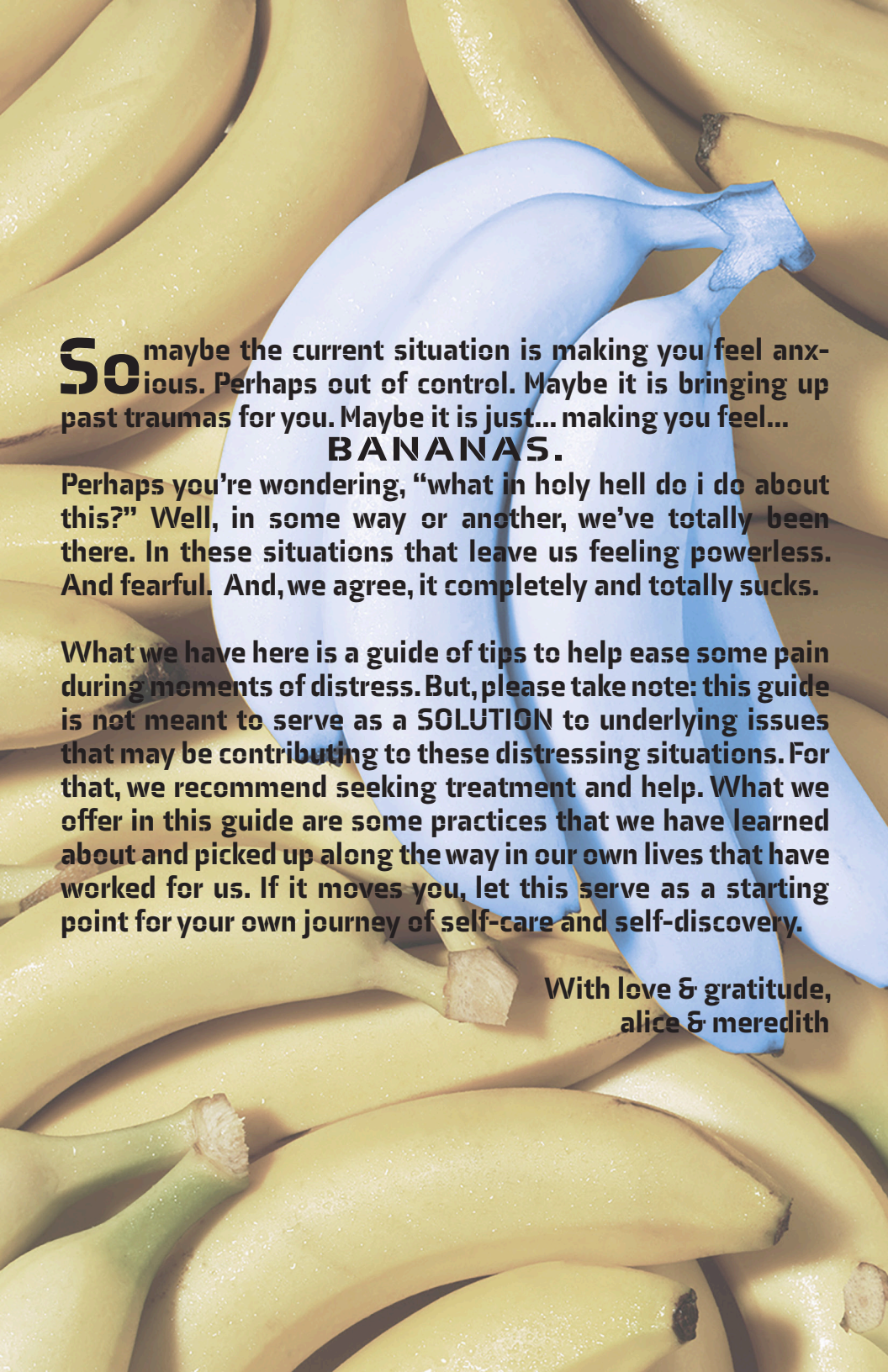


A close-up photograph of a squirrel holding a bright yellow flower to its face. The squirrel's eyes are closed, and it appears to be smelling or tasting the flower. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

**Some Tips & Tools  
from Alice & Meredith  
to Deal with Distress  
Cuz It Sucks, amirite?**

By Alice Kim & Meredith Kooi

Made to accompany Movement Love with Maggie Benoit, hosted by  
the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center



**So** maybe the current situation is making you feel anxious. Perhaps out of control. Maybe it is bringing up past traumas for you. Maybe it is just... making you feel...

## **BANANAS.**

Perhaps you're wondering, "what in holy hell do i do about this?" Well, in some way or another, we've totally been there. In these situations that leave us feeling powerless. And fearful. And, we agree, it completely and totally sucks.

What we have here is a guide of tips to help ease some pain during moments of distress. But, please take note: this guide is not meant to serve as a SOLUTION to underlying issues that may be contributing to these distressing situations. For that, we recommend seeking treatment and help. What we offer in this guide are some practices that we have learned about and picked up along the way in our own lives that have worked for us. If it moves you, let this serve as a starting point for your own journey of self-care and self-discovery.

With love & gratitude,  
alice & meredith

## **WHAT WE'LL BE COVERING**

### **+ DBT Crisis Survival Skills**

**TIPP**

**Distract**

**Self-Soothe**

**Improve**

### **+ BONUS MATERIAL**

**Gratitude**

**Morning Check-Ins**

## **TIPP Your Body Chemistry**

When your emotional arousal is really high and your brain is not processing information, one thing you can do is focus on your body and make changes there in order to help facilitate change in your emotions.

**TEMPERATURE:** lower your body temperature (this may help regulate intense emotions, too!)

- + Take a cold shower
- + Wash your face with cold water
- + Hold an ice cube
- + If you're in the car, turn on the A/C or roll your window down if the temperature outside is cooooool

**INTENSIVE exercise or movement:** expend your body's energy with movement

- + Engage in movement for a short period of time
- + Dance, jump, go for quick run

**PACED breathing:** pace your breathing by slowing it doooooowwww  
wnnnn

- + Slow your pace of inhaling and exhaling
- + Take a deep breath for 4 seconds, hold it for another 4 seconds, and exhale for another 6 seconds, then repeat
- + Notice the tension in your body and try to let it go

**PAIRED muscle relaxation**

- + While breathing in, gently tense the muscles in your belly
- + when breathing out, let go of the tension and tell yourself "relax"



## **DISTRACT Yourself Momentarily with:**

**DIFFERENT EMOTIONS:** watch or listen to stand-up comedy, listen to soothing music or music that fires you up

**ACTIVITIES:** rent a movie, build something, wash the dishes

**CONTRIBUTION:** help a friend or a family member, give away things you don't need, surprise someone with something nice, do something thoughtful for someone else

**COMPARISONS:** compare how you're feeling to a time when you felt differently, focus on how you overcame the situation

**PUSHING AWAY:** mentally leave the situation until you are ready to face it

**OTHER THOUGHTS:** count objects in your environment that are of similar color or shape

**OTHER SENSATIONS:** touch your nice furry pet, listen to very loud music, go out in the rain



## **Self-Sooooooothe Each of Your 5 Senses**

**VISION:** buy yourself a pretty flower, look at the stars

**HEARING:** listen to soothing music (we like doom metal), listen to the sounds of the city or whatever is around you, turn on the radio...let the sound go in one ear and out the other

**SMELL:** light a scented candle, burn incense, walk in a wooded area, use your favorite soap

**TASTE:** eat some of your favorite food, eat something sweet, drink lemonade, or peppermint tea...whatever you eat, do so mindfully by really focusing on the taste of your food

**TOUCH:** hug a friend, take a bath, get a massage, wrap yourself in your favorite blanket, touch your pet friend



**IMPROVE the moment with:**

**IMAGERY:** imagine things going well, imagine hurtful emotions draining out of you like water, close your eyes and imagine your safe and happy place

**MEANING:** find purpose and meaning in the hurtful situation, read about spiritual values

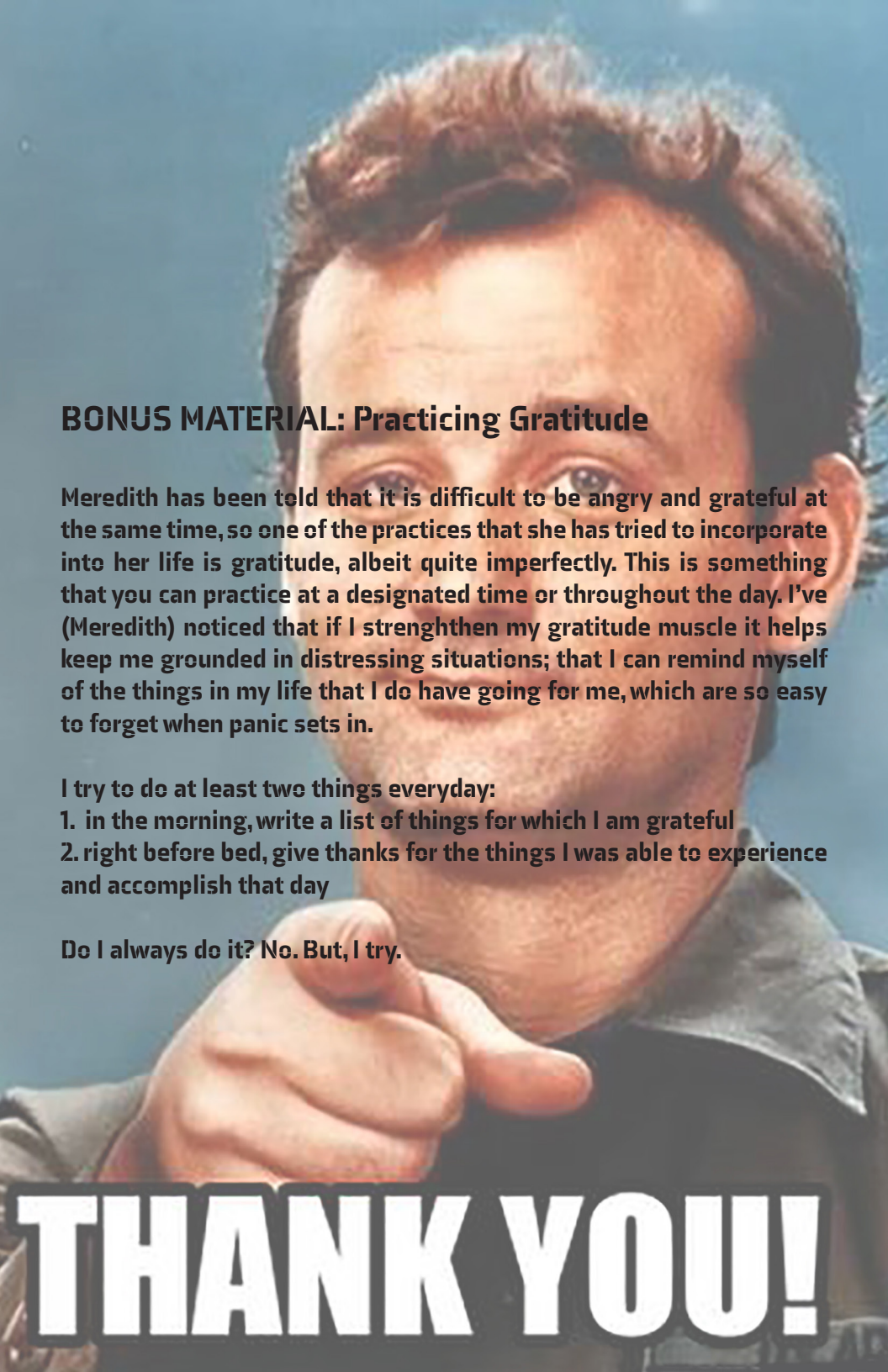
**PRAYER:** open your heart to a supreme being, ask for strength to bear the pain

**RELAXING ACTIONS:** breathe deeply, practice yoga, change your facial expression

**ONE THING IN THE MOMENT:** focus your attention on just one thing in the present moment

**TAKE A BRIEF VACATION:** take a 1-hour break from hard work, go for a walk, immerse yourself in a book

**SELF-ENCOURAGEMENT & RE-THINKING THE SITUATION:** tell yourself encouraging statements and affirmations like “this too shall pass,” “I’m doing the best I can,” “\_\_\_\_\_”



## **BONUS MATERIAL: Practicing Gratitude**

Meredith has been told that it is difficult to be angry and grateful at the same time, so one of the practices that she has tried to incorporate into her life is gratitude, albeit quite imperfectly. This is something that you can practice at a designated time or throughout the day. I've (Meredith) noticed that if I strengthen my gratitude muscle it helps keep me grounded in distressing situations; that I can remind myself of the things in my life that I do have going for me, which are so easy to forget when panic sets in.

I try to do at least two things everyday:

1. in the morning, write a list of things for which I am grateful
2. right before bed, give thanks for the things I was able to experience and accomplish that day

Do I always do it? No. But, I try.

# **THANK YOU!**



## **BONUS MATERIAL: Morning Check-Ins**

Another muscle to flex is the morning check-in, which isn't a quick fix, but could possibly help track patterns and maybe even signal when things are getting stormy.

Meredith likes to sit down with her notebook and Feelings Wheel (I *\*highly\** suggest looking into getting one of these babies) and write out how she is feeling

**PHYSICALLY**

**MENTALLY**

**EMOTIONALLY**

**SPIRITUALLY**

**\*\*\* You can add in your gratitude list here if you like! \*\*\***

**\*\*\* BONUS FOR POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS \*\*\***

After that I (Meredith) write out goals for the day. However, these goals need to be SMART:

**SPECIFIC** (simple, sensible, significant)

**MEASURABLE** (meaningful, motivating)

**ACHIEVABLE**(attainable)

**RELEVANT** (reasonable, realistic, results-based)

**TIME-BASED** (time limited, time-sensitive)

I've noticed that if I go out into the world *\*generally\** knowing how I'm feeling before I even step out the door, I become more aware of when I am feeling triggered or activated and can address it before it becomes a crisis situation. The goals I set are there as sign posts to help me keep a day in check because, for me, it really is one day at a time.

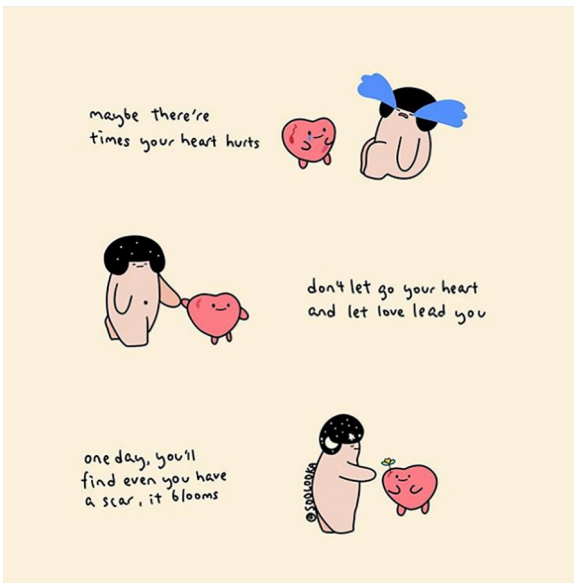
**REMEMBER**, these skills take practice... it will become easier to remember and implement them during stressful times the more you use them. I like to think of distress tolerance skills as a muscle - I wish I could lift a ton of weight on my own but before I can do that, I need to practice and strengthen my muscles first.

Some of these skills may work for you and some may not. Or maybe you need a combination of them. Maybe you need all of them! Try it out, but keep in mind that it's important to do what works for you so you can respond to your crisis situation mindfully and effectively.

Also, your feelings and thoughts are valid, but they may not always be factual, so remember to check the facts during a stressful situation and seek support if you need.

## **Life can be tough and we're in this together.**

For more information and for DBT skills updates from the author, Marsha M. Linehan, visit her website:  
[www.linehaninstitute.org](http://www.linehaninstitute.org)



@soolooka

**SPACE FOR YOUUUUUUUUUU  
BECAUSE WE LOVE YOUUUUUUU**

