

## Distress Tolerance Activities

**Body Moving Activities** These activities encourage us to move our body to increase circulation, distract us from our worries, & burn off energy. They are most effective when we feel either agitated or lethargic.

- Bike ride
- Chop wood
- Clean
- Climb stairs
- Dance
- Garden
- Go for a run
- Hit or throw a ball
- Kick something
- Play a sport
- Stretch your body
- Walk or hike
- Work out/Exercise
- Wrestle
- Yoga
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Relaxing Activities** These are activities that relax and calm our bodies.

- Breathe deeply
- Create art
- Exercise hard
- Fire in fireplace
- Go for a drive
- Hobby or craft
- Listen to a relaxation tape
- Massage
- Nap
- Play a game
- Play with clothes
- Progressive relaxation from toes to head
- Rock in a rocking chair
- Sit in the dark
- Sit in the sun
- Take a break from problem solving - come back later
- Visualize a mini-vacation
- Visualize a peaceful place
- Visualize a secret room
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Emotional Expression Activities** These activities get us in touch with our feelings and help us express them. Some activities require words but many are designed just to allow us to feel or see the extent of our distress.

- Assert your feelings and needs
- Bite something
- Break plates
- Cry
- Empty chair technique
- Grunt, stomp, shout
- Identify feelings and needs
- Journal or doodle
- Look for meaning & purpose in your struggle
- Pound a pillow
- Rip something
- Scream while driving
- Squeeze a rubber ball
- Stir up opposite emotions
- Talk in a loving
- Vesuvius release - boundaried expression
- Visualize a drain
- Write a letter expressing yourself
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Socializing Activities** These activities engage us with others. They help us see that we are not alone.

- Ask for support
- Be with people you admire
- Call a friend or family member
- Give something to someone
- Go to a religious service
- Go to a support group
- Go to an event
- Help someone in need
- Listen to another's perspective
- Make eye contact and smile at others
- Random act of kindness
- Reconnect with an old friend
- Spend time with positive and uplifting people
- Visit family or a friend
- Volunteer
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**In the Moment Activities** These activities bring our focus to making things better, as best we can, in the moment. Some activities are easy to do without any preparation, some set up for pleasurable experiences in the future, and others require that we prepare a space to make our situation different.

- Acceptance
- Affirm yourself
- Compare
- Distract yourself with entertainment
- Gratitude
- Imagine a wall
- Emulate someone you admire
- Make a massage appointment
- Make an appointment with a therapist
- Make a reservation
- Observe without judgement
- Packaging - box up a thought & set it aside
- Practice relinquishment
- Pray
- Read uplifting material
- Recall a past pleasant moment
- Repeat a mantra
- Reward yourself
- Shout “stop”
- Sing or hum a joyous song
- Smile
- Speak-up
- Wear your favorite color
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Sensation Focused Activities** These activities take our attention to our senses. They stimulate sensory awareness and can be used as a distraction. Most are pleasurable but some are not. Never do anything harmful to your body.

- Burn incense
- Buy or pick flowers
- Cup of tea or coffee
- Cold washcloth
- Eat something tasty
- File your nails
- Five senses stimulation
- Go out to eat
- Go somewhere new
- Hold an ice cube
- Hot bath or shower
- Lay on a heating pad
- Light a candle
- Listen to a story tape
- Listen to music
- Listen to nature
- Paint your fingernails
- Pamper yourself
- Physical sensations in the current moment
- Put on lotion
- Put on scented oils or perfume
- Seek beauty
- Sex
- Snap a rubber band
- Splash cold water on your face
- Suck on hard candy
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Thought Challenge Activities** These activities take our minds to a task that requires thought or sharp focus. These actions help us steer our minds away from things that are troubling by giving us a problem to solve or question to ponder.

- Color name
- Count backwards by 3's from 100
- Count things
- Count to 10 slowly
- Creative writing
- Examine the pros and cons
- Focus on what you like not what's wrong
- Identify your thoughts
- Mindfulness
- Name favorites
- Opportunity to learn
- Plan a joyous event
- Play a musical instrument
- Read
- Recite *Serenity Prayer*
- Sing something complex
- View long-term goals
- Visualize success
- Work
- Work a puzzle
- \_\_\_\_\_
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