

SIMPLE TIPS TO CALM DIFFICULT EMOTIONS

To feel better when emotions threaten to overwhelm you, try these coping skills.

1

DISTRACT YOURSELF

All emotions begin with thoughts. Pleasant activities can reduce intensity of emotions by distracting long enough to regain some calm. Try focusing on an easy task, clean a room, play a game, spend time on a hobby, listen to a podcast, watch one episode of your current favorite show, sing, work on a puzzle.

2

CALM YOUR BODY

We physically experience emotions from our head to our toes. Soothing the body can sometimes make unpleasant emotions tolerable. Use touch, taste, sound, smell and sight as a way to feel better. Take a hot shower, wear comfy clothes, pet an animal, drink your favorite non-alcoholic drink, light a scented candle, smell the air after the rain, listen to soothing or invigorating music, walk in a beautiful part of town or park. Whatever can help your body feel soothed can soothe your emotions as well.

3

CREATE POSITIVE EMOTIONS

Change your emotional reaction by doing something to create the opposite emotion. Fear, anger, sadness and shame are not 'bad'. But always acting on these emotions can lead to outcomes we later regret. When sad, get yourself to laugh; hopeless - listen to an inspiring talk; angry - do something a little bit kind for someone; sad - dance to upbeat music; fearful - look at your fears head on. Don't give up. This skill takes practice.

4

PUT YOUR BODY FIRST

Create a nourishing routine. Anxiety thrives on turbulence and uncertainty. A stable routine can make difficult emotions bearable. Eat balanced meals, get adequate sleep at the same time each night, treat yourself to regular exercise, take care of any physical illness, and avoid mood-altering substances.

5

COPE AHEAD

Make a plan for situations sure to bring high-level emotions. Describe the situation likely to be problematic. Which emotions are going to come up? Vividly imagine the situation in your mind. See yourself managing the situation calmly and according to your values. Rehearse in your mind exactly what you can do to cope effectively. Rehearse your actions, thoughts, what you say, and how to say it.

6

HEALTHY VENTING/EMOTIONAL DUMPING

Stay aware of the difference between healthy venting versus emotional dumping. Healthy venting feels beneficial, and emotional dumping feels toxic. Talking with supportive family and friends keeps us connected and helps us feel a part of something larger than ourselves. Stay away from repeating yourself over and over, however, because that can keep unpleasant emotions riled up. Share common experiences. Remember to reciprocate by listening to others, as well.