

STRATEGIES FOR SELF SOOTHING AND CALMING DOWN

- Take a time out and immediately start to deep breath; close your eyes, visualize a pleasant experience (conflict free image) that you have set in your mind previously that has involved all your senses in your detailed memory of that experience, press your feet into the floor intermitted, breath in through your nose slowly and fill your lungs and diaphragm as much as you can, hold your breath for five seconds, hold for 5 seconds then slowly breathe out through your mouth ...try three sets or more ...in between sets tell yourself something positive such as “calm down”, “I can do this” or “Its Ok”, You may also hold a stone with a positive saying on it or hold on to something that is calming and has meaning to you especially something associated with your pleasant conflict free image. This exercise will help produce calming chemicals in the brain.
- Listen to calming music such as Chopin (classical music), ocean waves, rain forest sounds, Native American Relaxation series,deep breathe while you are listening to music.
- Tense and release your muscles from the top to the bottom to let go of tension
- Take a brisk walk, breathing steady, at least 15 minutes, to produce endorphins which will calm you, you may also need to use self – talk in order to produce calming effects Join an exercise class, got to a walking track or do home exercise tapes
- Get a monthly therapeutic massage to work out of your body, harmful toxins from stress
- You may need to consider short term use of mood stabilizers available by seeing your physician. You may also opt for natural substances purchased at a health food store such as Melatonin for sleeping, L – Theanine, Gaba, calm – aid, stress relax, B – 50 vitamins, lemon flavoured fish oil, homeopathic calms pellets used under your tongue for immediate relief, **5 –HTP**, Chill pills, Stress Relax, Valerian, St Johns Wort, Sam E ,all must be under the consultation of a natural health practitioner or pharmacist for any drug interactions for any current medications you are already taking.
- Build in a ritual daily of deep breathing, logging your mood; your thoughts and feelings, making an effort to challenge or deal with negative feelings and thinking.
- Go outside even for few minutes and engage your senses to switch on the brain
- Drink at least 8 glasses of water daily which will help your energy levels. Keep your blood sugar stable by eating snacks every two hours such as nuts, raisins or dried fruit and 70% dark chocolate, cheese and crackers, fruit or whole grain toast with nut butters. Make and effort not to skip meals or drink too much coffee (not drinking coffee at all is best), tea or energy drinks that can promote irritability.

- Some people have found it helpful to eat a diet that supports brain function and helps with brain issues like anxiety, depression, stress etc; avoiding dairy, sugar, gluten and saturated fat and replacing instead with sweet drops stevia for sugar, unsweetened almond milk or unsweetened coconut milk with stevia added for dairy or just eat cultured yogurt sparingly, instead of saturated fat eats lots of sockeye salmon and fish, nuts and nut butters, seeds, coconut and olive oil, hummus, guacamole, legumes such as lentils and beans, and for gluten eat sprouted grain breads, brown rice pastas, quinoa, brown rice flour.
- Distract yourself by engaging in activities that bring out your creative side such as hobbies or take up an activity that interests you or do volunteer work or practise your spirituality. Ensure you have good social connections and reach out to others you love, trust and you feel will support you.
- Manage your environment, don't plan too many things to do in one day, if you are working at a job that requires long hours and days without breaks and getting very little sleep, you may need to consider changing employment from time to time before you burn out. Take 5 – 10-minute mini mental health breaks during the day to remind the brain to relax and emit serotonin and dopamine which help balance the stress chemicals of cortisol and adrenaline. Many people benefit from an electronic diet; no devices one hour before bed and no devices including a smart TV on in your bedroom at night, turning Wi-Fi off in your living space at night; at least place phone for alarms outside bedroom door
- Even if you can't draw ...art is a form of putting what you are feeling and experiencing on paper and releasing negative emotions and thoughts
- Write a therapeutic letter to yourself or someone you are upset with using your feeling words...not to send it but the idea is to release negative emotions and thoughts
- Constantly challenge what you are thinking/feeling and practise thought stopping and thought re framing ...turn old messages to new messages.....
- Take a hot shower to relax muscles or a calming bath with Lavender and chamomile essential oils. Buy special lamps designed for Seasonal Affective Disorder to boost mood
- Practise belly laughter daily ...your body does not know the difference between really laughing at a joke or inducing laughter yourself, you will get the same benefit
- If you are feeling anxiety talk to your body and remind it that you are familiar with this feeling and that you are going to continue on with your day in spite of the symptoms. If your breathing is difficult you can use and "energy overcorrection" as described in a separate handout. You can also start looking around your environment and start using your senses to notice things and spell out what you see or do math games in your head to try to switch on your prefrontal cortex.