



16th of November

How to help traumatized children

«Doing what matters in times of stress»

guidelines for children, adults and helpers

Guidelines

This lecture is built upon these two guidelines

they are ment for evrybody, but also addresses helpers



 **IFRC**
Psychosocial Centre

**Doing What Matters
in Times of Stress:
An Illustrated Guide**



 **World Health
Organization**

overview of content

6 chapters:

1. First aid when very stressed
2. When feeling overwhelmed and distressed
3. When anxious and nervous
4. When wanting to calm down
5. Strengthening my inner resources
6. When going to sleep

THE WELL-BEING GUIDE

REDUCE STRESS, RECHARGE
AND BUILD INNER RESILIENCE



 IFRC
Psychosocial Centre

chapter 1

First aid when very stressed

Should you or others for some reason become very upset or distraught, the following exercise is aimed at getting immediate relief. If having a flashback, the same exercise can be used to direct the attention back to the here and now to assist leaving unpleasant memories in the past.

Stand, sit or lie and keep your eyes open.

- Begin by finding five things in the immediate surroundings that you can see. Say out loud what they are and use concrete words to describe what you see.
- Next, find four sounds in the immediate surroundings that you can hear. Say out loud what they are and use as concrete words as possible to describe the sounds.
- Find three things in your immediate surroundings that you can touch/ are touching. Say out loud what they are using concrete words when describing the touch.
- Find two things in your immediate surroundings that you can smell. Say out loud what they are.
- Find one thing in your surrounding that you can taste. Say out loud what it is.



2

When feeling
overwhelmed and
distressed

- unwinding after
stressing situations

1. Awareness here and now

when stressed, we tend to go over what happened or worry about our future
focus on here and now, what are around you and what are the signals from your bod

2. Hug yourself calm

sit and feel the ground under your feet, take a deep breath,
left hand on right and right hand on left upper arm
press inwards , hold firm grip for some seconds and – release, repeat twice

3. Ground yourself. (getting ready for an uncomfortable situation)

stand straight, concentrate on your feet, lean slowly forward, back in position lean backwards etc
the lean slowly towards right side, to center and then to wright side. Never move the feet, but feel yo are
in balance

4. Thoughts in a box

invading thoughts:- visualize a beatiful box with a solidlock. Visualize place all intrusive thoughts inside
and lock it up well. (be sure to visualize placing the box outside your bedroom)

5. Anger managements

when upset we tend to clench our hands, leading to tension in arms shoulder and neck and shallow
breathing. Acknowledge the feeling, but also that it will pass. Open the hands and let arms hang relaxed
by the side of the body with palms showing



3.

When anxious and nervous

when level of stress decreases- we are able to think more clearly, feel more control and act more in a meaningful way

Breathing is the key:

1. **blow soap bubbles**

blow a couple of real or imaginary soap bubbles, The lungs effortlessly empty and fill up
Especially for children this exercise is associated with fun and distracts the mind from worries

2. **chew gum**

when chewing gum (in reality or imaginary) the mouth is filled with saliva which signals well-being to the brain. When nervous mouth gets dry.

3. **breath in a color you like**

combine deep breathing with a mental picture

imagine breathing in your most favourite colour and have a long breathing out with your least favourite colour

4. **worry time**

Decide on a daily 10-30 minutes worry time. when worries appear at other times during the day, remind yourself you will take care of them in worry-time. During worry-time try to make an action plan for each

chapter 4

4. When wanting to calm down

-regulating
emotions and bodily
arousal, de-stressing
oneself in order to
assist others

take a deep breath

sit comfortable, hand in your lap, palm upside. Breathe slowly through you nose, relax jaws and lips.

count while slowly breathing out with mouth open to 10,. repeat, untill you feel your body relaxes.

Outline a flower

place a point on the middle of a sheet, draw a flower with 8 petals. Breathe slowly in when drawing the pencil out from the centre and breathe out slowly as you draw towards the center at each petal . when the flower is done, notice if there is any change in your body

hand on the heart

as a simple gest of self-care – place both hands on your heart while breathing slowly and relxing your shoulde

calming by awakening senses- by releasing oxytocin

take a pencil or a stick in one hand and slowly touch the outline and then the total surface of the other hand, do it slowly and thoroughly, notice if there is a change in your body. then repeat , but change hands. If this feels good, go on by using the stick/pencil to slowly touch half of your face, notice the effect and continue the other half. . If you like the effect, go on touching your arms, throut, neck, lower legs or feet

imagine a hug

imagine hugging someone you care deeply about or holding hands in more than 20 sec. this may release positive chemicals, neurotransmitters and hormones that boost positive feelings

5. Strengthening my inner resources

Being able to separate thinking from feeling and to think about what you are feeling is a key skill for someone supporting others.

- **Think like an optimist-**

Growing your internal resilience by practicing optimism will prepare you to react to, and handle, everyday stressors effectively.

example of optimistic self-instructions:

- This is possible and manageable.....
- I get to do it.....
- I can manage.....
- I will ask for help.....
- I know how to calm myself.....
- I know my inner resources.....

- **Be kind and compassionate**

The body responds in completely opposite ways to stress and to kindness. Kindness has the beneficial effects of lowering the blood pressure, slowing the heartbeat, making digestion easier and decreasing the likelihood of catching colds and so on.

- **Make a well-being flower**

- • Material
- • Spiritual
- • Social
- • Cultural
- • Mental
- • Emotional
- • Biological



draw a flower with 7 petals

- Each petal of the flower represents one of the domains of your personal well-being. They represent the aspects of life where we need to feel healthy and content. Reflect and write down examples of things, people, or activities under each of the seven areas **that give you a positive sense of feeling healthy and good**. This is your own well-being flower.

strengthen inner resources- 5 continued



• **I have, I am, I can, I will**

First, open your palm and fingers wide. Place your hand on a piece of paper and draw around your hand.

- Write **I HAVE** on one finger and list names, people, images, places, animals you can rely on for support.
- Write **I AM** on another finger and write the things you are proud of.
- Write **I CAN** on another finger and write the skills, abilities, activities you engage in.
- Write **I WILL** on another finger and write things you will do to bring comfort to yourself when times are hard.
- Give yourself a thumbs up at the end of the exercise!

• **Learn from past adversity**

- First think about a difficult moment or event in the past. Next ask yourself the following questions:
- How did I cope with it and overcome the difficulties?
- How can this experience help me overcome my current difficulties?

6. when going to sleep



- **yawn away**

- Yawning is an effective and highly contagious reflex that sends signals of relaxation and release to the nervous system. Open your mouth, pull back your tongue, take a deep breathing, pretending yawning

- **relax the head**

- notice and relax every muscle in your forehead, your jaw, your neck and shoulders

- **gratitude**

- Gratitude is a powerful feeling that will also help you build resilience. Focusing on what you are grateful for also has a positive impact on your physical and mental health. Before going to sleep, take some time to think about the day that just passed. Pick three episodes, no matter how small or big, that made you grateful during the course of the day. Dwell on these good memories and notice how they fill you with pleasant feelings of being grateful. Allow the entire body to be filled with feelings of gratitude.

- **focus on an object**

- Focusing on an external object trains the ability to concentrate and to be fully present. At the same time, the focusing on an object exercise can be used to drift to sleep more easily. If it helps you concentrate, choose an object, for example a small stone, or a small ball to hold in a hand or between both hands.
- Lie in bed in a comfortable position. Close the eyes softly and breathe gently in.... and out. Now scan the body by letting the attention move around the body. Notice how one area after another comes to your attention. Next concentrate on the object. Focus on the sensations of holding the stone in the hand or between the hands. Notice the weight, the surface, the texture, and the areas of the palms and fingers that touch the object. Keep going for as long as you please or till you fall asleep... and hopefully sleep tight.

Doing What Matters in Times of Stress: An Illustrated Guide



overview of the guidelines

Section1:GROUNDING

Section 2: UNHOOKING

Section 3: ACTING ON YOUR VALUES

Section 4: BEING KIND

Section5:MAKINGROOM

Tool1:GROUNDING

Tool 2: UNHOOKING

Tool3:ACTING ON YOUR VALUES

Tool 4: BEING KIND

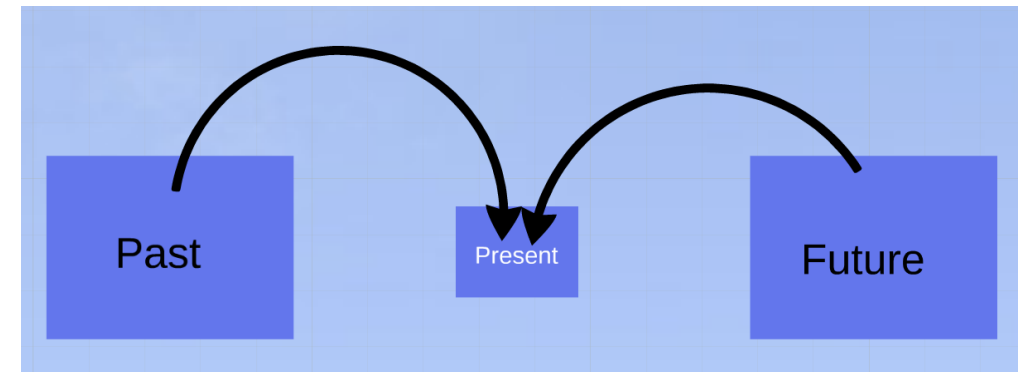
Tool5:MAKINGROOM

1.

when stressed we
have difficult being in
present time-

When they are stressed, many people ...

- ..cannot focus, get angry easily ,worry, cannot sit still, cry, have difficult sleeping, feel tired, feel sad and guilty
- And many of us think a lot about bad things from the past or bad things we fear in the future.
- we need to **ground** ourselves and be aware of the present



1. grounding

Some of the reasons for feeling stressed

DISPLACED FROM HOME

VIOLENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

FAMILY VIOLENCE

ILLNESS

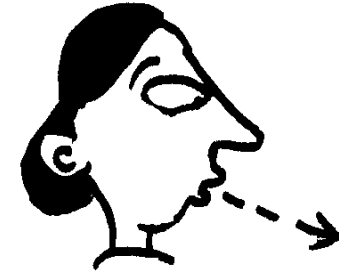
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tool

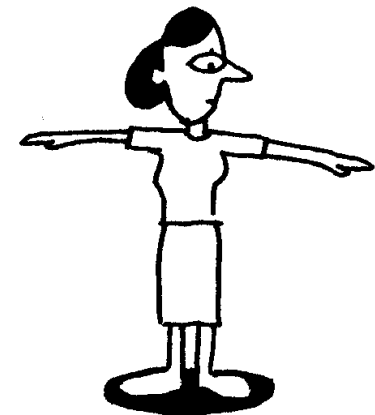
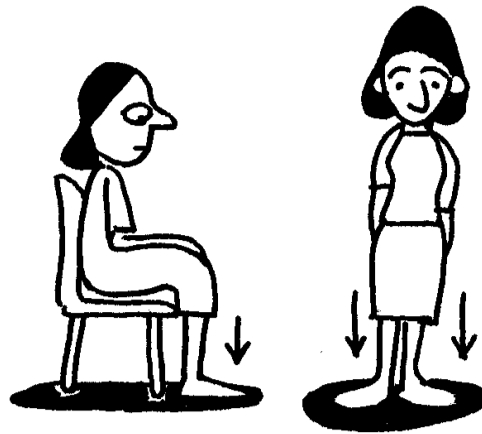
- **GROUND YOURSELF** during emotional storms by **NOTICING** your thoughts and feelings, **SLOWING DOWN** and **CONNECTING** with your body by slowly pushing your feet into the floor, stretching and breathing, and then **REFOCUSING** and **ENGAGING** with the world around you.
- What can you see, hear, touch, taste and smell? Pay attention with curiosity to what is in front of you. Notice where you are, who is with you and what you are doing.
- Practice tip:
- Grounding is especially useful during stressful situations or emotional storms. You can also practise grounding when you simply have one or two minutes available, like when you're waiting for something, or before or after an activity you do every day, like washing, eating, cooking or sleeping. If you practise during these times, you may find that boring activities become more enjoyable, and it will be easier to use grounding later in more difficult situations.

more grounding tools

Next, SLOW DOWN and CONNECT with your body. Slow your breathing. Empty your lungs completely. Then let them refill as slowly as possible.



Slowly press your feet into the floor. Slowly stretch your arms, or slowly press your hands together.



2. unhooking

comments



These powerful thoughts and feelings are a natural part of stress. But problems can occur if we get “hooked” by them.



When something is on a hook, it cannot get away. The hook traps it.



In the same way, we can get hooked by our difficult thoughts and feelings.

tool:

- UNHOOK YOURSELF with these three steps:
 1. 1) NOTICE that a difficult thought or feeling has hooked you. Realize that you are distracted by a difficult thought or feeling, and notice it with curiosity.
 2. 2) Then silently NAME the difficult thought or feeling; for example:
“Here is a difficult feeling”
“Here is tightness in my chest”
“Here is a feeling of anger”
 3. “Here is a difficult thought about the past” “I notice here is a difficult thought”
“I notice here are fears about the future”
 4. 3) Then, REFOCUS on what you are doing. Pay full attention to whoever is with you and whatever you are doing.

- being present:

remember focus 5 things you can see, 4 sounds you hear, 3 things to touch, 2 things to smell 1 thing to taste

**You can
practise these
unhooking
skills with any
activity you do.**

For example, if you are drinking tea or coffee...

- **...focus your full attention on it. You notice the drink with curiosity, as if you have never encountered such a drink before. You notice its colour.**
- **You sip it SLOWLY.**
- **You savour the smell of it.**
- **Let it sit on your tongue, feel it on your teeth and savour the taste.**
- **you drink it as slowly as possible, savouring the taste, noticing the temperature.**
- **You notice the taste fading from your tongue, as you swallow.**
- **And whenever you get hooked by thoughts and feelings – refocus on the drink.**
- **Go ahead and practise this now. Get some water, tea or coffee, and follow the instructions above.**
- **You notice the movements of your throat as you swallow.**
- **And you drink each mouthful in the same way: slowly, noticing and savouring.**



3. acting on your values

what are your values

- For example, if you are a parent or if you have responsibilities caring for others, what kind of person do you want to be?
 - Loving
 - Wise
 - Attentive
 - Committed
 - Persistent
 - Responsible
 - Calm
 - Caring
 - Protective
 - Courageous

tool:

Choose the values that are most important to you.
For example:

- being kind and caring
- being helpful
- being brave
- being hardworking.

You get to decide which values are most important to you!

- **Then pick one small way that you can act according to these values in the next week. What will you do? What will you say? Even tiny actions matter!**

«God give me the courage to change what can be changed, the patience to tolerate the things that cannot be changed and the wisdom to be able to see the difference»

4. BEING KIND

reflection:



Unkind thoughts are natural and may happen often; that is OK. But it is not helpful to be hooked by them, because... when we get hooked by these unkind thoughts, we get pulled away from our values. So we need to NOTICE and NAME them, to unhook from them.



When you see someone in pain, suffering and struggling, what are small acts of kindness that you could do?



And we should be kind to ourselves, too. and if you are kind to yourself ...you will have more energy to help others, and more motivation to be kind to others, so everyone benefits.

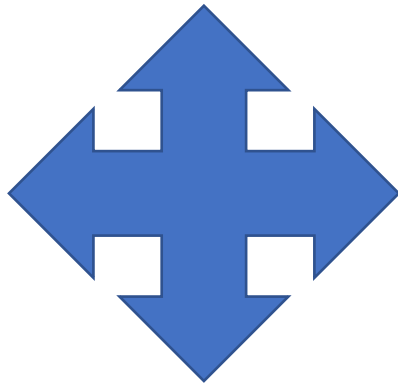
tool

- Notice pain in yourself and others and respond with kindness. Unhook from unkind thoughts by **NOTICING** and **NAMING** them. Then, try speaking to yourself kindly. If you are kind to yourself you will have more energy to help others and more motivation to be kind to others, so everyone benefits.
- You can also take one of your hands and imagine filling it with kindness. Place this hand gently somewhere on your body where you feel pain. Feel the warmth flowing from your hand into your body. See if you can be kind to yourself through this hand.

5. MAKINGROOM

reflection:

- Trying to push away difficult thoughts and feelings often does not work very well. So instead, **MAKE ROOM** for them:



tool

- 1) **NOTICE** the difficult thought or feeling with curiosity. Focus your attention on it. Imagine the painful feeling as an object, and notice its size, shape, colour and temperature.
- 2) **NAME** the difficult thought or feeling. For example:
“Here is a difficult feeling”
“Here is a difficult thought about the past”
“I notice here is sadness”
3. “I notice here is a thought that I am weak”
4. **3) Allow** the painful feeling or thought to come and go like the weather. As you breathe, imagine your breath flowing into and around your pain to make room for it. Instead of fighting with the thought or feeling, allow it to move through you, just like the weather moves through the sky. If you are not fighting with the weather, then you will have more time and energy to engage with the world around you and do things that are important to you.

5.making room

tool:

Imagine these thoughts and feelings are like the weather ...

- Focus your attention on a difficult thought or feeling. NOTICE and NAME it, then observe it with curiosity.
- Then breathe in slowly, and imagine your breath flows into and around your pain.
- And as you do this, breathe out slowly. Then once your lungs are empty, pause for second and count to three.
- Imagine the thought drift away like a cloud

- reflection:
- Our thoughts and feelings are like the weather. Always changing!



And we can learn to be like the sky,
and make room for the
“bad weather” of our
difficult thoughts and feelings
without being hurt by it.

the end

- So go back and practise these exercises now
- You can also practise during your day, whenever you experience difficult thoughts and feelings.
- With practice it gets easier!
- And much quicker!
- Remember: it is like learning any new skill.

