

PAIN: DISCOMFORT TOLERANCE SKILLS

These are skills that help people managing pain and discomfort. Just like learning anything new, it takes practice to feel comfortable with using new skills. So, Practice! Practice! Practice!

Distract:

Activities: Hobbies, cleaning, call or visit with a friend, games, drink warm fluids. Listen to beautiful, soothing, or exciting music, sing, hum

Contributing: Do something for someone else.

Opposite Emotions: Read emotional books (novel) or watch emotional movie (making sure either is OPPOSITE to current emotion), watch cartoons, seek religious material and music, listen to peppy music.

Pushing Away: Leave situation mentally, build an imaginary wall between self and situation, censor ruminating, put situation on the shelf, box it up.

Other Thoughts: Count to 10, count colors in surroundings, do puzzles, watch TV.

Counterstimulation:

(Practice for 3-5 minutes per SIMPLE, STRONG, PLEASANT)

Vision: Focus vision on a singular sensation, letting sight go in and out of focus as it wants, not lingering or processing any one thing. (picture, color, inside of eyelids, texture, flame, or image)

Hearing: With eyes closed, focus hearing on singular sensation, letting it go louder and softer with focus, not lingering or processing any one thing. (fan, outside noise, metronome, clock, single instrument or simple music)

Smell: With eyes closed, focus smell on a single, strong sensation, breathing in and out, not lingering or processing any one thing (strong lotions, oils, vic's vaporub on cotton ball).

Taste: With eyes closed, focus on a single, strong taste, breathing in and out, not chewing or processing any one thing. (hard candy, spicy mint, ice, frozen juice cube, lemon)

Touch: With eyes closed, focus touch on a single sensation, experience whatever you are touching, stronger for greater blocking of other sensations. (hold ice, squeeze ball, soak feet, hands in running water, heat pack, snap elastic band)

Improve the Moment:

Imagery: Imagine relaxing scenes, imagine secret room inside yourself and see how it is decorated – go in and close the door, imagine everything going well, imagine coping well, imagine pain draining out like water out of a pipe. Imagine your desired outcome – what you are doing, what you are experiencing.

Meaning: Find purpose or meaning in your pain (“this is a sign that I am working”, “this is my body’s way to keeping me attentive”); read about, focus on positive aspects of situation and repeat them over and over.

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Prayer: Open the heart to wisdom and higher power – either God or your own wise mind. Ask for strength to bear pain in the moment. Turn things over to a higher power.

Mindfulness in the Moment: Focus entire attention on what you are doing right now, keep in the very moment you are in, stay in the present, focus entire attention on physical sensations that accompany tasks that require little thinking, such as walking, doing dishes, playing sports, cleaning, be aware of how body moves, do awareness exercises.

Self-Talk: Cheerlead yourself: “I can stand it!”; “It won’t last forever”; “I will make it out of this”; “I’m doing the best I can!”

Pros and Cons: List pros and cons of tolerating the distress, list pros and cons of NOT tolerating distress. Focus on long-term goals.

Relaxation:

Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Tense and relax muscle groups starting with hands and arms going to top of head then working down; Massage neck, scalp, hands, calves; Apply pressure to points on hands or feet; take hot shower/ bath; exercise hard for 10-15 minutes.

Relaxation Apps: Smiling Mind, Relaxing Melodies, Breathe 2 Relax will help guide you in relaxation

Web relaxation: UCLA Mindfulness Project; Mottkids4kids; Coping Club; KidsHealth

Half Smile: Relax by letting go or tensing then letting go face, neck, shoulder, and half smile with lips slightly upturned with relaxed face, teeth apart, serene facial expression. Repeat slowly, for 2-3 minutes.

Body Awareness: Be mindful of the position of your body, focus on breath, focus on where body touches an object, and focus entire attention on sense of connection. Where are your arms? Legs? Moving as little as possible, let body sink in to sensation of its position.

Observe Breath:

Deep Breathing: Lie on your back, focus on the movement of stomach, allow stomach to rise and bring air into lower half of lungs, continue for 10 breaths.

Counting Breath: Sit comfortably and as you inhale be aware: “I am inhaling.” As you exhale, be aware: “I am exhaling.” Do this for a count of 10 and then start again.

Following the Breath: Sit comfortably; inhale comfortably: “I am inhaling normally.” Exhale in awareness: “I am exhaling normally.” Continue for three breaths. On fourth breath, extend the inhalation: “I am breathing in a long inhalation.” “I am breathing out a long exhalation.” Continue for three breaths. Now, follow breath carefully, as it moves in your body. Follow the entrance and exit of air: “I am inhaling.” Do the same with exhalations. Continue for 20 breaths, wait 5 minutes and start again.

Pace Breathing: Using a metronome or the second hand on a clock, listen with your eyes closed to the “click.” As you breathe normally, notice the pace of your breath, do you breathe in for 2 clicks? 3 clicks? In for 2 out for 3? Continue to practice for 1-3 minutes

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