

Managing Extreme Emotions

Follow these suggestions when emotional arousal is very **HIGH**—so extreme that your ability to use your skills breaks down.

First, observe and describe that you are at your **SKILLS BREAKDOWN POINT**:

- Your distress is extreme.
- You are overwhelmed.
- You cannot focus your mind on anything but the emotion itself.
- Your mind shuts down; your brain stops processing information.
- You cannot solve problems or use complicated skills.

Now check the facts. Are you really “falling apart” at this level of distress?

If no, **USE YOUR SKILLS.**

If yes, go to Step 1: You are at your **SKILLS BREAKDOWN POINT.**

Step 1. Use crisis survival skills to bring down your arousal:

(See Distress Tolerance Handouts 6–9a.)

- TIP your body chemistry.
- DISTRACT yourself from the emotional events.
- SELF-SOOTHE through the five senses.
- IMPROVE the moment you are in.

Step 2. Return to mindfulness of current emotions.

(See Emotion Regulation Handout 22.)

Step 3. Try other emotion regulation skills (if needed).