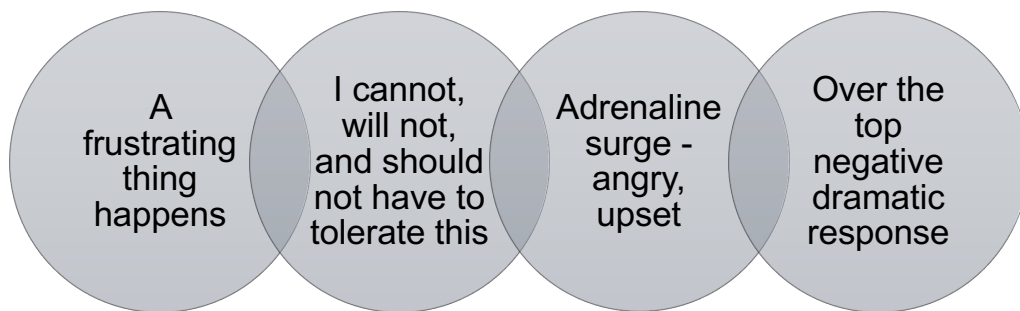


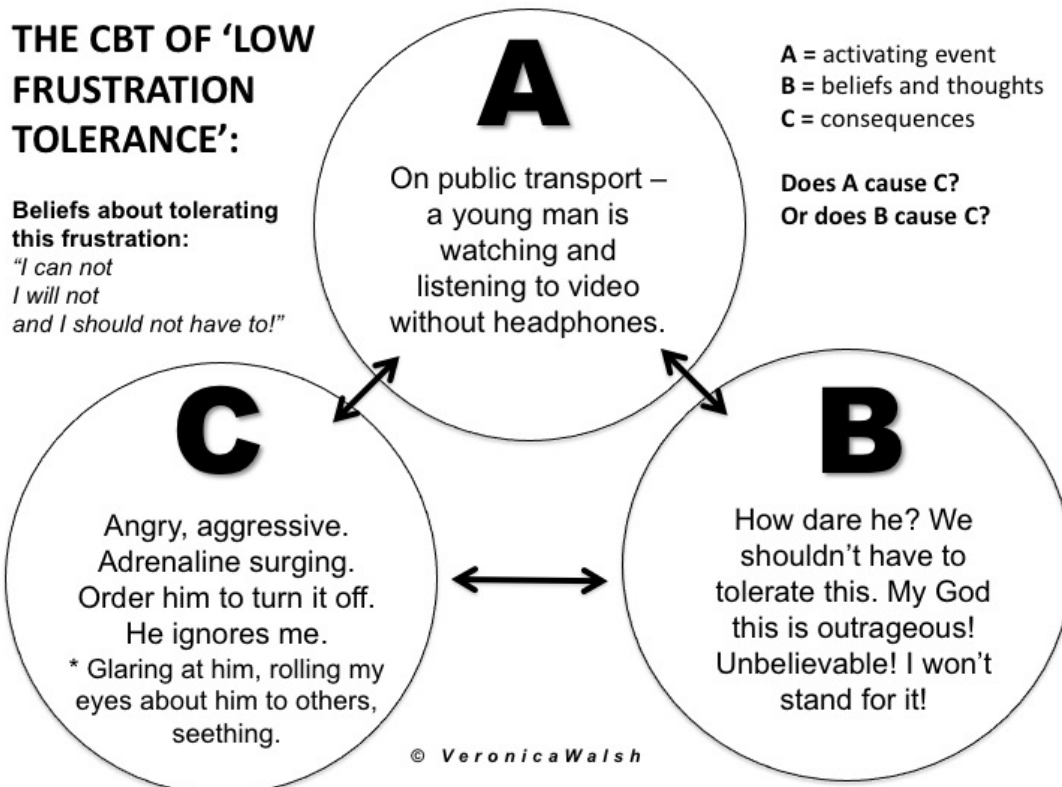
Understanding and regulating Low Frustration Tolerance

Understanding and managing Low Frustration Tolerance

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 (e.g. situations or events that cause us discomfort, and/or *anger us*). “I REFUSE TO TOLERATE THIS!!!” *sulks* *angry* *pumped up* *punishes* *self-sabotages all over the place....



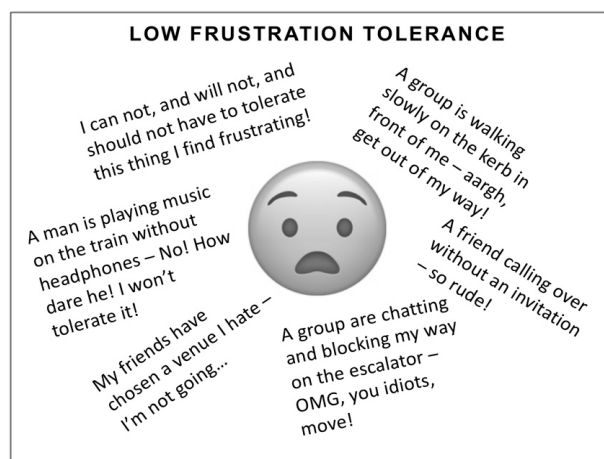
Example – check out this ABC map of low frustration tolerance in action:



This style of thinking is of course not quite rational, since it is not possible to live a life with no frustration, especially if we have a stress disorder that causes us to over respond to often benign or neutral situations that are actually no big deal, or at least nothing that we cannot cope with. We can learn to be cooler and more rational, and to dismantle this bad thinking habit and develop higher frustration tolerance with a healthy acceptance of reality.

For the thoughtless misbehaving passenger example, consider this: is it the noise itself that is causing the upset? Or the rule that it SHOULD NOT AND MUST NOT HAPPEN and that it CANNOT AND WILL NOT AND SHOULD NOT HAVE TO be tolerated? If it was a child giggling at a Sesame Street video would it be the same? If it was a Downs Syndrome man happily scrolling YouTube? If the audio was coming from the bus drivers radio, that he listens to while doing a stressful job? No? Well then it is not literally the event itself – so it can be dialled down... We can disapprove of the behaviour of a stranger, but we might be going over the top and causing unnecessary upset to ourselves and others. We can certainly give him a disapproving look, and/or say, 'excuse me, would you mind turning that down?' We can even get off that bus if we must – because the rage is not healthy. *There are many different self-management choices.*

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, (weather, traffic, a skin breakout, a stranger behaving poorly...), 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.



So - the CBT solution is to develop Higher Frustration Tolerance: through developing new skills in self-awareness and self-management through 'thought stopping' to disrupt the automatic LFT habit, (and to ideally dismantle irrational over the top frustration entirely in many instances). Would you be happy if somebody videoed you doing your thing, and then posted it online? No? Then maybe don't do it.

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, and change your response to the event. Cool yourself down with rational reframing – go from 70% anger to 35% irritation in seconds, then let it go...*

The LFT thought form template: Notice the LFT habit – it’s often instant and accompanied by anger. Stop it in its tracks – examine your self-talk – and replace it with alternative healthy self-talk. When you know better, you do better. Feel better. Behave better. Regulate yourself. This strategy works best if you WRITE IT DOWN in the first few weeks – journal how you explain things to yourself, and reframe with cool rational self-talk – see examples in the table below. This is called ‘learning by discovery, and is more likely to stick in your beautiful brain as a skill that can be used quickly as a mental task.



Low Frustration Tolerance:	Reframe with a Rational Thought Replacement
<p>I CAN NOT TOLERATE [insert whatever it is that you refuse to accept] – so I am justified in exploding with anger at this INJUSTICE!</p>	<p>The idea that I <i>cannot</i> tolerate situations that upset me, or that I disapprove of: e.g. people’s poor behaviour, random events, unsatisfactory conditions, and so on, is actually untrue.</p> <p>Accepting the belief that I cannot tolerate (or bear) something is irrational, and might become a self-fulfilling prophecy. This inflexible belief maximises my discomfort and causes stress hormones to surge, and strong negative emotions, usually resulting in self sabotaging, or self-defeating, or self-limiting choices of behaviours.</p> <p>I CAN tolerate them, I just don’t want to, so I imagine I should 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 upset with this kind of ‘rule’ and attitude and behaviour.</p> <p>It is more true and rational to say that I would PREFER NOT TO HAVE TO TOLERATE things I find frustrating, but I can tolerate them, and I’m okay, it’s okay.</p> <p>* Be rational: know what you can control and what you cannot control, be present.</p>
<p>I WILL NOT TOLERATE [insert whatever it is making you frustrated / angry / upset!]</p>	<p>That’s a bit silly (irrational) when I don’t have a choice – or when it is self-limiting and self-defeating to opt out of situations, or to be angry and upset at situations, because I imagine they’re intolerable for me. It’s more true and rational to say that I can and will tolerate this, I’d just prefer if I didn’t have to, and I’d prefer conditions and situations were always as I wish them to be, but I don’t DEMAND them to be as I wish, because that would be irrational. I would PREFER it if I bore stress more easily, but I have a stress disorder and I can only do my best, and my best is good enough - and evolving and changing and getting better... I’m ok, it’s ok.</p> <p>* breathe it down... and reframe – what are the facts? What are my choices?</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>It’s very silly (irrational) to imagine I <i>should not have to</i> tolerate things that are frustrating, especially since my stress is a disorder so I find lots of things frustrating! Even benign neutral events, or situations that are not really a big drama. So that rule is not going to work out well for me. It’s more helpful to thought-stop and remind myself that I am over responding to events and situations, but that of course I can accept reality in a cooler and more proportional way if I activate my ‘thinking brain’, and that I do have the resources to cope with and tolerate and accept frustrating situations and events.</p> <p>*Breathe it down.... Reframe...</p>

The LFT thought-form: *What regularly drives you bananas in an OTT unhelpful way? Use this table to map:*

Low Frustration Tolerance thinking:	Reframe with realistic rational thinking:
I cannot tolerate:	
I will not tolerate:	
I should not have to tolerate:	

Be cool and reframe – know what you can control and what you cannot control – accept reality, and structure realistic preferences instead of irrational demands and rules. Name and tame your bad habit, thought-stop and regulate....