

Distress TOLERANCE

The IMPROVE method is used to increase distress tolerance. It's designed to help individuals cope with and manage distressing emotions and situations without making things worse. Here's a breakdown of each component:

I - IMAGERY

- **What It Means:** Use your imagination to create a calming mental image. This might involve picturing a peaceful place, imagining a positive outcome to a situation, or visualizing yourself successfully coping with the distress.
- **How to Use It:** When feeling overwhelmed, close your eyes and visualize a place where you feel safe and at ease. This mental escape can help reduce the intensity of the distressing emotion.

M - MEANING

- **What It Means:** Find or create meaning in the distressing situation. This involves looking for a lesson, reframing the situation as an opportunity, or finding a broader purpose in the experience.
- **How to Use It:** Reflect on what you can learn from the situation or how enduring it might contribute to your personal growth. This can help shift your perspective and make the distress feel more manageable.

P - PRAYER

- **What It Means:** Engage in spiritual practices, whether through traditional prayer, meditation, or connecting with a higher power, however you define it.
- **How to Use It:** If you have a spiritual or religious practice, take a moment to pray or meditate, asking for strength, guidance, or peace. If you're not religious, you can still use this time for quiet reflection or mindfulness.

R - RELAXATION

- **What It Means:** Use relaxation techniques to calm your body and mind. This can include deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or taking a warm bath.
- **How to Use It:** When in distress, consciously relax your muscles, take slow, deep breaths, or engage in a relaxation activity like listening to calming music or doing yoga.

O - ONE THING IN THE MOMENT

- **What It Means:** Focus your attention fully on one task or activity in the present moment. This helps prevent your mind from spiraling into distressing thoughts.
- **How to Use It:** Engage in a simple activity—like washing the dishes, walking, or drawing—and give it your full attention. This mindfulness practice helps anchor you in the present and reduces the impact of distressing thoughts.

V - VACATION

- **What It Means:** Take a brief mental or physical "vacation" from the situation causing distress. This doesn't have to be a literal vacation, but rather a short break from the stress.
- **How to Use It:** Take a few minutes, hours, or even a day to step away from your responsibilities and do something enjoyable or relaxing, like reading a book, taking a walk, or watching a favorite show.

E - ENCOURAGEMENT

- **What It Means:** Provide yourself with positive self-talk and affirmations. Encouragement helps to build resilience and maintain a positive attitude in the face of distress.
- **How to Use It:** When feeling distressed, remind yourself of your strengths, past successes, and the fact that you can get through this. Use affirmations like "I can do hard things" or "I am capable."



Using IMPROVE in Daily Life

Practice Regularly: Regularly practicing each aspect of IMPROVE, even when not in crisis, can make it easier to access these skills when you truly need them.