Coping Skills to quiet or distract from distressing thoughts

Physical:

1. Put your hands in water & focus on the feeling: temperature, does it feel the same on each part of your hand, try cold then warm water.
2. Pick up or touch items near you: focus on the texture, colors, feeling, weight and temperature. Think of unique names for the color-instead of red; try maroon, crimson, burgundy, etc.
3. Breathe deeply; use square breathing-you can say or think “In and out.”
4. Take a walk
5. Hold a piece of ice
6. Savor a scent
7. Move your body: stretches, jumping jacks, etc. Pay attention to how your body feels.
8. Listen to your surroundings: birds, traffic, let the sounds remind you of where you are
9. Feel your body: focus on how your body feels head to toe, noticing each part. Can you feel your hair? Do your arms feel loose or stiff at your sides? Curl your fingers and wiggle your toes. Can you feel your heartbeat? Is it rapid or slow? Are your feet resting on the floor? Are your legs crossed? Pay attention to the weight of your shirt on your shoulders.
10. Touch something comforting

Mental:

11. Think in categories: “Musical instruments,” “Ice cream flavors” “mammals” “baseball teams,” etc. Take a minute or two and mentally list as many as you can.
12. Numbers can help center you-counting backwards from 100, choosing a number and think of ways you can make the number (6+11=17, 20-3=17, 8x2=1=17, etc.)
13. Make yourself laugh: think of a funny joke, watch a funny clip, anything you know will make you laugh.
14. Use an anchoring phrase: “I’m <u>your name,</u> I am 19 years old, I live in Wyoming, I love reading, I like being outdoors, I am loved by my family, I am a good friend & kind person.” You can expand it by adding details or observations until you feel calm “It’s snowing outside, I can still see the green of the pine trees, I feel thirsty, I love Chinese food, etc.
15. Describe a common task-like step by step, in a way that you might explain it to someone else: making coffee, how to clear a driveway of snow, how to change a lightbulb, sewing on a button; like you’re giving someone instructions on how to do it.
16. Imagine (visualize) leaving the painful feelings behind: walking, swimming, biking away from the thoughts/painful feelings. Imagine your thoughts are a channel or station: then lower the volume, or change the channel; they’re still there but you don’t have to listen to them.
17. Practice self-kindness: say nice things to yourself like, “you’re having a rough time, but you’ll make it through,” “You’re trying hard and doing your best” “You are smart and kind to others” “I can be gentle to myself” repeat kind, compassionate phrases!
18. List your ‘favorites’
19. Plan an activity you can do; a museum outing, going to see a movie, grocery shopping, etc.
20. List positive things: list 4 or 5 things in your life that bring you joy or contentment, visualizing each of them briefly.

21. Listen to music

Tips: Practice!!! Even when you aren't stressed/overwhelmed/anxious-so you'll know how to do it. Start early when you first start to feel bad. If one technique doesn't work at first, stick with it for a bit then move on to the next.