

DISTRACT WITH ACCEPTS

Intense feelings will come and go. They often peak as though they are a wave of emotion and the intensity will lessen over time. These experiences are frequent throughout pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum and within moments of parenting. It can prove to be of value to distract until the peak of intensity lessens and then return to the moment, problem solving or experiencing. The acronym ACCEPTS helps us remember this skill.

A	Activities	Engage in short activity that requires your attention and demands concentration. This could be a crossword puzzle, reading a book to your child, giving a bath, a hobby, work activity, cleaning, etc.
C	Contributing	Distract your attention by shifting to thinking of someone else. Do something kind for that person, volunteer, contribute to a cause, write a nice letter to someone, find a community project.
C	Comparisons	Consider a time when you were not coping as well and compare to this time. Remember there may have been times you were in more pain and you made it through. Compare to those less fortunate than you.
E	Emotions	Do something that creates a competing emotion. For example, if you are sad, find a funny video online, watch a funny movie. Nervous? Listen to soothing music.
P	Pushing Away	Temporarily push intense emotions out of your mind. Write the problem on a piece of paper, fold it up and put it away to deal with later. However, remember you must come back to the problem at some point.
T	Thoughts	When intense emotions arrive, try to shift to logical mind: count your thoughts, list the colors in the room, play 'eye spy,' recite a poem or song in your head, read a good book.
S	Sensations	Find sensations that are strong enough to distract from intense emotion. Hold ice in your hands and squeeze, eat something very sour, chew on mint.

Distraction can be useful in many situations but can also be overused at times. Try not to use distraction as a routine method to avoid painful emotions or difficult situations. It's most helpful when:

- You are so overwhelmed that it's unbearable
- The problem can't be solved immediately