

IMPROVE the Moment

distress tolerance skills

Distressing situations do not always have quick solutions. When this is the case, there might be no choice but to sit with uncomfortable emotions and wait for them to pass. The **IMPROVE** acronym outlines skills for *improving the moment*, making it easier to tolerate these situations.

I	Imagery Imagine a peaceful place far from your worries. What are the sights, sounds, and smells you notice? Alternatively, vividly envision the best possible resolution of your current challenge. <i>Use each sense to imagine relaxing on a beach. Visualize a stressful conversation going well.</i>
M	Meaning Is there any meaning you can find or create from your situation? Reflect on ways you can use your current experience to gain insight or help others. <i>Name any positive aspects of your struggle. List the ways you can grow from this experience.</i>
P	Prayer Use prayer to accept what you cannot control or seek guidance on navigating a difficult situation. Connect with a higher power or your own wise mind. <i>Say a prayer. Repeat a mantra. List five things you're grateful for. Meditate.</i>
R	Relaxation Find a quiet place where you can practice a relaxation technique of your choice. If you notice your attention wandering back to your worries, gently bring it back to your practice. <i>Practice deep breathing. Use progressive muscle relaxation. Stretch. Practice yoga.</i>
O	One thing in the moment Immerse yourself in a simple or repetitive activity that requires your full engagement. This could be a household chore or a mental task like counting or memorizing. <i>Pull weeds. Organize your clothes. Memorize a poem. Count backward from 100.</i>
V	Vacation Take a short break from your worries and do something fun or nourishing. This can refresh you and lead to a fresh perspective when you resume your day. <i>Call a good friend. Go on hike. Read something that interests you. Watch a favorite movie.</i>
E	Encouragement Practice being your own best advocate by repeating words of support to yourself. Be sure to select a phrase that feels authentic and motivates you to keep going. <i>"I got this!" "This too shall pass." "I survived before, and I'll survive again." "I'll be OK."</i>

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Instructions: Choose a specific situation you find distressful, or that you found distressful in the past. Reflect on how you can apply each of the IMPROVE skills to help you cope.

Imagery: Imagine and describe what it's like to be in a beautiful place where you're at peace.

Meaning: Describe the meaning you can find or create in your uncomfortable situation.

Prayer: Describe a prayer or meditation you can practice in this moment.

Relaxation: List relaxation strategies to try, such as breathing deeply or listening to music.

One thing in the moment: What is a simple but engaging activity you can focus on?

Vacation: List two ways you can take a break from your worries.

Encouragement: Select an affirmation, write it here, and then repeat it to yourself several times.