

What do I do With My Emotions?

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In moments of distress, you may wonder, “How can I stop feeling like this?” During these moments, it may be helpful to have a list of options of how to deal with difficult emotions. According to dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT), an evidence-based psychotherapy model, you have four ways to respond to difficult emotions in any situation (Linehan, 2015).

1. **Solve the problem.** Let’s say you want to stop feeling lonely. [You could try to reduce your feelings of loneliness](#) in many ways, such as calling a friend, spending time with family members, or joining a volunteer organization.
2. **Feel better about the problem.** Even if you do not change your situation, you can [change your thoughts](#), which have a direct influence on your emotions. For example, instead of dwelling on thoughts like “No one wants to spend time with me,” you can focus your attention on enjoying the time you spend alone. You can also regulate your emotions in other ways, such as getting adequate [sleep](#) and [exercise](#).
3. **Tolerate the problem.** If you do not solve the problem or feel better about the problem, you can learn to tolerate your emotions. By accepting your emotions, you can feel more peace and avoid the frustration that comes with resisting your present experiences. This is what is meant by the phrase, “Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.” One way

to strengthen your ability to tolerate emotions is by [practicing meditations](#).

4. **Stay miserable.** Sometimes individuals choose to stay miserable by doing nothing or doing actions that make the problem worse.

You can decide how you want to respond to your emotions in each situation. It can be easy to get in the habit of responding to all difficult emotions in the same way. However, all responses (besides staying miserable) can be helpful in different contexts. By improving your skills in each of these areas, you can develop greater versatility in emotional responses, which can increase your resilience during difficult experiences.

References:

Linehan, M. (2015). *DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets*. Guildford Press.