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DBT Skills: REST

The first step to changing any problematic or self-destructive behavior and to not act impulsively is to use the REST strategy.

REST reminds you to:

- Relax
- Evaluate
- Set an Intention
- Take action

Relax: The first step is to relax. Stop what you're doing, freeze, take a deep breath and pause. Step away from the situation for a few seconds to get a different perspective. Just don't do what you normally do. Don't act impulsively. Do your best to remind yourself that you have an opportunity to behave differently. Maybe even say out loud, "Stop", "Relax" or "REST", just to remind yourself to not react so quickly and automatically.

Evaluate: Next, ask yourself what's happening in this situation. What are the facts? Just do a quick evaluation. You don't have to figure it all out, and you don't have to do an in-depth analysis of why you're feeling the way you do. You don't even have to solve the problem if it's too complicated. Just do your best to get a general idea of what's occurring. For example, what is happening for you physically, emotionally and mentally. Maybe, just ask yourself a few simple questions, like these: "How do I feel?" "What's happening?"

Set an Intention: The third step is to set an intention to do something. In this case, an intention is a goal, target, or plan about what you're going to do. Ask yourself, "What do I need right now?" Do you need to do something for yourself? Or, do you need to solve a bigger problem? Whatever you choose to do, it doesn't have to be the final or best solution to the problem right now, but hopefully it will be something healthy that will help you cope.

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Take Action: Put your plan into motion. Proceed mindfully, which means move ahead slowly and with awareness of what you're doing. Whatever your intention was in the last step, do it now as calmly and effectively as you can. Again, this action may not be the ultimate solution to the problem at hand, but if you follow these steps, your mindful action is likely to be healthier and more effective than the self-destructive actions you would have taken if you had just reacted impulsively.

Although this might seem like a lot to do especially when you're feeling overwhelmed by emotions with practice, these steps can be accomplished in just a few seconds and become a new habit for you. Also, be aware that you might need to use REST more than once in the same situation. So if REST doesn't work the first time through, go back and use it again.

Book: The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Workbook (Second Edition) By: Mathew McKay PHD, Jeffrey C. Wood, PsyD, and Jeffrey Brantley, MD

Worksheet By: Janay Bailey, LMHC