

# You've Got Skills

## Distress Tolerance Skills

When we are overwhelmed, upset or activated we can respond in ways we regret later. These exercises below will help you tolerate those stressful interactions with your partner when you are feeling distressed.

### Self-soothe during a disagreement

- Observe Your Breath     Breathe from your stomach     Count your breath
- As you inhale say to your self “I am peace,” as you exhale say to yourself “I am love”
- Repeat the mantra “Peace begins with me”<sup>1</sup>     Half-smile and inhale and exhale quietly <sup>2</sup>
- Listen to soothing music     Touch your heart when you speak     Practice mindfulness
- Changing my tone     Sending love and light into the conversation
- Orientation: breath while looking around the room with eyes and ears wide open
- Take a time out     Mindfully drink a glass of water     Breathe and on the exhale hum
- Visualize being grounded and supported by the earth     Visualize a calm and safe place
- Touch the texture of your clothes, a chair, etc.     Mindfully taste a piece of candy or food
- Hold your partner’s hand while engaging in a conversation     Shaking out the tension

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<sup>1</sup> Bernstein, G. (2014). *Miracles Now: 108 Life Changing Tools for Less Stress, More Flow and Finding your* When you say “peace” touch your thumb and pointer finger, when you say “begins” touch your thumb with your middle finger, when you say “with” touch your thumb with your ring finger and when you say “me” touch your thumb with your pinky finger.

<sup>2</sup> Linehan, M. (1993) *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder*. New York and London: The Guilford Press. *Relax, let go of tension in your face, neck and shoulders and half-smile with your lips. A half-smile is upturning your lips with a relaxed face. By shifting your body, you shift your mind and your mood from tense and negative to relaxed and positive.*

## Shifting Your Focus of Attention if the disagreement is unresolved

- Engage in exercise or a hobby
- Clean the house
- Go for a walk
- Call or visit a friend
- Watch a funny or positive movie
- Read an uplifting book
- Shaking out the tension
- Listen to an uplifting or positive playlist of songs you have created
- Work on a puzzle, paint or play a video game
- Journal about your thoughts & feelings
- Read Louise Hay's positive thought cards
- Agree to disagree with your partner
- Prepare a cup of tea for yourself and offer to make one for your partner
- Throw ice cubes at a wall outside
- Scream under water, in your car or in a pillow
- Hit a punching bag in the backyard
- Sending love and light to yourself & your partner
- Leave the situation mentally and envision a wall between yourself and the situation
- Use the Emotional Freedom Technique<sup>3</sup>
- Prepare a healthy meal
- buy yourself flower
- Identify 3 things you are grateful for in the AM and PM<sup>4</sup>
- Do a random act of kindness
- Take a warm bath or a cold shower
- pet your animal, hug a friend or your partner
- Give yourself a butterfly hug or wrap yourself in a blanket
- Share your needs and feelings with your partner (refer to Module 4)

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<sup>3</sup> Ortner, N. (2013) The Tapping Solution: A Revolutionary System for Stress-free Living. US, UK, Canada, India, South Africa: Hay House Inc.

*Tapping the acupuncture meridian points. Once you identify then negative emotion, body sensation or thought you will scale the level of distress (0-10). Next you will repeat the following phrase while continually tapping the side of your left hand with a karate chop hand position of your right hand: "Even if I (i.e. feel anxious and overwhelmed OR feel unloved and uncared for) I deeply and completely love and accept myself. Say the phrase 3 times. Then tap the third eye area at the beginning of the eyebrow line repeatedly. State the phrase again 7 times. Then tap repeatedly underneath the outer part of your eye socket while repeating the phrase 7 times. Then tap repeatedly underneath your nose above your upper lid while repeating the phrase 7 times again. Then tap your chin while repeating the phrase 7 times. Then tap directly under the inner part of your collarbone while repeating the phrase 7 times. Then tap the sides of your torso while repeating the phrase 7 times. Then tap the top of your head while repeating the phrase 7 times.*

<sup>4</sup> Identify things you are grateful for in your life and/or what you appreciate about yourself.

## Make it Better

- Imagine you and your partner resolving the issue
- Imagine yourself coping well
- Lay down in nature & imagine your thoughts & emotions being drained from your body
- Listen to inspirational podcasts, teleseminars & workshops about personal development
- Focus on the positive aspects of the painful situation
- pray and/or meditate
- Ask the universe, source or God for greater wisdom, strength or help in carrying this pain
- Sending love and light to the situation
- listen to a relaxation or hypnosis CD
- Muscle relaxation technique <sup>5</sup>
- Laughter exercise <sup>6</sup>

## Pillars of Accepting Reality

- “Anytime you choose to fight reality, reality always wins.”
- Acceptance does not mean approval. Acceptance is acknowledging the situation is the way it is despite you not bring happy about it. Approval is when you recognize the situation is the way it is and you are happy about it.
- When we deny or avoid pain the pain may be reduced in the short-term but the intensity of the pain and suffering increases in the long-term. Acceptance allows us to let go of fighting with the truth and getting closer to gaining peace of mind.
- Find the silver lining, lesson learned or growth opportunity in the situation or experience.
- Take off your rose colored glasses and identify the things you can control and let go of the aspects of the situation that are outside of your control.
- Ask the wisdom of the universe, source, God, nature, mother earth etc. for support and guidance regarding this situation or to carry the burden of this situation for you so you can see the situation with more clarity.
- Choosing to tolerate the moment.
- Make an inner commitment to accept people for who they are and situations, flaws and loss for what they are. This is a continuous process and may need to be repeated several times.
- Be willing to do what is needed in each situation and listening to your intuition/inner wisdom as opposed to being willful (e.g. refusing to make necessary changes, quitting, doing the opposite of what will work, refusing to tolerate the moment).

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<sup>5</sup> Take a breath and tighten your hands while holding your breath for 10 seconds then relax your hands as you exhale. Then do the same for your arms, shoulders, feet, calves, thighs, buttocks, back, neck, face.

<sup>6</sup> Take a deep breath from your stomach then laugh deeply from your stomach saying, “ho, ho, ho,” repeat 3 times. Then take another deep breath from your stomach but this time laughing normally from your heart saying, “ha, ha, ha. Repeat 3 times. Then take another deep breath from your stomach and this time laugh with a high pitch focusing on your throat and third eye saying, “he, he , he.” Repeat 3 times.