

IMPROVE Skill

DBT: Distress Tolerance Skills

When you're feeling overwhelmed, the **IMPROVE** skill offers ways to make even distressing times slightly more positive by shifting your focus. This helps us tolerate lasting, difficult situations. When relatively calm, circle or highlight any ideas you think might help when you are very distressed. When you are very distressed, try one or more selected skills and check them off. Use the next page to reflect on how well they worked for you.

I

Imagery

- Imagine the most relaxing place in the world. Feel you're there with all your senses
- Imagine emotions drifting or draining away
- Recall a favorite memory in detail
- Imagine everything going well
- Imagine your favorite place

M

Meaning

- Find purpose or meaning in a challenging or painful situation
- Find any silver linings that you can
- Remind yourself of your spiritual values
- See yourself growing stronger, smarter, kinder, etc. because of this experience

P

Prayer

- Hold to your faith in God or the universe
- Open your heart to your own wisest self
- Pray or meditate on inner strength
- Turn things over to God or the universe
- Remember and have faith in your own strength and wisdom

R

Relaxing

- Take a hot bath or shower
- Drink a warm beverage
- Stretch or do yoga
- Breathe deeply into your diaphragm
- Notice and release tension in your shoulders, neck, face, hands, etc.

O

One thing in the moment

- Focus on where you are and what is happening in your environment *right now*
- Do one thing at a time and focus on it
- Brush away memories or future worries
- Focus on your senses and body sensations
- Do a grounding exercise

V

(Mini) Vacation

- Lay in bed or take a nap
- Go out into nature, fresh air, sunlight
- Eat a snack and watch your favorite show
- Mute your notifications for the day
- Get a massage or facial
- Purposely take breaks and rest

E

Encouragement and re-thinking

- Remind yourself: "This too shall pass"
- "This won't last forever"
- "I'm doing the best I can"
- Remind yourself of the facts relevant to the situation (e.g., "They care about me," "I've done this before," "Everyone make mistakes")



Use this page to record your practice of the IMPROVE Skill.

Describe the stressful situation. What happened and how are you feeling?	Which Self-Soothing skill did you try?	Rate the effectiveness of the skill	Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Imagery <input type="checkbox"/> Meaning <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxing <input type="checkbox"/> One thing... <input type="checkbox"/> Vacation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouragement	☆☆☆☆☆	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Imagery <input type="checkbox"/> Meaning <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxing <input type="checkbox"/> One thing... <input type="checkbox"/> Vacation <input type="checkbox"/> Encouragement	☆☆☆☆☆	
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Scan or [click here](#) to learn more about DBT:

*This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.



Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



325+
Companies Reviewed



3,625+
Hours of Firsthand Experience



1,545+
Data Points Analyzed



[Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

[Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



[Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

[Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.





Tools for Self-Assessment and Psychoeducation

Figuring out the next step in your mental health journey can be overwhelming. Developed by psychologists, the tools at [ChoosingTherapy.com](https://www.ChoosingTherapy.com) can help. Our mental health self-assessment quizzes can help you explore common symptoms of mental health concerns, as well as find the best therapy style for you. Our mental health worksheets can guide you through therapy concepts and how to use them in your life.

[Learn More with Mental Health Quizzes](#)

Our collection of psychologist-developed mental health quizzes can help you learn if you are experiencing mild, moderate, or concerning levels of anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and more. Each quiz also provides targeted resources based on your answers. These self-assessments are designed to offer insight, not diagnoses, and can be a helpful first step in recognizing symptoms and deciding whether to seek further support. If you have concerns about your mental health or your quiz results, we recommend you reach out to a licensed mental health professional.



[Free Mental Health Worksheets](#)

Search our collection of therapy worksheets by mental health topic, therapy modality, or demographic group. Our free, psychologist-developed worksheets make therapy exercises understandable and relevant to daily life. Find worksheets for help with ADHD, anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, and other common mental health challenges.