**DBT Worksheet: Distress Tolerance - The “Crisis Survival Skills” Toolbox**

**Purpose:**

Distress tolerance is one of the core skills taught in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). It helps you survive and navigate intense emotional pain without reacting impulsively or making the situation worse. Distress tolerance skills are designed for moments when you are overwhelmed by strong emotions or facing situations where you feel powerless. These skills teach you how to endure emotional distress in a healthy, safe way until you can address the underlying issue more effectively.

The “Crisis Survival Skills” Toolbox is a way for you to learn and implement strategies that can help you cope with emotional crises. Think of these skills as tools in a toolbox. You may not always know what tool to use right away, but as you practice, you will become more familiar with your own emotional responses and better at choosing the right tool in tough situations. This worksheet will guide you through some of the most common and useful distress tolerance skills. These are not about fixing the problem immediately, but about helping you stay grounded and survive the moment without escalating distress.

**Instructions:**

1. **Identifying Your Crisis**  
   First, think of a time recently when you were in a crisis or highly emotional situation. It could be a specific event or something you’re struggling with now. Write it down here:

**Crisis/Event:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Rate the Intensity of Your Distress**  
   On a scale of 1-10, rate how intense your emotional distress was or is in this situation (1 = low distress, 10 = overwhelming distress).

**Distress Level (1-10):** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Recognizing the Urge to Act**  
   When you're in crisis, the emotional pain can urge you to react impulsively. Do you feel the urge to act quickly, either by avoiding the situation or responding aggressively? Identify what you feel the urge to do:

**Urge to Act:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Distress Tolerance Skills to Try**  
   Now, look at the list of Distress Tolerance skills below. Choose at least two skills you can try in the future to survive emotional crises without escalating. Reflect on how these tools might help you in similar situations.

**Crisis Survival Skills:**

* + **Distract with ACCEPTS:**  
    A: Activities (engage in something that occupies your mind)  
    C: Contributing (do something for someone else)  
    C: Comparisons (think of someone who has it worse)  
    E: Emotions (engage in an activity that changes your emotional state, like watching a funny video)  
    P: Pushing away (mentally remove yourself from the situation)  
    T: Thoughts (focus on positive or neutral thoughts)  
    S: Sensations (use strong sensations like holding ice, or deep breathing to shift your focus)
  + **Self-Soothing with the Five Senses:**
    - **Sight:** Look at something calming or beautiful (e.g., nature, a photo).
    - **Sound:** Listen to soothing music, calming sounds, or your favorite song.
    - **Touch:** Hold something comforting (e.g., a soft blanket, pet an animal).
    - **Taste:** Eat or drink something that is comforting (e.g., a favorite snack, tea).
    - **Smell:** Inhale something soothing (e.g., essential oils, a scented candle).
  + **Radical Acceptance:** Acknowledge the reality of the situation without fighting it. Say to yourself: "This is the situation, and I can handle it."
  + **Self-Validation:** Accept your emotions without judgment. Recognize that your feelings are real and valid, even if they are uncomfortable.

**Skills You’ll Use:**

1. **How Can You Apply These Skills?**  
   Think about how you can apply the chosen skills in your next emotional crisis. For example, if you feel the urge to avoid a situation or lash out in anger, what can you do instead to stay grounded?

**Plan for Application:**

1. **Reflecting on the Outcome**  
   After using distress tolerance skills, reflect on the outcome. How did the situation change? Did you feel more grounded, or did the distress ease up? What worked for you, and what could you do differently next time?

**Reflection:**

**Summary:**

Distress tolerance is about surviving the storm of strong emotions without letting them control you. These skills are designed to help you handle intense emotions in a way that minimizes harm to yourself or others. By using tools like distraction, self-soothing, and radical acceptance, you are learning to "ride out" emotional crises instead of reacting impulsively or shutting down. The more you practice these skills, the better equipped you'll be to handle future challenges with patience and resilience. Remember, the goal isn’t to "fix" everything in a moment, but to endure the storm with strength and mindfulness.