

## **IMPROVE – Enhancing the Moment/Distress Tolerance**

IMPROVE skills help change how survivable the moment feels when pain cannot be avoided. These skills focus on altering the experience of the moment, not removing emotion.

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### **I – Imagery**

**Purpose:** Uses visualization to create safety, containment, or relief.

#### **Examples:**

- Imagining a safe or calm place
- Visualizing emotional pain draining away
- Imagining support or protection

#### **Helpful notes:**

- Keep imagery simple
- Eyes open is okay

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### **M – Meaning**

**Purpose:** Connects distress to values, purpose, or growth.

#### **Examples:**

- “What does getting through this say about me?”
- “How does this align with the life I want?”

#### **Helpful notes:**

- Meaning-making is optional
- Skip this skill if it feels invalidating in the moment

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### **P – Prayer or Intention**

**Purpose:** Creates connection, surrender, or trust beyond the self.

#### **Examples:**

- Prayer
- Talking to a higher power or a protector
- Setting a grounding intention or phrase e.g., “May I be happy, may I be healthy, may I be free from suffering.” or “Everything that I am and everything that I am not is just right for what I came to do in this world.”

**Helpful notes:**

- Can be spiritual, secular, or symbolic

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**R – Relaxation**

**Purpose:** Reduces physical tension and nervous system activation.

**Examples:**

- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Warm shower or bath
- Gentle stretching

**Helpful notes:**

- Works best after distress has come down slightly

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**O – One Thing in the Moment**

**Purpose:** Reduces overwhelm by focusing on only one thing.

**Examples:**

- Eating or drinking mindfully
- Fully focusing on one task
- Paying attention to breath or sounds

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**V – Vacation (Brief)**

**Purpose:** Gives temporary relief from demands.

**Examples:**

- Lying down for 5–10 minutes
- Sitting outside

- Closing your eyes and listening to music

**Helpful notes:**

- This is short and intentional—not withdrawal

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**E – Encouragement**

**Purpose:** Builds self-support and reduces self-criticism.

**Examples:**

- “I can get through this moment.”
- “I don’t have to decide anything right now.”
- “This feeling will pass.”