

# 1. **Fifteen Bilateral, Biomeridian Awareness Based Calming and De-escalation (BB-ABC) Tools to Prevent, Reduce and Eliminate Anxiety, Anger and Aggression**

## **Introduction**

The tools that make up the CCS BB-ABC calming and de-escalation process integrate effective calming strategies from the following evidence-based protocols (rationale, research and references are listed below in Extension # 1).

- Mindful emotional self-regulation – internal resonance and entrainment;
- Bi-lateral stimulation procedures similar to those applied in tactile EMDR;
- Acupressure (bio-meridian);
- Calming through repetitive patterning (reference Autism Research Institute – Self stimulating behavior);
- Mirror neuron enhancement via firing and wiring of the medial prefrontal cortex of the brain;
- Emotional Freedom Therapy,
- “Soles of the Feet” B-FIT Mindfulness technique.

The following awareness-based calming and de-escalation best practices are most effective when they are integrated into and become part of everyday, normal living activities. When PwDD do these exercises when they are relatively calm, the practices are normalized which significantly enhances the likelihood of effective use during times of pre-crisis and crisis. The following BB-ABC primary exercises are followed by a list of supplemental awareness-based calming strategies.

### *BB-ABC Exercise # 1: Butterfly Hug*

The butterfly hug can be readily taught for self-administration to the vast majority of supported children, youth and adults. Supporters can model this simple practice at any time of the day and thereby help influence others to start the practice.

- Fold arms across the chest so that the left hand rests on the right bicep and the right hand rests on the left bicep.
- Raise one hand and apply pressure on one bicep (thus activating the brain), then the other. Alternate at a rate of one activation per second. Both the individual and the supporter count out loud: “1,000 Here; 2,000 Here,” up to 10,000 and start over. “Here” is an essential label to keep both you and the individual mindful in each moment of activation.
- As the individual-supported activates, model and label the exact behaviour.
- Whenever you (the supporter) are not talking, silently and mindfully intend calm.
- Continue for up to five minutes. If agitation or difficult feelings continue, introduce other parts of the Behaviour Support Plan and return to the most suitable BB-ABC exercise.

### *BB-ABC Exercise # 2: Collar Bone Activation*

- Using the three middle fingers on each hand, alternate from left side to right side each second, activating the “sensitive” acupressure point of the collar bone region approximately one inch from the top of the collar bone.
- Refer to Exercise #1 for instructions about timing, role modeling, intentions and affirmations.

### *BB-ABC Exercise # 3: Hand BB Activation by Supporter*

- As appropriate, you (the supporter) hold the individual’s hand. Your thumb activates the “sensitive” space between the thumb and index finger of the PwDD hand.
- Activate this region, following the timing, role modeling and intentions as described in instructions for Exercise #1.
- For all exercises remind the recipient to notice how it feels by labelling “here.” This teaches mindfulness and activation of brain-calming circuits, (e.g. the medial prefrontal cortex).

### *BB-ABC Exercise #4 – Mindful Movement Awareness Based Calming*

This exercise should be practiced near daily so that the skill becomes automatic and neuron development is reinforced.

- Stand facing the individual you are supporting. Slightly bend your knees and become aware of what you are doing.
- Ask the individual you are coaching to do what you do.
- On your next inhalation, slowly raise your arms to the count of four; encourage the individual to do the same and to pay attention to how it feels, (e.g. “heavy”). Once arms are parallel to the floor have the individual label—i.e. say “up” out loud (if the individual is verbal).
- On the exhalation, slowly lower your arms to the count of eight and label “down.” Encourage the individual to notice how that feels.
- Repeat the up and down movement about five times.
- With arms in the down position, on the next inhalation have the individual tighten their hands and arms to the count of four and notice and label how it feels, (e.g. “tight”).
- On the exhalation, have the individual release to the count of eight and ask them to notice and label how it feels, (e.g. “release”).
- Repeat the muscle tightening exercise at least five times.
- Next, ask the individual to lift one of their feet (or just the heel if balancing is difficult) and label “lift.” Ask them to notice lifting. Place foot down and label “place.” Lift and place the other foot, notice. Repeat five times.
- Optionally, the individual can do the lift, place and notice sequence in a slow walk.

### *BB-ABC Exercise #5 – Mindful Walking*

- Optionally, the PwDD can do mindful walking at a slow rate of speed.

- To keep the exercise mindful and therefore to grow medial prefrontal neuron cells incorporate one of the following three noticing activities in the mindful walking exercise.
  - do a preplanned treasure hunt
  - play I spy with a peer or supporter
  - list in categories, e.g. objects, colours or shapes

### **Supplemental Awareness Based Calming Exercises (ABC)**

All of the following exercises are to be done mindfully while encouraging the PwDD to notice/pay attention/be mindful:

- ABC Exercise #6 - hand/foot massage, essential oils optional
- ABC Exercise #7 - high intensity interval training e.g. rebounder
- ABC Exercise #8 - fitness exercises – core, balance and strengths
- ABC Exercise #9 - mindful progressive muscle relaxation
- ABC Exercise #10 - calming music and vibro-acoustics
- ABC Exercise #11 - sensory diet as prescribed
- ABC Exercise #12 - neuro/bio feedback
- ABC Exercise #13 - bosu stabilization ball and cushion
- ABC Exercise #14 - balancing exercises, e.g. Wii, Xbox, wobble board
- ABC Exercise #15 - vestibular and proprioception swing.

(reference Need #6 for more details)

## **2. BB-ABC and Emotional Contagion to Calm**

While the above BB-ABC evidence-based practices can significantly prevent and de-escalate anxiety, anger and aggressive behaviours, their effectiveness is directly proportional to the calm and concentration of the family or support professional.

### **Calm begets calm, fear begets fear!**

The mindful, emotional self-regulation skills of the supporter will influence the recipient's emotions to calm. This response is based in part on the human social influence experience called **emotional contagion**. The individual's stress is therefore often caused or made worse by the supporter's agitation or anxiety. If a supporter lacks mindful emotional maturity, being under pressure or stress will cause him or her to become increasingly anxious. This anxiety is passed on to the PwDD through a process called *emotional contagion*. Emotional contagion happens when human energy systems influence each other. The individual being supported can be made anxious by the supporter's anxiety. The effect of emotional contagion is not limited to a single occurrence. If an individual is, for example, influenced to feel frightened in relation to a particular person, event or action, the response learned through emotional contagion can repeat itself with each new exposure to that person, event or action.