Tool Basket:

I have enclosed a number of exercises which you may wish to try. These exercises are designed for the times which you feel stressed, anxious, angry etc.

These exercises are meant to give you “Breathing Room”, i.e. break the pattern of negative self-talk. They may be of some use when you are faced with difficult situations or negative self-talk.

What works for you is completely individual to you. You can dip in and out of any or all of these exercises , using the tools to bring around positive change.

**4-4-4-4 Breathing:**

This is based on yogic breathing styles and is often known as “breath work”. It is used to change your focus and slow any emotional response to stimuli. Helping you to take stock of emotions.

Simply Take a deep breath in over the count of four seconds (this should feel natural).

Hold that breath for four seconds.

Release that breath for four seconds.

After exhalation pause for four seconds before repeating the cycle.

Note do not strain during the exercise and if you are unable to breathe in and hold and four seconds , then amend your breath and hold to what feels comfortable. As you become more comfortable with the breathing pattern then you can choose to increase the breath cycle up to four seconds.

**Emotional Regulation:**

We are all busy people and at times we don’t consider our own wellbeing.

Regularly check in with how you are feeling, the simplest way is three times a day, morning noon and night. Take several minutes of quiet contemplation to feel what’s going on.

Perhaps the easiest way to do this is act as thought your checking in a friend who you care for.

How is your mood?, Is there anything bothering you?, what are you looking forward to ?, do you have concerns about your day?. These are only a few examples that illustrate how you can be aware of any triggers and or patterns of behaviour which leads to disordered thinking and then participating.

This takes only a few moments and allows you to regain composure.

**Use an emotional scale:**

By identifying our own emotional state, we can work to identify any triggers which we may have. It can be helpful to determine what ones emotional state is at any given time as this allows you to identify what elicits any given emotional response.

From this you can take control over the situation which you may find yourself in and how you react.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 5 | Angry, upset, stressed, crying, frustration, negative feelings | Angry face outline outline |
| 4 | Annoyed, anxious, not coping, feeling low, dissociated, board | Worried face outline outline |
| 3 | Alright, feeling ok neither up nor down | Nervous face outline outline |
| 2 | Feeling good, things are going well, feeling positive | Grinning face outline outline |
| 1 | Feeling calm, relaxed, feelings of happiness and enjoyment | Smiling with hearts face outline outline |

Used in conjunction with “the check in” these two exercises can help assess the emotional situation. As stated they can be used to establish any triggers, and any coping mechanism by examining what helps and what doesn’t.

After identifying the feelings, thoughts and emotions that can lead to an emotional “stressors” then you can begin to **PLAN** .

**P.L.A.N:**

**P**, is for possibilities: Positive “Self-Talk” is simple and affective to raise your mood, increasing positive feelings and silence your inner critic.

Simply look into a mirror, and see yourself, all of yourself and say something positive about yourself. (This can be challenging to begin with, however persevere as the more you repeat the “mantra” the stronger the response will be)

Your statement here has to be something that resonates with you.

For example:

“I am worthy of happiness, I am free from my past it does not control or define me”.

Start with whispering your phrase, and gradually get louder with each repetition. Continue to do this until you are shouting.

Positive affirmation: A simple phrase you can repeat throughout the day internally or vocally. “Each and every day things will get better and better”. Again, you can make this your own. Likely when you start you start you may not believe the statement or think this is worthwhile. Remember the brain learns through repetition. Keep going it take at least 28 days to establish a new habit and to break an old one.

**L:** Latter or the future: Close your eyes and see yourself sitting in cinema middle row on your own. See the colours of the seats, what is the lighting like?, smell the popcorn sweet in the air build the picture up in your mind. See the curtain opening and exposing the cinema screen. You hear the Dolby surround sound add, and the music resonates with you. Anchoring you into the seat. The reel begins and as you see it you can see that this is your movie. Its all about you. You can see yourself as you are right now, in all your beauty, you can see family friends, smiling people, great memories. You can also see how your past has affected you and caused issues within your family and with friends. As you begin to feel the shift in emotion, when it become less pleasant. Lift your right hand and swipe left, as you do this the picture fasts forward to the next scene. It changes you begin to see you as you want to be . Happy , enjoying times with family and friend, planning your travel adventures. Having the funds to travel, feel the sun on your skin, feeling at peace. Making wonderful happy memories that you can only have now as you have moved on.

Bask in the positive emotions, feel them, perhaps give them as a colour, and hold on to it. When you are ready the curtain will close, and you can leave the cinema with the positive feeling lightness and a colour which when you see will bring back those feelings.

(This can be done by carrying a small piece of fabric of your chosen colour or a simple wrist band)

**A:** Actions Simply do something you love. Watch your favourite film or comedy series, walk outdoors early in the morning or late at night enjoying the quiet, being in nature is grounding and healing. Taking in all the surrounds and bank those positive feelings. These can be used, and the experience drawn on when things are difficult.

Get a stress ball, fidget ball or worry beads, even learn to knit. This is to keep the hand occupied. This is a form of unconscious mediation.

**N:** Next Keep talking to those who understand. Talk openly and honestly so that when you are struggling they can provide support.

**Take Five: Grounding Exercise**

This simple tool combines counting down from 5 to 1, while using your senses in a “mindful way”.

Start by noticing five things which you can see, you may wish to write these down or do this in your own head.

Once you are aware and can picture these things in detail, then move on to listing four things you can touch or feel. Then list three sounds. Two smells and finally one taste.

***You have already taken the most important steps by admitting you have an issue(s) which are negatively impacting on your life, and that you require help to work on this, by taking part in therapy.***

***It is important to remember that no journey is a straight road!***

***Keep going there may be slip ups but that is to be expected and know that these are not failures, rather an opportunity to establish what works for you and where you can learn. In doing so your self-awareness and self -knowledge will increase and as such you can continue to heal.***

***And finally: One size does not fit all, your journey is specific to you.***