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Handouts for Crisis Survival Skills

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Overview: Crisis Survival Skills

These are skills for tolerating painful events, urges, and emotions when you cannot make things better right away.

The STOP Skill

Pros and Cons

TIP Your Body Chemistry

Distract with Wise Mind ACCEPTS

Self-Soothe with the Five Senses

Improve the Moment



When to Use Crisis Survival Skills

YOU ARE IN A CRISIS when the situation is:

- Highly stressful.
- Short-term (that is, it won't last a long time).
- Creates intense pressure to resolve the crisis *now*.

USE CRISIS SURVIVAL SKILLS when:

1. You have intense pain that cannot be helped quickly.
2. You want to act on your emotions, but it will only make things worse.
3. Emotion mind threatens to overwhelm you, and you need to stay skillful.
4. You are overwhelmed, yet demands must be met.
5. Arousal is extreme, but problems can't be solved immediately.

DON'T USE CRISIS SURVIVAL SKILLS for:

- Everyday problems.
- Solving all your life problems.
- Making your life worth living.



STOP Skill



S_{top}

Do not just react. Stop! Freeze! Do not move a muscle! Your emotions may try to make you act without thinking. Stay in control!

T_{ake a step back}

Take a step back from the situation. Take a break. Let go. Take a deep breath. Do not let your feelings make you act impulsively.

O_{bserve}

Notice what is going on inside and outside you. What is the situation? What are your thoughts and feelings? What are others saying or doing?

P_{roceed mindfully}

Act with awareness. In deciding what to do, consider your thoughts and feelings, the situation, and other people's thoughts and feelings. Think about your goals. Ask Wise Mind: Which actions will make it better or worse?

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Pros and Cons

Use pros and cons any time you have to decide between two courses of action.

- An urge is a crisis when it is very strong and when acting on the urge will make things *worse* in the long term.
- Make a list of the pros *and* cons of acting on your crisis urges. These might be to engage in dangerous, addictive, or harmful behaviors, or they might be to give in, give up, or avoid doing what is necessary to build a life you want to live.
- Make another list of the pros and cons of resisting crisis urges—that is, tolerating the distress and not giving in to the urges.
- Use the grid below to evaluate both sets of pros and cons (this type of grid is also used in Distress Tolerance Worksheet 3). Or you can use the type of grid seen in Distress Tolerance Worksheet 3a and in the pros-and-cons worksheets for other modules.

	PROS	CONS
Acting on crisis urges	<p>Pros of acting on impulsive urges, giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Cons of acting on impulsive urges, giving in, giving up, or avoiding what needs to be done.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Resisting crisis urges	<p>Pros of resisting impulsive urges, doing what needs to be done, and not giving up.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Cons of resisting impulsive urges, doing what needs to be done, and not giving up.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Before an overwhelming crisis urge hits:

Write out your pros and cons; carry them with you.
Rehearse your pros and cons over and over.

When an overwhelming crisis urge hits:

Review your pros and cons. Get out your list and read it over again.

- Imagine the positive consequences of resisting the urge.
- Think of the negative consequences of giving in to crisis behaviors.
- Remember past consequences when you have acted on crisis urges.

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TIP Skills: Changing Your Body Chemistry

To reduce extreme emotion mind *fast*.

Remember these as **TIP** skills:

T

TIP THE TEMPERATURE of your face with COLD WATER*
(to calm down fast)

- Holding your breath, put your face in a bowl of cold water, or hold a cold pack (or zip-lock bag of cold water) on your eyes and cheeks.
- Hold for 30 seconds. Keep water above 50°F.

I

INTENSE EXERCISE*
(to calm down your body when it is revved up by emotion)

- Engage in intense exercise, if only for a short while.
- Expend your body's stored up physical energy by running, walking fast, jumping, playing basketball, lifting weights, etc.

P

PACED BREATHING
(pace your breathing by slowing it down)

- Breathe deeply into your belly.
- Slow your pace of inhaling and exhaling way down (on average, five to six breaths per minute).
- Breathe *out* more slowly than you breathe *in* (for example, 5 seconds in and 7 seconds out).

PAIRED MUSCLE RELAXATION
(to calm down by pairing muscle relaxation with breathing out)

- While breathing into your belly deeply tense your body muscles (*not* so much as to cause a cramp).
- Notice the tension in your body.
- While breathing out, say the word "Relax" in your mind.
- Let go of the tension.
- Notice the difference in your body.

***Caution:** Very cold water decreases your heart rate rapidly. Intense exercise will increase heart rate. Consult your health care provider before using these skills if you have a heart or medical condition, a lowered base heart rate due to medications, take a beta-blocker, are allergic to cold, or have an eating disorder.

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Paired Muscle Relaxation, Step by Step

If you have decided to practice **paired muscle relaxation**, it can be very helpful to practice relaxing each of your muscles first.

When you are starting, practice in a quiet place to reduce distractions, and make sure that you have enough time. As you improve with practice, you will want to practice in many different kinds of places, so that you can relax effectively when you most need to.

Remember that effectiveness improves with practice. If judgments arise, observe them, let them go, and return to your practice. If you become anxious, try focusing on breathing *in* to the count of 5 and *out* to the count of 7 (or the counts you have already determined for paced breathing), breathing all the while into your belly until you can return to relaxation exercises.

Now that you are ready to begin . . .

1. Get your body into a comfortable position in which you can relax. Loosen tight clothing. Lie or sit down, with all body parts uncrossed and no body part supporting any others.
2. For each area of the body listed below, gather tension by tightening muscles. Focus on the sensation of tightness in and around that area. Hold the tension as you inhale for 5–6 seconds, then release and breathe out.
3. As you release, say in your mind very slowly the word “Relax.”
4. Observe the changes in sensations as you relax for 10–15 seconds then move on to the next muscle.

Start first with each of the 16 muscle groups.

Once you can do that, practice with medium groups of muscles and then large groups.

Once you are good at that, practice tensing your entire body at once.

When you tense your entire body, you are like a robot—stiff, nothing moving.

When you relax your entire body, you are like a rag doll—all muscles drooping down.

Once you can relax all your muscles, practice three or four times a day until you can routinely relax your entire body rapidly.

By practicing pairing exhaling and the word “Relax” with relaxing your muscles, you will eventually be able to relax just by letting go and saying the word “Relax.”

Large
Medium
Small

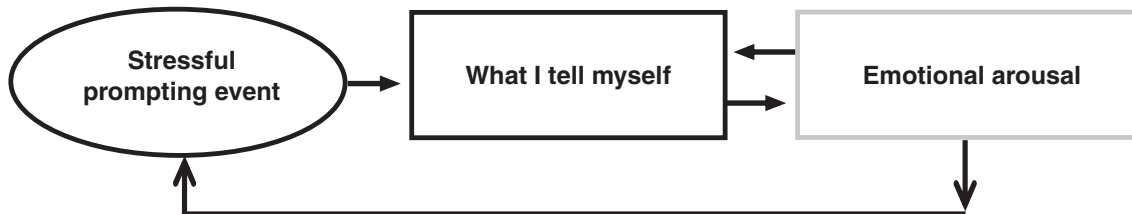
1. Hands and wrists: Make fists with both hands and pull fists up on the wrists.
2. Lower and upper arms: Make fists and bend both arms up to touch your shoulders.
3. Shoulders: Pull both shoulders up to your ears.
4. Forehead: Pull eyebrows close together, wrinkling forehead.
5. Eyes: Shut eyes tightly.
6. Nose and upper cheeks: Scrunch up nose; bring upper lips and cheeks up toward eyes.
7. Lips and lower face: Press lips together; bring edges of lips back toward ears.
8. Tongue and mouth: Teeth together; tongue pushing on upper mouth.
9. Neck: Push head back into chair, floor, or bed, or push chin down to chest.
10. Chest: Take deep breath and hold it.
11. Back: Arch back, bringing shoulder blades together.
12. Stomach: Hold stomach in tightly.
13. Buttocks: Squeeze buttocks together.
14. Upper legs and thighs: Legs out; tense thighs.
15. Calves: Legs out; point toes down.
16. Ankles: Legs out; point toes together, heels out, toes curled under.

Remember, paired relaxation is a skill. It takes time to develop. With practice, you will notice the benefits.

Note. Adapted from Smith, R. E. (1980). Development of an integrated coping response through cognitive–affective stress management training. In I. G. Sarason & C. D. Spielberger (Eds.), *Stress and anxiety* (Vol. 7, pp. 265–280). Washington, DC: Hemisphere. Copyright 1980 by Hemisphere Publishing Corporation. Adapted by permission.

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Effective Rethinking and Paired Relaxation, Step by Step



Step 1. Write down the **prompting event** that is often related to distressing emotions and that you want to work on reducing your emotional reactions to.

Step 2. Ask: “What must I be telling myself (that is, what are my **interpretations and thoughts**) about the event that causes such distress and arousal?” Write these down. Examples:

“He hates me,” “I can’t stand this!” “I can’t do this,” “I’ll never make it,” “I’m out of control!”

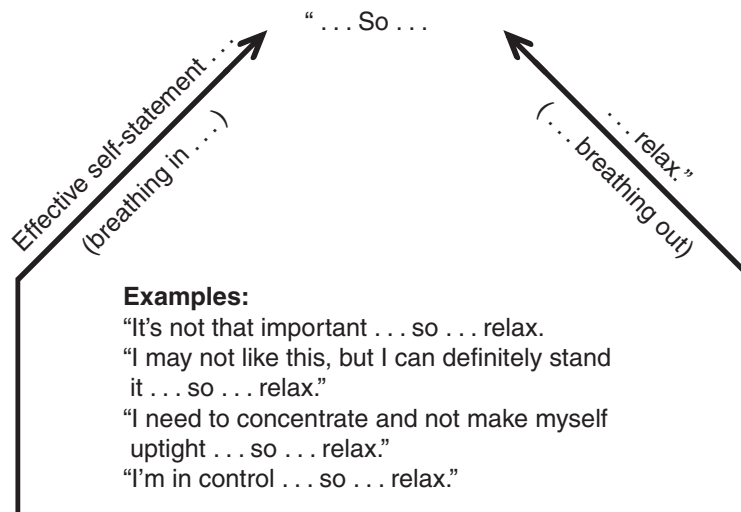
Step 3. Rethink the situation and its meaning in a way that counteracts the thoughts and interpretations producing stress and distressing emotions. As you rethink the situation, write down as many **effective thoughts** as you can to replace the stressful thoughts.

Step 4. When you are *not* in the stressful prompting event, **practice imagining** the stressful event:

- a. At the same time, while **breathing in**, say to yourself an effective self-statement.
- b. When **breathing out**, say “Relax” while intentionally relaxing all your muscles.

Step 5. Keep practicing every chance you get until you have mastered the strategy.

Step 6. When a stressful situation occurs, practice effective rethinking and paired relaxation.



Note. Adapted from Smith, R. E. (1980). Development of an integrated coping response through cognitive–affective stress management training. In I. G. Sarason & C. D. Spielberger (Eds.), *Stress and anxiety* (Vol. 7, pp. 265–280). Washington, DC: Hemisphere. Copyright 1980 by Hemisphere Publishing Corporation. Adapted by permission.

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Distracting

A way to remember these skills is the phrase “**Wise Mind ACCEPTS.**”

With **A**ctivities:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focus attention on a task you need to get done. | <input type="checkbox"/> Go out for a meal or eat a favorite food. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rent movies; watch TV. | <input type="checkbox"/> Call or go out with a friend. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean a room in your house. | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to your iPod; download music. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Find an event to go to. | <input type="checkbox"/> Build something. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play computer games. | <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with your children. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go walking. Exercise. | <input type="checkbox"/> Play cards. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surf the Internet. Write e-mails. | <input type="checkbox"/> Read magazines, books, comics. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play sports. | <input type="checkbox"/> Do crossword puzzles or Sudoku. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With **C**ontributing:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Find volunteer work to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> Call or send an instant message encouraging someone or just saying hi. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help a friend or family member. | <input type="checkbox"/> Make something nice for someone else. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surprise someone with something nice (a card, a favor, a hug). | <input type="checkbox"/> Do something thoughtful. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Give away things you don't need. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With **C**omparisons:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compare how you are feeling now to a time when you felt different. | <input type="checkbox"/> Compare yourself to those less fortunate. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Think about people coping the same as you or less well than you. | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch reality shows about others' troubles; read about disasters, others' suffering. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With different **E**motions:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read emotional books or stories, old letters. | <i>Ideas:</i> Scary movies, joke books, comedies, funny records, religious music, soothing music or music that fires you up, going to a store and reading funny greeting cards. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watch emotional TV shows; go to emotional movies. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to emotional music.
(<i>Be sure the event creates different emotions.</i>) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With **P**ushing away:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Push the situation away by leaving it for a while. | <input type="checkbox"/> Notice ruminating: Yell “No!” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leave the situation mentally. | <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to think about the painful situations. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Build an imaginary wall between yourself and the situation. | <input type="checkbox"/> Put the pain on a shelf. Box it up and put it away for a while. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Block thoughts and images from your mind. | <input type="checkbox"/> Deny the problem for the moment. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With other **T**houghts:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Count to 10; count colors in a painting or poster or out the window; count anything. | <input type="checkbox"/> Work puzzles. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repeat words to a song in your mind. | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch TV or read. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

With other **S**ensations:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Squeeze a rubber ball very hard. | <input type="checkbox"/> Go out in the rain or snow. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to very loud music. | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a hot or cold shower. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hold ice in your hand or mouth. | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Self-Soothing

A way to remember these skills is to think of soothing each of your **FIVE SENSES**.

With Vision:

- Look at the stars at night.
- Look at pictures you like in a book.
- Buy one beautiful flower.
- Make one space in a room pleasing to look at.
- Light a candle and watch the flame.
- Set a pretty place at the table using your best things.
- Go people-watching or window-shopping.
- Go to a museum or poster shop with beautiful art.
- Sit in the lobby of a beautiful old hotel.
- Look at nature around you.
- Walk in a pretty part of town.
- Watch a sunrise or a sunset.
- Go to a dance performance, or watch it on TV.
- Be mindful of each sight that passes in front of you.
- Take a walk in a park or a scenic hike.
- Browse through stores looking at things.
- Other: _____

With Hearing:

- Listen to soothing or invigorating music.
- Pay attention to sounds of nature (waves, birds, rainfall, leaves rustling).
- Pay attention to the sounds of the city (traffic, horns, city music).
- Sing to your favorite songs.
- Hum a soothing tune.
- Learn to play an instrument.
- Burn a CD or make an iPod mix with music that will get you through tough times. Turn it on.
- Be mindful of any sounds that come your way, letting them go in one ear and out the other.
- Turn on the radio.
- Other: _____

With Smell:

- Use your favorite soap, shampoo, aftershave, cologne, or lotions, or try them on in the store.
- Burn incense or light a scented candle.
- Open a package of coffee and inhale the aroma.
- Put lemon oil on your furniture.
- Put potpourri or eucalyptus oil in a bowl in your room.
- Sit in a new car and breathe the aroma.
- Boil cinnamon. Make cookies, bread, or popcorn.
- Smell the roses.
- Walk in a wooded area and mindfully breathe in the fresh smells of nature.
- Open the window and smell the air.
- Other: _____

With Taste:

- Eat some of your favorite foods.
- Drink your favorite soothing drink, such as herbal tea, hot chocolate, a latté, or a smoothie.
- Treat yourself to a dessert.
- Eat macaroni and cheese or another favorite childhood food.
- Sample flavors in an ice cream store.
- Suck on a piece of peppermint candy.
- Chew your favorite gum.
- Get a little bit of a special food you don't usually spend the money on, such as fresh-squeezed orange juice or your favorite candy.
- Really taste the food you eat. Eat one thing mindfully.
- Other: _____

With Touch:

- Take a long hot bath or shower.
- Pet your dog or cat.
- Have a massage. Soak your feet.
- Put creamy lotion on your whole body.
- Put a cold compress on your forehead.
- Sink into a comfortable chair in your home.
- Put on a blouse or shirt that has a pleasant feel.
- Take a drive with the car windows rolled down.
- Run your hand along smooth wood or leather.
- Hug someone.
- Put clean sheets on the bed.
- Wrap up in a blanket.
- Notice touch that is soothing.
- Other: _____

Body Scan Meditation Step by Step

Sit on a chair, or lie on your back on the floor with legs uncrossed. Put your arms in a comfortable position by your side, on your abdomen, or (if sitting) put them on your thighs palms up. Open your eyes partially to let light in. If you are lying on the floor, put a cushion under your knees if need be. Imagine your breath flowing to each part of your body as your attention gently moves up your body. Adopt a mind of curiosity and interest as you focus on each part of your body.

Focus on your breathing. Notice how the air moves in and out of your body.

- Take several deep breaths until you begin to feel comfortable and relaxed.
- Direct your attention to the *toes* of your left foot.
- Notice the sensations in that part of your body while remaining aware of your breathing.
- Imagine each breath flowing to your *toes*.
- Looking with curiosity, ask, “What am I feeling in this part of my body?”
- Focus on your left *toes* for several minutes.

- Then move your focus to the *arch* and *heel* of your left foot, and hold it there for a minute or two while continuing to pay attention to your breathing.
- Notice the sensations on your skin of warmth or coldness; notice the weight of your foot on the floor.
- Imagine your breath flowing to the *arch* and *heel* of your left foot.
- Ask, “What are the feelings in the *arch* and *heel* of my left foot?”

- Follow the same procedure as you move to your left *ankle, calf, knee, upper legs, and thigh*.
- Repeat with the right leg, starting with your toes.
- Then move through your *pelvis, and lower back, and around to your stomach*.
- Focus on the rising and falling of your belly as your breath goes in and out.
- Then go on to your *chest; left hand, arm, and shoulder; right hand, arm, and shoulder; neck, chin, tongue, mouth, lips, and lower face; and nose*.
- Notice your breath as it comes in and out of your nostrils.
- Then focus on your upper cheeks, eyes, forehead, and scalp.

- Finally, focus on the very top of your hair.
- Then let go of your body altogether.

Don't worry if you notice that thoughts, sounds, or other sensations come into your awareness. Just notice them and then gently refocus your mind. Don't worry if your mind has been drawn away from the object of your attention and you find yourself thinking about something else (it nearly always happens). Just calmly, gently, but with resolution, turn your mind back to the part of the body you've reached. You may need to bring your attention back over and over. You are not alone in this. It is this bringing of your attention back over and over and over, without judgment or harshness, that is the essential element of the meditation.



Improving the Moment

A way to remember these skills is the word **IMPROVE**.

With Imagery:

- Imagine very relaxing scenes.
- Imagine a secret room within yourself. Furnish it the way you like. Close and lock the door on anything that can hurt you.
- Imagine everything going well.
- Make up a calming fantasy world.
- Imagine hurtful emotions draining out of you like water out of a pipe.
- Remember a happy time and imagine yourself in it again; play out the time in your mind again.
- Other: _____

With Meaning:

- Find purpose or meaning in a painful situation.
- Focus on whatever positive aspects of a painful situation you can find.
- Repeat these positive aspects in your mind.
- Remember, listen to, or read about spiritual values.
- Other: _____

With Prayer:

- Open your heart to a supreme being, God, or your own Wise Mind.
- Ask for strength to bear the pain.
- Turn things over to God or a higher being.
- Other: _____

With Relaxing actions:

- Take a hot bath or sit in a hot tub.
- Drink hot milk.
- Massage your neck and scalp.
- Practice yoga or other stretching.
- Breathe deeply.
- Change your facial expression.
- Other: _____

With One thing in the moment:

- Focus your entire attention on just what you are doing.
- Keep yourself in the moment.
- Put your mind in the present.
- Focus your entire attention on the physical
- Listen to a sensory awareness recording (or use Distress Tolerance Handout 9a)
- Other: _____

With a brief Vacation:

- Give yourself a brief vacation.
- Get in bed; pull the covers up over your head.
- Go to the beach or the woods for the day.
- Get a magazine and read it with chocolates.
- Turn off your phone for a day.
- Take a blanket to the park and sit on it for a whole afternoon.
- Take a 1-hour breather from hard work.
- Take a brief vacation from responsibility.
- Other: _____

With self-Encouragement and rethinking the situation:

- Cheerlead yourself: “You go, girl!” “You da man!”
- “I will make it out of this.”
- “I’m doing the best I can.”
- Repeat over and over: “I can stand it.”
- “This too shall pass.”
- “I will be OK.”
- “It won’t last forever.”
- Other: _____

List (and then practice) rethoughts that are particularly important in your crisis situations (e.g., “The fact that he did not pick me up doesn’t mean he doesn’t love me”):

- _____
- _____



*Handouts for Reality
Acceptance Skills*





Radical Acceptance

(When you cannot keep painful events and emotions from coming your way.)

WHAT IS RADICAL ACCEPTANCE?

1. Radical means *all the way*, complete and total.
2. It is accepting in your mind, your heart, and your body.
3. It's when you stop fighting reality, stop throwing tantrums because reality is not the way you want it, and let go of bitterness.

WHAT HAS TO BE ACCEPTED?

1. Reality is as it is (the facts about the past and the present are the facts, even if you don't like them).
2. There are limitations on the future for everyone (but only realistic limitations need to be accepted).
3. Everything has a cause (including events and situations that cause you pain and suffering).
4. Life can be worth living even with painful events in it.

WHY ACCEPT REALITY?

1. Rejecting reality does not change reality.
2. Changing reality requires first accepting reality.
3. Pain can't be avoided; it is nature's way of signaling that something is wrong.
4. Rejecting reality turns pain into suffering.
5. Refusing to accept reality can keep you stuck in unhappiness, bitterness, anger, sadness, shame, or other painful emotions.
6. Acceptance may lead to sadness, but deep calmness usually follows.
7. The path out of hell is through misery. By refusing to accept the misery that is part of climbing out of hell, you fall back into hell.

Radical Acceptance: Factors That Interfere

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE IS NOT:

Approval, compassion, love, passivity, or against change.

FACTORS THAT INTERFERE WITH ACCEPTANCE

- 1. You don't have the skills for acceptance; you do not know how to accept really painful events and facts.
- 2. You believe that if you accept a painful event, you are making light of it or are approving of the facts, and that nothing will be done to change or prevent future painful events.
- 3. Emotions get in the way (unbearable sadness; anger at the person or group that caused the painful event; rage at the injustice of the world; overwhelming shame about who you are; guilt about your own behavior).
- Other: _____

Practicing Radical Acceptance Step by Step

- Observe that you are questioning or fighting reality (“It shouldn’t be this way”).
- Remind yourself that the unpleasant reality is just as it is and cannot be changed (“This is what happened”).
- Remind yourself that there are causes for the reality. Acknowledge that some sort of history led up to this very moment. Consider how people’s lives have been shaped by a series of factors. Notice that given these causal factors and how history led up to this moment, this reality had to occur just this way (“This is how things happened”).
- Practice accepting with the whole self (mind, body, and spirit). Be creative in finding ways to involve your whole self. Use accepting self-talk—but also consider using relaxation; mindfulness of your breath; half-smiling and willing hands while thinking about what feels unacceptable; prayer; going to a place that helps bring you to acceptance; or imagery.
- Practice opposite action. List all the behaviors you would do if you did accept the facts. Then act as if you have already accepted the facts. Engage in the behaviors that you would do if you really had accepted.
- Cope ahead with events that seem unacceptable. Imagine (in your mind’s eye) believing what you don’t want to accept. Rehearse in your mind what you would do if you accepted what seems unacceptable.
- Attend to body sensations as you think about what you need to accept.
- Allow disappointment, sadness, or grief to arise within you.
- Acknowledge that life can be worth living even when there is pain.
- Do pros and cons if you find yourself resisting practicing acceptance.



Mindfulness of Current Thoughts

1. OBSERVE YOUR THOUGHTS.

- As waves, coming and going.
- Not suppressing thoughts.
- Not judging thoughts.
- Acknowledging their presence.
- Not keeping thoughts around.
- Not analyzing thoughts.
- Practicing willingness.
- Stepping back and observing thoughts as they run in and out of your mind.

2. ADOPT A CURIOUS MIND.

- Ask, “Where do my thoughts come from?” Watch and see.
- Notice that every thought that comes also goes out of your mind.
- Observe but do not evaluate your thoughts. Let go of judgments.

3. REMEMBER: YOU ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS.

- Do not necessarily act on thoughts.
- Remember times when you have had very different thoughts.
- Remind yourself that catastrophic thinking is “emotion mind.”
- Remember how you think when you are not feeling such intense suffering and pain.

4. DON'T BLOCK OR SUPPRESS THOUGHTS.

- Ask, “What sensations are these thoughts trying to avoid?” Turn your mind to the sensation. Then come back to the thought. Repeat several times.
- Step back; allow your thoughts to come and go as you observe your breath.
- Play with your thoughts: Repeat them out loud over and over as fast as you can. Sing them. Imagine the thoughts as the words of a clown, as recordings getting all tangled up; as cute animals you can cuddle up to; as bright colors running through your mind; as only sounds.
- Try loving your thoughts.

Practicing Mindfulness of Thoughts

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OF THOUGHTS BY OBSERVING THEM

- 1. Notice thoughts as they come into your mind. As a thought comes into your mind, say “a thought has entered my mind.” Label the thought as a thought, saying, “The thought [describe thought] arose in my mind.” Use a gentle voice tone.
- 2. As you notice thoughts in your mind, ask, “Where did the thought come from?” Then watch your mind to see if you can see where it came from.
- 3. Step back from your mind, as if you are on top of a mountain and your mind is just a boulder down below. Gaze at your mind, watching what thoughts come up when you are watching it. Come back into your mind before you stop.
- 4. Close your eyes and scan your body for the first physical sensation that you notice. Then scan your mind for the first thought you notice. Shuttle back and forth between scanning for physical sensations and scanning for thoughts. Another time, replace scanning your body for physical sensations to scanning yourself for any emotional feelings. Then shuttle back and forth between an emotional feeling and a thought.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OF THOUGHTS BY USING WORDS AND VOICE TONE

- 5. Verbalize thoughts or beliefs out loud, using a nonjudgmental voice tone, over and over and over:
 - As fast as you can until the thoughts make no sense.
 - Very, very slowly (one syllable or word per breath).
 - In a different voice from yours (high- or low-pitched, like a cartoon character or celebrity).
 - As a dialogue on a TV comedy show (“You’ll never believe what thought went through my mind. I was thinking, ‘I’m a jerk.’ Can you believe that?”).
 - As songs, sung wholeheartedly and dramatically, in a tune that fits the thoughts.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OF THOUGHTS WITH OPPOSITE ACTION

- 6. Relax your face and body while imagining accepting your thoughts as only thoughts—sensations of the brain.
- 7. Imagine things you would do if you stopped believing everything you think.
- 8. Rehearse in your mind the things that you would do if you did not view your thoughts as facts.
- 9. Practice loving your thoughts as they go through your mind.

(continued on next page)

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OF THOUGHTS BY IMAGINING THAT YOUR MIND IS:

- 10. A conveyor belt, and that thoughts and feelings are coming down the belt. Put each thought or feeling in a box labeled with the type of thought that it is (e.g., worry thoughts, thoughts about my past, thoughts about my mother, planning what to do thoughts). Just keep observing and sorting thoughts into the labeled boxes.
- 11. A river, and that thoughts and feelings are boats going down the river. Imagine sitting on the grass, watching the boats go by. Try not to jump on the boat.
- 12. A railroad track, and that thoughts and feelings are train cars going by. Try not to jump on the train.
- 13. A leaf that has dropped off a tree into a beautiful creek flowing by you as you sit on the grass. Each time a thought or image comes into your mind, imagine that it is written or pictured on the leaf floating by. Let each leaf go by, watching as it goes out of sight.
- 14. The sky, and thoughts have wings and can fly through the sky. Watch as each flies out of sight.
- 15. The sky, and thoughts are clouds. Notice each thought-cloud as it drifts by, letting it drift out of your mind.
- 16. A white room with two doors. Through one door, thoughts come in; through the other, thoughts go out. Watch each thought with attention and curiosity until it leaves. Let go of judgments. Let go of analyzing thoughts and of figuring out if they fit the facts. As a thought comes into your mind, say, "A thought has entered my mind."

Other: _____

Other: _____

Other: _____

Other: _____

Other: _____