

## **CORE SKILL #6: ASSESS YOUR ACTIVATION - ACT EFFECTIVELY**

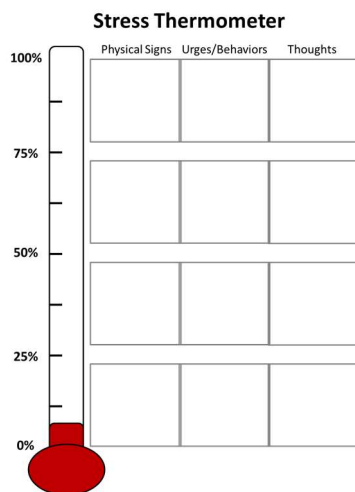
Tracking your “activation” can help you see your patterns of stress and resiliency.

The work you do as physicians can easily “Activate” your nervous system. Your sympathetic system gets up-regulated and your parasympathetic system gets down-regulated.

The tools in this section help you see your pattern (e.g. feeling behind makes me stressed), your usual behavior (e.g. rumination) and your choices for more effective action.

By purposefully change the balance from sympathetic to parasympathetic nervous system you are giving yourself more choices (e.g. take a cleansing breath and reprioritize).

### **TOOLS**



**Self-assessment:** Use the Stress Thermometer to be mindful of your vulnerability level. Most people find their “Resilience Zone” to be 25% or less and their “Danger Zone” to be over 75%.

**Triggers:** Know your Vulnerabilities to getting activated. Analyze the things that trigger you into a stress response. Triggers can be:  
Situational factors:

Feelings:

Thoughts:

**For an Acute moment of distress:** Try “TIP”\*

T = Tip the Temperature of your face with Cold Water

I = Intense exercise just for a minute or more if time allows

P = Paced Breathing and/or Paired Muscle Relaxation

*You can focus on any sensation to have similar results to the cold-water approach. Snap a rubber band on your wrist, smell a strong smell or taste sour or hot; or listen to very calming or very loud energizing music. Sing along!*

**When you feel emotionally dis-regulated:** Try “STOP”\*

S = Stop! Don’t react, just note the presence of your emotion mindfully

T = Take a step back and witness/experience the wave of emotion

O = Observe even more don’t try to get rid or amplify the feeling

P = Proceed mindfully, remember when you felt better, don’t judge, radically accept your emotions with full willingness and no judging

\*Adapted from DBT Skills Training by M. Linehan 2014