Overview

This webinar focuses on what affect regulation is, and how it affects our clients and their relationships.

It teaches quick and practical interventions designed to facilitate the development of self-regulation.

Learning Objectives: You will learn the STOP solution so you can teach clients daily stress reduction techniques and help them practice it.
Wise Words from Viktor Frankl

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

What is the Experience of Affect Dysregulation?

- Internal experience of being overwhelmed with emotion and feeling out of control
- Includes emotional, cognitive, somatic and/or behavioral manifestations of affect dysregulation

(Daitch, 2007)
Affect Dysregulation

Affect dysregulation is at the core of almost all psychological disorders:

- Personality disorders: narcissistic, borderline, histrionic
- PTSD
- Mood disorders: anxiety, depression
- ADHD
- Substance abuse

Vulnerability

- Childhood trauma
- Additional trauma in adulthood
- Temperament/genetics
- Stress
- Modeling
Emotions

• Emotions, in and of themselves, are neither good nor bad

• Even intense emotions have a time and place in which their expression is adaptive (e.g., grief)

The Big Three

• Fear

• Anger

• Sadness
The Problems Occur When:

- The intensity of the response does not “match” the life event
- When one lacks the ability to dampen the emotional intensity
- Response leads to the loss of jobs, friendships and romantic relationships

Getting Your Head Around the Brain

We are hardwired to react to many external stimuli with behavioral responses based on fear or anger.
Key Components of Emotional Flooding

- Unable to “hear” and heed the forebrain’s logic-based emotions
- No tools to calm emotional flooding
- Stuck riding the tide of emotional flooding

The Daily Stress Inoculation

- The Daily Stress Inoculation -- a daily practice for relaxing and lowering baseline levels of emotional reactivity
- This practice increases the sense of calm throughout the day and decreases the likelihood of emotional flooding
Five Steps of the Daily Stress Inoculation

- Focusing attention with the *Eye Roll*
- Releasing tension with *Tight Fist*
- Relaxing the nervous system with *Focusing on the Breath*
- Deepening relaxation with *Safe Place*
- Reinforcing effort and success with *Closing Affirmations*

The STOP Solution

- **Scan**
- **Time-out**
- **Overcome the Surge of Emotion**
- **Put the Tools into Practice**
**STOP: SCAN**

- Scan for thoughts, sensations, and emotions that are precursors to emotional flooding
- Reframe these cues as opportunities to practice self-regulation

**STOP: Time-Out**

- Take a Time-out when one is emotionally flooded in order to calm and center self
- Build a regimented habit of diffusing tension
Selecting a Space for Time-Out

- Private, quiet place where you will not be disturbed
- If you are in a public place, you can always go to the restroom to have some time alone

STOP

- Do you have the patience to wait 'til your mind settles and the water is clear?
- Can you remain unmoving 'til the right action arises by itself?

Tao te Ching
STOP: Overcoming the Initial Surge of Flooding

Induction techniques used to focus attention and calm:

• Eye Roll
• Tight Fist
• Breathing
• Safe Place

Sequence of Interventions

Must master the first three self-soothing skills STO... before learning the final part of the STOP Solution
STOP: Putting the Tools into Practice

- Mindfulness With Detached Observation and Acceptance
- Okay Signal
- Dialing Down Reactivity
- Juxtaposition of Two Feelings
- Autogenics
- Positive Future-Focusing
- Ego-states or Parts of Self

Directions for Mindfulness

- Name the thoughts, feelings or sensations, e.g., “there’s the frustration”
- Take an attitude of curiosity about your experience, e.g., “as I observe how frustrated I am, I notice my jaw clenching”
- Remind yourself that thoughts, feelings or sensations come and go
Fostering Acceptance

Look at the image of the suffering self with compassion

Okay Signal (Anchor)

- Establish an “anchor” with an Okay signal
- Signal that everything is fine or “Okay” in the moment
Dialing Down Reactivity

Think of a stressor... notice what number the needle on the dial is registering... use the power of your imagination to dial the number down...

Juxtaposition of Two Thoughts or Feelings

• Recognize that contradictory, opposing thoughts or feelings can coexist.
• Learn to “hold” two opposing thoughts or feelings simultaneously, calling forth a counterpart to reduce the intensity of the opposing, negative thought or feeling you are experiencing.
• Allow the positive counterpart to reduce the intensity of the opposing, negative thought or feeling.
• Experience the merging of the contradictory experiences and thoughts.
Autogenics

- A form of self-hypnosis
- Allows the conscious mind to connect to the unconscious control of the ANS

Positive Future-Focusing

Fast-forwarding in your mind’s eye to a time in the future when the emotional flooding has dissipated
Ego-States or Parts of Self

• Interact from adult parts of self

Demonstration

• Demonstration of the tools with a volunteer
Applications to Relationships

• If you interact with people, challenges are a given

• But emotional flooding is not

Emotional Triggers in Relationships

Feeling:
– betrayed
– controlled
– criticized
– judged/shamed
– abandoned
– lack of empathy
– misunderstood
Unchecked Emotional Flooding

When partners are unable to regulate affect, inability to resolve conflict with positive affect occurs

• Blocks ability to feel connection

• When the mid-brain (limbic centers) goes rogue, you are cut off from the experience of connection
Attunement

• Attunement is fundamental in our experience of well-being in a relationship

• “At the heart of empathic relationships is the experience of sending a clear image of our mind into the mind of another.” (Siegel, D., 2007)

• “The partners experience emotional resonance, they are humming the same tune.” (Daitch & Lorberbaum, 2014)

You Need a Variety of Tools
Remember to Teach Clients to:

• Take an immediate time-out to interrupt over reactivity
• Self-soothe to down-regulate the over-reactivity
• Contact wise parts of the self
• Rehearse and transfer skills learned in the therapy office to situations outside the office

Individualize for Each Client

Get their feedback, and then flow with the river.
Take-Away Points

• Everyone experiences an ever-changing, constant flow of emotions

• The goal is to modulate the intensity of emotion, not eradicate it

• The ability to experience emotion enriches and enhances your experience of life. However, when your clients experience emotional flooding and have no tools to ease it, they suffer.

Q & A
Resources


Resources

Resources


Your self-talk is powerful. Therefore, it is vital to identify self-defeating statements and counter them with self-affirming statements relating to whatever emotions are flooding your system.

*The Road to Calm Workbook*  
Anxiety-Treatment.com

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EMOTIONS ARE FEELING-RICH EXPERIENCES THAT CAN VARY IN DEGREES OF INTENSITY.

THEY ARE TRANSITORY, MEANING THAT IF YOU WAIT LONG ENOUGH, THEY WILL PASS.

YET A POWERFUL, PAINFUL EMOTION CAN SEEM TO LAST AN ETERNITY

EVEN IF IT DOES INDEED PASS IN ONLY A FEW MINUTES’ TIME.

- THE ROAD TO CALM WORKBOOK

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