

TIPP skills

TIPP skills are strategies you can try when you are feeling emotionally heightened, out of control or in crisis. Some will work better for you than others.

TIPP skills help reduce the intensity of your emotions and can reduce the need to do other behaviours such as self-harm or self-injury. If you find one of the TIPP skills helpful it can mean your emotions settle enough so that you can use other coping skills or strategies.

For each skill, try writing down how intense your emotions are before (rate it as between 0 and 100) and then again afterwards – has it gone down? Do you feel calmer afterwards than before?



Temperature – you can change your emotional distress if you can quickly change your body's temperature. Try this: hold your breath and plunge your face into a bowl of really cold water. Keep it there for 30 to 60 seconds. If that feels too strong then you can try holding your breath while holding ice packs to your face, focus on the areas around your eyes and cheeks. This skill works by activating a primitive reflex which slows your heart rate and activates your parasympathetic nervous system.



Intense exercise – you can reduce emotional distress by activating your body using intense cardio or aerobic exercise. You can pick an exercise you like e.g. running, skipping, boxing; it should be one that doesn't need lots of equipment. Do it for 15-20 minutes but remember to listen to your body and take breaks if you need to. Another way is to exercise in short bursts e.g. HIIT training when you do an exercise such as sprinting on the spot, star jumps or mountain climbers for 40 seconds then have 20 seconds rest before the next exercise. This skill works by taking some of the physical preparation for stress (fight/flight/freeze) and using it for exercise instead.



Paced breathing – This is a skill you can try in any situation. Slow your breathing down, count as you breathe in (right into your tummy), hold and then slowly count as you breathe out. Aim to take 5 or 6 breaths per minute, so that means every breath cycle (in-hold-out) should take 10-12 seconds. Do this for at least 5 minutes. There are some mobile phone apps which are great at helping with this skill. Again, like the temperature skill, this works by activating your parasympathetic nervous system, slowing your heart rate and so reducing emotional intensity.



Paired muscle relaxation – This skill takes practice. You need to work through a series of different muscle groups. Breathe in and tense your muscles for 5 seconds then breathe out and relax them again, as you relax them say the word "relax" to yourself. As you work through different muscle groups you will become progressively more relaxed. As long as you always say "relax" as you let the tension go then you start to 'pair' the word with the feeling. Work through fingers/hands, arms, toes/feet, legs, face, neck, chest, tummy and back. More detail is in NECP handout: Progressive Muscle Relaxation.