

Self-Regulation Strategies

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Self-Regulation Strategies

The following pages look at various strategies that we can use to promote self-regulation.

It is important to note that everyone is different and what works for one person may not be suitable for another.

Work with individuals to find what works best for them.



Co-Regulation

One of the most powerful tools for calming a young person is a calm adult. How can you be that cool calm collected adult when faced with a distressed (and often distressing) young person?

- We need to be the swan
- Calm communication – slow - low – low
- Our own emotional regulation matters, how can we help ourselves?
- We can be emotional regulation role models, when we regulate aloud
- Sometimes we'll get it wrong, that's okay so long as we learn from it



Biopsychosocial Interventions

FREDA & FRED

Friend – when worried, contact a well-chosen friend or key adult for support, advice or help

Relaxation – use muscle relaxation, breathing, positive thinking, visualisation, distraction

Exercise – regularly in a way that works for you: run, walk the dog, kick-box, dance...

Diet – go easy on sugary foods, junk food, and energy drinks.

Action – do something positive, e.g., practice, help out, find out...

Friend – learn to talk to yourself like a true friend would

Routine – develop a good one to stabilise your sleep pattern

Exercise – commit to doing this regularly over time

Diet – eat and drink regularly and reasonably



Controlled Breathing

Controlled breathing prevents us breathing too fast, shallow or irregularly when worried. Use controlled breathing for a minimum of four minutes to restore a normal balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide.

7:11 breathing which means that you breathe in through the mouth slowly to the count of 7, then breathe out through the mouth slowly to the count of 11.

Square breathing where you breathe in while counting 4; hold while counting 4; breathe out while counting 4; hold while counting 4 and repeat the square.



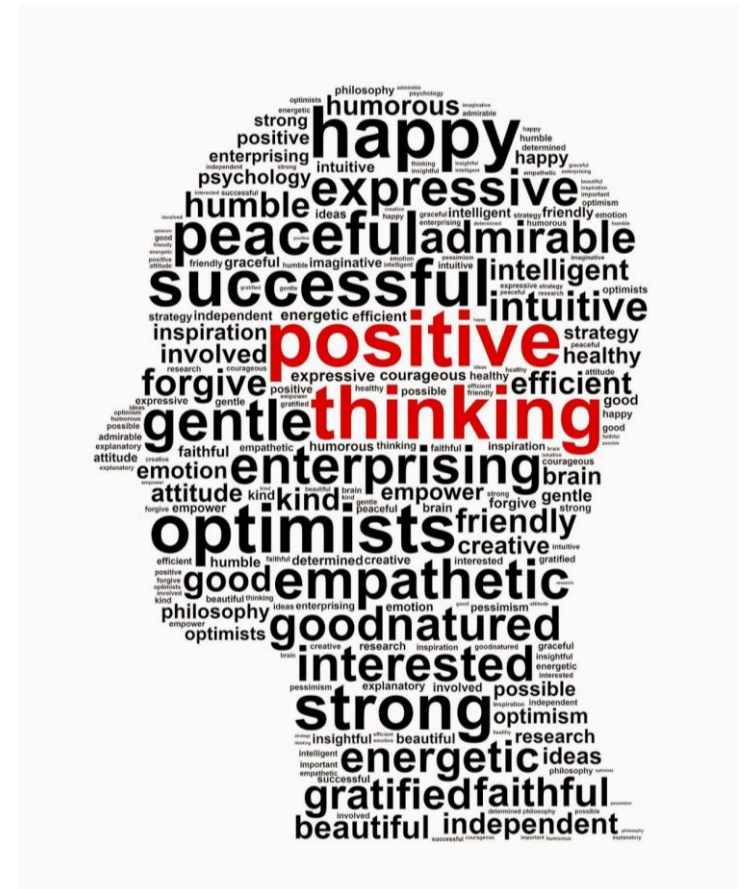
Visualisation

This involves picturing in the mind a scene that is quiet and relaxing to the *young person*; a time and place where they feel calm, safe, confident and in control.

The scene itself is less important than the feelings linked with it.

The more detail that can be included, the better: sights, sounds, smells and other sensations are all important.





Scaling

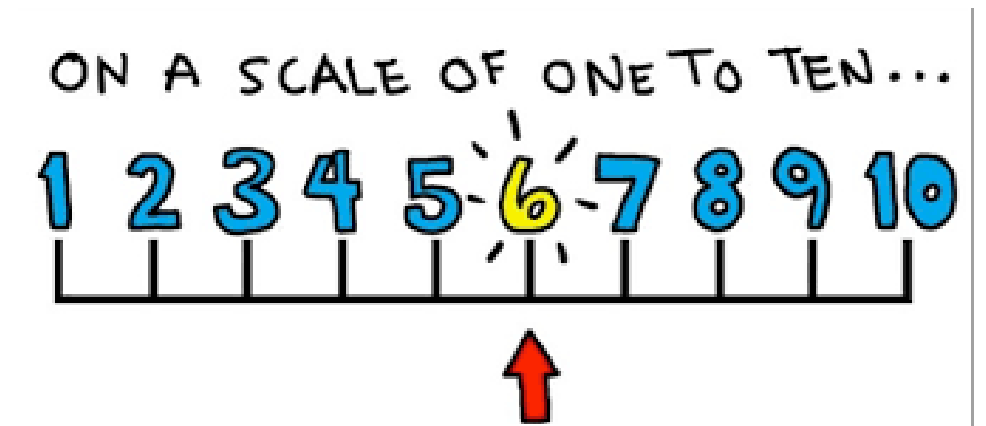
Sometimes it can help you to know how worried you're actually feeling. A quick test is to scale your present worry level out of 10.

0 is utterly chilled, totally calm.

10 is as bad as it can get!

If you are a 9 or 10 out of 10 it is pretty high, if it is 5 you are worried but not over the top, and 3 or lower is approaching calm.

A good question to ask is: "What can you do now, to move down one point on your scale?"



Focused Distraction

Distraction involves focusing very closely on the smallest detail of something close by: clouds in the sky; patterns in the wall, carpet or ceiling; lines on the palm of the hand or fingerprint patterns.

An alternative is “5-4-3-2-1” which is a ‘grounding’ technique and has various versions, all based on the senses. When the young person is feeling overwhelmed they can name:

5 things they can see

4 things they can feel

3 things they can hear

2 things they can smell

1 thing they can taste (or maybe their favourite taste).



Muscle Relaxation

Tensing and relaxing different muscle groups helps us to learn to recognise signals that we are becoming tense, and to release the tension.

Relaxing muscle groups can be linked to a little phrase that we say quietly to ourself in our head, like 'stay calm'. Teach the young person to tense and relax specific muscle groups in turn – toes, hands, shoulders, etc. They should 'scrunch' as tight as they can for a count of 5, and then relax while you encourage them to focus on the lovely sense of relief as the muscles are allowed to relax. This can be practiced anywhere.



Hand Massage

Use massage cream or hand lotion and massage it into your hands.

Don't think about anything else except your hands, the feel of the cream, the smell, the sensation.

Massage away any overwhelming feelings.

Work out any worries through the hands to the tips of your fingers.



Give yourself a Hug

Hugs send a message to our brains that we are safe.

Hugging creates safety and reassurance.

Squeeze yourself hard and hold it (for 10 seconds or longer).



Body Scan

Focus in on your body

1. Sit or lie comfortably
2. Control your breathing
3. Focus inside yourself
4. Work at your feet and complete a body scan around your body, relaxing each body part as you go



Calming Activity

Sometimes a calming activity may support our self-regulation

These may include:

Structured activities

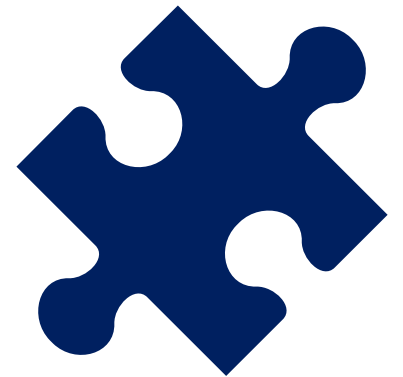
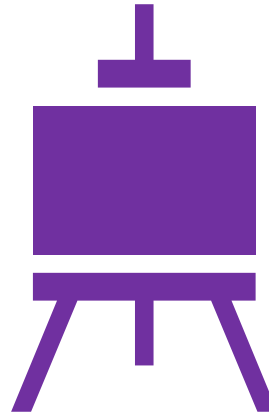
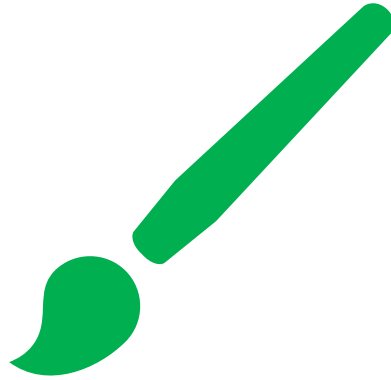
Colouring

Art

Music

Craft

Exercise



Mindfulness

Being mindful requires us to 'pay attention on purpose'. This means not thinking about the past or worrying about the future, but instead trying to focus on being 'in the moment' and grounded in our senses.

Whenever you observe your breath or your thoughts and feelings, the observing self is the part of you that's doing all the observing, it is the part of you that sees the big picture.

The magic of mindfulness is that it can be practised anywhere at any time. The aim is to get young people to stay present during the activity and tune into their senses what they can taste, smell, hear, see and touch.

Please note –for a young person who has experienced trauma –mindfulness (emptying the mind) may be difficult and actually make them feel worse and allow intrusive thoughts to enter. A mindfulness activity that keeps them busy e.g. exercise, yoga, art, rhythmic/repetitive may be a better option for some young people

