SUGGESTIONS FOR TIMES OF DISTRESS
Counseling & Wellness Services, 32 College Street, Bowdoin College, Phone: (207) 725-3145

GOALS:
- To stay grounded in the present
- To act effectively
- To not make the situation worse

The next time you are feeling an experience of pain or discomfort (sadness, stress, anxiety, anger, frustration, etc.), take some time to write by going through the following steps:

1. Connect with your surroundings: Notice 5 things you can see, 5 things you can hear, and 5 things you can touch or feel against your skin. Ground yourself by pushing your feet against the floor.

2. Breathe: Take 10 breaths while counting each one, trying to focus solely on breathing.

3. Awareness of Physical Sensations (1 minute): Scan your body and find an uncomfortable or even painful feeling. Try to breathe into it and observe the feeling without trying to push it away or hold onto it. See what you can notice about it.

4. Awareness of Thoughts (1 minute): What thoughts am I having right now?

5. Awareness of Emotions (1 minute): What emotions am I feeling right now? (Frustration, anger, sadness, anxiety, fear, guilt, regret, loneliness, hopelessness, etc.)

6. Self-acknowledgment: State the following aloud or in your head, filling in the blanks

“Okay, right now this is where I am, and this is what is happening. The situation I have to deal with is ___________________________________________. The emotions I am having are ____________________________, ____________________________, and ____________________________.

The thoughts I am having right now are ___________________________________________.

__________________________________________, and ____________________________________________.”

In my life, what I most value is ___________________________________________. The kind of person I want to be in my life is ___________________________________________. The actions I can take to deal effectively in this moment are: ___________________________________________.

__________________________________________, and ____________________________________________.”

THE EXAMPLE OF OPPOSITE ACTION
If you struggle to come up with a way to “deal effectively,” I encourage you to try the following. In the situation you are currently in, first take notice of the thing that you would normally have the urge to do in the moment (“In this situation, I feel like doing __________.”)

Next, I want you to figure out what the opposite thing to do would be. For example, if you are feeling depressed and your urge is to isolate and stay in bed, the opposite would be to leave the house and be around others. If you are angry and frustrated and your first impulse is to yell out of frustration, the opposite would be to stay quiet, breathe, and speak calmly. If you are frustrated with someone and your normal reaction is to treat them in a hostile or confrontational way, the opposite would be to go out of your way to do something nice for them or to do nothing at all. Once you have figured out the opposite action for your current situation, then you have one way to “deal effectively,” take action.