

HELPING YOUR CHILD HANDLE BIG EMOTIONS

A Parent-Friendly Guide to Distress
Tolerance

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- ▶ Getting through tough moments without making things worse
- ▶ Not about fixing the problem right away
- ▶ About helping your child stay in control

WHAT IS DISTRESS TOLERANCE?

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- ▶ 6 Skills to Manage Emotional Distress: DBT Distress Tolerance

SHORT INTRODUCTORY VIDEO



- ▶ Big emotions can lead to impulsive reactions
- ▶ Skills help children pause instead of react
- ▶ Builds confidence and emotional strength
- ▶ 💡 Ask: What does your child do when overwhelmed?

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOUR
CHILD

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- ▶ Think of a recent incident...
- ▶ What made it worse?
- ▶ What might have helped in that moment?

QUICK PARENT REFLECTION



- ▶ Activities – keep hands and mind busy
- ▶ Helping others – builds connection
- ▶ Change thoughts or sensations to reset emotions
- ▶ 🎯 Try this: Name 1 distraction your child already uses

ACCEPTS: HEALTHY
DISTRACTIONS

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- ▶ **A**ctivities

- ▶ Do something

- ▶ **C**ontributing

- ▶ Contribute to someone

- ▶ **C**omparisons

- ▶ Compare yourself to those less fortunate or to a time when you were feeling worse

- ▶ **E**motions

- ▶ Create different emotions

- ▶ **P**ushing Away

- ▶ Push the painful situation out of your mind temporarily

- ▶ **T**houghts

- ▶ Replace your thoughts.

- ▶ **S**ensations

- ▶ Intensify other sensations

DISTRACT WITH WISE MIND
ACCEPTS



- ▶ Use the senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, movement
- ▶ Examples: music, cozy blanket, favorite snack
- ▶ Goal: help the body feel safe
- ▶ Ask: Which sense calms your child most?

SELF-SOOTHE: CALM THE BODY

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HOW TO SELF-SOOTHE

Self-soothing strategies help us cope with overwhelming and intense emotions. These techniques soothe the mind and body when in a state of distress. When we self-soothe, we use the five senses to calm the nervous system.

SOUND

- Listen to your favourite music – LOUD!
- Visit somewhere with natural running water and listen to the sounds
- Use a meditation app/video with soothing sounds
- Talk to someone you love and listen to their voice.

SIGHT

- Create soothing mood lighting with lamps, candles or fairy lights.
- Look at your favourite art or photos.
- Watch your favourite TV show or movie.
- Surround yourself with nature or look out of the window at the sky.
- Read something uplifting

TASTE

- Eat your favourite meal.
- Eat something soothing like ice-cream.
- Drink something soothing like hot chocolate.
- Chew some gum!

SMELL

- Burn incense or light scented candles.
- Use essential oils.
- Buy yourself some nice smelling flowers.
- Cook or bake something that smells tasty.
- Spray yourself with your favourite perfume or spray.

TOUCH

- Have a hot bath or shower.
- Warm your towels in the dryer or on a radiator.
- Put your softest, comfiest clothes on.
- Wrap yourself up in soft sheets.
- Hug someone you love for as long as you need.
- Ask someone you trust for a massage or foot rub.
- Splash cold water on your face and back of neck.

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- ▶ Temperature – cold water or ice
- ▶ Intense exercise – quick bursts
- ▶ Paced breathing – slow it down
- ▶ Muscle relaxation – tense and release
- ▶ □ Practice: Take 3 slow breaths together

TIPP SKILLS (FAST RELIEF)

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- ▶ Ask your child: “What helps you feel calm?”
- ▶ Create a short list together
- ▶ Practice BEFORE the next incident

PARENT PRACTICE MOMENT



- ▶ Accept reality as it is (even if you don't like it)
- ▶ Fighting reality increases distress
- ▶ Acceptance creates space to move forward

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE



- ▶ Acceptance does NOT mean you agree
- ▶ It does NOT mean giving up
- ▶ It means choosing peace over struggle

IMPORTANT REMINDER



- ▶ You may need to choose acceptance again and again
- ▶ Notice thoughts like: “This isn’t fair”
- ▶ Gently guide yourself back


TURNING THE MIND

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- ▶ Willingness: doing what works
- ▶ Willfulness: resisting reality
- ▶ Ask: “What would help right now?”
- ▶ ⚖️ Ask: When does your child get ‘stuck’?

WILLINGNESS VS. WILLFULNESS

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- ▶ Build a 'calm kit' with your child
- ▶ Practice using it when calm
- ▶ Use it during stressful moments
- ▶  Activity: List 3 items for a calm kit

CREATE A CRISIS PLAN





- ▶ What is ONE skill you will try this week?
- ▶ How can you model calm for your child?
- ▶ Small steps create big change

FINAL REFLECTION

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