

THE EXPANDED  
DIALECTICAL  
BEHAVIOR  
THERAPY  
SKILLS TRAINING  
—MANUAL—

PRACTICAL DBT FOR SELF-HELP, AND  
INDIVIDUAL & GROUP TREATMENT SETTINGS

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# IMPROVE the Moment

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**Core concept:** Make the here and now better when in distress.

Like ACCEPTS, these skills provide healthy distractions.

Use the acronym *IMPROVE* to remember the building blocks (Imagery, Meaning, Prayer, Relaxation, One thing or step at a time, Vacation, Encouragement) of this skill. These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

**Imagery:** Your mind is powerful. (Think of times when you have distressed yourself with negative imagery.) You can harness the power of positive imagery to feel better and more relaxed. Concentrate on a scene in your mind (a beach, the forest, a safe and happy place). Your mind can convince your body that it is there.

Use guided imagery with a CD. Practice skill use in your mind's eye (proven effective in sports). Enter a daydream. Consider practicing imagery before bedtime as part of your sleep routine.

As distractions creep in, gently let them go and refocus.

Describe how you can use **Imagery**:

**Meaning:** Validate that the cloud is there *and* find the silver lining. Is there an opportunity in this problem? What is the lesson or the learning that will come from your difficulties? Victor Frankl, renowned existential psychiatrist and concentration camp survivor, once said, “If you can find a why, you can tolerate almost any how.”

Describe how you can use **Meaning**:

**Prayer:** Pray for strength and resolve in distressful times. Seek connection with and guidance from your higher power. Avoid “why me” or bargaining prayers; those prayers tend to demoralize us rather than build us up.

As an alternative, “talk” to anyone important to you: A deceased relative you loved, a person you admire (whether you know him/her or not), or anyone who helps you feel connected outside yourself.

Describe how you can use **Prayer**:

**Relaxation:** Practice breathing exercises (see Mindfulness), Self-soothe skills, progressive muscle relaxation with each major muscle group, or anything that calms you.

Describe how you can use **Relaxation**:

**One Thing or Step at a Time:** When overwhelmed, go back to the most important priority again and again. If you have many problems, pick the most important one to focus on or the one you have the most resources to solve. In the context of solving problems, taking one step at a time helps to manage your distress.

Describe how you can use **One Thing or Step at a Time**: