

Coping Skills for Graceful Revolution

A Workbook for Navigating Difficult Times



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These are uncertain times.

When things feel out of our control, as undoubtedly they will, we need a toolbox of coping skills to navigate crisis situations without making things worse for ourselves. So often, as humans, we want to avoid feeling negative emotions. Yet ignoring or numbing out our feelings comes at the risk of making our situation worse.

The intention of this workbook is to offer you a space to try out several coping skills and figure out which work best for you. These skills are based in dialectical behavior therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, yoga, and mindfulness.

I hope you find these practices helpful in launching your own graceful revolution.

Revolution is messy.
Give yourself grace.

For more coping skills and to stay connected, find me on instagram
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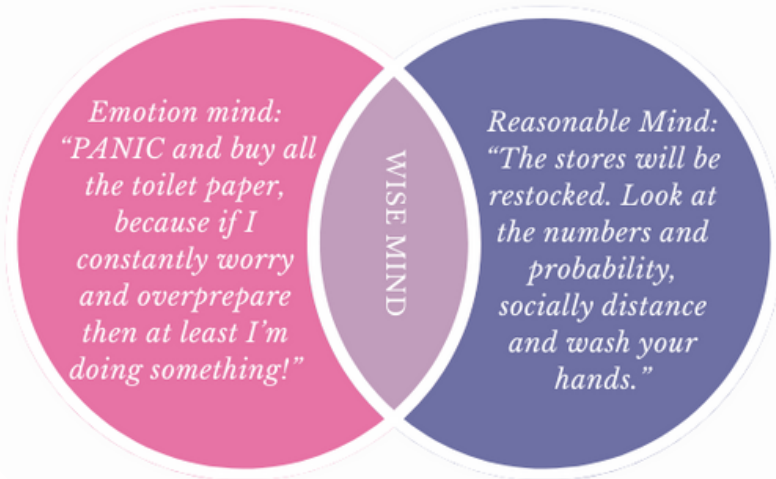
Mindfulness Skills

Three States of Mind

Mindfulness skills begin with recognizing what state of mind you are in - emotion mind, reasonable mind, or wise mind. Emotion mind is when our emotions run the show, and our behaviors follow those emotions. Reasonable mind ignores emotions in favor of the facts and research. Wise mind validates the emotions while checking the facts, so that we can make choices about our behavior that are informed by both reason and how we feel.

In the example to the right, emotion mind lets anxiety take control and becomes overwhelming, leading to panic shopping. Reasonable mind ignores emotions and just operates on facts, leading to downplaying the severity of the situation. Wise mind would acknowledge the anxiety, check the facts, and try to take a balanced approach.

3 states of mind: the coronavirus version



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Ideas for activities to do mindfully:

Do One Thing In The Moment

Any activity can be done mindfully. I know it might sound boring, but sweeping the floor, doing the dishes, and folding the laundry are all better done mindfully. When you find emotions escalating, try to pay attention to what you are doing in that moment. Walking and breathing mindfully are very effective ways of reducing anxiety through the body. Painting, coloring, and knitting are creative options to practice mindfulness. Whatever activity you choose to do, keep bringing yourself back to the present moment, over and over again.

Use the space to the left to write down some ideas of mindful activities to try.

Practice Being Non-Judgemental

We are often our own worst critic. Try noticing when you "should" on yourself - when you think you should be doing something differently. Practice self-compassion by talking to yourself just as a dear friend would, or by imagining what a friend would say to you in a moment of self-judgement. Can you take a kinder, more understanding tone? In the space below, make note of some self-judgements you hold and challenge them from a place of self-compassion and non-judgement.



Distress Tolerance Skills

What is distress tolerance?

Distress tolerance is our ability to tolerate a crisis moment without making things worse for ourselves. As human beings, we are constantly seeking out comfort, which means that when we experience stressors, we often develop unhealthy ways of finding relief that ultimately make our conditions worse in the long run. Some examples include using food, substances, gambling, or shopping to feel good and numb out our negative emotions. Distress tolerance skills help us add tools to our toolbox so we can calm down the nervous system and make more clear-headed decisions, ultimately finding wise mind.

Distract Yourself

Distracting yourself until the heightened emotions pass is one way of tolerating distress. There are several ways to distract yourself in order to calm down.

I'll try to distract by:

Activities - Choose a distracting activity like exercise, cleaning, reading a book, or working on a project.

Contributing - Help someone else as a way of taking your mind off your own situation. Call a friend, help a family member, or reach out to a neighbor. Contributing to their wellbeing will inevitably increase your own positive emotions.

Opposite Emotions - Engage in something that you know will create a different emotional experience. Watch a funny movie or stand-up comedy, listen to relaxing music, or read a fiction book.

Other Sensations - Intense sensations help us tolerate distress and shift our attention to something else. Listen to really loud music, take a cold or hot shower, drink a warm beverage, run your hands under ice cold water or hold an ice cube.

Radical Acceptance

Accepting the reality of our situation is key when it comes to tolerating distress. If we deny reality, we are stuck wishing things were different. Only when we accept reality are we then able to move forward and make productive changes. Accepting reality doesn't mean you agree with the situation or how you hoped things would go, but it means you wholeheartedly accept your current situation.

what is acceptance?

IT'S RAINING

i don't like rain.
i wish it wasn't raining.
my day would be better
if it wasn't raining. my day is
ruined. every day is like this.
it's always like this. why does
it always rain when all i want is
for it to be sunny?

IT'S RAINING

yup.

things I can accept



Emotion Regulation Skills

In the long term, we want to bolster our resilience and reduce our vulnerability to negative emotions. That's where emotion regulation skills come in.

PLEASE Skill

Take your self-care practices back to basics with this reminder.

Physical Illness - take care of any physical illness right away. Take medications as prescribed. For example, if you have a headache, take the medication that helps you feel better.

Exercise - move your body for 20 minutes a day

Avoid substances - drugs and alcohol make us more vulnerable to negative emotions.

Sleep - get the right amount of sleep for your body, most adults need between 7-9 hours per night.

Eat balanced - make room for all the foods, there are no good or bad foods. Enjoy the foods that leave your body and mind feeling good.

Remember, your feelings aren't facts.

Emotions are temporary.

Your emotions do not define you.

Avoid judging your emotions, try not to label them good or bad, simply accept them.

Emotions are here for a reason. They show up to teach us something. What are your emotions trying to teach you right now? Is your emotional reaction in-proportion to the situation?

Are there ways your emotions do not serve you? How do your emotions get in your way?





Interpersonal Skills & Conscious Communication

Validation

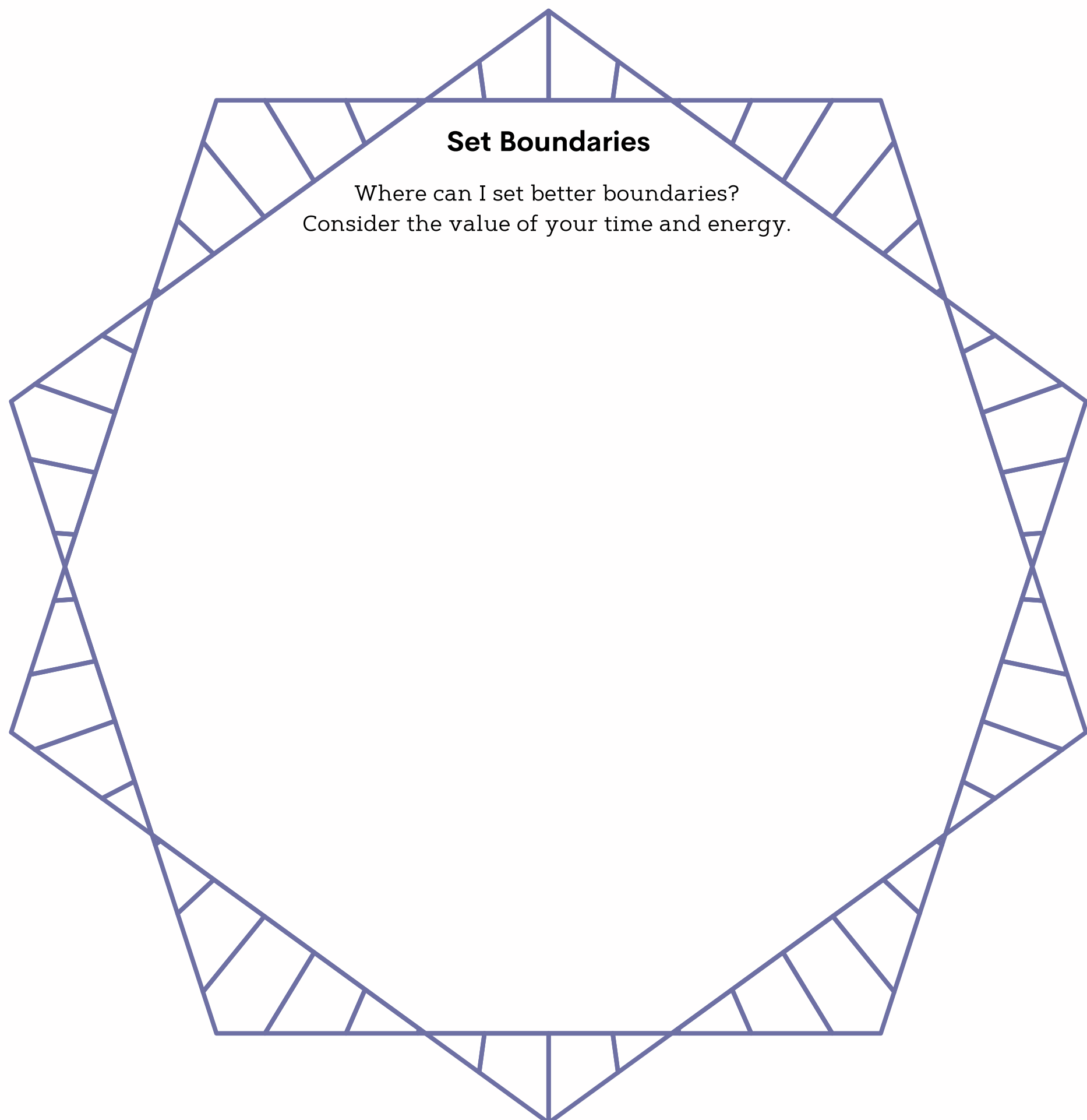
Validation lets another person know you understand them. Usually it's accomplished by reflecting what the person says, possibly rephrasing their perspective or finding an emotion word that describes what they are expressing. Validation doesn't mean you agree, it demonstrates that you understand.

Active Listening

Active listening and validation go hand-in-hand. One must be mindfully listening to another in order to validate them. Notice when you are half-listening, distracted by the thoughts of your side of the argument, or how you relate to what they are saying. Many times when we are listening to someone else, we are still in our head thinking about our own stuff! When this comes up, bring your attention back to the speaker.

Use I statements

Speak to how you feel about a situation, instead of blaming the other person. Own your part in whatever is happening. Someone will likely be more receptive to hear, "I feel more organized and calm when the house is clean," as opposed to "You guys never clean up after yourselves!"



Anxiety Management Skills

Grounding

When you feel anxiety begin to rise, grounding is an extremely effective way of bringing oneself back into the present moment. By accessing the nervous system through mindful awareness of the senses, emotions can de-escalate.

Thought Stopping

If you find yourself ruminating on a thought, getting stuck in the mindless social media scroll, or engaging in any habit that is not helpful and possibly increases negative emotions, imagine a stop sign in your mind and STOP!

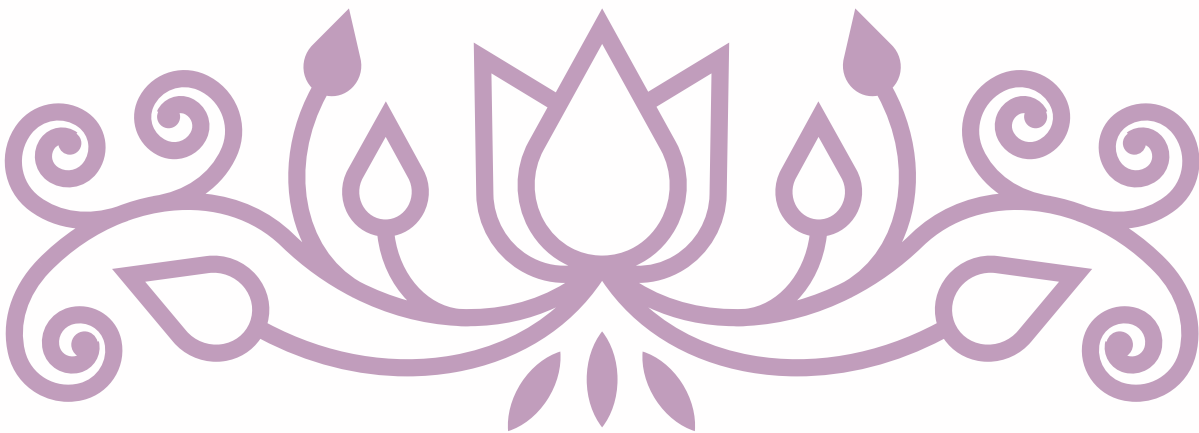
3-2-1 Technique

Name 3 things you can hear,
3 things you can see,
and 3 things you can touch.

Name 2 things you can hear,
2 things you can see,
and 2 things you can touch.

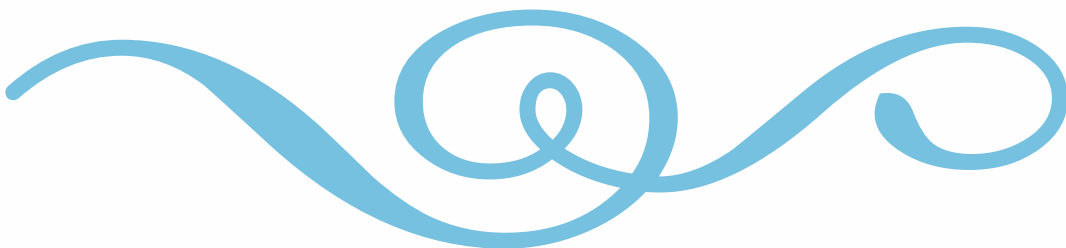
Name 1 thing you can hear,
1 thing you can see,
and 1 thing you can touch.

how do you feel?



Thought Diffusion

This is a type of meditation that allows one to acknowledge their thoughts without necessarily getting caught up in the internal dialogue. To practice, as you notice your thoughts, make them into one word or one picture, then put the word/picture on a cloud or in a bubble and as you exhale, imagine it floating away. Return your mind to your breath, and each time a thought arises, simplify it and float it away over and over again.



Breathing Techniques

Breathing is one of the fastest ways to access and downregulate the nervous system.

One of the most powerful techniques I find is three-part diaphragmatic breathing, which can be layered in with many other techniques. Place both hands on your diaphragm and allow the breath to fill your lungs, all the way down to the bottom, let the stomach be soft and receptive so the diaphragm can rise and fall freely. Then feel the ribs move in all four directions, side to side and front to back, then the chest lifts just slightly. On the exhale, chest, ribs and diaphragm gently fall back.

In addition to three part breath, one can add on the following:

- taking long exhales, making the exhale twice as long as the inhale
- breathe out the mouth, sigh, flubber the lips
- techniques where the breath is held, such as
 - 4-7-8 breath: breathe in for 4, hold for 7, breathe out for 8
 - Square breathing: breathe in for 4, hold for 4, breathe out for 4, hold out for 4
- focusing the breath on the left nostril and left side of the body for grounding
- focusing the breath on the right nostril and right side of the body for energy
- alternate nostril breathing: close off the nostrils using the thumb and ring finger, release the right side and breathe in, close again, release the left side to breathe out. Breathe in through the left, close, breathe out through the right. Continue in this pattern.

Yoga for Emotional Resilience

Yoga can be extremely beneficial in calming the nervous system. Research shows yoga decreases anxiety and depression symptoms both in the short and long term. Slow flow and restorative yoga that focuses on grounding is very powerful. The simple restorative yoga poses below focus on cultivating relaxation by communicating a sense of safety to the body.



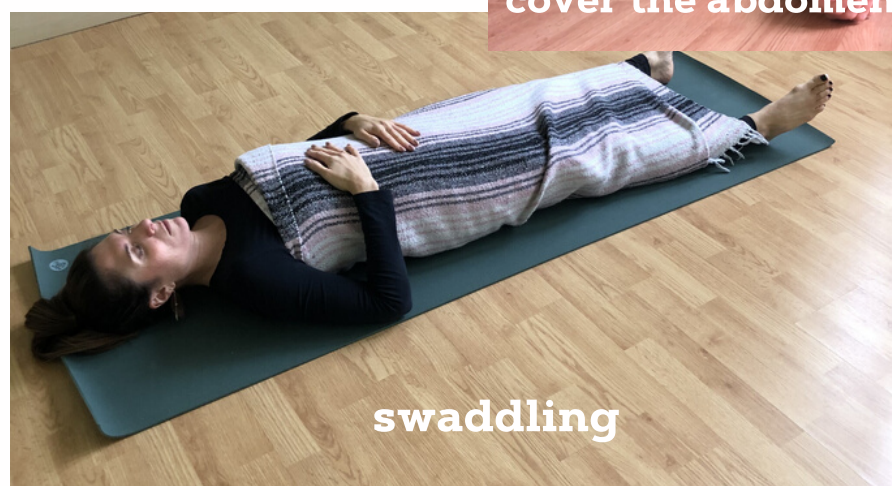
wrapping the pelvis



wrapping the legs



cover the abdomen (or add weight of sandbag)



swaddling



pronated savasana

Somatic Based Regulation Techniques

There are several other ways to calm down the nervous system through the body. Other effective techniques include:

- Pretzel arms: reach your arms out, cross at the forearms, turn palms to face and interlace the hands. Roll your fists in toward your heart and your arms will make a pretzel shape, giving you a self-hug.
- Ragdoll: stand in mountain pose with knees soft. Inhale and reach your arms up, as you exhale, make a "ha" sound and fold over your legs. Press into your feet and rebound up to standing with soft knees. Repeat up to three times. (Be careful not to over-do this one and get dizzy!)
- Find mountain pose: stand evenly on all four corners of your feet, with feet hip width apart. Focus on your feet and the connection to the ground. Be sure to avoid locking out the knees. Lengthen up through all four sides of the waist and crown of the head.
- Shaking it out: shake your arms and hands, legs and feet. Move around shaking out your limbs.
- Intense exercise: go for a jog, do jumping jacks, dance around. Do anything that will tire you out.
- Intense temperature: take a hot bath or shower, or take a cold shower. Hold an ice cube. The temperature change will force your attention on something else.
- Physical connection: hold hands, receive a tight hug, cuddle, let someone put their arm around you or their hand on your back.
- Singing: SING! Just for the fun of it. You don't have to be good! Play really loud music and sing along.
- Walk barefoot in grass and feel the soles of your feet connect to the earth for a grounding, sensory experience.

When we experience crisis, we have five options:

- 1) solve the problem**
- 2) change the way we feel about the problem**
- 3) stay miserable**
- 4) make the problem worse**
- 5) accept the problem and move forward**

What do you want to choose?

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Journal Activity

What do you want to remember from this time?
What are you learning about yourself right now?



Coping skills

What are my most effective coping skill strategies?

A circular graphic composed of many short, purple line segments arranged in a ring, resembling a stylized sunburst or a circular pattern of dashes. The segments are of varying lengths and are oriented radially, pointing outwards from the center of the circle. The overall effect is a textured, circular border.

More Resources

Find even more videos and blog posts about using these skills to cope more effectively.



For 7 days of Coping Skills videos and a BONUS weekly checklist
sign up for my email list right on my homepage:

www.jamiehanley.com

Thank you so much for meeting me here.
Please continue to connect with me if I can be of service. I hope you've found this
information helpful on your healing journey.

*Warmest,
Jamie*

About Jamie Hanley, LPC, E-RYT 500, C-IAYT

Jamie Hanley, MS, LPC, ERYT-500, C-IAYT (she/her) has specialized in offering yoga to mental health populations since 2008, and has shared yoga with several treatment programs including eating disorders, substance abuse, at-risk adolescents, and therapeutic schools. She has researched and facilitated yoga therapy groups on the effects of yoga for anxiety and depression. Since 2014, Jamie has facilitated 200 hour and 500 hour yoga teacher trainings, as well as long-form therapeutic yoga trainings.

While working with yoga in mental health facilities, Jamie realized there was a great need for professionals who could offer yoga in the context of mental health. She returned to graduate school and completed a masters in mental health counseling in 2013. Jamie has worked as a counselor in a variety of mental health settings including outpatient, intensive outpatient, and partial hospitalization treatment for eating disorders and general mental health. She believes that a trusting relationship is the foundation for healing. She incorporates holistic practices such as mindfulness, breath work, meditation, yoga, and guided relaxation into therapy sessions. Jamie specializes in working with eating disorders, maternal mental health, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, and chronic pain.

As a mental health counselor and yoga therapist, Jamie believes everyone is entitled access to healing, regardless of gender, size, race, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, or any other unjustly limiting factors. She is committed to leveraging her privilege as a cis-gender white female to help support those who will benefit from yoga and holistic healing.

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