

Distress Tolerance Pros and Cons

DBT: Distress Tolerance Skills

Sometimes behavior urges (impulses to do something) are easy to resist. However, during a crisis, resisting behavior urges - even those that would make things worse for you - can be very difficult. This worksheet helps you slow down and weigh the pros and cons of acting on urges during a crisis.

What is a crisis?

- A highly stressful situation
- Short-term rather than long-term
- A situation so intense that it makes you feel like you have to act *right now*

What is an urge?

- A strong desire, impulse, or craving to do something or stop doing something
- The feeling of *wanting* to do something (whether or not you actually do it)

What happens when crises and urges mix?

Being in a crisis can **create** urges that are helpful or harmful:

- For example, someone threatening to harm you can create an urge to get away from them immediately. This urge makes sense for the situation and **makes things better** (keeps you safe).
- Another example might be getting let go from your job. If this creates an urge to yell and scream at your manager, it might make emotional sense, but still **make things worse** (it might harm your reputation or cost you a positive reference that would help you get a new job).

Harmful urges can be **crises themselves**:

- If stress makes you feel the need to **engage in risky behavior** (behavior that might harm you or make things worse), this could cause a crisis. For example, overwhelming urges to:
 - Drink or use drugs when you are trying to abstain
 - Engage in unsafe sexual practices
 - Make impulsive purchases or gamble
 - Self-harm

Reflect on your own experience

Have you ever experienced an urge because of (or resulting in) a crisis? If so, what was happening? What did you feel the urge to do? Did you act on the urge? Did it help or harm you?

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

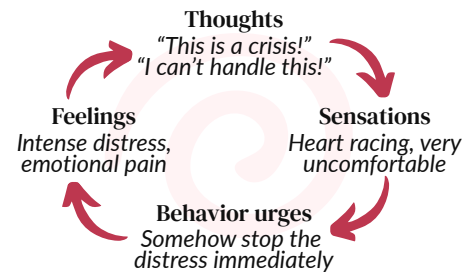


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Deciding whether or not to act on an urge during a crisis might seem simple - when you're not *in* the crisis. It's much easier to make decisions that help us and move us towards our goals when we're feeling calm.

However, **during a crisis, urges can feel very strong.** We can get stuck in a powerful cycle, with our thoughts, feelings, sensations, and behavior urges all making each other stronger.



That's why thinking through pros and cons can help. This process helps you slow down and access your wise mind so you can make a choice that is right for you.

Use the grid below to consider pros and cons of acting on or resisting **crisis urges: desires to engage in risky, addictive or harmful behaviors** - or to give up and avoid doing what is necessary to meet your long-term goals.

	Pros	Cons
Act on crisis urges	Pros of acting on impulsive behavior urges or avoiding what needs to be done	Cons of acting on impulsive behavior urges or avoiding what needs to be done
Resist crisis urges	Pros of resisting impulsive behavior urges or doing what needs to be done	Cons of resisting impulsive behavior urges or doing what needs to be done

- Read over your pros and cons list as much as you need to.
- Imagine experiencing the **positive** consequences of **resisting** the crisis urge.
- Imagine experiencing the **negative** consequences of **acting on** the crisis urge.
- Remember the **negative** consequences that occurred when you last **acted on** crisis urges.

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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://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.



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