

DBT Skill: IMPROVE the Moment

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>

Use these cognitive and behavioral strategies to make difficult moments more tolerable when you cannot immediately change the situation.

- **I - Imagery:**
 - Use imagination to go to a different place mentally (peaceful scene, safe place).

- Visualize coping effectively or emotions draining away.
- Imagine a protective shield.
- **M - Meaning:**
 - Find or create purpose or meaning in the pain.
 - Ask: "What can I learn?" "How can this help me grow?"
 - Connect suffering to a larger value or goal. *Use cautiously.*
- **P - Prayer:**
 - Turn towards a higher power, spiritual source, or inner wisdom for strength or guidance.
 - Engage in prayer, meditation, read inspirational texts, connect with something larger.
- **R - Relaxation:**
 - Intentionally relax your body.
 - Use Paced Breathing, Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR), gentle stretching, warm bath, listen to relaxation recordings.
- **O - One Thing in the Moment:**
 - Focus entire attention on the task/activity at hand (washing dishes, walking, listening).
 - Notice details and sensations. Gently bring mind back when it wanders.
- **V - Vacation (Brief):**
 - Take a short, planned break from the stress.
 - Set a time limit. Go to a different room, do an unrelated activity (read, nap).
- **E - Encouragement:**
 - Be your own supportive coach.
 - Use kind, encouraging self-talk: "I can get through this," "This won't last forever," "I'm doing my best."