

Calming Strategies

Mindfulness Exercises

Mindful Check-in

- Objectively notice your surroundings, describing what you notice using each of your five senses (to yourself or out loud).
- Then check in with how you are feeling emotionally and physically.

Mindful Breathing

- Focus your attention on your breathing, whether deep or natural breathing.
- Each time a thought comes to mind or your attention shifts, just notice that it happened – without judgment – and redirect your focus back to your breath.
- Continue to refocus your attention back to the breath as often as needed.

Body Scan

- Starting at the top of your head, scan your awareness through your body, down to your feet.
- Notice how each part of your body feels, without judgment.

Ride the Wave of Emotion

- Say to yourself: "This feeling is overwhelming *right now* but it won't last forever."
- **Feelings come and feelings go.**
- **You can have your feelings and still be okay.**

Leaves on a Stream

- Imagine being in a forest by a stream. When you have a thought, notice it without judgment, put it on a leaf, and throw it into the stream to float away.
- Repeat each time you have a thought to clear your mind.

Grounding Strategies

Physical Grounding

- Press your feet and toes into the floor, rooting yourself in the present moment. Feel the chair underneath you. Squeeze the chair with your hands.
- Touch anything around you and **notice you are here in this moment.**
- Imagine your feet are like the roots of a tree, planted deep in the ground; your body stands tall and strong like a tree.

Visual Reorienting

- 54321: notice five things you see, four things you feel (touch), three things you hear, two things you smell, and one thing you taste.
- "I Spy": e.g., find five red items in the room, find all the square items in the room, find something that looks smooth to the touch.
- Pick one item in the room and describe it to yourself in as much detail as you can (color, shape, texture, etc.).
- Describe the entire room to yourself (focus on sights, sounds, smells, etc.).

After using a strategy, do a mindful check-in:

How do I feel emotionally right now?

What sensations do I notice in my body right now?

Notice how your emotions and sensations may have shifted from those you felt prior to doing the calming strategy.

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Self-Soothing: Engage the Senses

- Create a self-soothe kit with items that engage each of your five senses.
- Example items for a self-soothe kit:
 - Fidgets (e.g., stress ball, Thinking Putty)
 - Scented hand lotion
 - An essential oil rollerball
 - Mints, cinnamon or sour candy; gum
 - A picture of someone or something that makes you happy
 - Small glitter calming jar
 - Music (phone and headphones)
 - Drawing/coloring materials
 - Scrap paper for crumpling or tearing
 - Weighted blanket or lap pad
- Items that engage three or more senses at once are most effective (your brain has no choice but to calm down).
- Use fidgets and other sensory strategies *mindfully*, not mindlessly.

Mindful Movement: Rhythmic and Repetitive

- Walking running; playing a sport
- Yoga
- Lifting weights
- Dancing
- Singing or playing an instrument (drums!)
- Mindfully playing with a slinky
- Drawing or coloring
- Knitting, crocheting, braiding
- Side to side standing crunches
- Clenching fists and then releasing them
- Tapping/rubbing your shoulders, arms, legs
- Progressive muscle relaxation
 - Purposefully tense your face muscles/jaw, then release.
 - Do this all the way down your body and notice each body part relax.

Calm, Happy Place

- Think of a place you've been or can imagine being where you feel completely calm and happy. If you can't think of a place, create one in your mind. What would that place look like?
- If you need to make your place safe, add imaginary fences, guards, anything to keep you safe. This is *your* place so no one/nothing can come into it unless you want them to.
- **Five senses:** What would you see around you in that place? Hear, smell, feel on your skin/touch, taste?
- Really focus on how you feel in the present moment, both emotionally and physically, when you think of that place. Notice any shifts that occur in your emotions and your body when you think of being in that place.
- Give your place a name or cue word/phrase.
- Say the name or cue word/phrase and then think about your place. Notice any shifts that occur in your emotions and your body when you think of being there.

Healthy Distractions

- Puzzles (jigsaw, crossword, sudoku, logic)
- Read a book, listen to music, play a game, play a sport, engage in something creative, exercise; do these in a focused but not mindful way.
- Ask yourself random questions that make you think (e.g., "What did I have for breakfast this morning?" "How did I get to school today?" "What's the capital of Illinois?" "What's 5 + 5?").
- Alphabet games: name an animal, food, country, etc. for each letter in the alphabet.

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