

Finding Your Balance



**Mindfulness &
Self-Regulation in Everyday Life**

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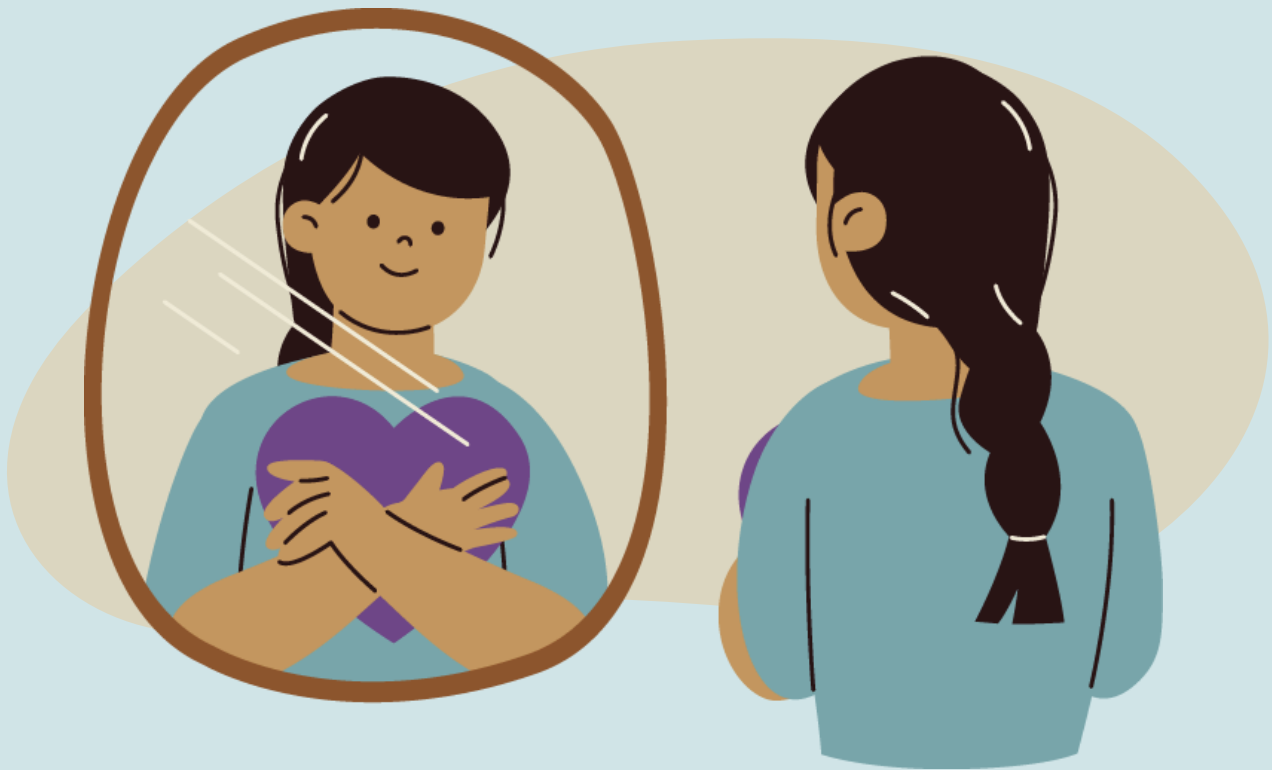
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For More Resources Visit: <http://www.pcrc-survivors.org/>

What are mindfulness & self-regulation?

Mindfulness is the practice of nonjudgmental attention to the present moment. It involves being attentive to your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations as they arise without becoming overwhelmed by them.

Self-regulation is the practice of managing your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in response to both internal and external triggers. It involves staying calm under pressure, making thoughtful decisions, and adjusting your emotional state in helpful ways.



What are the benefits of using mindfulness & self-regulation?

Mindfulness and self-regulation contribute to the mind-body connection, which is the relationship between mental processes (thoughts, emotions, and beliefs) and physiological functions (heart rate, muscle tension, and hormone levels). The state of your mind can directly influence your body and vice versa. When your mind is calm and focused, your body is more likely to be in a relaxed state, with reduced stress hormones and a lower heart rate.

When your body experiences stress, tension, or fatigue, it can impact mental clarity, concentration, decision-making, and emotional stability. Working on your mind-body connection creates the balance necessary to handle stress and challenges.

Benefits of Mindfulness

- Reduced stress
- Improved focus & concentration
- Enhanced emotional regulation
- Better relationships

Benefits of Self-Regulation

- Improved decision-making
- Greater emotional resilience
- Increased productivity
- Enhanced self-control

Mindfulness Techniques

The goal of mindfulness techniques is to teach you to slow down and bring attention to your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. These three examples listed below provide opportunities for you to practice mindfulness.

Deep Belly Breathing

- Sit in a comfortable, relaxed position. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so.
- Place your hand on your abdomen and breathe in deeply for 4 seconds. Allow your stomach to expand as you inhale paying attention to your breath entering your body.
- Slowly exhale for 8 seconds, emptying the air from your abdomen.
- Repeat for 2 minutes or longer, allowing your body and your mind to relax as you breathe fully.

Body Scan Meditation

- Sit in a comfortable position, with your feet flat on the ground. Slowly direct your attention to your toes and your feet. Notice any tensions, discomfort, or other sensations you feel.
- Take a deep breath and release the areas of tension.
- Next move up your ankles and calves and focus your attention there. Take notice of the sensations and breathe in to release the areas of tension.
- Continue moving up your body, taking the time to focus your attention to each specific part.
- Take deep breaths as you concentrate on each body part and release any areas of tension.
- After you have completed a scan of your body, take three deep breaths to center your mind.

Mindful Walking

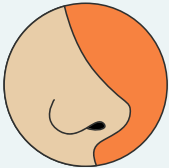
Ideally this would take place outdoors and be for a set amount of time. The goal is to focus your attention on your senses, one at a time, as you walk. Try to maintain full awareness with each step.



Touch: Pay attention to the sensation of your feet touching the ground and the air around you. What does the ground feel like? How do your feet feel? What other things do you feel? Is it hot? Cold? Is there a breeze?



Hearing: Pay attention to the sounds around you. What do you hear? From your body? From others.



Smell: Pay attention to the scents around you. What can you smell? Is it pleasant or unpleasant? Is there anything new that you notice?



Sight: Pay attention to what you see. What colors surround you? What do the buildings, animals, and plants look like? Where are you focusing your gaze?



Taste: Pay attention to what you can taste.

Self-regulation Techniques

The goal of practicing self-regulation techniques is to teach you how to manage your behavioral and emotional reactions during challenging situations.

Cognitive Reframing

- Identify a negative or irrational thought and reframe it into a more balanced, positive perspective. For example,

Instead of thinking this...

"I can't handle this."

Try this...

"This is challenging, but I can take it one step at a time."

Instead of thinking this...

"I never can do anything right."

Try this...

"That was not the outcome I wanted, but I will keep trying and practicing to improve."

Instead of thinking this...

"I will never feel safe again. This has ruined my life."

Try this...

"I've been through a traumatic experience, and what I experienced was terrible. This is a process, and I can regain my sense of safety over time."

Emotional Awareness

- Practice recognizing and labeling your emotions when they arise.
- Use a feelings wheel, such as the one below, to help you identify a specific emotion. For example, "I am feeling _____, right now" or "That situation made me feel _____".
- Identifying and naming your feelings can help you respond with greater control.

Positive Self-talk & Affirmations

When you are distressed, challenge your inner critic by replacing negative self-talk with positive affirmations that focus on your strengths and capabilities.

When to use positive self-talk & affirmations:

After experiencing trauma

- "My emotions are valid, and I can process them at my own pace."
- "I don't have to have all the answers today."
- "It's okay to feel this way right now."
- "Healing is a process."

When you feel unsafe or anxious

- "I am capable of creating a safe space for myself."
- "I may feel unsafe right now, but I am taking the steps to feel secure again."
- "I trust myself to use what's within my control to make choices that protect me."

When you feel isolated or disconnected

- "I am not alone in my journey. Some people care, and there is support available for me."
- "It's okay to reach out for help. Asking for support is a sign of strength, not weakness."
- "I will find a way forward."

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

PMR can help you practice intentionality with how your body reacts.

- Sit or lie down in a quiet, comfortable position.
- Take three deep breaths to relax.
- Tense the muscles in your feet (curl your toes tightly) for 5-10 seconds. Then, release and relax your feet for 20 seconds, focusing on the sensations of relaxation.
- Repeat this process for each muscle group: calves, thighs, abdomen, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, and face.
- After completing all muscle groups, take a few moments to notice how your body feels and enjoy the sensation of relaxation.

Sensory Grounding

Grounding techniques can bring your focus to the present moment while stabilizing overwhelming emotions. Try this exercise by identifying the following with your senses.

You can say them aloud or think to yourself:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Mindfulness → Awareness Self-regulation → Action

Practice mindfulness to become aware of your thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the moment. Then, use self-regulation to manage your emotional responses and behaviors.

Examples

- When you feel stress building, practice mindful breathing to center yourself and then use cognitive reframing to change your perspective on the situation.
- When you notice tension or discomfort, do a body scan or deep breathing to release the tension. Then, use positive self-talk and affirmations to help redirect your thoughts.
- Rather than simply trying to “fix,” your emotions, first practice observing them without judgment. Then, after paying attention to how you feel, choose a self-regulation technique that feels most appropriate in the moment to help you process your emotions.



How to incorporate mindfulness & self-regulation into your life

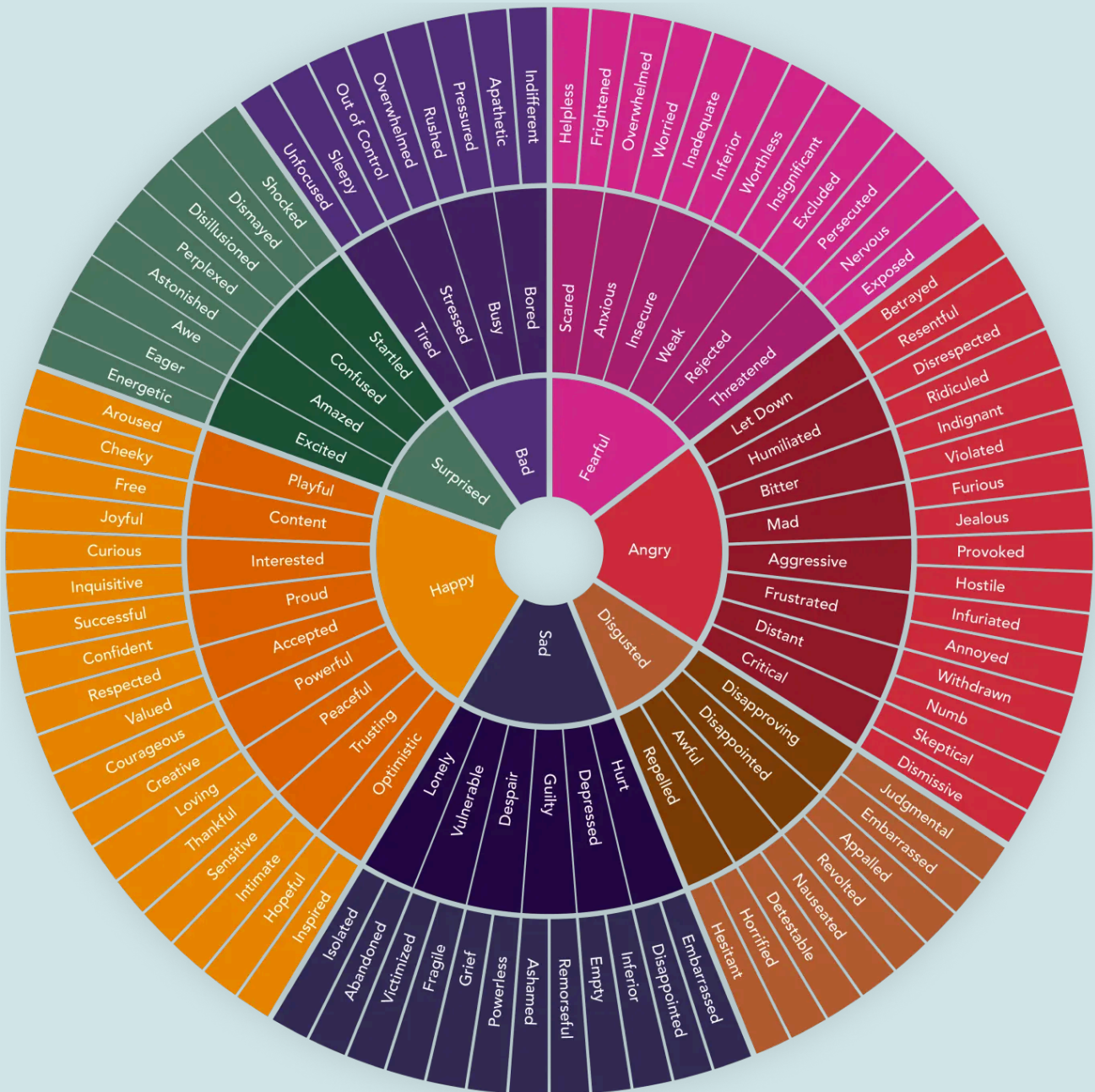
- Make mindfulness and self-regulation a daily practice.
- Create a routine by setting a specific time each day for practicing mindfulness, such as morning meditation or breathing exercises before bed. Incorporate self-regulation as needed throughout the day when you experience stress or have overwhelming thoughts.
- Set realistic goals. Start small by committing to short mindfulness sessions (5-10 minutes) and slowly increasing the duration. Have a goal to practice one technique at a time. If daily is too much, try weekly.
- Stay patient and compassionate with yourself, understanding that these practices take time to develop. View challenges as opportunities for growth; you will eventually find a technique that works for you.

Mindfulness and self-regulation work together to improve emotional and mental stability. By staying present (mindfulness) and managing your thoughts and emotions (self-regulation), you can foster balance in mind and body.



Feelings Wheel

The feelings wheel is a great tool to help you identify and articulate your emotions more precisely.



Source: feelingswheel.com

Feelings Wheel (cont)

To assist you with determining your feelings, answer the following questions as you view the wheel.

What emotion are you feeling right now?

Start by using the Feelings Wheel to identify the core emotion you're experiencing.

Can you narrow down your emotion to a more specific feeling?

Look at the outer sections of the wheel to find a word that best matches your experience.

What physical sensations are you experiencing with this emotion?

Explore whether you feel tense, relaxed, agitated, etc., to help identify the emotion.

How intense is this feeling right now on a scale from 1 to 10?

This can help you measure how deeply you feel this emotion.



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