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# Labeling your emotions

When you can label your emotions, you often feel less emotionally reactive. Feel them, name them, let them exist … and they will pass. Your emotions are yours, valid, and unique.

## Locating the core emotions

Emotion is just energy moving through the body. There are five primary emotions – anger, fear, sadness, joy, and disgust, and none of them are inherently good or bad.

Stop periodically and ask yourself, “What am I feeling right now?” Scan your chest and neck in order to detect your emotion-linked sensations. Locate the sensation and describe its precise nature as accurately as possible.

Imagine that your body is made of billions of “bits.” What are the bits doing? Perhaps they are twisting, popping, tightening, spinning, or flowing. Be as specific and as granular as possible. Once you locate the sensation, breathe deeply but gently into the belly. Try to accept it or even appreciate it, but just allowing it to exist is sufficient.

### Fear – in the belly

Fear manifests as a belly sensation (i.e., butterflies), and it can also be felt as a tingling in the back of the beck. There are three types, the first two of which are very healthy.

#### Survival fear

Survival fear is telling you that something needs to be immediately known or faced. The body is demanding that you wake up! It may be practical preparation or emotional support; it may be permission to lower your standards or to make mistakes. Whatever it is, if you don’t get it and go ahead without it, you will get hurt.

#### Stage-fright fear

Stage-fright fear, a very frequent fear when growing, is telling you that something new wants to be learned. It invites your full attention, presence, and awareness. Every time you try anything new, anything that summons and stretches your capacities, you’re going to feel uncertainty and self-doubt as well as challenge and exhilaration. This fear is your great ally that is telling you that you’re on the right track. That being said, no matter how prepared you are, you’re going to feel stage fright all over again each time you move to a higher level of performance or a more exacting audience

#### Toxic fear (very unhealthy)

This unconscious fear is almost always about a made-up future situation: It is anxiety disconnected from the present. It is lying in a warm bed with a full stomach visualizing being homeless one day, being fired from a future job, or being cheated on in the future, and then becoming paralyzed or activated by this possibility.

### Anger (back, shoulders, neck, jaw, and arms)

Anger says that something must be challenged or destroyed so that something more beneficial can replace it. Action must be taken. A boundary needs to be set or an existing one is being violated. If you feel angry, consider what is no longer of service and needs to now be destroyed.

Tap into your inner anger to befriend it. We all have it, and we need to make it work with us.

### Sadness (eyes, heart, front of throat)

Sadness says that something needs to be let go of, said goodbye to, or moved on from. Something once meaningful is going away and will be lost. If you feel sad, wonder what you need to let go of.

### Joy (rising in the core or spine)

Joy says that something needs to be celebrated, appreciated, or laughed with.

## A taxonomy of emotions

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **I feel …** | **Confused** | **Sad** | **Weak/inferior** | **Fearful** | **Angry** |
| mildlya littleslightly | AmbivalentAwkwardBotheredDistractedHesitantIndecisiveUncertainUndecidedUnsettledUneasy | DisappointedDownGlumIn a funkLonelyLowSomberSubduedUnhappy | BashfulChagrinedEmbarrassedJudgedReluctantSheepishStartledSurprised | CautiousDistrustfulShyStressedTenseTentativeTimidUncomfortableUneasy | AnnoyedBuggedFrustratedGrouchyImpatientIrritatedMiffedRaw |
| somewhat | BewilderedBlurryFoggyLostMisunderstoodNumbPerplexedPuzzledStuckTorn | DejectedDisconnectedDiscouragedDistressedGloomyHurtInsignificantMelancholicUpset | ApologeticContriteCrummyEnviousExposedGuiltyIgnoredJealousNeedyRegretfulSorryUnsupportedVulnerable | AfraidAlarmedAnxiousApprehensiveFrightenedNervousOn EdgePressuredScaredWorried | AggravatedAgitatedDefensiveDisgustedDismayedExasperatedIndignantMadOffendedPissed offResentful |
| stronglyextremelyreallyverysuper | BaffledConfoundedLostOverwhelmedPowerlessRattledShockedStumpedStunned | AwfulCrushedDepressedDesolateDespondentDevastatedGrievedHopelessMiserable | AshamedDelinquentDisgracedHorribleHumiliatedIneptMortifiedUselessWorthless | DistressedHorrifiedIntimidatedPanickedParalyzedPetrifiedShockedTerrifiedTrapped | Appalled BitterDisgustedEnragedFuriousHostileIrateOutragedVengefulVindictive |

## Major emotions and their opposites

Abandoned – Adopted, Cherished, Defended

Afraid – Brave, Calm, Composed, Fearless

Alone – Together

Annoyed – Gratified, Pleased

Anxious – Brave, Calm, Collected

Ashamed – Calm, Confident, Happy, Joyful

Betrayed – Assisted, Helped, Loyal, Faithful

Blamed – Approval, Praise

Bored – Energized, Refreshed

Burdened – Unloaded

Cheated – Faithful, Fair

Concerned – Calm, Collected, Composed

Confused – Clear, Composed, Organized

Crazy – Balanced, Calm, Collected, Sane

Heaviness – Thinness, Light

Despair – Hope, Joy

Devastated – Create, Construct, Guarded, Protected

Disappointed – Calm, Cheerful, Comforted, Encouraged

Disgusted – Attracted, Delighted, Pleased

Doubt – Belief, Calm, Clarity, Certainty, Confidence

Helpless – Able, Capable, Fit, Powerful

Embarrassed – Composed

Empty – full

Exhausted – Able, Active, Energized, Strong

Guilty – Innocent, Right, Moral, Good

Impatient – Easygoing, Controlled, Patient, Tolerant

Inadequate – Able, Abundant, Capable, Enough

Insecure – At Ease, Calm, Collected, Composed

Horrified – Brave, Calm, Fearless

Hurt – Happy, Pleased

Lazy – Active, Careful, Attentive, Energetic

Lethargic – Alert, Active, Animated, Lively

Lonely – Populated, Close, Loved, Sociable

Lost – Seen, Alive, Attentive, Aware

Offended – Flattered, Praised, Complimented

Outraged – Calm, Relaxed, Happy

Pressured – Free, Left Alone, At Ease

Punished – Cleared, Released, Exonerated

Trapped – Free

Rage – Calm, Love, Peace, Indifference

Rebellious – Happy, Obedient, Compliant

Regret – Comfort, Content, Delight, Joy

Rejected – Cherished

Resentment – Delight, Happy, Connected, Free

Sadness – Cheer, Happiness, Joy

Scared - Bold, Brave, Cool, Courageous

Self-conscious – Calm, Comfortable, Confident, Easy

Shame – Pride, Approval, Esteem, Honor, Respect

Silly – Intelligent, Mature

Suffering – Ease, Calm, Relief, Joy

Uncertain – Sure, Confident, Predictable

Worried – Calm, Comforted, Happy, Relaxed

Wary – Certain, Careless

## Do an emotion chat aloud with yourself

Converse aloud with yourself about your current emotions for 60 seconds without stopping.

Also describe aloud for 60 seconds what you are doing second to second: "I'm typing; I'm now scratching my ear; I'm now laughing; I'm now wondering why my upper back is tired, etc."

## Daily check-in with phone alarm

Check in daily where you ask how you are feeling, why in that way, and what you thus need.

## Growing pain versus shrinking pain

Growing pain is the pain of expanding into a greater version of yourself that fulfills your potential. It gives you true information about which choices you ought to be making based on how you truly feel, and it aligns you with reality.

Shrinking, unhealthy pain is the pain of resisting reality. Its pain leads you to following others’ “shoulds” in life.

# Managing your emotions

## Physiological strategies

### Do nothing until the intensity subsides

Recognize when you’re feeling too emotional. Refrain from “doing” when you’re like this. Just sit still, observe yourself, and label the emotions. View it as something the body is temporarily experiencing. This separates them from your thoughts and gives you more freedom and capability to eventually change your thoughts.

If you have the opportunity, find a way to laugh, eat, do a quick exercise, call a friend, or anything else to distract yourself for a moment.

### Sit and do a body scan

Be present with your body parts as you meditatively focus on each one and continuously lengthen your exhale.

### Curl or gently bite your tongue

With your mouth closed, rest the tip of your tongue between the teeth, and feel the air coming into your nostrils. Or, with your mouth open, curl the tongue up into your upper teeth.

### Vocalize the sound of each passing emotion

Most emotions go through the body in 90 seconds or less if you can match your expression with your experience. They come through like waves on the ocean - rising, cresting, and releasing, followed by calm until the next wave. In times of intensity, these waves are large and close together. You can release each wave and experience the calm. Breathe deeply into your belly, move your body in the way the emotion might move, and vocalize what might be the emotion’s sound if it had one.

Check your body, match the experience, and go back and forth until the energy is released.

### Sit in the stream and feel emotions float by

Imagine sitting out in nature, in the middle of the stream of your emotions. Notice each emotion floating by. Accept it. Welcome it. Watch it float away and around the bend.

"I am BREATHING, I am experiencing (this emotion), and as a result I am seeing it float away.”

### Align and ground your body firmly

1. Lift your ten toes.
2. Press the bottom of your big toes and your heels into the earth.
3. Pull your belly in as if you are sucking it in.
4. Tuck your tailbone by tilting the bottom of your pelvis forwards and upwards
5. Sit or stand up so straight so that your upper body almost angles backward.
6. Keep your shoulders open to the sides, and feel the scapulae pulling down.
7. Gaze straight across or higher. If you look down, you will feel down, so look up.
8. Soften your jaws and smile. Forcing a smile will encourage a natural one.
9. Notice all five of your senses.

### Dig below the layers of each emotion

“I feel \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_ … and that makes me feel \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_ … and that makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ … and that makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_ … and.”

### Look up and around

Bring yourself into the present moment. Look around yourself. Is something wrong? Everything might be great!

### Dress as if you are successful

If you expect the best, you’ll get the best. Pretend to be in control and people will assume it.

The days when you least feel like dressing well are the days when you must do it. How you feel is reflected in how you look, and how you look is reflected in how you feel. Taking a moment to check yourself lets you see your mood before it sets the tone for the rest of your day. Consider wearing red: More than any other color, it encourages others to think you are confident.

### Speak as if you are successful

Your thoughts are only seen by you.

Rarely apologize, and rarely say “just” in a request. ”

Visualize the many times you have been successfully assertive.

Get cozy sitting in the discomfort of not people-pleasing. Safety does not mean people-pleasing.

Think “CCDD.” Speak calmly, concisely, deeply, and directly into their eyes.

#### Practice in front of a mirror

Keep requests and wants to one sentence, and express them by making a fist, stomping, and repeating, “I have a right to…” Say it with different phrases, such as “be respected,” “feel safe,” “be listened to,” etc. Or try it with negatives such as “I don’t like that,” “Stop it,” and “Don’t do that.”

For possible questions that others may ask, such as “What do you do,” look in the mirror and keep asking yourself that until you can answer confidently.

### Do your daily habits

Strong habits solve a lot of life’s problems with as little spent effort as possible. However, no daily or weekly habit will stay interesting forever. You will have to love boredom.

Your actions reveal how badly you want something. If you keep saying something is a priority but you never act on it, you don’t really want it. Be honest with yourself. The sacrifice of energy or of the desire always comes before the reward.

You might not care if you fail, but you will care a lot more if your spirit or inner child fails. They can’t self-discipline themselves or use self-control, and they are relying on cognitive abilities to set up a good system for your habits.

#### Four steps to having strong habits

Habits have four sequential steps: cue, craving, response, and reward. Make the cue obvious, the craving attractive, the response easy, and the reward enjoyable.

The cue notices the reward and triggers your brain to get it. The craving is your motivation. The response is the actual habit you perform to obtain the reward, which leads to a positive feeling.

##### Obvious cue

* Write down your current habits to become aware of them.
* Write out your implementation intentions: “I will [Behavior] at [Time] in [Location].”

Write out a plan beforehand about when and where you will implement a particular habit. Make the time and location so obvious that, with enough repetition, you get an urge to do the right thing at the right time even if you can’t say why. Being specific about what you want and how you will do it helps you avoid distractions.

* Use habit stacking: “After I [Current Habit], I will [New Habit].”

Identify a current habit you already do each day and then stack a new behavior on top of that. Perhaps you can put them in spatial order. You can then make longer chains of habits.

* Design your environment. Make the cues of good habits obvious and visible.

##### Attractive craving

* Use temptation bundling. Pair an action you need to do with an action you want to do.

Find a way to do the habit in a fun and alluring way, such as brushing your teeth on your back.

* Join a culture where your desired behavior is the normal behavior.

This could be a group with whom you already have something in common. Remaining part of a group after achieving a goal is crucial to maintaining your habits. It is friendship and community that embed a new identity and help behaviors last over the long run.

* Create a motivation ritual.

Do something you enjoy immediately before a hard habit. Perhaps use mindfulness to bring the “flow” feeling into your body in order to be productive. Do this visually, auditorily, and kinesthetically. Imagine a sequence of slides rapidly moving through your mind. Also, think about what it is going to feel like after you do the habit.

* Schedule something in the future related to it to lock you into good behavior.

This might be buying an air ticket for next year to a place where you hope to give a presentation.

##### Easy response

* Decrease the number of steps between you and your good habits.
* Prime your environment to make future actions easier.
* Optimize the small choices that deliver outsize impact.

Do something very small for 30 days. What it is doesn't matter. But it is important that you do it. Picking one small thing that you can commit to doing for the next 30 days in a row will make your life genuinely better in some small way. Do it solely because you said you would do it.

* Downscale your habits until you can do them in two minutes or less.
* Invest in technology and onetime purchases that lock in future behavior.
* Avoid missing twice in a row. When you miss once, highly prioritize it the next time.

Missing two days in a row but doing it for five days in a row that week is worse than doing it for four days that week but skipping a day after each one. The first mistake is never the one that ruins you. It is the spiral of repeated mistakes that follows.

The problem is not slipping up but thinking that if you can’t do it perfectly, you shouldn’t do it all. The all-or-nothing cycle of behavior change is just one pitfall that can derail your habits.

##### Enjoyable reward

* Use reinforcement. Give yourself an immediate reward after you do your habit.
* Track your habits. Keep track of your habit streak and lengthen the chain.

Though you are having the smallest goals possible, keep a written log of how you showed up.

You could also keep a wall calendar of habit tallies. Then aim to improve your completed habit percentage by 1% a month.

You may want to have two jars of paper clips on your desk with a certain number of paper clips in one with the other jar empty. After each habit completion, put one paper clip in the second jar.

#### When adding a new habit

If you add a habit, do it for 21 days. It will be a struggle for the first 21 days before it takes root. Willpower is a muscle; strengthen it. Or if you don’t do it every day for 21 days in a row, aim to do it 65 times. Then, after 21 days, perhaps add another new habit.

##### Do it for just two minutes

When you start a new habit, scale down your first daily efforts to two minutes at the most. Writing a book starts with just writing one sentence or one paragraph. What you want is a “gateway habit” that naturally leads you down a more productive path. The point is to master the habit of showing up. A habit must be established before it can be improved. As you master the art of showing up, the first two minutes become a ritual at the beginning of the routine. The more you ritualize the beginning of a process, the more likely it becomes that you can slip into the state of deep focus that is required to do great things.

**You must stop the effort after two minutes.**

The secret is to always stay below the point where it feels like work. This reinforces the identity you want to build. You are taking the smallest action that confirms the type of person you want to be. Then after mastering the first two minutes, advance the next week to an intermediate step and repeat the process – focusing on just the first two minutes of that and mastering that stage before moving on to the next level. Eventually you’ll end up with the habit you had hoped to build while still keeping your focus where it should be: on the first two minutes of the behavior.

#### Four steps to breaking a bad habit

Make the cue invisible, the craving unattractive, the response difficult, and the reward unenjoyable.

* Invisible cue: Reduce exposure. Remove the cues of your bad habits from your environment.
* Unattractive craving: Reframe. Highlight the benefits of avoiding your bad habits.
* Difficult response: Increase the number of steps between you and your bad habits.
* Unenjoyable reward

Get an accountability partner or accountability group to watch your behavior. Also, create a habit contract that includes making the costs of your bad habits public and painful. This is verbal or written agreement in which you state your commitment to a particular habit and the punishment that will occur if you don’t follow through. Then you find one or two people to act as your accountability partners and sign off on the contract with you.

### Keep your blood sugar steady

A steady blood sugar makes it easier to have willpower, which in turn steadies the emotions.

### Do the toughest tasks in the A.M.

Self-regulation depends on the time of day. It’s easier in the morning.

### Exhale slowly but very audibly

Via your mouth, go “AHHHH. AHHHHH.” Stick out your tongue or scream if you need to.

### Take breaks to clear your mind

After 75 minutes, take a break. When you come back, your judgment will be better.

### Take a cold shower

The head is most important. You could even just have a bucket of water where you wrap a towel around your neck and then bend over to immerse your head in it.

##

## Interpersonal strategies

### Talk to a friend who is good at this

Share your goals for improved self-management and ask for advice. Mention what give you the most trouble.

### Make your goals public

If you tell others what you want to do, their awareness will make you feel more accountable and motivated. Ask them to monitor your progress. You may even give them the power to dole out rewards or punishments.

### List the friends who make you happy

Make a list of those who make you feel happy. Feeling good strengthens our willpower.

### Assertiveness

#### Situational phrases for it

* For others’ behavior change: “I noticed\_, it made me feel \_, and I would like it changed to\_.”
* For denying someone: “No.” That is a complete sentence.
* For another’s assertion of something as fact or logical: “What is your evidence?”
* For being complimented: “Thank you.” (end of sentence)
* For not answering a question: “I’m uncomfortable with doing that” or “I’m going to pass.”
* For being under pressure for a response: Say, “I’ll get back to you on that.” And then reflect.
* For the uncertainty if they ask for an apology: “I’ll think about it.”
* “and” instead of “but”
* “do” instead of “try”
* “I know that…” instead of “I think that…”
* “will” and “want” instead of modal verbs

## Higher-power strategies (prayer, meditation, etc.)

### The Serenity Prayer

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

### Thank God for five things

### Loving-kindness meditation for yourself

Imagine offering loving kindness to someone you already feel loving toward. Visualize that person so that you naturally feel lightness. Slowly recite these phrases for them:

“May she feel safe. May she feel healthy. May she feel peaceful and happy. May she feel loved.”

After completing this heartfelt love offering, remind yourself that all people want these same feelings, including yourself. So, now give yourself loving kindness.

“May I feel safe. May I feel healthy. May I feel peaceful and happy. May I feel loved.”

## Mental strategies

### Focus on your choices

Focus on your choices in responding to each unpleasant stimulus. Visualize the positives of the long-term reward over the instant gratification.

### Positively talk aloud to yourself

Silence your negative self-talk by positively talking aloud to yourself.

### Write out a list of possible fixes

Making a list gives you a sense of control.

### See your negative emotions as a child

Sit with them. Listen to them. Hug and love them. Give them oxygen.

### Circle upwards into unconscious competency

* Beginner level: I am bad at it and unaware of it.
* Advanced beginner level: I am bad at it and aware of it. Just notice it.
* Intermediate level: I’m working on it and have to be conscious of it when doing it. No failure, just feedback.
* Advanced level: I am good at it and can do it without consciously thinking of it.

The problem is not slipping up but thinking that if you can’t do it perfectly, you shouldn’t do it at all. The all-or-nothing cycle of behavior change is just one pitfall that can derail you.

### Set three intentions for today

Taking time to set three intentions for today will make you feel more emotionally grounded.

1. What do I have to do?

2. What do I want to achieve?

3. How do I intend to feel?

### Earn a secure attachment

#### Secure types

With themselves

* Are present and mindful,
* have internalized their secure base and make this available to others,
* believe they are capable, lovable, and worthy of self-compassion when they struggle,
* integrate their emotions and logic for the decisions they make,
* have a healthy relationship with the way they speak to their inner selves, and
* see clearly themselves, what it is, who those around them are, and these others’ strengths and limitations.

With others

* attend to themselves before attending to others, such as when following their daily routine,
* make their secure base available to others,
* offer both emotional vulnerability and emotional self-responsibility,
* express emotions directly and take them seriously when the other brings them up,
* are reasonably and consistently emotionally available to their friends and family,
* can have difficult conversations with others, be misunderstood, and still be calm and okay,
* have a strong network (family, friends, etc) to rely on for support and encouragement, and
* behave consistently both in and out of relationships.

##### Secure bases

Someone who has a secure type can offer a secure base, both to themselves and to others. Secure bases offer emotional availability, emotional co-regulation, and warm encouragement. Think of yourself as taking care of a pet animal; the pet animal might misbehave and might not be cuddly all the time, but your behavior towards it stays the same.

1. *Warm* s*upportive encouragement*: caring encouragement for the other’s solo explorations;
2. *Availability:* physical, psychological, and emotional;
3. *Responsiveness*: responsive co-regulation, a safe haven, a commitment to open communication, and comfort

Think of ‘w.a.r.’ - “warm, available, and responsive” or “warm, attuned, and ready”

###### Three aspects of a secure base

Warm encourager

The supportive encourager is warm and shows an interest in what’s important to you. They want you to be the best version of yourself and are accepting of your learning and personal growth. They’re supportive even when you differ in opinion or interests.

Availability

You are available, emotionally and consistently. You are comfortable enough with others’ negative emotions that you don’t make them get rid of their negative emotions – especially towards you – in order for you to feel okay. You can decenter and turn off your own world for a moment.

Responsive, safe haven

Exercises to internalize it

Exercise 1

Think about a place (real or imagined) that you find calming and comforting. Imagine the sights, sounds, and physical sensations of being in this safe place with one of your safe figures. The more real you make it, the more calming the experience will be.

Practice imagining this experience during calm times until you can do it with relative ease. Then choose to go there whenever you are overwhelmed by feelings of rejection or any other emotions. Use it as a way to help you feel stronger as you work through a difficult sensation so that you can face feelings of rejection as they happen.

Exercise 2

Think back to when you were upset and one of your safe havens responded with caring.

Allow yourself to hold warm and anxious feelings simultaneously. Hold out your hands, palms up. Look at one hand as you connect with the warmth. Feel the warmth in it. Then look at your other hand and feel the fear of rejection. Then choose to refocus on the hand “holding” the sense of warm connection.

Reflect on the conflicting feelings. Your anxiety has more to do with your chronic fear of rejection than with any sign that this person will reject you.

Return your attention to the feeling of being comforted. Look at the palm “holding” the sense of feeling soothed. Feel the caring and relief.

What it looks and feels like

When you’re a safe haven, you’re empathically attuned and responsive to others’ needs, particular when they are upset. You can accurately read them and respond appropriately to their emotional state with caring, reassurance, and support. They can safely share their feelings and let you in to their inner world since you won’t be too quick in giving fixes and also won’t be overwhelmed. You are a cup for their negative emotions, and just being in your presence is comforting to them.

Being a good listener, you make them feel understood. You might say “I see your (emotion)” and can sit silently with them in that feeling, which will feel quite validating to them. Only after these things would you ask them if they want any input from you. Or you could try to uplift them, make them feel better, and send them back to explore, but only after assuring them that they can come back to you if they fall flat on their face or struggle.

Words a safe haven might say

(Say this calmly.)

“I see your pain, I’m acknowledging it, I’m going to be able to help you soothe it. We will identify what you are feeling and reflect it back to your inner child accurately. Only then will we find a constructive solution for it with you.”

###### An exercise to internalize your secure base

When you have repeated interactions with people past and present who function as secure bases, you carry a sense of them within you, in the closest *availability* possible. You can then strengthen this resource by consciously re-imagining the comfort and encouragement in those memories.

Choose one of your secure bases. Find a positive picture of this person and put it on your phone, ideally a photo of the two of you. Choose a picture depicting a positive experience you had together. You might even make it your phone’s wallpaper. It should be easy to find.

Set an alarm to look at this picture every day. When the alarm goes off, look at the picture and…

* Pause long enough to revisit a memory of them being caring, supportive, and encouraging.
* Repeat aloud the following sentences, which reflect the three elements of a secure base: warm encouragement, availability, and responsive co-regulation. Repeat them slowly and with a connection to what you are saying (or thinking):
	+ I can rely on \_\_\_\_\_ to support and encourage me in activities that I want to pursue.
	+ If I am upset, I can ask for help and they will probably be there for me. This would help me feel relieved and better able to cope.
	+ \_\_\_\_\_\_ genuinely cares about me and just being near them is comforting.

You might print out or save the sentences on your phone so that you will always have them with you. If you really connect with them, they can help you feel closer to your chosen secure base.

The more you repeat them, the more deeply they can sink into your being.

###### Becoming your inner child’s secure base

Our observing self is our mature self and our experiential self is our little child within us, our inner child. A good external representation of our inner child might be a soft stuffed animal, a stuffed bear perhaps, that we can always hold and affirm in front of a close-up mirror.

Stress may cause your inner child to cry out. Unprovoked, they may come out and demand attention when we least expect it. Thus, gently listen to them. Let the child cry if they need to. Comfort and shield them. Figure out what they need. Learn to center them within yourself. Sit with them and continuously lengthen your exhale. Help yourself to see what is their space within you, and apart from that, what is your adult space.

Try letting them stay in your dark house alone. Encourage them to explore on all fours around all rooms in the dark (after you put away dangerous objects that were on the floor). Then go sit in that dark closet with them that often terrifies them. Perhaps you will need to wrap your arms around them to keep away the bogeyman. It’s just a closet. And then debrief afterwards.

#### Insecure types

##### Online resources

See the YouTube channels for Heidi Priebe and Thais Gibson.

Also see Hal Shorey’s “Freedom to Change” blog on the Psychology Today website.

##### Avoidant styles (dismissive-avoidants & fearful-avoidants)

Avoidants feel resentful towards any close attachment figure and struggle to see the positive in their partner, particularly when the partner is emotional. Be conscious of where this comes from and separate that from what safeguards the relationship. As an avoidant your brain wants to trick you into finding the negatives. If it is a lack of attraction, you’ll know immediately. If it’s avoidance, you will fluctuate.

Avoidants tend to prematurely leave the relationship. They overestimate the likelihood of constant engulfment and underestimate the pain of losing this partner. If you are an avoidant, the closer you feel to someone, the more of an urge you will have to run from them. Confront your willingness to lose this person.

If you feel this desire to escape, consider what unmet needs that desire is expressing, and whether the feelings are due to incompatibility or issues which you can voice and solve. Sit down, talk with yourself, stay put, and breathe. And tell yourself you can stand the discomfort.

Consider the other person just wants to be close and doesn’t want to control you. Focus on the sensation you feel when they do get too close. See if you can name it. The sensation is not you; it is only a sensation. Separate any love feelings from this anxiety. The anxiety will then be less next time because we see that we are not being engulfed and are not losing ourselves.

Accept your need for space whether it’s emotional or physical, and express this. Wanting space is just as valid as wanting closeness. Explain to your partner in advance that you need some time alone when you feel things are getting too mushy, that it’s a need you have in any relationship, and that it’s not about them. Partners may be more comfortable handling avoidant behaviors than you realize once they understand your needs. Suggest a few options, and make sure their needs are taken care of as well.

Once you vocalize your need for space and see that your partner is happy to give it to you, you may find you do not in fact need it so much after all. Often it is just a fear of overwhelm manifesting, and if you can see that the fear doesn't come true, it dissipates.

###### Beware the phantom ex

Dismissive-avoidants and fearful-avoidants think about the phantom ex – or phantom future partner - when their partner can’t meet those needs the phantom could meet, regardless of other needs the phantom would not be able to meet. When the phantom thoughts arise, avoidants should either ask their partner to meet these needs or get them met outside of the relationship.

There is no perfect one in your future.

##### Anxious types (anxious-preoccupied & fearful avoidants)

Anxious types put the other on a pedestal, but these mates are human, not an ideal nor an idol. Remember your own talents and hobbies, as well as their weaknesses and flaws. For guys, women do want a soft, gentle guy, but if you act that way too early, they won't respect you.

To move towards a secure style, anxious types have to be more dismissive. Meet a couple of people where you know going in that you are going to end it afterwards, no matter how attractive they are. And then during the first three dates with someone you do like, give them emotional space as you might in giving physical space to a plant in a garden. Don’t jump so fast with comfort if they are feeling distressed. This will increase frustration tolerance.

Be careful of your tendency to disclose too much too soon. Remind yourself regularly that you hardly know them. Disclosing works best when done in even degrees between each person. At the very least, try to get them to disclose more than you are, and then disclose just enough for them to be warm and supportive. The rest can come out, if you so choose, with time.

Ask often about how they’re doing but rarely about how “we” are doing, to avoid looking needy. And don’t ask about their past relationships. If you need to be reassured that they’re attracted to you, do so directly in a calm and assertive way.

To strengthen your patience, turn to other sources of support in your life - such as family, friends, and fulfilling and validating activities. They will still love you if you do what you want. With a sense of acceptance and value in other areas of your life, you can lessen the pressing need to create an instant, unrealistically perfect love.

Be careful of feeling jealous when realizing they are dating others too. Know that "I am enough."

As the relationship progresses, consider whether you are feeling supported and encouraged in developing your separate interests, or whether you are giving up those aspects of yourself in exchange for the connection. Your insecurities prevent you from walking away when your partner is rejecting or being overly distant. Have you been clear about expressing your needs?

When feeling anxious, take a moment to consider that something may indeed be off. But also consider that something may not be off. So keep that to yourself for a bit, meditate or journal on it, and let it come up naturally to them on their own. There is no need to panic. Acknowledge the ugly feeling is there and be there for your inner child without sharing it.

Limit gifts to holidays, anniversaries, and about six random days during the year.

Other reminders:

* Keep realistic expectations of your partner. You are not going to be their top priority 24-7.
* Even deep in the relationship be aware of oversharing and speaking in an unfiltered way.
* Be aware of people-pleasing them and being too self-effacing.
* You are responsible for only your emotions.
* Only respond to what is explicitly said. Ignore trying to find subtext.
* Be more decisive and assertive than you feel comfortable being. Learn to say,
	+ "This is what I think ...."
	+ "This is what I need ..."
	+ "This is what I want ..."

##### For fearful-avoidants in particular

* Prioritize your own needs and daily routine. Repair your own internal trust baseline.
* Journal as much as possible.
* Learn to receive.
* Question your negative interpretations. Assume a better possibility than what the gut says.
* Be more assertive when with others.
* Manage others’ expectations of your giving. Resist stepping in to be the situation’s savior.
* Sit in the unease of not people-pleasing by saying "let me think about it and get back to you."
* Know that you are most likely innocent in the situation.
* Rework the excessive guilt, apologizing, and shame.
* Be vigilant of all-or-nothing thinking.
* Respond to just what others explicitly say and do.
* State your boundaries and needs, and resolve the small conflicts before they get bigger.
* Be slower to both trust and distrust.
* Be mindful of how you’re apt to feel anxious and inconsistently good around close friends.
* Take emotional time-outs when you feel flooded. Take 30 minutes and rapidly exhale.
* Interrupt your trauma response more often, most likely fawning or fleeing.
* Break the false dichotomy of being alone but free or being in a relationship but trapped.

When feeling trapped in the relationship, beware of chronic fantasies of leaving. These give you a window into your unmet needs. What is your feeling in this fantasy? You likely just need more emotional space and will have to ask explicitly for this alone time, or time with your friends. State, “My needs are \_\_\_, and these specific actions by you would make me feel more cared for.”

###### Stages of a fearful-avoidant becoming secure

1. You're starting to heal when you consciously recognize feeling disorganized and can refrain from acting or making any major decisions while in this state. You remind yourself that there is a “you” underneath that is calm and capable of waiting a few moments until the emotional intensity subsides. You know that if the decision is that important, it can wait. You just consciously observe your problems.

2. You no longer think of yourself as bad, unworthy of love, or commitment phobic. You see your attachment wounding for what it is and that your issues are changeable. The way you currently show up is beyond your control but only for a little while longer. You start internalizing the worldview of “I am okay and you are okay.”

3. You feel some space between your emotional reactivity and your behavior. You catch yourself when reacting strongly and begin using new tools to deal with it, albeit imperfectly at first. You share your boundaries, understand your needs, and vulnerably communicate them.

4. You get triggered less often and less intensely. You have extra energy for doing the things you want to create, share, or do, such as activities in the relationships you want to have.

5. You no longer feel triggered by people who display heavy emotional vulnerability.

6. You do not feel threatened when others behave in a way in which you do not want to be. You accept their taboo emotional quirks and live with their unfixed problems.

### Nightly bedtime journaling for happiness

(This shouldn’t take more than ten minutes.)

1. What experiences today, however mundane, gave you pleasure?

2. What praise and feedback did you receive?

3. What were the moments of pure good fortune?

4. What were your achievements, however small?

5. What made you feel grateful?

6. How did you express kindness?

7. Reflect on past entries.

### Changing negative memories and after painful moments

#### The ABCDE model

The ABCDE model describes how your beliefs about an event cause your negative emotions.

1. Activating event: This is an outside event or stimulus that you blame for your problems.
2. Beliefs are what you tell yourself about the event. These beliefs make you feel negative.
3. Consequential emotions: These might include depression, anxiety, self-pity, or anger.
4. Dispute: Dispute your rational and irrational thoughts and beliefs about the event.
	1. Challenge your memory and interpretation of events.
	2. What would you say to someone else who held a belief like this one?
	3. Are you ignoring your strengths and focusing on your weaknesses?
5. Effect: When you experience cooler emotions, your mind and body are relatively relaxed and open to ideas about how to rationally approach the situation to get the effects that you want.

#### List your key qualities and write an essay

List your qualities for a specific context. For example, if you just rejected by a date, list qualities that make you a good relationship prospect (like, being loyal or emotionally available); if you failed to get a promotion, list qualities that make you a valuable employee (you have a strong work ethic or are responsible). Then choose one of the items and write a brief essay (one to two paragraphs) about why the quality is valuable and likely to be appreciated by others in the future. Do this every day for a week or whenever you need a self-esteem boost.

Next, place the list in your pocket. Carry it with you for at least one full day though you might want to carry it even longer than that. Consciously engage with it each day. At the end of the first day you complete it, take the paper out of your pocket and review the list. The next morning, read it slowly before placing it back in your pocket for that day. Continue doing this daily until you feel that it is ingrained in your sense of self.

### Rewire your limiting beliefs with opposing evidence

Question your interpretations with opposing evidence. What meaning are you giving to them? Answer this in a journal with the opposite hand. Can you absolutely know that it’s true? What might be some other possibilities? Name at least three.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A challenge where you feel disempowered | Interpretation | Opposite interpretation  | Evidence for the opposite interpretation |
| Self-interpretation (Example: I am weak, I am trapped, I am not good enough, I am alone etc.) |  |  |  |
| Interpretation of external circumstances (Ex.: She betrayed me, it was unfair, he left me, etc.) |  |  |  |

### Visualizing better emotions and beliefs

Visualize for a few seconds what you want as if you already have it.

When you visualize being in a future scene, you are associating with it. You literally jump into it. When you aren’t in the scene but still see it from afar, you are disassociating from it. However, you can disassociate from a scene while a second you is in it; you just can’t feel the feelings of that second you. They are on the screen or stage being observed by you.

#### Disassociating from a negative

* Look down on it from above, and make it very small.
* Compact it into a dot and move it down to your smallest toe and keep it there.
* Imagine that it has a volume dial and that you are turning the volume down.
* Turn it from a color image to a black-and-white image.
* For something recent, imagine pushing it very far behind you so that you can barely see it.

#####

##### Equilibrate with imagined opposite sensations

1. Do a full body scan. Name the sensations you feel, these experiences in your body.

2. Breathe down to your tailbone.

3. Equilibrate with imagined opposite sensations.

4. Figure out what your needs are in this moment to feel relief and to feel better.

#### Reframing a negative into a positive

Reframing is when you change a negative mental representation into a positive one. You do this by changing your frame of reference to the most useful one possible when seeing the experience. Almost any negative one can be reframed.

Take the images that once frustrated you and make them wither and disappear, or change them to images that bring you ecstasy. What can you learn? With a negative situation, perhaps you play circus music when thinking about it, or maybe clowns run into the middle of it. Or perhaps you freeze the mental video at certain spots and insert new actions into the scene before replaying it forward and backwards in your mind several times with these new actions included.

With physical pain, you can greatly reduce or remove it by seeing the pain as opposed to feeling it. See its shape and size, and move it ten feet away from your body. Make it bigger and then smaller, and then shrink it down into a spiky green ball. Throw the ball at the sun and watch it melt before it comes back to earth as sunshine to feed the plants.

##### The “WHOOSH” pattern to make it last

What if you were to take all the important things you hate to do and attached feelings of pleasure to them? What if you took all your problems, fears, frustrations, and negative memories and shrank them down or put distance between them and you?

Identify an unpleasant behavior from the past or future that prevents you from having high self-esteem and achieving your personal best. Identify the negative stimulus that triggers this unwanted behavior and then emotionally associate with that negative image. You are in the picture and see it from your own eyes. Make your surroundings big and bright.

Break your focus for a few seconds: Change your emotional state or frame of mind that you are in. Stand up and give your body a good shake, or move around the room.

You now need to create a disassociated but wonderful image of yourself as you would be if you made the desired change and felt thrilled about your improvement. Create a large, bright, and colorful image of yourself being a wonderful, resourceful “you” who has already solved the issue of the unpleasant image. This second image is disassociated because we are creating an ideal internal representation. Whenever you see this wonderful, resourceful “you,” he says to you, “I FEEL GREAT!” and these words encircle his head in a golden circle.

Shrink this disassociated image of this wonderful you down to a dark dot and take a few breaths.

Then make this dot blossom out into a sparkling, life-size image. Listen to the wonderful you saying, “I feel great about myself!”

Take the image of this wonderful you and multiply it thousands of times, and leave one copy right in front of you while tossing all the rest up in the air. Watch them come down around you in concentric circles, as far as you can see in every direction. Then listen to a chorus of the wonderful yous saying, “I feel great about myself!”

Then shrink this positive image back to a dot.

Break your focus again for a few seconds. Stand up and give your body a shake. Open your eyes and check out the ceiling for a couple of seconds. Recall the negative image. Make it bright and colorful so that you are fully associated with it.

Squash the second image, the positive picture, down into its dot, and put it in the bottom right corner of the negative picture.

Break your focus again. Stand up and give your body a shake. Open your eyes and check out the ceiling for a couple of seconds.

Now take that dot, and in less than one second, have it grow in size and brightness and with a “WHOOOSH!!!” sound, bursting literally through the middle of the negative picture, shredding it to smithereens. Say the sound "WHOOSH" with all the excitement and enthusiasm you can. Excitedly saying, "WHOOSH!!" sends powerfully positive signals to your brain.

Break your focus again. Stand up and give your body a shake. Open your eyes and check out the ceiling for a couple of seconds.

Start back at the beginning of the process with the large negative image and the dot representing the very desirable, happy image.

Slowly repeat this entire “WHOOSH” cycle three times.

Break your focus again. Stand up and give your body a shake. Open your eyes and check out the ceiling for a couple of seconds.

Now run the process three times very fast and then do three more cycles, as fast as possible, until you no longer get the negative feelings. The key to this pattern is speed and repetition. You must see and feel that small dot become huge and bright and explode through the big picture, destroying it and replacing it with an even bigger, brighter picture of how you want things to be. Experience the great feeling of seeing things the way you want them.

Break your focus again. Stand up and give your body a shake. Open your eyes and check out the ceiling for a couple of seconds.

Eventually, you will "WHOOSH!!!" the two pictures so that thinking about the negative experience or possibility makes you think automatically about the positive or resourceful experience. You may have to do the cycle a couple of more times for this to happen.

Once you hook up this triggering mechanism, that negative image will now move you toward that ideal picture of yourself. Thus, you're creating a whole new way for your brain to deal with what upset you in the past.

The keys are speed and having fun with it. What you are telling your brain is, see this, "WHOOSH!!" Do this, see this, "WHOOSH!" Do this, see this, "Whoosh!" Do this . . . until the old picture automatically triggers the new picture, the new states, and thus the new behavior.

You can also do the slingshot approach. Imagine holding a large slingshot. Between its two posts is the negative image that you want to change. Place the dot-sized picture of your desired behavior in the sling and mentally pull this farther and farther back until the sling is stretched as far as possible. Then let it go. Watch as it rips right through the old picture in front of you and into your brain.

##### Overcoming moderate emotional trauma

###### Split trauma into tiny segments

Separate the trauma into tiny bits so you can put its various aspects into perspective. You want to know what aspect you really need to look at. When you think of your fear,

* What's the most worrying aspect about it?
* The least worrying aspect?
* Does distance from the object change the way you feel about it?
* Does color make a difference?
* Does movement make a difference?
* When you're approaching it, what thoughts go through your mind?

###### Then imagine going to a favorite cinema

1. With your eyes open or closed, imagine you’re sitting in the middle of your favorite movie theater. There are no other moviegoers, just you. You look up at the movie screen and begin to watch a grainy black-and-white movie of your life. To differentiate between the two, we will call the person on the screen, “the movie-star-you,” and the person in the seat, “the moviegoer-you.” As the moviegoer-you, you turn away from the screen for a moment and look back and up at the projection booth behind you. There inside the projection booth, on the other side of protective plexiglass, is a third you, a “projection-booth-you,” who can easily see both the moviegoer-you and the movie-star-you.
2. The movie begins. Eventually there is a traumatic scene from your past, one that still causes you anguish to this day. The moviegoer-you winces and shudders as the movie-star-you is traumatized during the scene. The projection-booth-you has seen it several times a night for the last week, is unfazed by it now, and is thus calm and bored during the traumatic peak. As the projection-booth-you, watch the whole scene from your distant projection booth, starting before the beginning of the trauma and going beyond the end of it, when everything is OK again.
3. When the traumatic scene is over, rewind the movie reel back to the beginning. Play this black-and-white movie again, and from your projection booth, watch the reactions of the moviegoer-you in his seat. See his discomfort as he squirms when the movie-star-you is traumatized on the screen.
4. Rewind the traumatic scene again and press pause in the middle of it. Climb out of your projection-booth and walk down the aisle to the front of the theater’s screen in a very strong, authoritative manner. Turn around to face the moviegoer-you, and tell him that you've been watching over him and know of two or three ways that can help him change that traumatic memory, two or three reframes of the content that will help him handle it differently, now and in the future.
5. With your projection-booth remote control, mute the movie but press play, and act out these traumatic scenes in a confident, happy, and hilarious way in front of the screen for the scared moviegoer-you in his seat. You are reassuringly demonstrating to the timid moviegoer-you all the different ways in which the scene can be played. Once the scene has finished, play the movie in reverse, and act in a happy and hilarious way again, but do it backwards physically so that it matches the movie playing in reverse behind you.
6. Now speed up the movie to such a fast pace that the traumatic scene lasts only one and a half seconds. Make the movie go so fast it appears like a cheap home movie or an old silent slapstick comedy from the days of Charlie Chaplin. Quickly act out the traumatic scene at this warp-speed pace, and do so again in reverse. Keep acting out these possibilities for the moviegoer-you until he calms down and gets thoroughly bored.
7. As the moviegoer-you, you are now a little less fearful of the traumatic scene in the movie. As the projection-booth-you, bring the movie back to its regular speed. Then pause it with it still muted, and encourage the moviegoer-you to stand up and walk to the front of the screen and act out the scene himself, just as the projection-booth-you was doing a moment ago. Enthusiastically reassure the moviegoer-you that it will be safe for him to act out the scene with wildly funny arm movements, loud laughter, and comical noises.
8. As the moviegoer-you, you can look as stupid as long as you are laughing. That is the only rule. Force yourself to laugh if you have to by using your jaws to raise both of your cheeks upwards. Laugh for the duration of the traumatic scene. There is no one else in the theater – just the moviegoer-you and the projection-booth-you. As long as the moviegoer-you trusts the projection-booth-you, the moviegoer-you will only need a little reassurance.
9. Once you as the moviegoer-you has done the scene several times, play the movie in reverse, and act out the scene in reverse, with it still muted. Once you have done that a couple of times, do it very quickly while laughing so that the traumatic scene in reverse lasts only one and a half seconds.
10. As the projection-booth-you, ask the moviegoer-you to sit back down, and now act out the scenes for the seated moviegoer-you with the sound back on. The movie’s sounds will add to the trauma, and thus it is important to first do the acting without sound. Add as much humor as you did before, and also act out the traumatic scene in reverse. Once you have done that, do it at warp speed, both forwards and backwards, for the moviegoer-you in his seat.
11. Ask the moviegoer-you to stand up and comically act again, this time with the real sounds in the background. Do this quickly in reverse several times while laughing.
12. Finally, merge the projection-booth-you and the moviegoer-you, and as one person, happily walk out of the movie theater and into the bright sunshine outside.

#### Visualize visiting yourself as a child

Close your eyes. See yourself as a young child. Often it helps to see your child sitting outside in a meadow. Introduce yourself as the future you. Tell the child that you made it. You grew up. Then say that you have come to love them, that you will always be there for them, and that you will never leave them. Listen to see how the child responds. If the child will let you (and they might not at first), hug them. And if it doesn’t work the first time, don’t give up! Keep coming back. After all, you promised that you will always be there.

### Using affirmations with supporting evidence

An affirmation is a positively-worded wish that you repetitively say aloud and that you assert to be true. Literally it means “to make firm.” It helps you reach your goals and stay focused. By repeating and visualizing the affirmation with specific evidence, you enable your mind to believe what you tell it.

#### Composing one

1. What image do you want to “make firm?”
2. Write it with a 1st-person subject (“I”).
3. Be positive. Refrain from negative words such as “not.”
4. Give examples of why it is true. Find two pieces of evidence and imagery in each life area (career, financial, spiritual, physical, emotional, social, and mental), or 10-15 pieces overall.
5. Be specific. What makes you \_\_\_ enough? What actions are you taking to move more in this direction? To whom are you \_\_\_?” List the reasons why this person sees you in this way.
6. Next, word the affirmation in increments that matches your progress. For example, if you are working on “I am not good enough,” start with “I am working on becoming better,” and then in progression …

“I am getting better and better each day,”

“It is possible to be good enough,”

“I am seeing myself becoming good enough,” and then finally

“I am good enough.”

1. Say it aloud with heavy emotion. *Feel* and *see vividly* what you say.
2. The day’s first and last hours are best for saying it, or at the end of meditation, yoga, or a hard workout.
3. Repeat it often that day and for 21 days in a row. The subconscious mind wants familiarity.
4. Memorize it.
5. Find evidence daily of the affirmation in order to cement your new perception of yourself: “I was \_ (affirmation) in my \_\_\_ area of life today when:” (for each life area).
6. Add a new one each week.

#### Sample affirmations

* I am asserting myself.
* I am benefitting from negative feedback.
* I am breathing through my pain.
* I am bouncing back from each rejection.
* I am being fearless.
* I am handling success.
* I am breathing deeply.
* I am fascinating.
* I am meeting deadlines.
* I am empathizing.
* I am being carried in God’s hands.
* I am calming in front on anger.…

#### Ways to use them

1. Say them silently in meditation.
2. Say them aloud throughout the day to yourself, particularly in a deep, authoritative voice.
3. Say them aloud in total darkness – or listen to them - while blinking very fast.
4. Excitedly say them in front of the mirror, in yoga poses, and elsewhere.
5. Articulate them with arches eyebrows and flexed toes.
6. Improvise a speech about achieving your affirmations. Talk about them as if they happened.
7. Sing it or chant them.
8. Visualize them in MASSIVE letters above your head.
9. Write them out repeatedly with your non-dominant hand, perhaps 15-20 times a day.
10. Write them on 3x5 index cards and read them aloud multiple times each day.
11. Write them out on 5-by-7 cards and post them on the walls of your home.
12. Record them in a self-hypnosis format with an induction beforehand and then an awakening.
13. Get close friends to affirm you by powerfully reading them to you.
14. Record and play them on your stereo throughout your home. Vary the subject of the recorded affirmation with the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd-person perspective. Also vary the tone and volume. “I am now…”, “(Your name), you are now…”, “(Your name) is now…”, “I am feeling…”, “(Your name), you are now feeling….”, “(Your name) is now feeling …”, “I am emanating …”, (Your name), you are now emanating …”, (Your name) is now emanating …”

#### Say “I love you” to the mirror while naked

When alone and naked, look at yourself in the mirror. Look right into your eyes, and as genuinely and sincerely as you can without laughing, say, “I love you. I am here for you. I will always be here to protect you.” Keep doing it until you can say it with the utmost sincerity, and have it feel perfectly warm and natural. Your emotions don’t know where incoming thoughts and sounds originate. You will just recognize that someone is looking at you and saying, “I love you.” You will be creating a new memory.

## Managing fear and anxiety in particular

### Avoid reversing big decisions prematurely

No matter what decision you make, even if it’s the wrong one, avoid self-abandoning midway. Stay where you are, stick with the decision you’ve made, and show up for yourself fully and completely inside of that decision.

Commit to the decision for a certain time period. Imagine there is no other possible decision but this one. You have been mandated to live in that version of reality with those people around you. You have to make the best of that situation for that time period. There is nothing else out there for you as an alternative. This is all you are ever going to get to work with. Take a whiteboard and hang it on the wall and write, “This is it. You are tasked with it.”

### Repeatedly and quickly glance side to side

Rapid-eye movement can help distract the amygdala and limbic system during fear-exposure moments. Quickly move your eyes from side to side ten times fast without turning your head.

### Do the “bellows breath” (Kapalabhati)

Sit in a comfortable upright position with your spine straight.

If you are feeling paralyzing anxiety, close your mouth, pull in your abdomen, and exhale out your nose in a rapid-fire fashion, 2-3 bursts per second. Just focus on your exhales. Do it for no longer than 15 seconds at first, and then build up to a minute. This is a “warming” breath.

If you are feeling a neurotic kind of anxiety or a panic, do the same but with your mouth open. This is a “cooling” breath.

###

#### Or just clench your abs or even your upper face

If you are talking to someone and want to do this, just silent squeeze your abs in repeatedly. Or, for something more radical, clench the muscles around your eyes for a few seconds and let go, repeatedly; you will literally hear the tension dissipating. Each time you do this, the length of the tension will decrease. Try doing this face scrunching ten times within 20 seconds for clarity.

### Copy beliefs of those who succeeded

Those who over-achieve do so with a "have to" and not a "want to." Your persistence equals your belief in yourself. Model the beliefs of those who have succeeded where you want to as well. Whatever you believe, your brain will alter your five senses so that you feel it as real.

### Use a journal for fear and negativity

Whenever you feel negative or fearful, get out your diary or journal and write down the nastiest complaints you can think of. This is your friend when a real friend is not there to hear you bitch.

### First face a more powerful fear

Thinking about a more powerful fear often makes it easier to overcome the fear that you’re dealing with. If possible, first face this more powerful or scarier fear. Once you do the harder thing, the real thing becomes fun. For example, if you have to present in front of someone who scares you, rehearse in front of someone who scares you more.

### Scramble the fear

Every time you have a fearful thought, ask yourself these four questions in a rapid tempo:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What would happen if that did happen? | What would happen if that didn’t happen? |
| What wouldn’t happen if that didn’t happen? | What wouldn’t happen if that didn’t happen? |

This scrambles the fear. By the time you process the fourth question, you have lost the fear.

### Admit the fear of success

Being good at something can be lonely, and the expectations that people have of you sustaining your success can seem overwhelming. Get comfortable with your own success by visualizing yourself as calm and graceful amidst success. You have every right to be a shining star to many.

### For anxiety-provoking decisions

Talk to a friend or colleague about your future self in “scenario A” for a minute, with all positive words and no pauses. This is very important – no pauses. Then do the same with “scenario B” and any other choices. Does one particular scenario speak to you?

### Start small, do that badly, and share it

We can reprogram our subconscious mind by incrementally and repetitively doing what makes us fearful for at least 21 days in a row. Break it into small steps, lower your standards, and admit that you are a beginner. Confront the first step and stay within the feared situation until your anxiety subsides, usually between twenty minutes and one hour. Your anxiety will lessen with each additional exposure. Aim to repeat your exposures at least once weekly if not daily. Then proceed to the next step. To make it difficult to weasel out, tell a friend or family member what you’re up to and report to them regularly.

Anything worth doing is worth doing badly at first. The cure for writer’s block – and also the road to self-motivation – is simple. Write badly. Just start typing anything – it can be the worst thing you’ve ever written; it doesn’t matter. When you’re in the first stages of creating, never censor yourself. Make your first steps something like, “one bad page a day” or “one roll of bad photographs a week.” The worst you can produce will never be as bad as the worst you imagine.

Every great person began as an inexperienced beginner. Admitting you’re a beginner instantly creates a warm, relaxed atmosphere in which - paradoxically - your performance improves. If you pass through even a thin curtain of fear, your confidence will increase.

The next step is to set a target date for venturing out and showing your work to someone else. Make it your family or a close friend, someone who is not an expert in your chosen field.

### Embrace your failures and mistakes

Exceeding yourself happens only after you've perceived your failure. Stopping because you’re scared costs you much more than your worst mistakes. When you fall on your behind, at least you learn that the ground is hard and that you’re not made of glass, but when you quit or chicken out, you don’t learn anything. So, go for “No.” See if you can get rejected on purpose. Failure is the true test of greatness. The pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses you. Now go further.

##

### Write a letter to your future rejected self

Choose a time when you are feeling positive about yourself. Then follow these steps:

Before writing to your future self, reflect on a time when you felt overwhelmed by rejection. As an outside observer, note how the rejection took over your emotions and your thinking. Not only did it prevent this past self from feeling anything positive, but it also distorted almost everything about you and your experiences to make it all seem to be awful.

Note your thoughts about, and feelings toward, that past self. It is important to do this as an outside observer, one who is currently feeling good about yourself. When you focus on your past self, think about how your struggles were human ones. Then you will notice that you are better able to have empathy and compassion for that past self.

Consider what advice you would want to offer that past self. Think in terms of what that self could do to try to get through this difficult time. For example, you might suggest calling a friend or going for a walk.

Now write the letter to your future distressed self. Put all of your answers to the above into a letter offering your future upset self some compassion, encouragement, and even a bit of advice while going through a similarly difficult time.

Put the letter in an accessible place. When the day comes that you are again struggling deeply with rejection, open the letter. You will find that it helps. After all, who knows and understands you better than yourself!

What makes this letter helpful is that you know deep in your heart that the person who wrote the letter understands you, honestly cares, and is being truthful in saying that the negative feelings won't last forever (despite how it feels).

Sample letter:

Hey buddy. The fact that you are reading this means you are in a dark place right now. You are probably feeling worthless - like dirt - and that no one really cares about you. And I'm really sorry about that - it's a tough place to be. But the truth is that when you get in this place, everything looks worse than it is. Even though you aren't feeling good now, there have been times when you have felt good, and there will be times when you will feel that way again. Think about what you know to be true about the people in your life. You have friends who have always been there for you. They have shown you, over and over again, that they care. So, even though you feel worthless right now, remember that is just a feeling that will pass. Sometimes it has helped to call a friend. Do these things or focus on something else that helps you feel good. I promise you that you will feel better and stronger again.

Love,

me

## Managing anger in particular

Accept that anger is just a physical sensation in your body, a certain energy. Feel and acknowledge it when it happens. You always have a right to be angry. The lack of a justification for its presence will sometimes affect your ability to feel it. It says “I matter. I need to take action.”

You do not have to act on nor express your anger. Its presence often has an irrational basis. However, it helps us see our boundaries and where we’re not showing up for ourselves.

If on your own, see anger as a conversation between you and your inner child. Children speak in feelings; they are trying to get our attention about something they do not like. We can say aloud the physical sensations to make them more real. "I am BREATHING, I am experiencing this emotion, and I am noticing that I am surviving it."

### Expressing it

It is okay to express anger even when the other person didn't mean to upset us, but do so outwardly on a lower scale at the appropriate times. This gets it out of the body. The fact that it feels small is the reason why you should bring it up.

A 2 out of 10 on the anger scale is actually in the optimal zone for resolving that problem before it gets bigger. When things are low level, it’s easy to resolve them because they aren’t impacting us that strongly yet. We can have an easily inoffensive experience of expressing our anger and have things be resolved in a way that doesn’t hurt too many feelings since it is just not that heated yet for either person.

Practice this with people who you know are safe, maybe even people who you can go to and say,

“I want to start practicing setting boundaries and talking more about what upsets me because I’m placing a lot of conscious focus on becoming aware of that at this point in my life. So, if I come to you over the next couple weeks and tell you something I’m annoyed about or something that upset me or something that I wish were different, I want you to know that usually I only express anger when it’s really intense. So you might think that I’m feeling something really intense about this small thing. But actually, it’s probably that I’m trying to tell you about something before it gets big. I’m like at a 2 out of 10 right now, so it isn’t a big deal for me, but I made a promise to myself that I’m going to practice talking about it. So, here’s what I feel frustrated about or resentful towards you for in this specific situation.”

Let them know that you felt angry about that thing. Ask if you two you can find a clear interpersonal agreement, one that lets you feel safer and freer within. You’re asking them to work with you to repair the relationship.

If that fails, your anger can now tell you to set a boundary with this person around this particular thing. The next situation in which you feel a bit frozen or are tempted to fawn over someone like when you first felt your anger, or if you feel like something is off for you and you can’t quite put your finger on it, you might be feeling anger but also unsafe to fully experience it. The more you can become aware of what that trauma-response feeling is like in your body, the more you can become clear on when you are feeling angry in the moment.

That doesn’t always mean the present moment is the appropriate or best time to express your anger, especially if you struggle with clear expression of it, but it does mean that you’re going to become a lot more precise at pinpointing what it is that you’re angry about and exactly which situations your anger is related to. Soon you will be a lot more precise, clear, factual, and clean when expressing your anger. Someone watching a camera recording of it would 100% agree that it happened. We want to be extremely clear about the instance where we felt the anger, and then we want to express what happened and that we are angry about it.

The end goal is to get aligned in your inner and outer worlds. If you are not attached to the outcome of changing someone else’s behavior, and your true, honest goal is just standing up for yourself so you can walk away with self-respect, then your anger is always going to be a success if approached in this way. Find the fact that definitely happened, state very clearly and cleanly that you felt angry about it, and now you are working with reality.

## Managing guilt and shame in particular

### Guilt versus shame

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Guilt** | **Shame** |
| Guilt is the feeling of I made a mistake.  | Shame is the feeling of I am a mistake.  |
| Guilt is about your behavior, not your identity.  | Shame is about your identity and sense of self.  |
| Guilt does not obscure our judgment of what happened. | Shame obscures our judgment of what actually happened.  |
| Guilt does not cover up other feelings, such as shame. | Shame covers up other feelings, such as guilt. |
| Guilt leads us to reach out to others and make amends. | Shame disconnects us from others, and we want to run from the memory of what happened. |
| With guilt you are considering someone else’s perspective. | With shame, you are preoccupied with your own perspective even if it doesn’t feel that way. You assume others are looking at you as harshly and maliciously as you see yourself when in all likelihood, they have zero awareness of what you are thinking about. As a result, shame cannot survive when discussed with others. |
| Guilt cannot be felt before ages 5-6. It needs a higher level of rational thinking to access. You have to know that others are processing, thinking, and believing things differently from the way that you do. You see the difference between what you did and its impact on someone else. You do something perfectly well meaning, it negatively impacts someone else, and you feel guilty about that once you understand their perspective.  | Shame is an earlier emotion in our life, and thus our brain has buried it deeper into us. When a baby looks to the caregiver after a mistake and the caregiver just happens to be looking away, the baby, still seeing the two as one, interprets the caregiver’s action as embarrassment and disconnecting shame. That disconnection is the beginning of your sense of your own self disintegrating in the presence of a dysregulating other. It feels overwhelming and all-consuming. You might feel it around any moments you feel weak, vulnerable, anxious, guilty, proud, or sudden disgust. |

We don't need to feel guilty about feelings nor thoughts. Feeling homicidal rage or sexually creepy is different from committing homicide or being a sex creep.

Sit in those memories where you feel shame and feel for an underlying emotion. Do you really feel guilty?

##### 2-minute review to heal from shame

1. Identify the specific behavior you engaged in. Shining light onto shame makes it go away.
2. Name the shame aloud repeatedly. “Shame, shame, I am feeling shame.”
3. Ask yourself who was harmed and how, and see if you need to make amends.
4. Identify other potential consequences and commit to accepting them.
5. Look for triggers or other factors that initiated your behavior.
6. Decide whether you could have avoided or changed the triggers before you initiated action.
7. Discern which were stronger when you acted, your thoughts or the emotions in your body.
8. If your behavior is part of a larger pattern, decide what you need to do to change it, and do it.
9. When you start thinking about it again, remind yourself you already did this 2-minute review.

##### You might just be imagining the shame

Often we ruminate because we are afraid to look at that possibility that maybe there wasn’t anything there at all, not one iota of shame. It might just be a void that we built up to be something that wasn’t.

#### Apologizing

An effective apology

1. specifies the transgression,
2. specifies the impact,
3. expresses genuine remorse,
4. repairs the situation in detail,
5. assures the behavior won’t recur,
6. accepts the consequences,
7. accepts that the other person’s mad feelings will continue indefinitely, and
8. lets them see the change in your behavior without you mentioning it.

Give compassion to yourself after you make a mistake so that you don’t shame yourself.

##### If you tend to over-apologize

Be slower to apologize if wrong. Instead, ask for time to calm down, step away, and reflect.

##### To avoid self-shaming when apologizing

Specify what you are apologizing for, and don’t fawn. Balance your humility and self-respect.

Separate what it feels like to know you are wrong from the experience of fawning. When you are wrong about something, gracefully excuse yourself from that interaction, saying that you need time to think, and then tend to that feeling in yourself in a compassionate way. Let yourself know that you are okay and safe enough in yourself to be wrong about something and that you are not going to criticize or judge yourself for not getting things right initially.

In addition, separate being wrong from the stories you tell yourself about what it means to be wrong. Take out a notebook and answer the prompt, “If I am wrong, that means \_\_\_\_.” Answer that as quickly as you can. Notice how much of this is an intrapersonal threat.

Why it was important for people in your past to shame, blame, or ostracize you when you were wrong? What threat response might they have felt themselves? Can you disentangle yourself from those threats they faced? You can then apply that to the current experience of being wrong.

Next, figure out why you did it. What need were you trying to fulfill that led you to behaving or thinking in that way? You have to actually think you’re wrong for this part to work. It can’t be a fawn response. This means taking responsibility only for that which you are responsible for. It means acknowledging you have made a mistake, and that if it affected other people, it’s likely you have remorse over it, and you want to do something to right your wrong. But you also have to be firm in the fact that you have reckoned with this mistake internally. You have really spent time getting familiar with why you made it, and you can offer people a clear perspective of why you won’t make it again in the same conditions in the future. A big part of being able to make true amends is knowing the limits of those amends.