

Ways to Manage Distress RIGHT NOW!

Adapted from Yale-New Haven Hospital, Intensive Outpatient Program

- ❖ **Self-Soothe.** Get yourself some hot cocoa, coffee, soda, juice or water. Drink your beverage slowly focusing on the sensations of taste, smell and temperature.
- ❖ **Intense Sensations.** Go to the kitchen and take a piece of ice, and some napkins. Hold the ice in your hand, and use the napkins to absorb the melting water. Focus on the intense cold sensation of ice in your hand.
- ❖ **Distract yourself.** Pick up a magazine and focus your attention on the pictures or an interesting article. Bring your mind to whatever you are reading or looking at, redirecting it from upsetting thoughts and feelings.
- ❖ **Practice deep breathing.** Place one hand on your belly, inhale slowly counting to 5, feeling your belly expand. Pause. Exhale slowly, counting to 5, feeling your belly deflate. Practice this deep breathing 10 times.
- ❖ **Use Relaxation.** Give yourself a little neck and shoulder massage- you can rapidly tap your fingers on your neck and shoulders or rub your neck and shoulders. Focus on different muscles in your body from your head to your feet telling yourself to let go of tightness and tension.
- ❖ **Self-encouragement.** Think of what you might say to someone in a similar situation as you. Give yourself the same encouragement and support. Tell yourself things like “I can get through this” or “This won’t last forever.”
- ❖ **Use imagery.** Imagine a wall between yourself and the situation. Or imagine a peaceful, happy, secure place. It can be someplace you have been or someplace that you create in your mind. Imagine in detail what your place looks like, any soothing smells, if there are any comforting people or animals with you, what it feels like where you are sitting or laying, what sounds you can hear...
- ❖ **Make comparisons.** Distract yourself by thinking about problems that you don’t have or that you no longer have. Focus on something that someone else is struggling with, or find a magazine article about a problem that doesn’t apply to you. Consider ways that you are better off now than you were at other points in your life.
- ❖ **Focus on thoughts.** Count backwards from 100. If you lose track, start over again. Make a shopping list. Describe the furniture in the room or other objects in front of you.