

Pleasant Activities List

This is a list of activities one can do from home. Feeling bored or looking for ideas? Check the activities below and mark the ones that look interesting and you would like to try.

Check the “T” box any activity from the list that you used to enjoy or would like to Try.

Check the “P” box if the activity gives you Pleasure.

Check the “M” box if the activity gives you a sense of Mastery.

Anxiety and Stress Management Workbook Coping in Times of COVID 19

T	P	M		T	P	M	
			Wear clothes that I like				Learn something
			Be outdoors				Call relatives
			Think about pleasant memories				Talk on the phone
			Talk about sports				Watch a movie
			Watch sports				Enjoy intimacy with a partner
			Sit in the sun				Cook or bake
			Plan trips or vacations				Order take out or delivery
			Buy things				Reminisce or talk about old times
			Do artwork or crafts				Get up early in the morning
			Read religious literature				Call friends
			Rearrange my room or house				Write in a diary
			Read books or magazines				Say prayers
			Watch TV				Meditate or do yoga
			Fix things around the house				Read the newspaper
			Give advice to others				Exercise at home
			Complete a challenging task				Walk barefoot
			Solve a puzzle or crossword				Call relatives
			Take a long bath or shower				Talk on the phone
			Write stories, poetry, or music				Watch a movie
			Sing				Enjoy intimacy with a partner
			Watch TV				Cook or bake
			Fix things around the house				Stay up late
			Attend religious services on TV or online				Sew, knit, or crochet
			Play a musical instrument				Be with someone I love
			Take a nap				Sleep late
			Put on makeup or do hair				Start a new project
			Plan or organize something				Take a walk
			Relax				Watch people
			Attend religious services on TV or online				Write letters, cards, or notes
			Play a musical instrument				Care for house plants

		Take a nap			Play cards
		See beautiful scenery			Buy things for myself
		Improve my health			Play board games or games online
		See, listen to, or smell nature			Look at the stars or moon
		Listen to the radio			Tackle that to do / to buy list
		Give gifts			Listen to music
		Photography			Go jogging or walking, take the dog
		Help someone			Doing arts and crafts
		Hear jokes or comedy routines			Wear comfortable clothes
		Eat good meals			Tackle that to do / to buy list
		Recycle old items			Listen to music
		Go on a date			Go jogging or walking, take the dog
		Do outdoor work such as gardening			Doing arts and crafts
		Recycle old items			Wear comfortable clothes
		Smile at people			Watch a sunset
		Talk about politics			Laugh
		Clean or organize something			Read magazines or newspapers
		Do favors for people			Dance
		Use Cologne, perfume, or aftershave			Get involved in your faith
		Shower / brush your teeth			Start on that book you were always going to write
		Wash your hair/shave			Feel good about doing absolutely nothing sometimes
		Fix and eat something you enjoy			Lie out in the sun and get a little Vitamin D
		Clean or organize something			Talk about my children or grandchildren
		Do favors for people			Get involved in your faith
		Plan that career or job change			Start on that book you were always going to write
		Listen to others			Feel good about doing absolutely nothing sometimes
		Get back to that hobby			Lie out in the sun and get a little Vitamin D
		Start a garden or take care of plants			Talk about my children or grandchildren

		Affirm self for doing a full day's work, choose self-satisfaction			Get involved in your faith
		Play with pets			Other:
		Read cartoons or comic books			Other:
		Play with pets			Other:
		Read cartoons or comic books			Other:
		Listen to lectures or sermons			Other:

Emotion Regulation Skills

I. What is “Emotion Regulation” and why would these skills be important to have?

What is Healthy Emotion Regulation?

- Emotional Awareness: noticing and identifying the emotions you experience.
- Accepting all of your emotions, both positive and negative.
- Responding to negative and/or intense emotions in a way that is consistent with your values.
- Using multiple healthy strategies to cope with unpleasant emotions.

What Healthy Emotion Regulation is NOT:

- Believing you have no way to influence how you feel.
- Avoiding experiencing negative or strong emotions. People often try to control their emotions by telling themselves not to feel whatever it is they feel. Emotionally invalidating environments tell us that people should: smile even if they feel unhappy, be nice and not rock the boat when they feel angry, never express “bad” or negative emotions.
- Using unhealthy strategies to avoid, push away, or change your emotions.
- Judging negative emotions as “bad.” This results in additional feelings of guilt, anger, and/or anxiety. The addition of these *secondary/manufactured feelings* to an already negative situation simply makes the distress more intense and tolerance for the feelings even more difficult.

II. Function of Emotions

Although emotions can be extremely unpleasant at times, we are biologically hardwired to experience them for a reason. Listed below are three important functions that emotions can serve in our lives.

- **(1) Emotions Communicate and Influence Others:** The expressive characteristics of our emotions (e.g., voice tone, facial expressions, body language, posture) help us communicate our feelings to others. This can be incredibly valuable in that it lets others know how we are feeling and it influences the behavior of others. As compared to words, emotions are often communicated faster and can be more powerful in influencing others (e.g., a person’s terrified face signals panic or a baby’s cry calls for the attention of the caregiver).

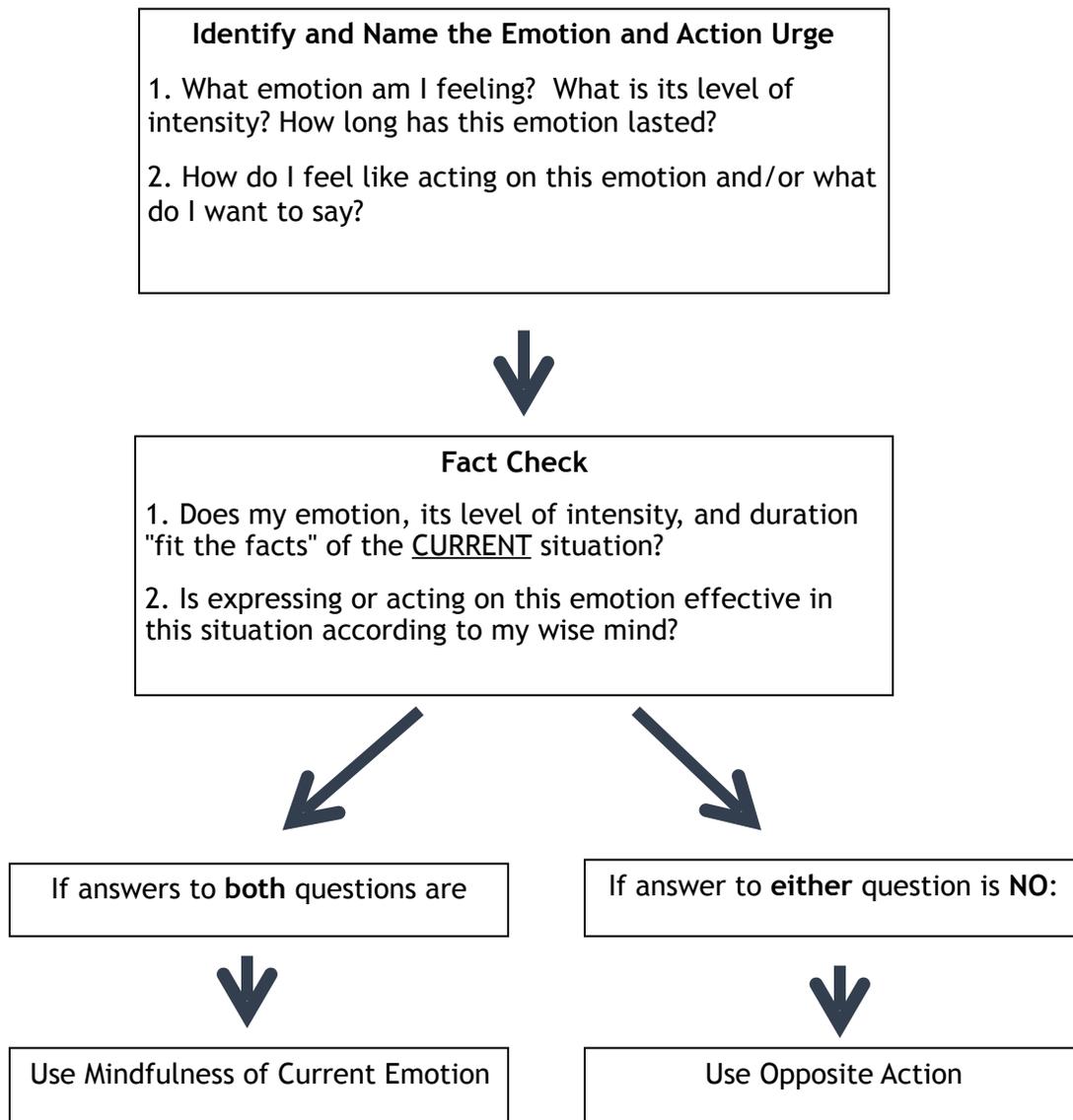
Are there times where emotions have helped you communicate your needs with others or influence their behavior in a helpful way?

- **(2) Emotions Organize and Motivate for Action:** This function has important survival value and is one of the main reasons we don’t want to get rid of our feelings states! Each emotion is designed to tell us very important things about what is going on in our lives and motivate us to do something helpful or useful. For example, the emotion of fear signals that danger is present and prompts the need for immediate action and/or attention to the danger cue so that you are kept safe.
- **(3) Emotions Communicate to Ourselves:** In addition to communicating to others, emotions also help us communicate information to ourselves. When we are participating in life using our “wise mind,” emotions can act as important signals and sometimes even alarms. By validating and listening to what we are feeling in a compassionate manner, we can then choose how to effectively respond.

I. "Fact Checking" Emotions

In order to determine how to effectively respond to our feelings, we first have to decide whether they make sense or "fit" the current situation. People always have a right to feel their feelings, but just because a feeling is there does not mean that it is an accurate reflection of the facts of the situation. For example, feeling panic during a severe earthquake where one is trapped in an enclosed place "fits the facts" because the situation is indeed very dangerous. On the other hand, feeling the same amount of panic on entering an elevator in a safe building does not "fit the facts" because the actual likelihood of danger is very, very low. This feeling state and its level of intensity may be understandable given that this person has been trapped in an enclosed place before. However, just because a feeling is understandable does not mean that it "fits" a current situation or is serving us well in the present moment.

Through mindfulness skills, we can observe and describe our feelings in a nonjudgmental manner and decide how to effectively respond to them. When an emotion, its level of intensity, and its duration "fit the facts" of the current situation, it is preferable to use mindfulness to accept and express the emotion and then let it go ("ride the emotion out"). On the other hand, when an emotion, its level of intensity, or duration does not "fit the facts" of a situation, or when acting on the emotion would not be helpful, opposite action can help you shift out of the feeling to a different emotion. Use the following decision tree to help guide your decision as to what emotion regulation skill to use.



II. "Letting Go" of Emotional Suffering: Mindfulness of Your Current Emotion

Painful emotions are a part of the human condition and everyone has to face painful feelings no matter how hard we might try not to! "Letting go" of painful feelings does not mean ignoring or pushing them away, or trying to "just get over it." The goal of this skill is not to get rid of negative emotions but instead to find a new way to relate to them, so that they do not cause additional suffering. *Accepting* painful emotions does NOT mean we agree with or approve of the situation that is causing them or like or want to have the feelings. Rather, it is acknowledging the reality of the present moment and the source of the pain. Acceptance eliminates any unnecessary suffering, leaving only the pain of the emotion itself. At times, acceptance can even reduce the pain. *Fighting* emotions, on the other hand, guarantees that they will stay around. The following "soda bottle" metaphor can be used to help illustrate the helpfulness of experiencing emotions and the consequences of emotional avoidance.



Imagine a bottle of soda shaken.

When the cap comes off, there is a rush but it is temporary and then the soda flattens.

If you put the cap back on quickly, the soda will retain the fizz.

Soda under pressure has fizz, but can't keep producing the energy after the cap is left off



When you stop avoiding your feelings, you may feel emotions intensely, but it is only **temporary and it lessens.**

Avoidance keeps the emotions from being processed and thus **keeps the high intensity in the emotions.**

Experiencing the emotion allows the emotion to be processed and allows it time to **lessen in intensity**

The Basic Steps in "Letting Go" Are:

1. Observe the Emotion

- Observe and describe the emotion. Step back, to get unstuck from the emotion.
 - Be fully aware, open, and present-oriented.
 - This strategy is useful because it allows you to get distance from the emotion, which is crucial for figuring things out and problem solving.
 - Observing emotions is also a form of exposure. When you expose yourself to the emotion without necessarily acting on it, you learn that emotion itself is not catastrophic.

2. Experience Your Emotion

- As a wave, coming and going
- Try not to block, suppress, or push the emotion away
- Don't try to change, "fix," or get "rid of" the emotion
- Don't try to keep the emotion around, don't hold on to it, rehearse it, or amplify it

3. Remember: You are Not Your Emotion

- You do not necessarily have to ACT on the emotion
- Remember times you have felt different

4. Practice Loving Your Emotion

- Don't judge your emotion
- Honor ALL of your emotional experiences, both the pleasant and unpleasant. There is often meaning and wisdom even in the most unpleasant of feelings
- *Radically accept your emotion*

Remember: Trying to build a wall to keep emotions out ALWAYS has the effect of keeping them IN. Practice loving your emotions. Be willing to have them!

A Story about Acceptance:

A man bought a new house and decided that he wanted to have a very beautiful lawn. He worked on it every week, doing everything the gardening books told him to do. His biggest problem was that the lawn always seemed to have dandelions growing where he didn't want them. The first time he found the dandelions, he pulled them out. But, alas, they grew back. He went to his local gardening store and bought weed killer. This worked for some time, but after the summer rains, he found dandelions again. He worked and pulled and killed dandelions all summer. The next summer, he thought he would have no dandelions at all, since

none grew over the winter. But then, all of a sudden, he had dandelions all over again. This time, he decided the problem was the type of grass. So he spent a fortune and had all new sod put down. This worked for some time and he was very happy. Just as he started to relax, however, a dandelion came up. A friend told him it was due to the dandelions in the lawns of his neighbors, so he went on a campaign to get all his neighbors to kill their dandelions. By the third year, he was exasperated. He still had dandelions. So, after consulting every local expert and gardening book, he decided to write the U.S. Department of Agriculture for advice. Surely the government experts could help! After waiting several months, he finally got a letter back. He was so excited. Help at last! He tore open the letter and read the following: "Dear Sir: We have considered your problem and have consulted all of our experts. After careful consideration, we think we can give you very good advice. Sir, our advice is that you learn to love those dandelions."

Some emotions in our lives are like the dandelions in this story. Try as we might to get rid of them, they seem to persist. The efforts to rid them from our lives produce additional suffering and exhaust us. We must learn to accept, love, and care for our dandelions.



III. Changing Emotions by Acting Opposite to the Current Emotion

In contrast to the Mindfulness of Current Emotion Skill, Opposite Action helps you change a current emotion that does not "fit" the current situation, that you are "stuck" in, or that is not serving you well.

A note of caution: This skill is best used when the emotion you are experiencing does not realistically fit the situation or the level of intensity is not appropriate to the current circumstance. This skill should NOT be used when an emotion is adaptive or fits the current situation. For example, if the problem is fear, you should implement opposite action (entering the fearful situation) only if there is indeed NO serious danger. If the problem is guilt or shame, don't repeat actions that in your wise mind you believe are immoral.

The Basic Steps in Opposite Action Are:

1. Identify the Action Urge

- Each emotion prompts a natural urge to engage in a specific behavior. Use the following chart to identify the action urges associated with several different emotions.

<i>Emotion Name</i>	<i>Action Urge</i>
FEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Escape or run away• Avoid
GUILT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••
SHAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••
SADNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••
ANGER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••
DISGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••
JEALOUSY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••

2. Identify the Opposite Behavior/Action

- Identify the behavior opposite to this urge. Use the chart below to identify the behaviors opposite to the action urges listed above.

<i>Emotion Name</i>	<i>Opposite Action</i>
FEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do what you are afraid of doing.• Approach events, places, tasks, activities, and people you are afraid of.• Do things to give yourself a sense of control and mastery over your fears.• When overwhelmed, make a list of small steps or tasks you can do. Do the first thing on the list.
GUILT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make public your personal characteristics or your behavior (with people who won't reject you).• Repeat the behavior that sets off guilt.
SHAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make public your personal characteristics or your behavior (with people who won't reject you).• Repeat the behavior that sets off shame.
SADNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get active. Approach people, places, and things.• Build mastery; do things that make you feel competent and self-confident.• Increase pleasant events.

ANGER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gently avoid the person you are angry with rather than attacking him/her (avoid thinking about him/ her rather than ruminating). • Take a time out and breathe in and out deeply and slowly. • Be kind (rather than mean or insulting).
DISGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move closer to the object that disgusts you. Eat, drink, stand near, or embrace what you find disgusting. • Be kind to those you feel contempt for; step into the other person's shoes.
JEALOUSY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let go of controlling others' actions. • Share the things and people you have in your life.

3. *Take the Opposite Action ALL THE WAY*

- Engage in this opposite behavior.
- Do it ALL the WAY
 - Act opposite with all aspects of your experience (e.g., posture, facial expressions, thinking, what you say, voice tone, and how you do it.
 - Halfway opposite actions don't work.

<i>Emotion Name</i>	<i>Opposite Action ALL THE WAY</i>
FEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look around slowly, explore. Keep eyes and ears open and focused on the feared event. • Take in factual information—notice that you are physically safe. • Change your posture--keep your head and eyes up, shoulders back and relaxed, knees apart, hands on hips, heels a bit apart. • Change your body chemistry—pace breathing (deep and slow).
GUILT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No apologizing or trying to make up for a perceived transgression. • Take in all the information from the situation. • Change your body posture—look innocent and proud, lift your head, “puff up” your chest, maintain eye contact, keep voice tone steady, audible, and clear.
SHAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No apologizing or trying to make up for a perceived transgression. • Take in all the information from the situation. • Change your body posture—look innocent and proud, lift your head, “puff up” your chest, maintain eye contact, keep voice tone steady, audible, and clear.
SADNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to the present moment, be mindful of your environment—each detail as it unfolds, experience new or positive activities you are engaging in. • Change your posture—adopt a “bright” body posture: head up, eyes open, shoulders back, “upbeat” voice tone. • Change your body chemistry—increase physical movement (run, jog, walk, or do other active exercise).

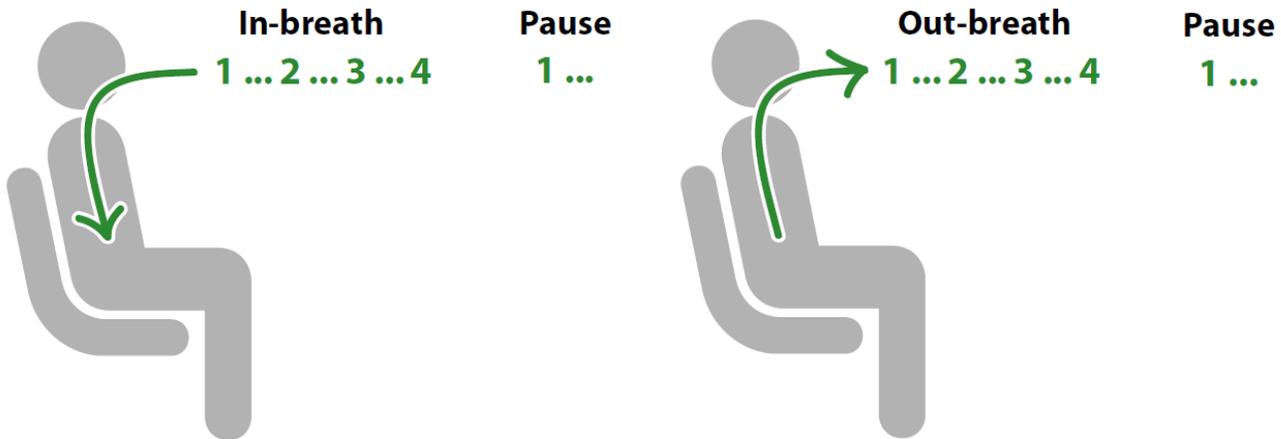
<p style="text-align: center;">ANGER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine understanding and empathy for the other person you feel anger towards—try to see the situation from his/her point of view, imagine really good reasons for how he/she is behaving or looking. • Change your posture—unclench hands with palms up and fingers relaxed (willing hands), unclench teeth; relax chest, stomach, and facial muscles; allow self to half-smile. • Change your body chemistry—pace your breathing (deep and slow), run, do something physically energetic (nonviolent).
<p style="text-align: center;">DISGUST</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine understanding and empathy for the person you feel disgust/contempt for—try to see the situation from his/her point of view, imagine really good reasons for how he/she is behaving or looking. • Change your posture—unclench hands with palms up and fingers relaxed (willing hands), unclench teeth; relax chest, stomach, and facial muscles; allow self to half-smile. • Change your body chemistry—pace your breathing (deep and slow).
<p style="text-align: center;">JEALOUSY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop spying or snooping—suppress probing questions (“Where were you? Who were you with?”), fire your “private detective.” • No avoiding—listen to all the details, focus on sensations. • Change your posture—unclench hands with palms up and fingers relaxed (willing hands), unclench teeth; relax chest, stomach, and facial muscles; allow self to half-smile. • Change your body chemistry—pace your breathing (deep and slow).

4. REPEAT Acting Opposite ALL THE WAY

- Do opposite action OVER and OVER again.
- Might not see immediate results, but over time, emotions do change or reduce in intensity.

Relaxed Breathing

When we are anxious or threatened our breathing speeds up in order to get our body ready for danger. Relaxed breathing (sometimes called abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing) signals the body is safe to relax. Relaxed breathing is *slower* and *deeper* than normal breathing, and it happens lower in the body (the belly rather than the chest).



How to do relaxing breathing

- To practice make sure you are sitting or lying comfortably
- Close your eyes if you are comfortable doing so
- Try to breathe through your nose rather than your mouth
- Deliberately slow your breathing down. Breathe in to a count of 4, pause for a moment, then breathe out to a count of four
- Make sure that your breaths are *smooth*, *steady*, and *continuous* - not jerky
- Pay particular attention to your out-breath - make sure it is smooth and steady

Am I doing it right? What should I be paying attention to?

- Relaxed breathing should be low down in the abdomen (belly), and not high in the chest. You can check this by putting one hand on your stomach and one on your chest. Try to keep the top hand still, your breathing should only move the bottom hand
- Focus your attention on your breath - some people find it helpful to count in their head to begin with (“*In...two...three...four...pause...Out...two...three...four...pause...*”)

How long and how often?

- Try breathing in a relaxed way for at least a few minutes at a time - it might take a few minutes for you to notice an effect. If you are comfortable, aim for 5-10 minutes
- Try to practice regularly - perhaps three times a day

Variations and troubleshooting

- Find a slow breathing rhythm that is comfortable for you. Counting to 4 isn't an absolute rule. Try 3 or 5. The important thing is that breathing is slow and steady
- Some people find the sensation of relaxing to be unusual or uncomfortable at first but this normally passes with practice. Do persist and keep practicing

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Muscle tension can develop as a result of a number of different activities. However, it is a very common response to fear and anxiety. Do you tense up when you feel anxious, and then later experience aches and pains? Muscle relaxation can be particularly helpful when the muscle tension is a direct result of fear and anxiety. You may not be aware that muscle tension is something you experience in the face of fear and anxiety. As we build on your awareness of your body and the messages it is communicating, you also may become more attuned to tightness in the jaw or muscle tension in the shoulders following a triggering event.

Progressive muscle relaxation is practiced by tensing up a particular muscle and then relaxing it.

- Once you have set some time aside to engage in the exercise, slow down your breathing and give yourself permission to relax.
- When you are ready tense the muscle group described. Make sure you can feel the tension, but not so much that you feel a great deal of pain.
- Keep the muscle tensed for 5 seconds
- Relax the muscle for 10 seconds
- When you have finished the relaxation procedure, remain seated to gain composure, becoming more alert to your surroundings

Relaxation Sequence

- Right hand and forearm. Make a fist with your right hand.
- Right upper arm. Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to “make a muscle”
- Left hand and forearm
- Left upper arm
- Forehead. Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as though you were surprised by something.
- Eyes and cheeks. Squeeze your eyes tight shut.
- Mouth and jaw. Open your mouth as wide as you can, like you are yawning
- Neck. Be careful as you tense your muscles. Face forward and then pull your head back slowly as if you are looking up at the ceiling.
- Shoulders. Tense the muscles in your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is moved forward.
- Chest and stomach. Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air.
- Hips and buttocks. Squeeze your buttocks muscles
- Right upper leg. Tighten your right thigh
- Right lower leg. Do this slowly and carefully to avoid cramps. Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle.
- Right foot. Curl your toes downwards.
- Left upper leg. Repeat as for right upper leg.
- Left lower leg. Repeat as for the right lower leg.
- Left foot. Repeat as for right foot.

Using Grounding to Detach from Emotional Pain

WHAT IS GROUNDING?

Grounding is a set of simple strategies to detach from emotional pain (e.g., drug cravings, self-harm impulses, anger, sadness). Distraction works by *focusing outward on the external world*, rather than inward toward the self. You can also think of it as “distraction,” “centering,” “a safe place,” “looking outward,” or “healthy detachment.”

WHY DO GROUNDING?

When you are overwhelmed with emotional pain, you need a way to detach so that you can gain control over your feelings and stay safe. As long as you are grounding, you cannot possibly use substances or hurt yourself! Grounding “anchors” you to the present and to reality.

Many people with PTSD and substance abuse struggle with feeling either too much (overwhelming emotions and memories) or too little (numbing and dissociation). In grounding, you attain a balance between the two: conscious reality and able to tolerate it. Remember that pain is a feeling; it is not who you are. When you get caught up in it, it feels like you *are* in pain, and that is all that exists. But it is only one part of your experience - the others are just hidden and can be found again through grounding.

Guidelines

- ◆ Grounding can be done *any time, any place, anywhere*, and no one has to know.
- ◆ Use grounding when you are *faced with a trigger, enraged, dissociating, having a substance craving, or whenever your emotional pain goes above 6* (on a 0-10 scale). Grounding puts healthy distance between you and these negative feelings.
- ◆ *Keep your eyes open, scan the room, and turn the light on* to stay in touch with the present.
- ◆ *Rate your mood before and after grounding*, to test whether it worked. Before grounding, rate your level of emotional pain (0-10, where 10 means “extreme pain”). Then rerate it afterward. Has it gone down?
- ◆ *No talking about negative feelings or journal writing* - you want to distract away from negative feelings, not get in touch with them.
- ◆ *Stay neutral* - avoid judgments of “good” and “bad.” For example, instead of “The walls are blue; I dislike blue because it reminds me of depression,” simply say “The walls are blue” and move on.
- ◆ *Focus on the present, not the past or future.*
- ◆ *Note that grounding is not the same as relaxation training.* Grounding is much more active, focuses on distraction strategies, and is intended to help extreme negative feelings. It is believed to be more effective than relaxation training for PTSD.

WAYS OF GROUNDING

Three major ways of grounding are described below - mental, physical, and soothing. “Mental” means focusing your mind; “physical” means focusing on your senses (e.g., touch, hearing); and “soothing” means talking to yourself in a very kind way. You may find that one type works better for you, or all types may be helpful.

Mental Grounding

- **Describe your environment in detail**, using all your senses - for example, “The walls are white; there are five pink chairs; there is a wooden bookshelf against the wall...” Describe objects, sounds, textures, colors, smells, shapes, numbers, and temperature. You can do this anywhere. For example, on the subway: “I’m on the subway. I’ll see the river soon. Those are the windows. This is the bench. The metal bar is silver. The subway map has four colors.”
- **Play a “categories” game with yourself**. Try to think of “types of dogs,” “jazz musicians,” “states that begin with ‘A’,” “cars,” “TV shows,” “writers,” “sports,” “songs,” or “cities.”
- **Do an age progression**. If you have regressed to a younger age (e.g., 8 years old), you can slowly work your way back up (e.g., “I’m now 9; I’m now 10; I’m now 11...”) until you are back to your current age.
- **Describe an everyday activity in great detail**. For example, describe a meal that you cook (e.g., “First I peel the potatoes and cut them into quarters; then I boil the water; then I make an herb marinade of oregano, basil, garlic, and olive oil...”).
- **Imagine**. Use and image: Glide along on skates away from your pain; change the TV channel to get to a better show; think of a wall as a buffer between you and your pain.
- **Say a safety statement**. “My name is _____; I am safe right now. I am in the present, not the past. I am located in _____; the date is _____.”
- **Read something, saying each word to yourself**. Or read each letter backward so that you focus on the letters and not on the meaning of words.
- **Use humor**. Think of something funny to jolt yourself out of your mood.
- **Count to 10 or say the alphabet**, very s...l...o...w...l...y.

Physical Grounding

- * **Run cool or warm water over your hands**.
- * **Grab tightly onto your chair as hard as you can**.
- * **Touch various objects around you**: a pen, keys, your clothing, the table, the walls. Notice textures, colors, materials, weight, temperature. Compare objects you touch: Is one colder? Lighter?
- * **Dig your heels into the floor** - literally “grounding” them! Notice the tension centered in your heels as you do this. Remind yourself that you are connected to the ground.
- * **Carry a grounding object in your pocket** - a small object (a small rock, clay, a ring, a piece of cloth or yarn) that you can touch whenever you feel triggered.
- * **Jump up and down**.
- * **Notice your body**: the weight of your body in the chair; wiggling your toes in your socks; the feel of your back against the chair. You are connected to the world.
- * **Stretch**. Extend your fingers, arms, or legs as far as you can; roll your head around.
- * **Clench and release your fists**.
- * **Walk slowly, noticing each footstep**, saying “left” or “right” with each step.
- * **Eat something, describing the flavors** in detail to yourself.
- * **Focus on your breathing**, noticing each inhale and exhale. Repeat a pleasant word to yourself on each inhale (e.g., a favorite color, or a soothing word such as “safe” or “easy”).

Soothing Grounding

- ◆ **Say kind statements**, as if you were talking to a small child - for example, “You are a good person going through a hard time. You’ll get through this.”
- ◆ **Think of favorites**. Think of your favorite color, animal, season, food, time of day, TV show.
- ◆ **Picture people you care about** (e.g., your children), and look at photographs of them.
- ◆ **Remember the words to an inspiring song, quotation, or poem** that makes you feel better (e.g., the AA Serenity Prayer).
- ◆ **Remember a safe place**. Describe a place that you find very soothing (perhaps the beach or mountains, or a favorite room); focus on everything about that place - the sounds, colors, shapes, objects, textures.
- ◆ **Say a coping statement**: “I can handle this,” “This feeling will pass.”
- ◆ **Plan a safe treat for yourself**, such as a piece of candy, a nice dinner, or a warm bath.
- ◆ **Think of things you are looking forward to in the next week** - perhaps time with a friend, going to a movie, or going on a hike.

WHAT IF GROUNDING DOES NOT WORK?

Grounding does work! But, like any other skill, you need to practice to make it as powerful as possible. Below are suggestions to help make it work for you.

- ❖ **Practice as often as possible**, even when you don’t need it, so that you’ll know it by heart.
- ❖ **Practice faster**. Speeding up the pace gets you focused on the outside world quickly.
- ❖ **Try grounding for a looooooonnnnnngggg time (20-30 minutes)**. And, repeat, repeat, repeat.
- ❖ **Try to notice which methods you like best** - physical, mental, or soothing grounding methods, or some combination.
- ❖ **Create your own methods of grounding**. Any method you make up may be worth much more than those you read here, because it’s *yours*.
- ❖ **Start grounding early in a negative mood cycle**. Start when a substance craving just starts or when you have just started having a flashback. Start before anger gets out of control.
- ❖ **Make up an index card** on which you list your best grounding methods and how long to use them.
- ❖ **Have others assist you in grounding**. Teach friends or family about grounding, so that they can help guide you with it if you become overwhelmed.
- ❖ **Prepare in advance**. Locate places at home, in your car, and at work where you have materials and reminders for grounding.
- ❖ **Create a cassette tape of a grounding message** that you can play when needed. Consider asking your therapist or someone close to you to record it if you want to hear someone else’s voice.
- ❖ **Think about why grounding works**. Why might it be that by focusing on the external world, you become more aware of an inner peacefulness? Notice the methods that work for you - why might those be more powerful for you than other methods?
- ❖ **Don’t give up!**

“Cool” Thoughts for Coping with Panic

“I’s having anxiety now. I am not dying or going crazy, just having a lot of anxiety.”

“This feeling isn’t comfortable or pleasant, but I can stand it.”

“I can be anxious and still deal with this situation.”

“I’m in control here.”

“I’ve survived this before and I’ll survive this time too.”

“This isn’t the worst thing in the world.”

“This isn’t an emergency. It’s ok to think slowly about what I need to do.”

“I’m going to ride this out and wait for my anxiety to decrease.”

“This isn’t really dangerous.”

“The best way out of this is THROUGH it.”

“This is an opportunity for me to learn to cope with my fears.”

“I’ll just let my body do its thing. This, too, will pass.”

“I can take all the time I need in order to let go and relax.”

“I can do my coping strategies and allow this to pass.”

“The anxiety won’t hurt me - even if it doesn’t feel good.”

“This is just anxiety, I am not going to let it get to me.”

“Nothing horrible is going to happen to me.”

“Fighting and resisting doesn’t help, so I’ll just let it pass.”

“These are just thoughts and feelings, not reality.”

What are some other thoughts for coping that have been helpful to you?

Self-Soothing Activities

In addition to healthy distraction, self-soothing activities can be used to effectively respond to intense emotional states. Self-soothing has to do with being gentle and kind to oneself. Think of soothing each of your five senses: Vision, Hearing, Smell, and Touch, as well as saying kind and encouraging statements to yourself.

 **Vision:** Buy a beautiful flower, light a candle and watch the flame, go to a museum with beautiful art, watch a sunset, look at nature around you, watch the stars, walk in a pretty part of town, fix your nails so they look pretty, look at beautiful pictures in a book, look at photographs of people you care about, etc...

 **Hearing:** Listen to beautiful or soothing music or invigorating, exciting music, pay attention to the sounds of nature (waves, birds, rainfall, leaves rustling), sing or hum your favorite songs, etc...

 **Smell:** Use your favorite perfume or lotions or try them on in the store, spray fragrance in the air, light a scented candle, put lemon oil on your furniture, put potpourri in a bowl in your room, boil cinnamon, bake cookies, bread, smell the roses, walk in the nature and mindfully breathe in the fresh smells, etc...

 **Taste:** Have a good meal, have a favorite soothing drink such as herbal tea or hot chocolate (no alcohol), treat yourself to dessert, sample flavors in an ice cream store, suck on a piece of peppermint candy, chew your favorite gum, get a little bit of special food you don't usually spend money on, really taste the food you eat, eat one thing mindfully, etc...

 **Touch:** Take a bubble bath or hot shower, put clean sheets on the bed, pet your dog or cat, have a massage, soak your feet, put creamy lotion on your whole body, put a cold compress on your forehead, sink into a really comfortable chair, hug someone, etc...

Positive Self-Statements: Say kind and encouraging statements to yourself ("you are a good person going through a hard time. You will get through this."), think of your favorites (color, animal, season, time of day, tv show), think of positive things you are looking forward to in the next week (time with a friend, going to a movie, going on a hike, etc...).

What other self-soothing activities can you think of?

Which of these strategies are helpful?

GRAPES

Make feeling good a daily habit.

Increase energy and improve mood by practicing GRAPES daily.

Gentle with self

Be kind to yourself. Think about yourself with pride, acceptance, and forgiveness

Relaxation

Take time to relax and unwind from stress

Accomplishment

Commit to completing at least one task

Pleasure

Do something that makes you feel good

Exercise

Get moving to improve your mood and health

Social

Connect and interact with others