



Some things you can do to regulate emotions

If you are triggered, you need something to get you through this moment. You might be feeling panic, anxiety, anger, or rage. Try one or two of these six effective calming remedies.

Mindful Breathing. This is the universal self-calming treatment. Breathe slowly (at least 4 seconds to inhale, and 4 seconds to exhale) through the nose. Breathe from your diaphragm (so it feels like you are breathing down into the belly). The breaths do not need to be unusually big, just slow and steady.

This works because the vagus nerve from the emotional center of your brain connects to your breathing. When it picks up slow, deep breathing, it sends a signal to your brain that says in effect “the body is calm, everything is alright.” (In contrast, rapid shallow breathing sends a signal that “the body is on full alert, look out for danger!”)

Soothing self-talk. Consciously tell yourself, “I can handle this without getting upset,” “I am OK.” Again, this sends calming signals to the emotional center of your brain. (In contrast, an internal monologue of “this is terrible” “I’m gonna die” “I’m going to kill someone” is obviously not calming!)

Listen to comforting music. Play some recorded music, or get out your own instrument if you play one.

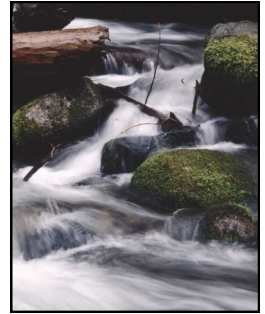
Read some comforting/inspiring poetry or spiritual writing. Pull out a book that is heartfelt and compassionate. Particularly something that is simple and clear, and does not require a lot of intellectual effort.

Connect with a dog, cat or other pet. Petting a good friend can put your feet on the ground and your hands in a soft spot. The hands have more nerve endings than any other part of the body except the lips. When your hands are touching a comforting furry animal, they send a “safe” signal to the brain.





Go to a rejuvenating natural place, by the water, in the woods, a park, or in the mountains. The natural world has great healing and restorative power.



After you get through this moment, you may want to practice some things that will help you become less vulnerable to getting triggered again. I recommend a physical practice or a breathing practice. By “practice” I mean something that you do on a regular basis, when you are not distressed. This is akin to taking medication daily, but without the side effects. A practice like this is good preparation prior to beginning therapy; it can help you become more tolerant of strong emotions before you start the challenging work of resolving trauma through therapy.

Practice gentle yoga or Tai Chi. This will calm and organize the brain. Get a video to use at home, or better yet, join a class. These movement practices are often better than meditation for trauma survivors, who often cannot sit quietly for more than a few seconds.



Super-power your breathing practice with the StressEraser biofeedback unit.

This unit teaches your body to coordinate your breathing with your heart rate, and is particularly valuable for anyone who has had poor success with other breathing practices.

Note: I DO NOT recommend practices that include releasing aggression through violent activities like hitting (not even a pillow), breaking things, etc. Although these may relieve stress in the moment, they tend to become addictive and increase your aggressive actions over time.

I wish you good success.

Erran Sharpe



Soothing Self-Talk

I can come back to this later when I'm ready.

It's OK if someone else is upset.

I am OK just the way I am.

I can choose to be happy if I let go of being "right."

I can live with discomfort, even if I don't *like* it.

I don't have to be perfect.

I can be kind and gentle to myself.

Crying soothes my soul.

I can handle this situation.

I am loveable and worthy of respect even when I make mistakes.

I don't have to fix anyone else.

I'm still OK, even when others are unhappy with me.

