

**iVeronicaWalsh.wordpress.com guided self help worksheets:
The Low Frustration Tolerance ‘thought form’**

Many people who suffer from stress disorders develop Low Frustration Tolerance (LFT) – this is a term coined by one of the founding fathers of CBT, Dr Albert Ellis, referring to when we imagine we *cannot* and *will not* and *should not have to* tolerate conditions that frustrate us (eg conditions that cause us discomfort, and *anger us*). “I REFUSE TO TOLERATE THIS!!!” *tears door off hinges *kicks the cat....

Which of course is not quite rational, given that with stress disorders pretty much everything frustrates us – and we over respond to often benign or neutral situations that are in reality either no big deal, or nothing that we cannot cope with. So how can we learn to be cool?

Know what you can control and what you cannot control, that is the secret to good psychological health, (thank you Greek stoics). The idea that we have a supreme ‘entitlement’ not to be caused any discomfort is irrational. Sometimes it simply is what it is, plus note that if stress is distorting your thinking, and causing a trippy nervous system and extreme emotional states, well you can’t even be trusted as a reliable narrator of exactly *what* the situation is.

The CBT solution to develop High Frustration Tolerance (or better still, to dismantle irrational needless frustration entirely in many instances): develop new skills in self awareness and self management through ‘thought stopping’ to disrupt the automatic LFT habit.

Thought Stopping: begin to build a new habit of noticing situations where you are using the *low frustration tolerance* distorted thinking habit – and consciously and deliberately interrupt and disrupt it. Cool yourself down with rational reframing instead – go from 70% anger to 35% irritation in seconds, then let it go... It’s a science, believe it

Summary: reframe and replace: Notice the LFT – stop it in its tracks – examine it for evidence – and replace it with alternative healthy thinking. Feel better. Behave better. Dump the habit. This strategy works best if you WRITE IT DOWN in the first couple of weeks – find how you explain things to yourself, examine the thinking, and reshape it with actual literal statements that are in your words and language. This is called ‘learning by discovery, and is more likely to stick in your head as a skill that can be done quickly as a mental task. Here are a few general ones I did earlier. Make yours more specific to address the issue itself:

| Low Frustration Tolerance thinking: | Reframe with a Rational Thought Replacement |
|---|--|
| I SHOULD NOT HAVE TO TOLERATE [insert whatever is annoying you, a person and something they’re doing, or whatever it is] – so I will not tolerate this. | It’s very silly (irrational) to imagine I <i>shouldn’t have to</i> tolerate things I find frustrating, because my stress is a disorder and I find pretty much everything frustrating! Even benign neutral events. So... that’s not going to work out. It’s more true and rational to thought-stop and remind myself that I’m over responding to events and situations that are not really a big deal, and that I can accept reality in a cooler and more proportional way, and that I do have the resources to cope. {Breathe it down.... Reframe... } |
| I CAN NOT TOLERATE [insert whatever it is that you refuse to accept] – so I jam ustified in exploding with anger at this INJUSTICE! | The idea that I cannot tolerate situations I disapprove of: peoples behaviour, random events, unsatisfactory conditions, and so on, is actually untrue. I CAN tolerate them, I just don’t want to, so I REFUSE TO. Which is quite ridiculous (irrational) since I cannot control others or the world or basic facts and realities, so I’m really just causing myself and others unnecessary upsetness with this kind of ‘rule’ and attitude and behaviour. It’s more true and rational to say that I would PREFER NOT TO HAVE TO TOLERATE this, but I can tolerate it, and I’m okay, it’s okay. {know what you can control and what you cannot control, that is the rational thinking core). |
| I can’t bear [insert whatever it is that you think is making you frustrated / angry / upset]! | That’s a bit silly (irrational). If I ‘couldn’t bear it’ I’d drop down dead or burst into flames, because ‘it’ is happening - yet here I am. It’s more true to say that I have problems coping, and I wish I didn’t have to bloody cope, but that I’m doing my best. Accepting that I can’t bear something as true is irrational, and might become a self fulfilling prophecy (it maximises my discomfort and turns on my threat response, usually resulting in self sabotaging, or self defeating, or self limiting, behaviours). It’s more true and rational to say that I can bear this, I’d just prefer if I bore stress more easily, but I have a stress disorder and I can only do my best – I am doing my best, and my best is good enough - and evolving and changing and getting better... {breathe it down... and let it go} |

Try it for yourself! The next page has a blank table to fill in – print it out and JOURNAL:

| Low Frustration Tolerance thinking: | Really? Reframe with rational thinking: |
|--|--|
| I can not tolerate: | |
| I will not tolerate: | |
| I should not have to tolerate: | |

