

# Rural Women's Health

Promoting healthier and happier living



International Rural women's Day – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025

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Thank you so much for joining me today to explore some techniques and tools you can use to help manage your wellbeing.

Cognitive behavioural therapy is an approach to mental health that is focused on empowering you to feel more in control of your wellbeing.

I hope following our webinar you were able to take away greater knowledge of what impacts our wellbeing as well as some tools and techniques you could use to support yourself in living a happier, more enjoyable life.

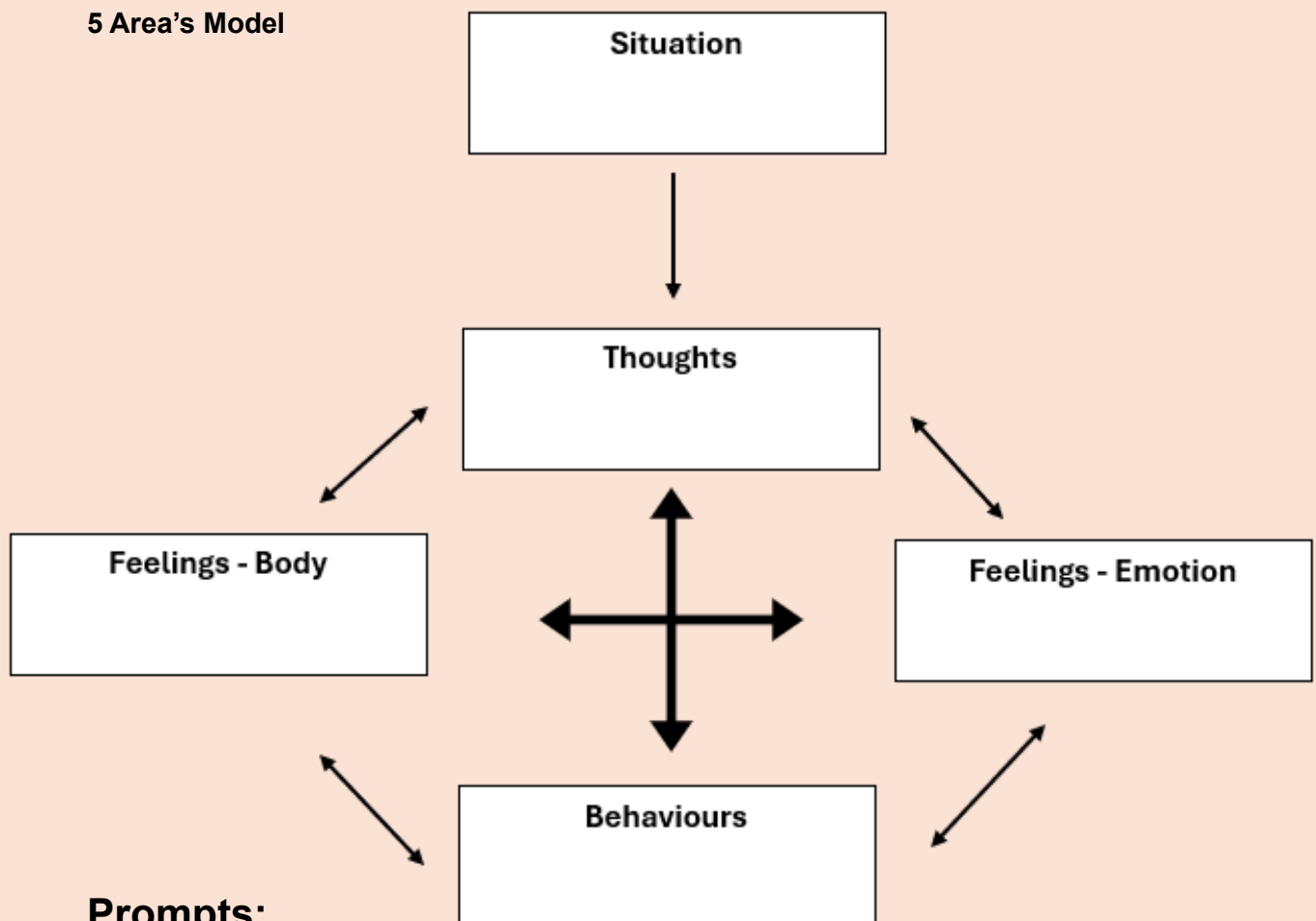
As human beings, we can only do so much and when we are trying to manage so many different demands it is natural that we will struggle at times.

This does not mean we will feel like that forever, but it does mean that we may need to prioritise ourselves and our wellbeing.

## Getting started:

One of the most helpful tools in our wellbeing arsenal is this map which we use to help break down what is happening for us when we are struggling with difficult emotions and involves identifying 5 areas.

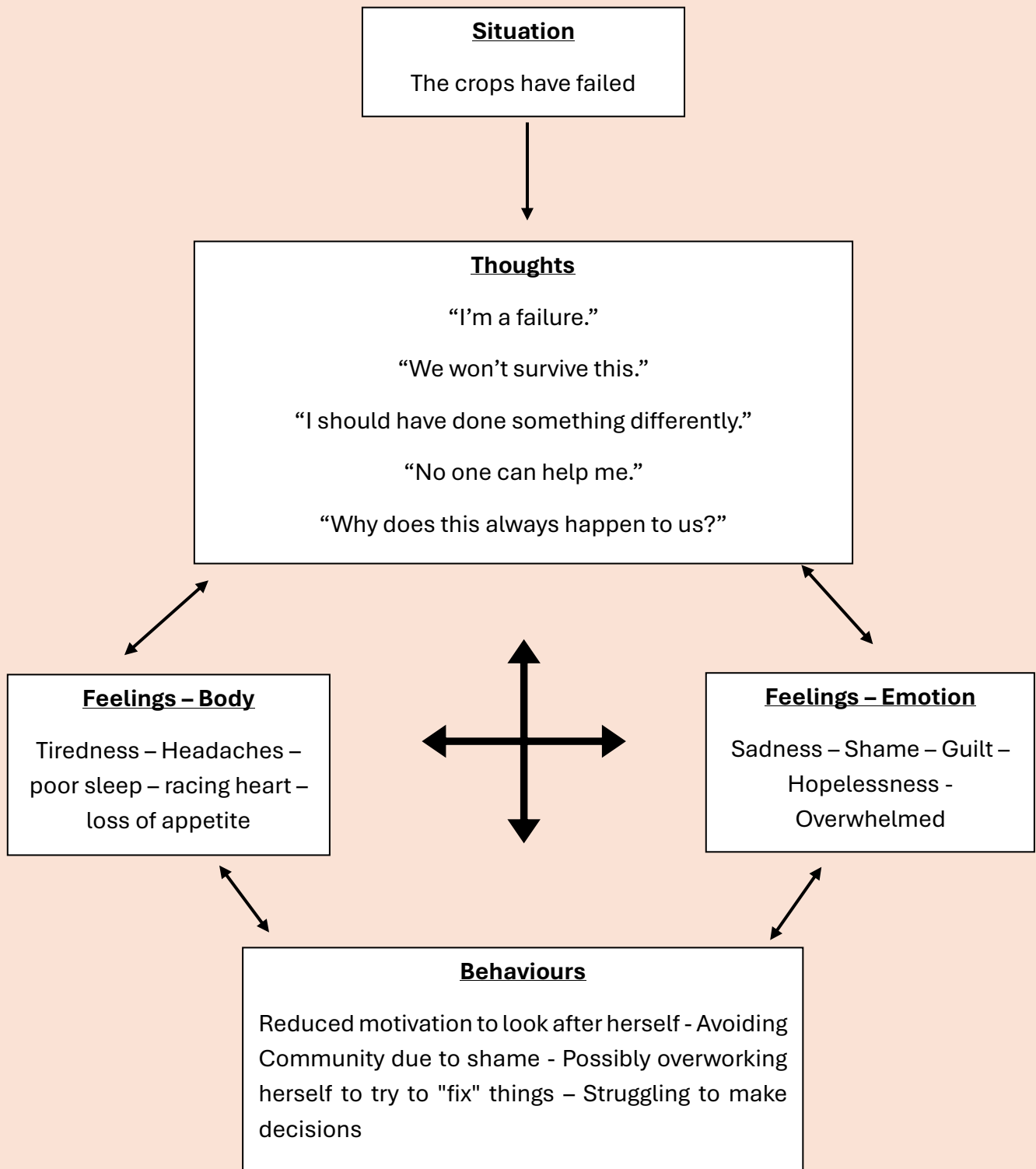
## 5 Area's Model



## Prompts:

- Situation: Where am I, who am I with.
- Thoughts: What is going through my minds? what sense are we making from what is happening?
- Feelings - Emotions: How am I feeling? Sad? Happy? Afraid?
- Behaviours: What I do/did next, how I cope.
- Feelings – Body: Am I noticing any changes in sensation in my body? Is my body indicating to me I am anxious or stressed?

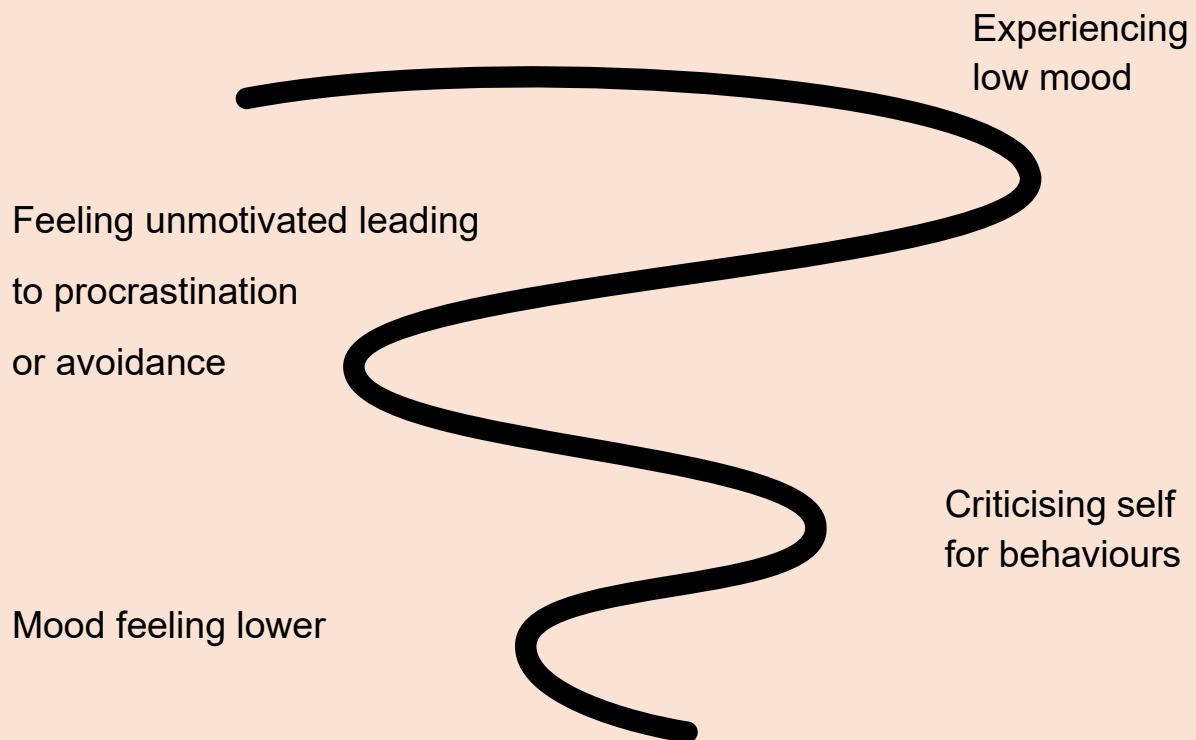
## 5 Areas model - Example



# Tools For managing Wellbeing

## Behaviour Activation

- Principle that what we do impacts how we feel
- Particularly beneficial for those struggling with sadness/hopelessness/Loneliness/stress
- Less “want to’s” and more “Have To’s leads to disconnection from meaning



**Unless interrupted, downward spiral continues**

## **Principle of ACE**

Achievement e.g work, chores, education, skills

Connection e.g Family, Friends, Pets, Nature

Enjoyment e.g Hobbies, interests, Fun, relaxation, creativity

- what one person might class as feeling like an achievement may not feel like that for another, so it is important to be curious and open to trying new things.
- The main barrier faced when applying this is that you are feeling tired and lacking motivation so understandably this might feel like a very hard task. I have broken it down into steps which I help will make putting this into action a bit easier

## **Applying Technique:**

Step 1. Make a baseline diary of activities, Mood and ACE.

- A helpful place to start with this technique is to jot down everything you do for a week including detail on how you are spending your time, how this is impacting your mood and how balanced your ACE is.
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Step 2. Reflect on baseline - Any unhelpful behaviours e.g avoidance, procrastination? Is ACE present and balanced?

- At the end of a week, reflect on what you have written down and consider trends in your mood such as being linked to certain activities or unhelpful behaviours and see if your ACE is balanced. Once we know how normal life is looking, we can then start to introduce more meaningful activities.

Step 3. Identify meaningful activities and gradually introduce them

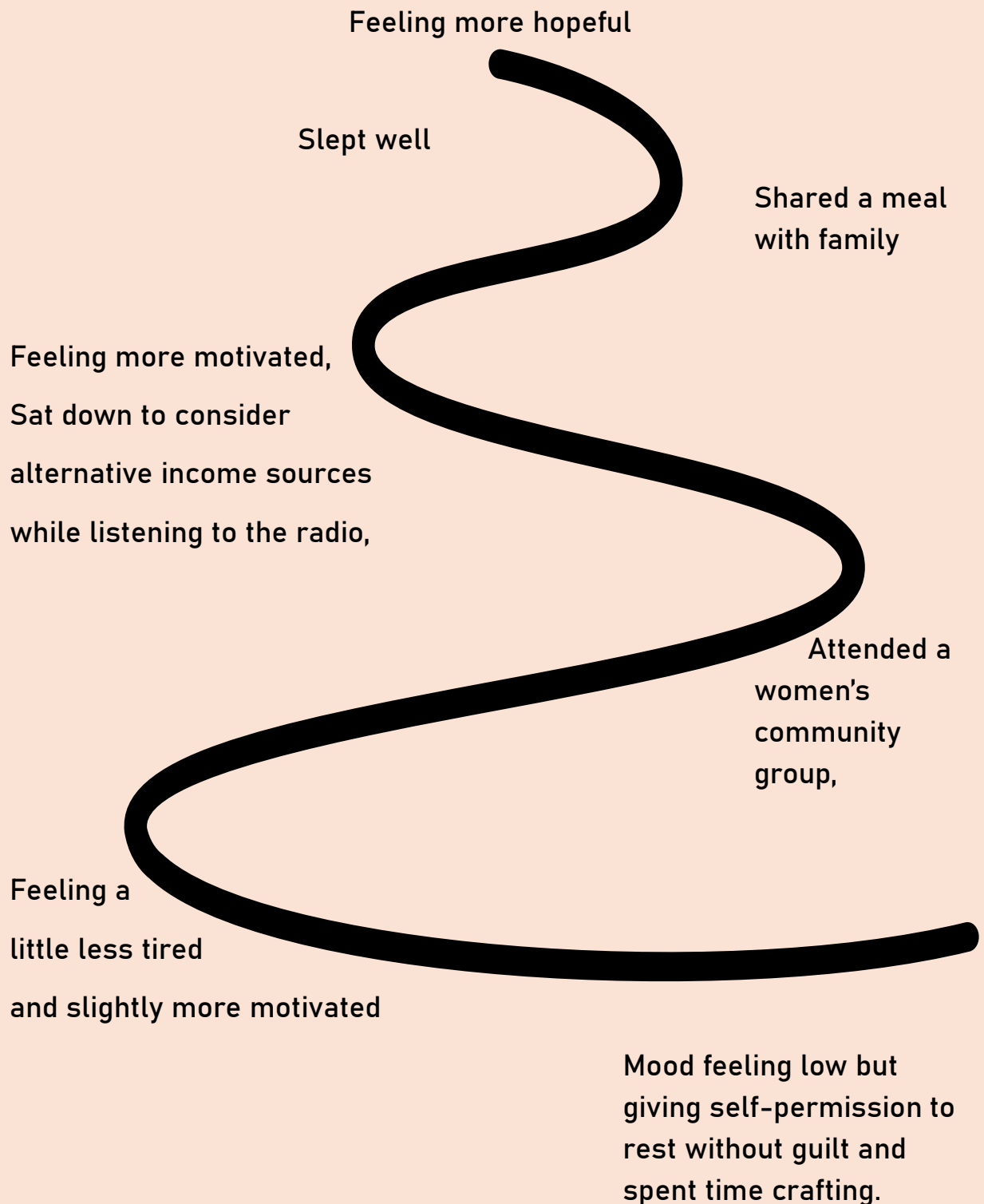
- When making these changes it can be very daunting when we are already feeling stressed/tired, so we want to do this in a graded way.
- When working with a changeable routine such as around planting season, it is important to make sure time is still set aside for the "Want To's".

Step 4. Continue to check in with mood and adjust where needed

- As you move forward continue to check in with what you are doing and how you are feeling and adjust when needed.

*When making any type of change it is important to give yourself permission to not get it right sometimes or for setbacks to happen. What is important is to continue forward.*

## Behaviour Activation – Example



## Thought Challenging:

- Automatic thoughts are often hard to detect, we first notice a mood change
- Often feel like facts
- We are seeking thoughts which are: Balanced, Fair, Accurate and proportional
- Changing the way we think takes time and effort but is achievable
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### Exercise

|                          |                         |                |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Thought:</b>          |                         | <b>Belief:</b> |
| <b>Evidence for</b>      | <b>Evidence against</b> |                |
|                          |                         |                |
| <b>Balanced thought:</b> |                         |                |
|                          |                         |                |

## Thought Challenging - Example

| <b>Thought:</b> I've failed by family                                                                                                                                                                       |  | <b>Belief:</b> 95%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Evidence for</b>                                                                                                                                                                                         |  | <b>Evidence against</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The crops failed again this season.<br><input type="checkbox"/> The family is struggling financially.<br><input type="checkbox"/> She is the main person responsible for the farm. |  | <input type="checkbox"/> The drought is widespread—other farmers are also suffering.<br><input type="checkbox"/> She worked hard every day and tried everything she could.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Farming is unpredictable; it's not fully in her control.<br><input type="checkbox"/> Her family hasn't said she failed—they know she's doing her best.<br><input type="checkbox"/> She's kept the household running under very difficult circumstances. |
| <b>Balanced thought:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| I worked hard this season to do all that I could to manage the crop and look after my family.<br>The drought was out of my control and is not my fault. Many other farmers are struggling.                  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

### **When developing balanced thought, ask yourself:**

- What other ways are there of viewing this situation?
- How would some else view this situation?
- Is there a benefit to me thinking this thought?
- Am I jumping to a conclusion?
- Am I focusing on the bad side?
- Am I Taking responsibility for something that is not my fault?

# **Relaxation/Grounding**

Practicing relaxation and grounding techniques frequently can help us bring down our overall level of stress and allow us to feel more capable to manage the day to day demands we face. It can also have additional benefits including better sleep, better concentration, higher levels of self-compassion and more able to resolve conflict in relationships.

## **5-4-3-2-1 Method:**

Look around where you are when you feel difficult emotions and name.

- 5 things she can see
- 4 things she can touch
- 3 things she can hear
- 2 things she can smell
- 1 thing she can taste or is grateful for

## **Box Breathing**

A simple breathing exercise made up of 4 steps. To begin box breathing, sit or stand with your back straight. Or, if you prefer, you can lie down with your arms by your side. Choose whatever position feels most relaxing.

1. Breath in slowly through your nose to a count of 4. Place your hand on your stomach and feel it expand.
2. Hold your in breath and count to 4.
3. Breath out slowly through your mount for a count of 4
4. After breathing out, hold your breath for a count of 4.

Repeat as many times as you like.

# **Self-Compassion**

Practicing self-compassion means embracing the fact that imperfection is part of being human. Recognize that it's impossible to always be completely compassionate toward yourself or others. However, the more often you operate from a place of compassion, guided by your soothing system, the more your mental health and overall well-being will benefit.

## **How to be compassionate**

- Meet yourself with kindness: acknowledge your struggles instead of ignoring them.
- Remind yourself it is not your fault you are struggling, and all people struggle at times.
- Prioritise self-care: doing the things you enjoy relieving stress or to relax
- Ask for help when you need it
- Slow down: Use relaxation/grounding techniques to give yourself a break from thoughts
- Use thought challenging technique to challenge self-critical thoughts
- Take time to acknowledge your positive attributes.

## **Safety planning:**

A safety plan for mental health is a personalized, written list of strategies and contacts to use during a mental health crisis, such as suicidal thoughts or self-harm urges. This can also be used to consider how you can stay safe from a person who is making you feel afraid or is hurting you. This involves answering several questions.

1. What are my warning signs? (e.g hopeless thoughts, isolating myself, issues with sleep)
2. What can help me cope with my feelings? (e.g distractions, relaxation, music, hobbies, etc)
3. What people or places could help me feel safe? (e.g Family member, Friend, community centre, home)
4. Who could support me when I am feeling unsafe in myself (E.g Healthcare workers, community leaders)
5. How can I make my environment safer? (E.g removing access to certain tools or objects)
6. . What are my reasons for living/hope are: (E.g people, pets, hobbies, special interests, hopes and beliefs)

Remember: We do not control the thoughts we have but we do control how we respond to them.

## **Coping with External stressors - Additional tips**

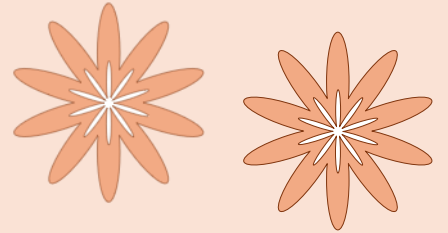
- Focus on basics: Make sure you are hydrating, eating and sleeping well
- Practicing Self- Compassion: Reminding yourself you are worthy of care and deserve to rest when needed.
- Spirituality: Draw strength from beliefs.
- Use relaxation or grounding techniques
- Problem solving: What's the problem? What are 2–3 possible solutions? What small step can I take today?
- Safety Planning: Managing personal safety and safety from others.
- Seek support from community e.g Family, Friends, Support workers, Healthcare professionals.

A gentle reminder that what we have discussed today are Skills and as such, they take time to build and feel natural but with practice they can become second nature. To get there it is essential you are patient with yourself.



**“Mental Health Problems don’t  
define who you are. They are  
something you experience. You  
walk in the rain, and you feel the  
rain, but you are not the rain”**

**Matt Haig**



## References

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