



Mental Health Practices Visual Reference Guide

EMOTION REGULATION TOOLKIT

WHEN FEELING OVERWHELMED

Practice	How To	Duration	Chapter Reference
Box Breathing	• Inhale (4 counts) • Hold (4 counts) • Exhale (4 counts) • Hold (4 counts) • Repeat	1-5 min	Ch. 5: Resilience
5-4-3-2-1 Grounding	• Name 5 things you see • 4 things you can touch • 3 things you can hear • 2 things you can smell • 1 thing you can taste	2-3 min	Ch. 4: Mindfulness
Body Scan	• Bring attention to feet • Slowly move awareness up body • Notice sensations without judgment • Release tension where discovered	3-10 min	Ch. 7: Mind-Body
Emotional Labeling	• Notice emotion arising • Name it specifically • Locate where you feel it in body • Allow it to be present without action	1-3 min	Ch. 4: Mindfulness



WHEN FEELING ANXIOUS

Practice	How To	Duration	Chapter Reference
Extended Exhale	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inhale for 4 counts • Exhale for 6-8 counts • Focus attention on the exhale • Feel tension releasing with each breath	2-5 min	Ch. 5: Resilience
Worry Containment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write all current worries quickly • Set specific "worry time" later • Close notebook until designated time • Return to present activity	2-5 min	Ch. 3: Rewiring
Progressive Relaxation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tense muscles in one area (5 sec) • Release completely (10 sec) • Notice the contrast sensation • Move to next muscle group	5-15 min	Ch. 7: Mind-Body
Cognitive Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notice anxious thought • Add phrase: "I'm having the thought that..." • Observe thought as mental event • Allow it to pass without attaching	1-3 min	Ch. 3: Rewiring



😞 WHEN FEELING DOWN

Practice	How To	Duration	Chapter Reference
Behavioral Activation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose one small meaningful activity• Set timer for just 5 minutes• Begin without waiting for motivation• Notice sensations during activity	5-15 min	Ch. 6: Habits
Pleasant Event Scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify small activities you've enjoyed• Schedule one daily• Approach with curiosity not expectation• Fully engage senses during activity	10-30 min	Ch. 6: Habits
Self-Compassion Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledge difficulty: "This is hard"• Connect to common humanity: "Others feel this too"• Offer kindness: "May I be gentle with myself"• Place hand on heart while speaking	2-5 min	Ch. 5: Resilience
Values Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify one core value important to you• Choose tiny action expressing this value• Implement regardless of mood• Notice how alignment feels	5-30 min	Ch. 10: Sustaining



WHEN FEELING ANGRY

Practice	How To	Duration	Chapter Reference
S.T.O.P. Practice	• S top what you're doing • T ake a breath • O bserve what's happening internally • P roceed with awareness	1-2 min	Ch. 4: Mindfulness
Physical Discharge	• Find private space • Push against wall (not damaging) • Stomp feet or tense/release muscles • Match movement to sensation intensity	2-5 min	Ch. 7: Mind-Body
Anger Journaling	• Write uncensored thoughts without judgment • Explore underlying needs/values • Note body sensations accompanying anger • Identify possible responses	5-15 min	Ch. 5: Resilience
Emotional Validation	• Name anger without judgment • Acknowledge legitimate aspects • Identify unmet needs beneath anger • Consider what would help meet needs	3-5 min	Ch. 4: Mindfulness



PREVENTION & MAINTENANCE PRACTICES

MIND TRAINING

Practice	How To	Duration	Frequency
Focused Attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose single focus (breath, sound, object)• Direct full attention to this anchor• Notice when mind wanders• Gently return attention to anchor	5-20 min	Daily
Loving-Kindness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin with self or easy person• Repeat phrases: "May you be happy, safe..."• Gradually extend to neutral/difficult people• Notice sensations as you practice	10-20 min	2-3x weekly
Thought Reframing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify negative thought pattern• Question its accuracy and helpfulness• Generate alternative perspectives• Create balanced thought to replace it	5-15 min	As needed
Gratitude Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify 3 specific things you appreciate• Note why they matter to you• Feel the appreciation in your body• Express gratitude when possible	3-5 min	Daily



BODY PRACTICES

Practice	How To	Duration	Frequency
Morning Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gentle stretching upon waking• Focus on areas of typical tension• Match movement to breath• Set intention for the day	5-15 min	Daily
Tension Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scan body for areas holding tension• Note connection to emotional states• Apply gentle pressure or movement• Release with extended exhales	5-10 min	As needed
Nature Walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walk in natural setting• Engage all senses fully• Notice details often missed• Feel connection with environment	15-60 min	2-3x weekly
Somatic Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stand in comfortable position• Extend arms to define personal space• Practice saying "yes" and "no" with body• Notice sensations of boundary setting	5-10 min	Weekly



HABIT FOUNDATIONS

Practice	How To	Duration	Frequency
Sleep Routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistent sleep/wake times• No screens 1 hour before bed• Bedroom cool, dark, quiet• Relaxation sequence before sleep	—	Daily
Morning Sunlight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get outdoor light within 1 hour of waking• 5-15 minutes exposure minimum• No sunglasses if possible• Combine with gentle movement	5-15 min	Daily
Mindful Meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remove distractions while eating• Notice colors, smells, textures• Chew thoroughly and pace eating• Notice hunger/fullness cues	Meal length	1-3x daily
Digital Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define tech-free times and zones• Batch communications at set times• Remove unnecessary notifications• Establish evening digital sunset	—	Daily



🤝 RELATIONAL PRACTICES

Practice	How To	Duration	Frequency
Active Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give full attention to speaker• Notice when mind wanders• Reflect back what you hear• Ask curious questions before responding	Conversation length	As needed
Boundary Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify your needs and limits• Prepare clear, direct language• Express boundary without apology• Maintain despite discomfort	2-10 min	As needed
Repair Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledge impact without defensiveness• Listen to other's experience• Express genuine understanding• Make amends and forward agreements	10-30 min	As needed
Social Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reach out to supportive person• Share authentically about experience• Ask meaningful questions• Express appreciation for connection	5-60 min	2-3x weekly



QUICK-REFERENCE BY TIME AVAILABLE

1 MINUTE OR LESS

Practice	When to Use	How To
Three Breaths	Transitions, stress moments	Take three conscious breaths with full awareness
Hand on Heart	Emotional moments	Place hand on heart with gentle pressure, breathe
Name to Tame	Strong emotions	Specifically name emotion: "This is anxiety"
Orienting	Dissociation, anxiety	Notice 5 things you can see in your environment
STOP Practice	Reactivity, autopilot	Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed



 **2-5 MINUTES**

Practice	When to Use	How To
Box Breathing	Anxiety, stress	Inhale 4, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4, repeat
Three-Minute Breathing Space	Transitions, stress	Aware → Gather attention → Expand awareness
Body Scan Express	Tension, distraction	Quickly scan body from feet to head, release tension
RAIN Practice	Difficult emotions	Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture
Worry Containment	Rumination, worry	Write concerns for later, return to present



 **10-15 MINUTES**

Practice	When to Use	How To
Extended Body Scan	Physical tension, sleep	Thoroughly scan body, releasing each area
Thought Record	Negative thought patterns	Document thoughts, evidence, alternatives
Focused Breathing	Building concentration	Sustain attention on breath sensations
Guided Visualization	Stress, preparation	Mentally rehearse positive scenario or outcome
Nature Connection	Restoration, perspective	Engage with natural elements using all senses



 **30+ MINUTES**

Practice	When to Use	How To
Deep Relaxation	Stress recovery	Progressive relaxation, guided meditation
Journaling Session	Processing, clarity	Extended writing exploration of thoughts/feelings
Movement Practice	Energy regulation	Walking, yoga, dance, or other movement
Chapter Deep Dive	Understanding, learning	Study one book chapter with implementation notes
Support Connection	Building resources	Meaningful conversation with supportive person



PRACTICE SELECTION FLOWCHART

START HERE → How are you feeling right now?

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|→ Activated/Anxious → Need immediate calming?

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|→ Yes → Extended Exhale Breathing

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|→ No → Progressive Muscle Relaxation

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|→ Low Energy/Down → Need activation or comfort?

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|→ Activation → Behavioral Activation (tiny step)

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|→ Comfort → Self-Compassion Practice

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|→ Disconnected/Numb → Need grounding or expression?

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|→ Grounding → Sensory Engagement Practice

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|→ Expression → Expressive Movement or Writing

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|→ Irritated/Angry → Need release or understanding?

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|→ Release → Physical Discharge Practice

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|→ Understanding → Needs Identification

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|→ Scattered/Unfocused → Need centering or structure?

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|→ Centering → Focused Attention Practice

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|→ Structure → Implementation Intentions

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└→ Relatively Balanced → Building resources or skills?

| └→ Resources → Gratitude or Pleasure Practice

| └→ Skills → Choose practice from chapter of interest

IMPLEMENTATION REMINDERS

1. **Start small:** Consistency matters more than duration.
2. **Stack habits:** Attach new practices to existing routines.
3. **Track visibly:** Create simple visual reminders of practice.
4. **Prepare for obstacles:** Plan ahead for common barriers.
5. **Create environmental triggers:** Visual cues for practice.
6. **Focus on process not perfection:** Approach with curiosity.
7. **Build gradual progression:** Slowly extend duration as consistently as possible.
8. **Celebrate small wins:** Acknowledge all progress.
9. **Expect non-linear progress:** Ups and downs are normal.
10. **Return with self-compassion:** Begin again when practices lapse.