

Distress Tolerance/Coping Ahead: 3X3X3 Plan

Part of coping ahead and tolerating distress is developing a plan ahead of time that you can use in a crisis or distressing situation. An easy way to develop this plan that will last approximately ½ hour is to use a 3X3X3 plan. The idea here is to plan on using 3 different skills, 3 different times, for at least 3 minutes. A sample 3X3X3 plan might look like this:

<p>DT - Distract, ACCEPTS: Watch a funny YouTube Video</p>	<p>CM/Dialectical Thinking: ID “myths”(cognitive distortions) and come up with healthy challenges</p>	<p>DT - Self-soothe: Notice everything I can about the taste of a piece of candied ginger</p>
<p>Repeat DT – ACCEPTS: Read something funny in an ironic and/or comic way</p>	<p>CM/ Dialectical Thinking: Try to analyze the situation by thinking about it from the perspective of an alien from another planet</p>	<p>Repeat DT – Self-soothe: Notice everything I can about the sensory aspects of my favorite pillow or blanket</p>
<p>Repeat DT ACCEPTS: Think about a nice surprise you could plan for a friend or family member</p>	<p>CM/Dialectical Thinking: Fully participate in something different, like blowing bubbles</p>	<p>Repeat DT – TIP skills: Ice-cold water, intense movement for 1-5 full minutes without stopping, paired breathing and muscle relaxation</p>

A 3X3 plan can include whatever skill set you want. Other ideas might include ways to practice opposite action, thinking about options you have if you radically accept, planning out a DEAR MAN, drawing out the Wise Mind or the Describing

Emotions diagrams and analyzing your situation from a more logical point of view. Try to practice a skill that you haven't used before. You could journal, draw, write a poem or story, listen to music (which can be a form of opposite action too), bake cookies, design a sanctuary space, take a walk, drink some cold water or have a hot cup of tea or coffee...the possibilities are endless.

The key idea here is to plan ahead. I've found that distress tolerance and coping usually work best if there is something you can go to right away. Needing to think about what to do while you're in crisis is very difficult, and that the less you have to do means that you're more likely to be able to cope effectively. You have to fully participate in doing these, too – a half-hearted effort likely won't have the effect you want. You need to fully throw yourself into doing these.

Another key element here is to make sure you take a full three minutes on any one exercise. That's the third "3" – 3 things, 3 times, for at least 3 minutes each. This gives your mind and body enough time to ride the wave of emotion and maximize your chances of being effective.

The next two page includes a planning sheet and a blank 3X3X3 grid for you to use in planning. Before you jump into filling out the grid, consider ideas from each of the 4 skill sets that you might find useful; when you have that, begin putting them in place in your 3X3X3 plan.

Plan Ideas: Come up with as many ideas as you can from each category. Feel free to add more sheets if you need to.

Core Mindfulness:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Distress Tolerance:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Emotion Regulation:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Interpersonal Effectiveness:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3X3X3 Grid: Pick out ideas from three categories, and put them in each box. If you think you'll need it, print out or make a second grid for a second plan. Make sure that you have what you need in order to carry out your plan. For example, if your plan includes watching YouTube, make sure you have access to the internet where you plan on watching.

Skill Set: _____ Tool:	Skill Set: _____ Tool:	Skill Set: _____ Tool:
Skill Set: _____ Tool:	Skill Set: _____ Tool:	Skill Set: _____ Tool:
Skill Set: _____ Tool:	Skill Set: _____ Tool:	Skill Set: _____ Tool: