

Feeling Grounded & Centered

By Sue Brooks, M.A.

Many of us are feeling traumatized recently due to a variety of concerns beyond our control, be they political or weather related such as Hurricane Harvey. Accept that the fight and flight part of your nervous system has been activated and is on high alert. It's biology.

To activate the rest and digest part of your nervous system (the parasympathetic nervous system), do 3 to 10 really deep inhalations and exhalations. Yawn. Relax your tongue. Wiggle your jaw. Do it gain, until you really feel it.

To feel present, experience your senses. Look around. What colors and shapes do you see? What sounds do you hear? What is the taste inside your mouth? What smells? Touch something. Is it rough, smooth, hot, cold? Feel your toes inside your shoes or the ground under your feet.

To activate your thinking brain, bring awareness to your breathing and think to yourself "In. Out. In. Out." Do this every time you are in the restroom in order to kick start your brain into the habit.

To calm your working memory in order to help you get clarity for making decisions, think of something that you are grateful for. Anything at all. This is the reason gratitude lists work.

To increase empathy for others and decrease your middle brain circuits involving your own ego, look up at the stars or down into the veins of a tiny blade of grass, sensing the wonder and awe of Life – which I know may be a stretch right now. For a few moments, though, give yourself permission to think beyond the urgency of it all.

Pause. Walk, slower. Slow. Down.

Connect. Get and give hugs. Make good eye contact with people.

Accept help, no matter how big or small.

Reach out to someone else, no matter how big or small.

Emotions

We have 7 universal, primary emotions:

- mad/anger
- sad
- glad/joy
- afraid/fear
- shame
- disgust
- surprise (the shortest)

All the rest of our emotions are secondary emotions which are combinations of emotions plus various thoughts and behaviors. Note: the emotion of anger is not the same as the behavior of aggression and hostility.

Make a space for what you are feeling and experiencing. Just let it be what it already is.

Your brain automatically slows down when you identify by name which emotions you are experiencing. Next, listen to the message that each emotion is trying to tell you so you can decide which one to deal with first. Keep in mind that experiencing an emotion is not the same as taking action as a result of an emotion.

And, know that just like the weather and Hurricane Harvey, your emotions will eventually pass.

Be kind to one another. Be patient with one another. We're all we've got.

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