

Changing the body chemistry
Skills to decrease the extreme emotional mind.
A way to remember these skills: **CALM**

Using **C**old.

Use ice water to calm yourself down by changing your autonomous nervous system.

- Keep your face in a bowl with ice water for 30 seconds.*
- Splash ice water in your face.
- Keep an ice pack wrapped in a towel on your face. *ice water slows down the heart rate. Do not use ice water if you have a heart problem.

Breath **A**t peace.

- Slow down your breath when you in- and exhale (with an average of 5 to 7 breaths per minute).
- Breathe from the depth of your belly.
- Exhale slower than you inhale (e.g. 4 seconds in and 8 seconds out).

Let go of your muscles, relax.

- Start with your hands, go to your forearms, upper arms, shoulders, neck, forehead, eyes, cheeks & lips, tongue & jaw, chest, upper back, stomach, belly, buttocks, thighs, lower legs, ankles, feet.
- Tighten your muscles (for 5 seconds, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the entire exercise)
- Then let go, relax every muscle (entirely)
- Notice the tension. Notice the difference when you are relaxed.

Move more and more intensely.

To calm your body down when it is charged by emotions.

- Move intensely, even for a few minutes.
- Discharge the tension that is stored in your body by running, walking fast, jumping, playing a ball game, weightlifting, etc.

Calm

- A. If you are upset or in crisis, it can be difficult to apply these skills, and it can be very difficult to manage the crisis. These CALM skills are a quick way to get your emotional arousal down.
- B. There are 4 kinds of CALM exercises. Every kind ensures that the physiological response patterns of the individual change, due to which a change in the irritability level occurs. Every skill decreases the physiological irritability.
 - a. Temperature: ice water
 - b. Slowing down breath
 - c. Letting go of bodily muscle tension
 - d. Move more and more intensely
- C. The Calm skills are mainly necessary when people
 - a. Are stuck in their emotional mind
 - b. Are in crisis (strong urge to self-harming behaviour, or when an important deadline has to be made and the individual is overwhelmed).
 - c. Do not process information effectively anymore.



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- d. Are emotionally overwhelmed
- e. Cannot apply other skills anymore, or when they do not help.

D. Emotional deregulation

- a. Emotional deregulation has to do a lot with how our bodies react naturally to emotional irritability/arousal
- b. A condition of emotional deregulation occurs when the sympathetic nervous system becomes extremely active.
- c. It is important to remember that 1. physiological arousal is an important part of emotions, and 2. every part of the emotion system that is changed affects the entire system.

E. Ice. The CALM skills

- a. These skills use ice or ice water. If this is used the heart rate goes down and the physiological components of the emotional arousal are decreased.
- b. These skills help the most:
 - i. During high emotional irritability, panic and/or failure of other skills due to the feeling of being overwhelmed.
 - ii. When you have fear, which makes it difficult to focus on tasks that require concentration
 - iii. When you cannot sleep well due to worrying, or fear in the 'background'.
 - iv. When there is a high level of anger or another intense emotion or when it is impossible to let go of intense emotions, including worrying.
- c. Exercise:
 - i. Instruct the individual to notice every negative emotion they can feel right now.
 - ii. Hand the individual an ice cube and ask him/her to put this on his/her forehead for 30 seconds until it becomes uncomfortable.
 - iii. Participation is voluntarily. It is not a competition.

F. Aerobics, moving activities

- a. These skills can have a great impact on the emotion of this moment, whereby negative emotions decrease and positive emotions increase. In fact they have 20 minutes after moving a quick effect on emotions and the mood.
- b. An important characteristic of emotions is that they prepare us for action. Anger prepares us for attacks or defence, fear for running away. If the body has a high level of irritability, it can be very difficult to stop emotional action, even if the action is dysfunctional.
- c. Try to participate in some kind of movement for the coming days, such as walking at high speed for 20 minutes, or playing basketball.

G. Breathing more calmly means breathing more slowly.

- a. Breathing more calmly indicates slowing down the speed of in- and exhalation (with an average of 5 to 7 breaths per minute) and breathing deeply from the belly. Breathing out has to take longer than breathing in (e.g. 4 seconds in and 8 seconds out).



- b. Breathing slower can enable changes in the sympathetic and parasympathetic activities. It is effective in decreasing emotional irritability/arousal because it increases the parasympathetic activity.

H. Continuous relaxation. Let go.

- a. This is a relaxation method in which the body relaxes by tightening and letting go of every individual muscle group. First the sensation of the tension is noticed, and then, after letting go of the tension, the sensation is noticed when the muscle tension finally decreases.
- b. As crisis survival-skill it can deliver reasonable quick results, mostly resulting in experiencing less tension and fear than before the procedure.
- c. Relaxing the body can also relax the mind by decreasing tension and fear.
- d. The basic idea is: 1. First to tighten the muscle group and meanwhile noticing the sensations of tension, and then 2. Relaxing every muscle group completely while you notice the sensation of the tension flowing away from the muscles.
- e. The entire procedure usually takes about 30 minutes, but can also be done quickly within 5 to 10 minutes.
- f. If you practice you can learn how to relax muscle group without first having to tighten them. But to learn this you have to practice a lot.
- g. Exercise:

Sit in a comfortable way with your feet firmly on the ground and your eyes focused on a place in front of you.

Hands and wrists: make a fist with both hands and pull with the help of your wrists your fists upwards.

Keep the tension for 2-3 seconds. Notice the tension.

Let both fists go and notice the difference.

Upper and forearms: make a fist and bend both arms so that they touch your shoulder.

Keep the tension for 2-3 seconds and notice the tension.

Let your arms down and let go of your fists. Notice the difference.

Shoulders: pull both shoulders up to your ears.

Keep the tension for 2-3 seconds and notice the tension.

Let go of your shoulders. Notice the difference.

Forehead: pull your eyebrows towards each other, frown a bit.

Keep the tension for 2-3 seconds and notice the tension.

Let the tension in your forehead go. Notice the difference.

Eyes: squeeze your eyes tightly closed.

Keep the tension for 2-3 seconds and notice the tension.

Relax your eyes. Notice the difference.

Now slowly bring back your attention to the room.

Were group members able to notice the sensations of tightening and relaxing every body part? What have you noticed regarding your emotions?

