

Emotion Regulation: IMPROVE the moment

During emotionally trying situations, we need skills to help get ourselves back into an effective emotional range. If our self-soothing kit isn't doing the job, we can turn to "IMPROVE" skills. Our IMPROVE skills are designed to be both a complement to our self-soothing kit as well as a menu of options for ways we can keep our spirits up and help encourage ourselves through tough times.

Imagery

Use your imagination to help calm your mind and/or to make a plan for what to do. Imagine yourself in a safe, calm environment. Picture yourself on the other side of this stressful situation and speculate how you could get to that resolution place. Create an image in your mind of your distress – what does it look like, where is it in your body? Now, picture it evaporating off from you.

Meaning

Try to find the meaning in the discomfort. If we find ourself in a hopeless or impossible situation, look to our values and try to let them guide your decisions.

Prayer

Prayer means different things to different people. For some, it means tapping into a higher power. For others, it means quiet, supportive and reflective self-talk. Take a moment to connect and calm.

Relaxation

Look inward and evaluate how your body feels. Are you breathing quickly? Is your heart racing? How do your muscles feel? Engage in relaxation exercises that can counteract how your body is reacting to this distress.

One thing at time

Bring your mind into focus and narrow into the one...right...next...step. Let the next two hundred steps go and just focus on the one thing you can do right now.

Vacation

We need a break! Set a timer (a few minutes, a couple hours, the least you're willing to spare) and allow yourself a mini-vacation. Turn off your phone, go outside, watch TV or do something that will be treating yourself. Once the timer goes off, re-evaluate the situation you just left.

Encouragement

The only consistent cheerleader we can count on is ourselves. Notice if you are being overly critical of yourself and practice some cheerleading. You can get through this. This is difficult and you are strong!