
Distract Yourself From Self-Destructive Behaviors

Instead of engaging in behaviors that can cause serious or even permanent damage, try using some alternative behaviors below. Some of them might sound strange, or even mildly painful themselves, but they're less destructive than cutting, burning, and mutilating yourself. The final goal is, of course, to stop engaging in all forms of self-destructive behaviors permanently. However, until you can do that, these behaviors offer less harmful alternatives.

Here are some safer actions that you can use to distract yourself from your self-destructive emotions and thoughts. Make a note of the ones you're willing to do, and then add any healthy, non-harming activities that you can think of.

- Instead of hurting yourself, hold an ice cube in one hand and squeeze it. The sensation from the cold ice is numbing and very distracting.
- Write on yourself with a red felt-tip marker instead of cutting. Draw exactly where you would cut. Use red paint or nail polish to make it look like you're bleeding. Then draw stitches with a black marker. If you need to make it more distracting, squeeze an ice cube in the other hand at the same time.
- Gently snap a rubber band on your wrist each time you feel like hurting yourself. This might cause some minor temporary pain, but it causes less permanent damage than cutting, burning, or mutilating yourself.
- Gently dig your fingernails into your arm without breaking any skin.
- Draw faces of people you hate on balloons and pop them.
- Write letters to people who have hurt you. Tell them what they did to you. Then throw the letters away or save them to read later.
- Throw foam balls, rolled-up socks or pillows against the wall as hard as you can.
- Scream as loud as you can into a pillow or scream someplace where you won't draw attention from other people, like at a loud concert or in a car.

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- Stick pins into a doll instead of hurting yourself. You can make a doll with some rolled up socks or a foam ball and some markers.
 - Cry. Sometimes people do other things instead of crying because they're afraid that if they start to cry, they'll never stop. This never happens. In fact, the truth is that crying can make you feel better because it releases stress hormones.
 - Go exercise. Go to the gym or yoga studio and take your pain and frustration doing something healthy. Go for a long walk or long run. Use all of that destructive energy in a positive way.
 - Other healthy, non harming ideas:

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