

Trauma survivors often find themselves overwhelmed with thoughts, emotions, memories, unwanted bodily sensations or an absence of feeling, blank mind, out of touch with self. It is common for survivors of interpersonal trauma to experience one of these 2 extremes which I refer to as dysregulation. Google “window of Tolerance” for a variety of videos to explain this phenomena.

In a nut shell, when exposed to prolonged or extreme stress (or both) we burn through our internal resources, like a car burns through gas. Once our internal resources are dwindling, our tolerance for stress decreases. This is referred to as a narrow window of tolerance. As trauma survivors, those internal resources are spent, and typically they are rarely or not at all replenished. This leaves a survivor with a chronic narrow window of tolerance. So, as a trauma survivor, a normal human response stress is to find yourself either- hyper aroused (highly emotionally activated) or hypo-aroused (extremely blank, numb, stuck). This, in simpler terms is experienced as over reactive or under reactive to what might seem appropriate to a situation.

If this rings true to you, you might find the following options to be helpful in bringing you back to yourself and out of the experience of dysregulation. Not every option is for every person, so try these things and if they do not work, it may simply mean it is not the resource for you or not the right time for this resource or that you need more support before you can begin to successfully use the resource independently. Be kind to yourself in trying these suggestions. Stop if you are trying something that makes you feel worse. If something makes you feel worse, it is definitely the wrong resource or wrong time for the resource. Ask for help if you need more support than these resources supply.

Flashback Halting

- Right now, I am feeling (*name emotions*)
- In my (*body areas*)
- With the sensations of (*name sensations*)
- Because I am remembering (*name trauma*)
- At the same time I can look around and see that I am (*name where you are, when -date, year, time . . .*)
- I can see (*name things you can see right now*)

- And so I know (*name the trauma you are remembering*) is not happening now / anymore.

Grounding

- Put a strong mint, lemon / sour candy or other strongly flavored bite in your mouth
- Crunch it a bit and let it sit on your tongue
- Breathe deeply (not huge gulping breaths, just deep) from the diaphragm, feeling your stomach rise when you breathe in and fall when you breathe out
- Think to yourself on the inhale “breathe in relaxation”
- Think to yourself on the exhale “breathe out tension”
- After about 5 to 10 cycles of the above breath process, repeat silently to yourself upon inhale “I am” and on the exhale “at peace” for about 3 to 4 breath cycles

Self Connection and Compassion

- Sit still and silent in a comfortable position with your thoughts and emotions for a few minutes (2 to 5). Silently name and notice the emotions and sensations and where in your body you experience these emotions and sensations.
- Breathe deeply from the diaphragm. Breathe into the places in your body where the emotions and sensations are being held by focusing on these bodily areas as you breathe in and out.
- Place your hand/s on your chest over your sternum, OR, place your hands on opposite shoulders and tap your shoulders lightly as you do the next two steps.
- Notice in yourself the values that are present in you. Name these values and starting with “I value” filling in the blank with your values.
- Say out loud to yourself: “I am enough, This experience does not define me, I am enough,
- I am worthy, I deserve love, I love myself , I am enough”

Journal Process

- Find a quiet place and time free of distractions, a place that feels nurturing, peaceful, comfortable.
- Phone off and out of sight for the time being.
- Begin with a question or focal point related to what has you feeling dysregulated and begin writing as best you can, every thought that comes into your mind – capture it on paper. Do this until the thoughts stop coming.
- Take a 10 to 20 minute brisk walk, drink some ice water, perhaps eat a mint, breathe deeply from the diaphragm. Standing or sitting > raise your left knee to your right elbow, then your right knee to your left elbow and repeat for about 5 rounds.
- Now return to what you have written and read it, aloud if possible, and make notes on anything that stands out, any ah-has, patterns you notice, or “dots that connect”.
- Share this with your therapist or a safe supportive friend who has earned your trust and will keep what you share confidential.

Make Two ILsts

On list one identify the grievances, disrespects and bad breaks:

- People who don't like you
- Situations and or experiences that went wrong
- Unfair expectations
- Bad situations
- Unfortunate outcomes
- Unfairness

It's all legitimate, it's all real. Don't hold back.

On list two, write down the privileges, advantages and opportunities you have:

- The places where you get the benefit of the doubt.
- Your leverage and momentum.
- The positive things you see that others don't.
- What's working and what has worked in the past for you.

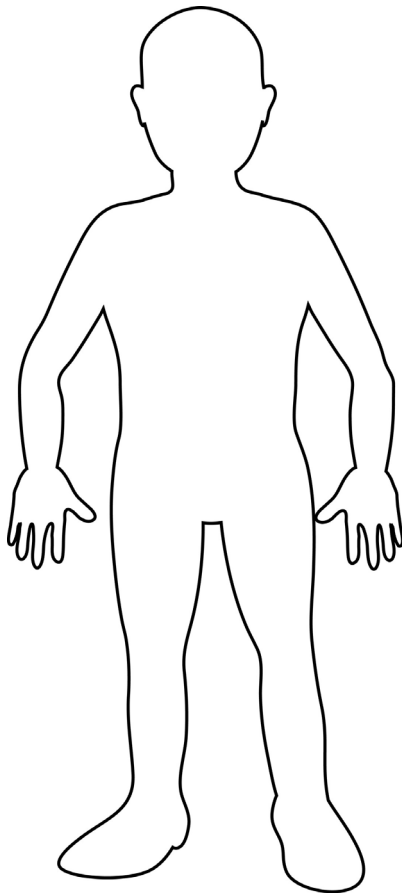
- The resources you can tap.
- The things you know.
- People who trust you and whom you trust.

Now, take list one and put it in a drawer. Take list two and tape it up on your bathroom mirror. Read the list in the drawer once a month or once a year, just to remind you that it's safe and sound. Read the other list every day.

The daily list will facilitate what you notice toward more resilience and will positively influence, how you interpret what you see and the story you tell yourself about what's happening and what will happen.

Adapted from the work of Seth Godin

Naming and Mapping your emotions



Write 4 to 8 feeling words (emotions) on the lines below. Then choose one color to represent each feeling word (emotion) and color the box next to the word with the chosen color.

_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Now use the colors to color in the body image to the left. Color each part of the body according to where you feel each of the different emotions you identified above and write the sensations present with each emotion in the body.

Another Kind of 2 lists For Getting Out of Negativity

Name the situation that has me stuck in negativity and pessimism:

The negative things about the situation	The positive things about the situation
How does this view serve me? How and why does it serve me this way?	How does this view serve me? How and why does it serve me this way?

Take time here to journal your response and experience with each of the options above.