

DBT Distress Tolerance: IMPROVE the Moment

Ways to make an unbearable moment more survivable when the larger problem cannot be solved immediately.

IMPROVE

- Imagery: picture a place or scene associated with steadiness.
- Meaning: connect the moment to purpose, learning, service, or values without minimizing pain.
- Prayer or spiritual practice: use if it fits your beliefs.
- Relaxation: soften muscles, stretch, breathe, or use warmth.
- One thing in the moment: narrow attention to the next small task.
- Vacation: take a brief, safe mental or physical break.
- Encouragement: use realistic phrases such as “I only need to get through the next ten minutes.”

Purpose

The skill is designed to reduce suffering enough to avoid impulsive actions that would worsen the situation.

Try this reflection

Which letter in IMPROVE feels most natural to you, and which one might be worth practicing?

Using this resource: For education and skill-building only; not diagnosis, medical advice, or crisis care. If you feel overwhelmed, pause and seek appropriate professional support. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support; call 911 for an immediate emergency.