

How to Deal With Low Frustration Tolerance

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Frustration is an emotion that stems from challenges that stand in the way of goals. The ability to deal with frustration is known as frustration tolerance.

Individuals with high frustration tolerance are able to deal with setbacks successfully. Individuals with low frustration tolerance may grow frustrated at seemingly minor, everyday inconveniences like traffic jams and noisy kids.

Individuals with low frustration tolerance may give up on tough tasks immediately. The mere thought of having to wait in line or work on a task that they don't understand may feel intolerable.

If you fall on the low end of the frustration tolerance spectrum, it may cause some problems in your life. Fortunately, there are some things you can do to improve your frustration tolerance.

Consequences

Frustration tolerance is a core component of psychological well-being. Individuals who can handle setbacks are more likely to persist at their goals, which can help them feel good and achieve more.

Those with [low frustration](#) tolerance may give up easily or avoid tough tasks altogether. It can take a serious toll on their achievement.

It can also affect relationships. Individuals with low frustration tolerance might be more likely to lash out when they're [frustrated](#). They may have little patience for their partners' behavior or their intolerance to everyday situations (like waiting for a table at the restaurant), and this can lead to increased tension in the relationship.

Causes

There are several reasons why some people struggle with low frustration tolerance:

- **Mental illness.** Mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety, can decrease a person's frustration tolerance. Studies have also found that individuals with [ADHD](#) tend to have less tolerance for frustration as well.
- **Personality.** Personality also plays a role in frustration tolerance. Some people naturally tolerate frustrating circumstances better than others.
- **Belief systems.** An individual's beliefs also play a role in how well they tolerate frustration. A person who thinks things like "Life should be easy," or "Other people should always meet my expectations," will be less tolerant of everyday stressors than someone else.

Signs

Low frustration tolerance looks a little different in everyone. But here are some common signs:

- Frequent procrastination due to an inability to tolerate the frustration associated with a tough or boring task
- Impulsive attempts to "fix" a situation due to impatience rather than waiting for the issue to correct itself
- Exaggerating temporary discomfort
- Insisting on pursuing immediate gratification
- Giving up immediately when presented with a challenge or obstacle
- Growing irritable or angry about everyday stressors

- Thinking or insisting, “I can’t stand this.”
- Avoiding tasks that might cause distress

Build Frustration Tolerance

Frustration tolerance can be learned. With practice and consistent dedication, you can decrease the intensity of your frustration, and you can learn to express your feelings in socially appropriate ways. Here are some strategies that can help you build frustration tolerance.

Related: [The 6 Stages of Behavior Change](#)

Accept Tough Situations

Feelings of frustration get fueled by thoughts like “These things always happen to me!” or “Why does traffic have to be so bad every day? This is horrible.”

Respond to exaggeratedly negative statements with more realistic statements. Instead of thinking about the unfairness of traffic jams, remind yourself, “There are millions of cars on the road every day. Traffic jams are going to happen.”

When you catch yourself dwelling on the unfairness of life, consider whether it’s a situation you can change or whether you need to change the way you respond to it. If the situation is outside of your control, then focus on acceptance.

Give Yourself a Pep Talk

Frustration can stem from doubting your inability to tolerate distress. Thinking “I can’t stand to wait in line,” or “I am too overwhelmed to try again,” will increase your frustration. These types of thoughts can also prevent you from doing tasks that might lead to feelings of frustration.

Remind yourself that you can cope with distressing feelings. Whether you take a deep breath and try again, or you count to 10 when you’re feeling upset, experiment with coping skills that will help you deal with frustration in a healthy way.

Related: [Healthy Coping Skills for Uncomfortable Emotions](#)

Learn How to Calm Your Body

Feelings of frustration can lead to physiological symptoms, like increased heart rate and higher blood pressure. The changes in your body might cause you to doubt your ability to deal with frustration, which can lead to a vicious cycle that’s hard to break.

Knowing how to calm your body can be key to calming your mind. [Deep breaths](#), [meditation](#), [progressive muscle relaxation](#), and physical activity can help you manage the physical symptoms of frustration in a healthy way.

Experiment with different relaxation strategies until you discover what works for you. Then, when your feelings of frustration begin to rise, you can spring into action and calm your body before your symptoms become too intense.

Practice Tolerating Frustration

Just like any other skill, frustration tolerance requires practice. Start small, and work on practicing your skills.

Purposely do something that is mildly frustrating, like working on a tough puzzle or waiting in a long line. Manage your self-talk, and use healthy coping skills to deal with your feelings.

When you are successful at managing your frustration, you'll gain confidence in your ability to tolerate distress. Over time, you can gradually expose yourself to more and more frustrating situations.

A Word From Verywell

While you might be tempted to assume that you were simply born with a short fuse, your low frustration tolerance doesn't have to be permanent. You can take steps to build this tolerance, which could improve the quality of your life.

So if you're having difficulty improving your frustration tolerance on your own, or if it seems to be a symptom of a bigger issue, then talk to a mental health professional. Treatment may range from [talk therapy](#) and addressing thoughts that fuel your frustration, to considering medication that treats underlying issues like [depression](#).

Article Sources

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2. Scime M, Norvilitis JM. [Task performance and response to frustration in children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder](#). *Psychology in the Schools*. 2006;43(3):377-386.

Additional Reading

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- Loya JM, Mccauley KL, Chronis-Tuscano A, et al. [An experimental paradigm examining the influence of frustration on risk-taking behavior](#). *Behavioural Processes*. 2019;158:155-162. doi:10.1016/j.beproc.2018.10.013

