**Managing difficult and overwhelming feelings**

Difficult feelings such as irritability, frustration, anger, and anxiety are all natural human emotions, and it is ok to feel those things. But when they start to happen all the time, or feelings start to spiral, it can become overwhelming, so it can help to have strategies to manage them.

For strategies to be successful, they need to be practiced often so that we can do them automatically when needed.

**Calming techniques –**

**Immediate things you can do when feelings get out of hand**

* **Take control of your breathing** – try ‘square breathing’:

slowly breathe in for a count of 4,

hold your breath for a count of 4,

slowly breathe out for a count of 4,

hold the out breath for a count of 4.

Repeat this and gradually get slower each time until you feel more in

control and your body begins to calm down.

* **Grounding** – try the Five Senses or 5,4,3,2,1 technique:

Look for **5** different things that you can see around you,

Listen for **4** different things that you can hear,

Touch **3** different things that are nearby,

Smell the air and identify **2** different things that you can smell,

Find **1** thing to taste (or imagine the taste of one thing you enjoy eating).

This helps as a distraction, and to bring your body and mind back to the

present and to reality.

* **Visualisation** –

Think about and picture yourself (real or imagined) in a place where you feel safe and comfortable. Relax there for a while.

**How you can prepare for the future and plan ahead**

* **WORRY TIME**

**Have a set time to think about things and work out solutions:**

It can help to control the time you think about things that can cause frustration or anxiety.

Have a specific time of day when you can think about things in a practical and objective way.

If you find yourself thinking about them at another time, remind yourself to stop and that you will think about it later.

This helps you control your worries rather than the other way round.

* **Know your triggers:**

Think about times in the past when you have felt frustrated or anxious,

and try to identify any triggers that still happen now. Think about

positive ways to deal with those triggers (see Taking control).

* **General wellbeing:**

Get to know the things that your body and mind need to maintain a positive state of equilibrium, such as regular healthy food intake, water, fresh air, exercise, sleep, fun, connection with others, purpose, rest and relaxation, acceptance, self-compassion, and anything else this is important to you.

* **Acceptance:**

It can often be difficult accepting certain situations, or things that other people say and do, or even something about ourselves that we find difficult. Finding ways to accept the things we have no control over can help with reducing the impact of difficult feelings (although that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t stand up for what we believe).

* **Distractions:**

If you can, try using diversions to distract your mind when you find

yourself overthinking a situation. Try listening to music, watching TV,

reading, going out for a walk, exercise, gaming, making a meal, or

anything else that you enjoy.

**Taking control:**

By recognising triggers, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, you can start to gain more control over them.

**Focus on one particular concern:**

Describe a difficult feeling or issue that you want to work on (eg. irritability, frustration, anxiety, something else?).

What does it physically feel like in your body?

What thoughts do you have when you feel like this?

What do you do/how do you behave when you feel like this?

Is there something that you are worried might happen in this situation?

**Describe different kinds of triggers:**

Emotional triggers:

People who might trigger you:

Places that might trigger you:

Things that might trigger you:

Thoughts that might spiral out of control:

Situations that might happen:

Get to recognise regular triggers and, if appropriate, see if there are ways to avoid them. It is often not possible to avoid them, so using the calming techniques above should help when situations do come up.

DESCRIBE YOUR 3 BIGGEST TRIGGERS IN MORE DETAIL:

1. .
2. .
3. .

DESCRIBE A WAY OF AVOIDING THESE TRIGGERS (IF YOU CAN) OR DESCRIBE A STRATEGY FOR REDUCING THE TRIGGER:

1. .
2. .
3. .

DESCRIBE A POSITIVE STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH EACH TRIGGER WHEN IT CANNOT BE AVOIDED OR REDUCED:

1. .
2. .
3. .

**Reflecting on a situation:**

When you’re feeling calm, think about what was happening for you in a difficult situation where you felt triggered, and the situation became overwhelming.

As if you are watching TV, or reading a book, imagine someone else is in that same situation now and think about what was happening for them before, during, and afterwards. While you watch the scene play out, think about the following questions:

* What do you think about what is happening for them?
* What do you think about their reaction? What they did? What they said?
* Do you understand why they are feeling that way?
* What advice, if any, would you give them?
* Would you help them? If so, how would you help them?
* **Can you give some positive advice to yourself?**