

Revisioning Exercises for Improving Mood During the Present Crisis

These short exercises require a mirror and either photos or white paper and colored markers. The mirror should be one that you can place in an armless chair in front of you. A floor mirror can also be placed against a coffee table in front of you. In either case you should be able to see your face and photo/drawing in the mirror while sitting down. For the EMOTIONAL REGULATION exercise, the mirror should be 22" wide.

We call the following list **Emotional Healing Stages**, that reflect the emotional needs that we all have from time to time. These emotional stages are developmental, such that meeting the needs of the uppermost categories are most important and help meet the needs of the categories lower on the list. Nevertheless, exercises are included for increasing all 7 emotional needs.

ATTACHMENT EXERCISE – Helps increase **oxytocin** and decrease stress.

Requirements: Photo of a good friend from the present or past, someone who had empathy for you. If no photo is present, using the white paper and colored markers, draw this person next to you at the ages you were, possibly doing a fun activity you used to do together.

Next, hold the photo or drawing up to the mirror so that in the mirror you can see yourself next to the photo/drawing. Within moments your mood should improve. Sadness may precede the calmness if any grief is involved with the person you Revisioned.

CALMNESS EXERCISE – Helps increase **GABA**, another major relaxing chemical in the brain.

Requirements: Vacation photo or drawing showing a setting of relaxation. You can enlarge the photo on your computer. With the computer (or drawing) sitting on your lap or desk, turn the screen around facing the mirror in front of you so that you can see yourself behind your relaxing scene. Notice that you feel more immersed in the relaxing scene than looking at it straight on.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION EXERCISE – Helps increase **endorphins** and relieve emotional and physical pain.

Requirements: Photo of someone or an activity (like a former job or ability) that you have lost and is causing grief (sadness, fear, or anger). This could be a drawing showing you happily doing this job or activity from the past. Tape the photo/drawing next to you on a couch, level with your chest. Put the mirror in front of you. You should be able to see yourself and the taped photo/drawing in the mirror. Notice the feelings that arise. If no feelings occur, notice bodily sensations that could be a precursor to feelings, such as chest tightness, heart racing, etc. Be mindful of the emotions, which could cover the range of feelings mentioned above, but

in a different way. This grief occurs more rapidly and should end within 15-30 minutes, slowing down with calmness. Usually, the next day most people feel relief with some increase in the personal identity that was damaged following the loss.

HAPPINESS EXERCISE – Helps increase **dopamine**, the pleasure chemical in the brain.

Requirements: Photo or drawing of yourself participating in a fun activity from your recent or distant past. Turn this photo/drawing around to the mirror reflecting your face and image. Happiness should appear. Relish in this joy for as long as you want.

ENERGY AND MOTIVATION EXERCISE – Helps increase **norepinephrine** and energy and decrease procrastination.

Requirements: Find a photo or draw yourself (at any age) doing an activity which involves some sport or sustained activity like cycling, skiing, downhill skiing, roller-blading, etc). Turn it around to the mirror so that you can see the photo/drawing and your face. You should feel some increased happiness or energy. Having used this exercise clinically, clients normally feel recharged over the next few days or weeks and tend to take on tasks they had been putting off.

SELF-ESTEEM EXERCISE – Helps increase **serotonin** and self-worth.

Requirements: Use a photo (or drawing) of yourself when you felt important, successful, or confident. Consider times when you graduated, won an honor, achieved an award, were promoted, etc. Find a photo or draw yourself at this time of importance. Hold the photo/drawing up to the mirror and wait to begin feeling reconnected to that confidence you had in the photo/drawing.

FLOW EXERCISE – Helps increase **anandamide**, the brain chemical associated with times when you feel totally immersed or engaged in an activity.

Requirements: Consider a time in your life which was difficult for you to get through. Try to remember a fun time before that difficult time occurred. Or, this could be a place you escaped to while you were going through this difficult time. Draw yourself going back in time and playing with your younger self doing this fun activity. Next, consider a real or imaginal form of transportation that will take you and your younger self over, above, and beyond the difficult time without having to re-experience it (Back to the Future car, magic carpet, a jet, etc.). Pack a bag of your favorite things you liked about yourself (your strengths) before this difficult time occurred. Take your journey from the past to the future, bypassing the difficult time completely and ending up in the present.

Notice your feelings. Many people experience a sense of flow that can continue for weeks or months.

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