



SCARBOROUGH
CENTRE FOR
HEALTHY
COMMUNITIES

Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Care Centre

Resource Package

for survivors of
sexual and/or
domestic violence



It's not your fault.

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About Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities

Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities (SCHC) is one of the most established and comprehensive community health organizations in the province. The organization owes its beginnings in 1977 to thirteen community agencies, a core group of community leaders, and countless volunteers who identified emerging health and social needs within Scarborough. We work with over 550 volunteers and 200 staff to offer 38 distinct and integrated services across 11 sites. In order to remain a client-centred, integrated, engaged, and proactive organization, we have continued to work closely with our community members and foster partnerships addressing pressing needs, setting new standards of excellence in community health.

Mission

SCHC is dedicated to meeting the diverse, holistic health needs of the communities of Scarborough by addressing the physical, mental, social, financial and environmental aspects of their health. Through the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the delivery of a comprehensive range of culturally competent health and social services, we cultivate vital and connected communities.

Vision

To be recognized by our clients, communities and partners as leaders in championing holistic health and wellness for the diverse populations of Scarborough.

Values

- I** Inclusiveness
- C** Community Engagement
- A** Accountability
- R** Respect
- E** Equity

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Introduction

The **Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Care Centre** at SCHC offers free, confidential, trauma-specific individual and group counselling for anyone over the age of 12 who has experienced sexual assault, domestic violence, childhood sexual abuse, or any combination thereof. Our Registered Social Workers work with victims/survivors to support empowerment and a recognition of self-worth to help begin the process of healing in a prompt, professional, and compassionate manner. Services are offered at 3 locations: [2660 Eglinton Avenue East](#) (The Hub), [629 Markham Road #2](#), and [1333 Neilson Road #320](#).

The impacts of sexual assault and domestic violence can be life-changing. Abuse can take many forms including physical, sexual, emotional, mental/psychological, verbal, financial, spiritual. Anyone - regardless of sex, gender, age, religion, culture, ethnicity, financial situation, level of education, etc. - can experience abuse. Abuse can take place at home, work, school, or in the community, and can be perpetrated by a family member, friend, acquaintance, colleague, boss, teacher, coach, etc.

The purpose of this package is to provide you with resources to support you in your healing. We have included information about trauma and trauma responses, some myths around sexual violence and domestic violence, triggers, and self care, as well as tools and strategies to help you manage some of the impacts of your experiences. The resources included in this package do not replace support by a trained counsellor, and are rather to be used alongside or while you are waiting for individual counselling.



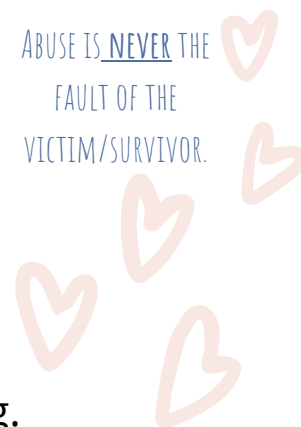
WE ALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE LIVES
FREE FROM VIOLENCE.



IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO SEEK SUPPORT.



ABUSE IS NEVER THE
FAULT OF THE
VICTIM/SURVIVOR.

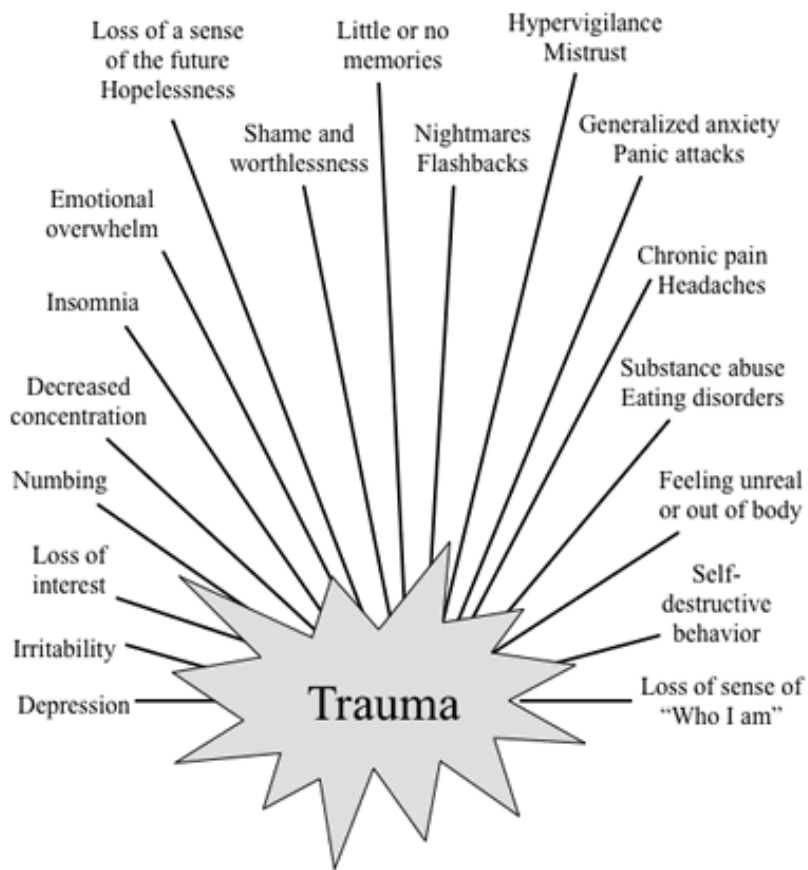


You do not need a referral to access counselling.
To contact our program, please call **(416) 847-4144**



SCARBOROUGH
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Common Impacts of Trauma



"Trauma survivors have symptoms instead of memories" [Harvey, 1990]

Adapted from Bremner & Marmer, 1998

Copyright 2007 Janina Fisher, Ph.D.

These are just a few of the ways that survivors of trauma, and specifically sexual violence and intimate partner violence may respond to their experience(s) of violence. Other responses may include:

- self blame
- digestive issues, little or no appetite
- suicidal feelings, self-harm
- lower immune system
- specific chronic pain in neck, back, shoulders
- shock, disbelief
- anger
- overwhelming sadness
- fatigue
- feeling as though the world is not a safe place
- difficulty with intimacy and navigating new intimate relationships

What you are experiencing may not be on these lists. It is important to remember that there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to respond to a traumatic events of events, nor are any responses 'bad'. They are all 'normal' responses. Responses to sexual violence and/or intimate partner violence may also be influenced by myths and stereotypes about these crimes (i.e. "they were asking for it", "if it were that bad, they would have left/fought back", "if they can't remember the details, it must not have happened", etc.).

If you are finding that any of these responses are interfering with your daily life or your relationships, then it is important to seek support. While it is impossible to undo what you may have experienced, it is possible to lessen the distress experienced by memories of the trauma, however they manifest.

Self Care

Self care is about intentionally doing things for ourselves to take care of our emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual selves. It will look different for everyone, and it is important to find things that work for you. Practicing self care in times of calm is critical, as it is difficult to create habits in times of stress. As self care habits begin to develop, they will become easier to access in times of stress. Additionally, practicing self care in times of calm can be preventative, helping to keep us regulated as we navigate the stressors of daily life as well as the stressful impacts of trauma. You can think of self care like a glass of water that needs to constantly be topped up. If it reaches empty, our capacity to deal with stressful situations will also be depleted. Practicing self care can be difficult for a number of reasons – time constraints, low motivation, feeling ‘selfish’, and sometimes past experiences in which our needs were not met and/or in which having needs may not have felt safe. Below are some ideas for self care, some of which may not be possible for you, but there are many more that are not on this list!

Emotional Self Care

- Do something that makes you laugh (watch a funny show, joke with a friend, listen to a funny podcast, read a funny book)
- Write down a list of your ‘wins’, or things that you are proud of
- Reach out to a friend
- Write, paint, draw – anything!
- Drink tea
- Smell essential oils - lavender, peppermint, etc.
- Listen to music (or if you play an instrument, play music!)
- Leave the house and go for a walk, even just around the block
- Look at photos of comforting people in your life
- Practice positive affirmations
- Pet a cat/dog/bunny
- Visualize a safe place, or being surrounded by people who love and care about you



Self Care

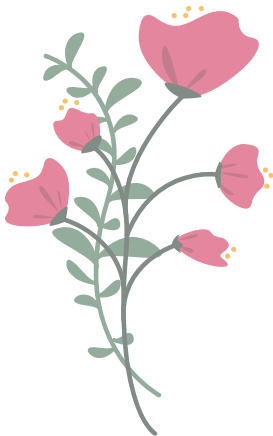


Physical Self Care

- Have a warm bath
- Massage your own hands, feet, legs, etc.
- Wrap a blanket around you
- Engage in enjoyable exercise – go for a walk/run, do yoga, stretch, dance
- Try to maintain a regular bed time to allow enough sleep at night
- Go on an adventure, even in your neighbourhood
- Rearrange your room
- Practice deep breathing
- Paint your nails
- Drink water

Mental Self Care

- Read
- Do a crossword, Sudoku, or jigsaw puzzle
- Play a board game with a friend
- Notice negative thoughts, and remind yourself that they are *just* thoughts, not facts
- Try something new - draw, write, sew, knit, collage, etc.
- Make a calendar of pleasant activities to look forward to



Spiritual Self Care

- Do a random act of kindness
- Meditate (a useful app: *Stop, Breathe, and Think*)
- Volunteer for a cause that is meaningful to you
- Find some nature, and express gratitude for small but beautiful things
- Go to a place of worship with meaning for you
- Pray/smudge/engage in meaningful rituals
- Listen to music

Common Myths Around Sexual Assault

MYTH

Sexual assault is about uncontrollable sexual desire.

Most sexual assaults are committed by strangers in dark alleys.

It is only women who can be sexually assaulted.

If someone does not say "no", consent is implied.

If someone consents to sex today, it is implied they consent to sex any other time as well.

All victims of 'real' sexual assault try to run or fight back.

FACT

Sexual assault is about **power** and **control**. It is a way of asserting control and dominance over another person.

Most sexual assaults are committed by someone **known to the victim** - friend, acquaintance, partner, family member, etc.

While women make up the vast majority of adult victims of sexual assault (87%), it is important to note that **persons of all genders** can and do experience sexual assault.

The absence of a clear "no" does not imply consent. Consent is **never implied**. Just because someone does not or cannot say the word "no", it does not mean that they consent to sexual activity.

Consent is an **active, ongoing process**. Someone can revoke consent at any time, even in the middle of sexual activity. Similarly, someone can consent to a specific kind of sexual activity and not consent to another kind.

When faced with threat or danger, **we do not always have control over how we respond**. Our animal defence systems become activated, and our body responds in a way that increases the chance of survival. If it is not safe to fight or run away because there is little chance of escape and increased chance of further violence, our system may determine that freezing or collapsing will give us the best chance of getting out of the situation alive. This is not a conscious decision!

Common Myths Around Domestic Violence

MYTH

Domestic violence is usually a one-time incident - an argument that got out of hand.

Alcohol causes domestic violence.

If someone is really in an abusive relationship, they will just leave.

Men can't be abused by their partners.

Domestic violence is only physical.

Domestic violence primarily impacts people who are poor and uneducated.

FACT

Violence in a relationship is **hardly ever a single incident**, and typically becomes more frequent and severe over time.

Alcohol can reduce inhibition and the ability to recognize the impacts of one's action, but it **does not cause violence**. The decision to use violence against one's partner is what causes violence.

It's not that simple. Barriers to leaving include: increased risk of severe violence following separation including murder, financial dependency, lack of alternate housing, lack of a support network due to forced isolation/alienation, cultural/family/social pressure to stay in the relationship, etc.

While it is women who disproportionately represent victims/survivors of intimate partner violence,¹ **individuals of all genders can and do experience intimate partner violence**. However, women are far more likely to be killed by a male intimate partner. Additionally, intimate partner violence does not only exist in heterosexual relationships - LGBTQ+ relationships can also be violent and there are unique dynamics that exist in LGBTQ+ relationships.

Abuse can be physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, sexual, verbal, financial, and can include tactics such as isolation, gaslighting, stalking, intimidation, threats, harm to property and pets, etc.

Domestic violence impacts individuals of **all demographics**.



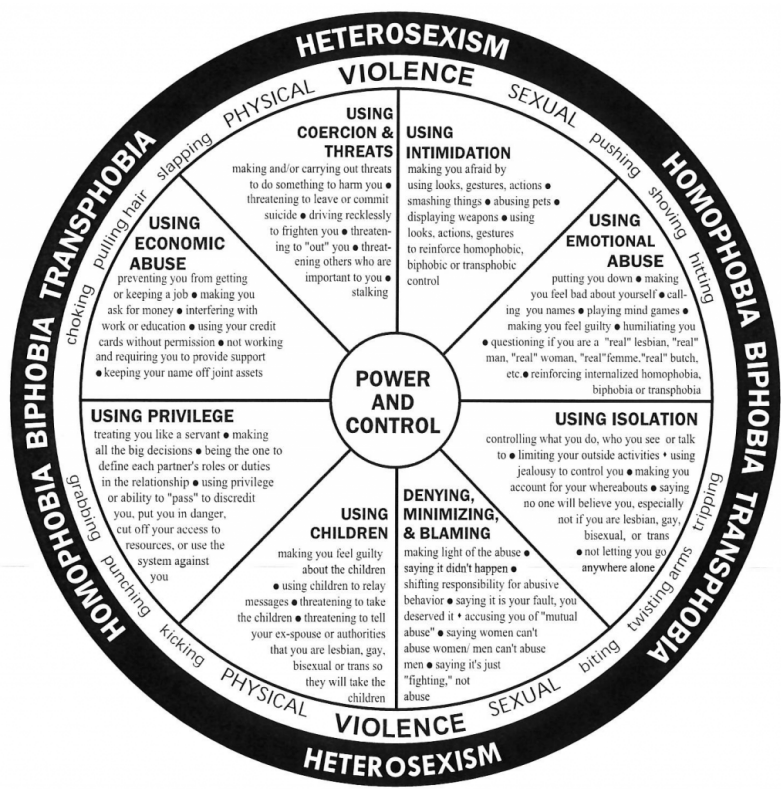
Power and Control Wheels

These wheels can be used as a way of understanding the various tactics abusive partners use to achieve and maintain control over their partners. When physical and/or sexual violence is present in a relationship, how a partner navigates emotional, psychological, verbal, spiritual, and economic abuse changes, given the underlying threat of physical harm. This is not to say that abusive relationships in which physical/sexual violence is not present are any less abusive. Rather, that physical/sexual violence are additional mechanisms of control that can be maintained through the assertion of other control tactics.

The wheel on the right demonstrates some of the unique dynamics and control tactics present in abusive LGBTQ+ relationships.



<https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/>



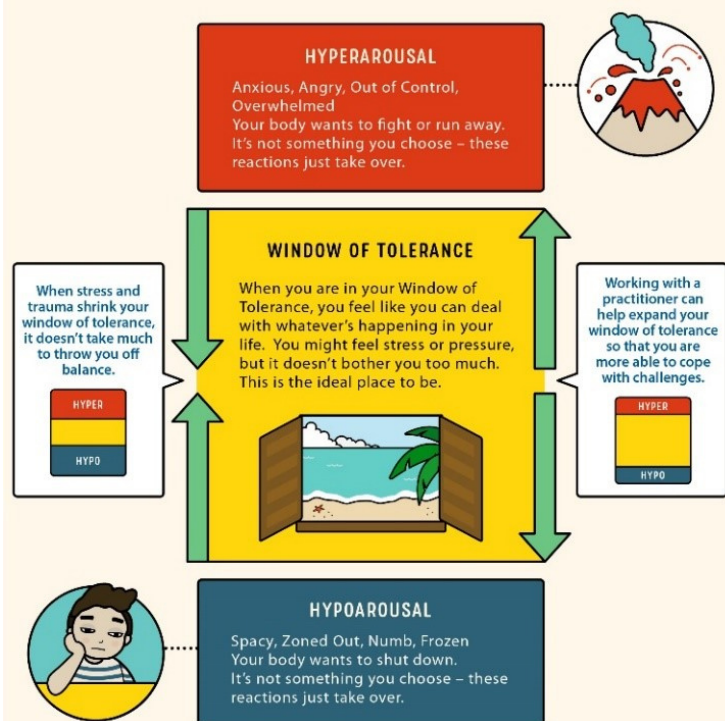
The LGBTQ+ Power and Control Wheel was developed by Roe and Jagodinsky. Adapted from the Power and Control and Equity Wheels developed by <https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/>

Window of Tolerance

Being able to regulate and manage one's emotions is an important part of healing. At the same time, feeling unable to regulate emotions is a very common trauma response. It is not uncommon for survivors of trauma to either feel *too much* or *too little* (or sometimes both).

The idea of a “Window of Tolerance”* can be helpful in understanding how and when you are able to manage stress and overwhelm. When you are in your Window of Tolerance, you are able to ride the ups and downs of daily life without becoming emotionally overwhelmed to the point of being unable to manage. You feel safe, connected to yourself and others, open, and curious. This does not mean that you do not feel or experience strong emotions and ups and downs (this is part of being human!), just that you are able to remain calm, rational, and collected, and soothe yourself in the face of challenges or stressors.

How Trauma Can Affect Your Window Of Tolerance



nicabm

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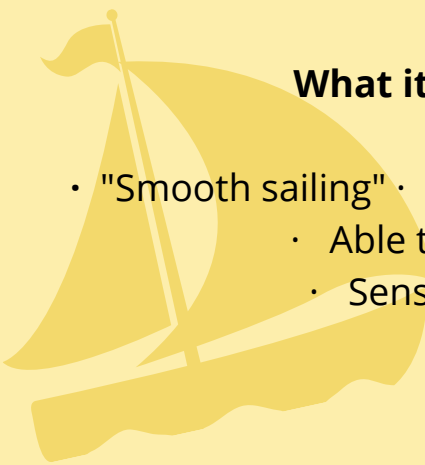
Trauma can affect the effect of shrinking your Window of Tolerance, so that even otherwise 'small' stressors may become unmanageable. Leaving your Window of Tolerance means entering a zone of either hyperarousal or hypoarousal, and in either case means you are no longer able to think clearly, make rational decisions, and maintain connection to trusted others in your lives. Indicators that you have left your Window of Tolerance will be unique to you, and it is important to learn to identify when you are leaving/have left your Window of Tolerance so that you can begin to identify strategies to bring yourself back into your Window of Tolerance. Remember, the idea isn't to always live in your Window of Tolerance, but to be able to bring yourself into it when you have left it.

How Do I Know When I am in My Window of Tolerance?



What it can feel like to be hyperaroused:

- Surge of energy, activation in arms and legs
- Rapid speech
- Angry
- Increased heart rate
- Anxious, panicky
- Perception of danger/threat
- Sweaty palms
- Defensiveness
- Impulsivity
- Disoriented, unable to think straight, racing thoughts



What it can feel like to be in your window of tolerance:

- "Smooth sailing"
- Regulated
- Able to tolerate emotional ups and downs
- Calm
- Able to connect with others
- Steady, regular breathing
- Sense of general safety and ease
- Open and curious
- Rational
- Compassionate



What it can feel like to be hypoaroused:

- Shut down response
- Low energy
- Lack of sensation
- Withdrawn, feeling absent, disconnected
- Fatigued
- Low motivation
- Poor appetite
- Shallow breath
- Feeling like nothing matters
- Shame

Window of Tolerance



When I am hyperaroused, I feel:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

I can ground myself by doing the following:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

Window of Tolerance



When I am hypoaroused, I feel:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

I can ground myself by doing the following:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

You can use the resources on pages 6-7 and 15-21 to help identify strategies you can use when you are feeling either hyperaroused or hypoaroused.

Triggers

Feeling triggered is a common response following a traumatic experience or series of traumatic experiences. A trigger may be something that directly reminds you of a past experience or it may be something that seems to have little to do with past trauma but may bear symbolic significance in some way. Because of the way that memories of traumatic experiences are processed in your brain and body, when you feel triggered you may feel pulled back to past, as though you are re-experiencing a past trauma all over again. Your body may be responding in a similar way as to when the traumatic event was actually happening. This is your body trying to survive/keep yourself safe - even if you don't need it to anymore! You may feel little control over how you respond to being triggered, and the emotional and sometimes physical overwhelm that can result may feel unbearable. You may feel as though your day has been interrupted, and have difficulty returning to what you were doing before feeling triggered. While you may continue to have reminders of past trauma for a long time after the experience has past, it is possible to get to a point where you are able to manage triggers and what the distress and overwhelm they bring with them.



Learning to identify your triggers is an important first step, so that you can learn to develop strategies to take care of yourself when feeling triggered or when expecting to be in a triggering situation.

Learning to notice what happens when you are triggered is another important step. Are there early warning signs? What do you first notice happening in your body? What thoughts and emotions come up? What are your impulses in those moments? Learning to recognize early signs can open up the opportunity to intervene early and avoid being taken over by the the triggering experience.

Experimenting with various grounding strategies can help you to develop ways of managing triggers. Because triggers have the ability to transport you back to a past trauma, strategies that help you to remain grounded in and focused on the present can make it more difficult to be transported back into the past. It's not always enough to tell yourself that you are in the present moment - you also need to feel yourself in the present moment. The grounding techniques on the following pages offer exercises that engage not only your brain but also your body and your senses, to help your whole system remain firmly grounded in the present.

Grounding Techniques

After a trauma, it's normal to experience flashbacks, anxiety, and other uncomfortable symptoms. **Grounding techniques** help control these symptoms by turning attention away from thoughts, memories, or worries, and refocusing on the present moment.

5-4-3-2-1 Technique

Using the 5-4-3-2-1 technique, you will purposefully take in the details of your surroundings using each of your senses. Strive to notice small details that your mind would usually tune out, such as distant sounds, or the texture of an ordinary object.



What are 5 things you can see? Look for small details such as a pattern on the ceiling, the way light reflects off a surface, or an object you never noticed.



What are 4 things you can feel? Notice the sensation of clothing on your body, the sun on your skin, or the feeling of the chair you are sitting in. Pick up an object and examine its weight, texture, and other physical qualities.



What are 3 things you can hear? Pay special attention to the sounds your mind has tuned out, such as a ticking clock, distant traffic, or trees blowing in the wind.



What are 2 things you can smell? Try to notice smells in the air around you, like an air freshener or freshly mowed grass. You may also look around for something that has a scent, such as a flower or an unlit candle.



What is 1 thing you can taste? Carry gum, candy, or small snacks for this step. Pop one in your mouth and focus your attention closely on the flavors.

Categories

Choose at least three of the categories below and name as many items as you can in each one. Spend a few minutes on each category to come up with as many items as possible.

Movies	Countries	Books	Cereals
Sports Teams	Colors	Cars	Fruits & Vegetables
Animals	Cities	TV Shows	Famous People

For a variation on this activity, try naming items in a category alphabetically. For example, for the fruits & vegetables category, say "apple, banana, carrot," and so on.

Grounding Techniques

Body Awareness

The body awareness technique will bring you into the here-and-now by directing your focus to sensations in the body. Pay special attention to the physical sensations created by each step.

1. Take 5 long, deep breaths through your nose, and exhale through puckered lips.
2. Place both feet flat on the floor. Wiggle your toes. Curl and uncurl your toes several times. Spend a moment noticing the sensations in your feet.
3. Stomp your feet on the ground several times. Pay attention to the sensations in your feet and legs as you make contact with the ground.
4. Clench your hands into fists, then release the tension. Repeat this 10 times.
5. Press your palms together. Press them harder and hold this pose for 15 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of tension in your hands and arms.
6. Rub your palms together briskly. Notice and sound and the feeling of warmth.
7. Reach your hands over your head like you're trying to reach the sky. Stretch like this for 5 seconds. Bring your arms down and let them relax at your sides.
8. Take 5 more deep breaths and notice the feeling of calm in your body.

Mental Exercises

Use mental exercises to take your mind off uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. They are discreet and easy to use at nearly any time or place. Experiment to see which work best for you.

- Name all the objects you see.
- Describe the steps in performing an activity you know how to do well. For example, how to shoot a basketball, prepare your favorite meal, or tie a knot.
- Count backwards from 100 by 7.
- Pick up an object and describe it in detail. Describe its color, texture, size, weight, scent, and any other qualities you notice.
- Spell your full name, and the names of three other people, backwards.
- Name all your family members, their ages, and one of their favorite activities.
- Read something backwards, letter-by-letter. Practice for at least a few minutes.
- Think of an object and "draw" it in your mind, or in the air with your finger. Try drawing your home, a vehicle, or an animal.

Grounding Techniques to Manage Stress

Tight Fist



The purpose of this activity is to quickly release physical tension, while at the same time releasing stress, anxiety, fear, worry, anger, and frustration. When we feel ourselves becoming overwhelmed by stressful situations, it can be difficult to put the brakes on our reactions. This activity uses the body's natural tendency to tense up when we're distressed, by first exaggerating this tension in a safe way and then consciously and mindfully releasing it. The conscious and mindful release of tension helps to produce a calming effect.

How to do it:

- 1) Imagine all of your stress, worry, anxiety, fear, anger, frustration, and tension are flowing into one of your hands. Make a fist with this hand as you visualize this, and squeeze it tightly, and then tighter.
- 2) Try to imagine what all of this tension flowing into your fist from the rest of your body looks and feels like. Does it have a colour? A texture? Is it moving slowly or rushing through you? What does it feel like as it moves into your fist?
- 3) Then, slowly release and open your fist, finger by finger. As you do this, imagine all of the tension you collected in your fist being released to the ground. If you visualized the tension as a coloured liquid, visualize this colored liquid leaving your fist. Imagine it being absorbed into the earth, far beneath you.
- 4) Take a moment to notice how you feel, what body sensations you notice. If you still feel there is remaining tension or stress in your body, you can repeat the exercise with your other hand.

Adapted from Daitch, Carolyn & Lorberbaum, Lissah (2016). The Road to Calm Workbook: Life-changing Tools to Stop Runaway Emotions. W.W. Norton & Company.

Grounding Techniques to Manage Stress



The purpose of this activity is to create a safe place in your mind that you can “go” to any time you need to ground yourself in the face of stress, anxiety, or overwhelming emotions. Practicing this activity in times of calm will help you to more effectively practice it in times of stress.



How to do it:

- 1) If it's comfortable for you, close your eyes. If not, try to just soften your gaze.
- 2) Try to picture a welcoming, safe place. This could be a place that exists in real life, or it could be something you imagine. Many people find being on a beach near the water to be their safe place, or a forest with a river running through it, but your safe place can be anywhere you like.
- 3) Take a few minutes to tune into each of your senses as you imagine this place. What do you see, smell, and hear? Is there anyone else around? What is the temperature like in your safe place? Are you sitting or lying down on something? Are you walking? What thoughts do you notice as you think of this place? The more details you are able to notice, the more 'real' your safe place will feel.
- 4) Try to think of a word or statement that you can use in the future to bring yourself back to this place. This could be something like “my beach”, or “my forest”, or even just “my safe place”. Whatever it is, practice repeating it to yourself while still holding the image of it in your head.
- 4) As you leave your safe place and come back into the present, take a moment to check in with yourself – what do you notice in your body?

Adapted from Daitch, Carolyn & Lorberbaum, Lissah (2016). The Road to Calm Workbook: Life-changing Tools to Stop Runaway Emotions. W.W. Norton & Company.

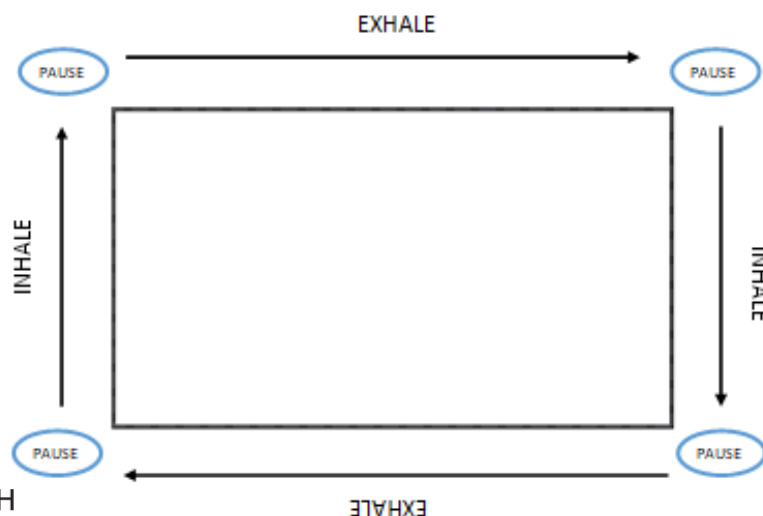
Rectangle Breathing

Rectangle breathing activates our parasympathetic nervous system. When we breathe in, our sympathetic nervous system (SNS) is activated, helping to energize us. When we breathe out, we activate the “rest and digest” influence of the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), helping us to slow down our breathing and even relax digestive unrest/stomach tension (common symptoms of anxiety, stress, and panic). By extending our exhale, we are increasing activation of the PNS even more.

How to do it:

- 1) Place one hand on your stomach, and inhale. As you do, notice your ribcage expanding.
- 2) Pause for a second or two before releasing your breath.
- 3) Exhale, trying to make your breath out **longer** than your breath in was. Notice your stomach naturally come back in (try not to tense your stomach muscles).
- 4) Repeat steps 1-3.

Use the image of a rectangle to help guide your breathing, inhaling as you follow the short sides and exhaling as you follow the long sides.



progressive muscle relaxation

One of the body's reactions to fear and anxiety is muscle tension. This can result in feeling "tense", or can lead to muscle aches and pains, as well as leaving some people feeling exhausted. Think about how you respond to anxiety. Do you "tense up" when you're feeling anxious? Muscle relaxation can be particularly helpful in cases where anxiety is especially associated to muscle tension. This information sheet will guide you through a common form of relaxation designed to reduce muscle tension.

Muscle tension

Muscle tension is commonly associated with stress, anxiety and fear as part of a process that helps our bodies prepare for potentially dangerous situations. Even though some of those situations may not actually be dangerous, our bodies respond in the same way. Sometimes we don't even notice how our muscles become tense, but perhaps you clench your teeth slightly so your jaw feels tight, or maybe your shoulders become. Muscle tension can also be associated with backaches and tension headaches.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

One method of reducing muscle tension that people have found helpful is through a technique called Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). In progressive muscle relaxation exercises, you tense up particular muscles and then relax them, and then you practise this technique consistently.

preparing for relaxation

When you are beginning to practice progressive muscle relaxation exercises keep in mind the following points.

- **Physical injuries.** If you have any injuries, or a history of physical problems that may cause muscle pain, always consult your doctor before you start.
- **Select your surroundings.** Minimise the distraction to your five senses. Such as turning off the TV and radio, and using soft lighting.
- **Make yourself comfortable.** Use a chair that comfortably seats your body, including your head. Wear loose clothing, and take off your shoes.
- **Internal mechanics.** Avoid practicing after big, heavy meals, and do not practice after consuming any intoxicants, such as alcohol.

general procedure

- 1 Once you've set aside the time and place for relaxation, slow down your breathing and give yourself permission to relax.
- 2 When you are ready to begin, tense the muscle group described. Make sure you can feel the tension, but not so much that you feel a great deal of pain. Keep the muscle tensed for approximately 5 seconds.
- 3 Relax the muscles and keep it relaxed for approximately 10 seconds. It may be helpful to say something like "Relax" as you relax the muscle.
- 4 When you have finished the relaxation procedure, remain seated for a few moments allowing yourself to become alert.

Relaxation sequence

1. **Right hand and forearm.** Make a fist with your right hand.
2. **Right upper arm.** Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to "make a muscle".
3. **Left hand and forearm.**
4. **Left upper arm.**
5. **Forehead.** Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as though you were surprised by something.
6. **Eyes and cheeks.** Squeeze your eyes tight shut.
7. **Mouth and jaw.** Open your mouth as wide as you can, as you might when you're yawning.
8. **Neck. !!!** Be careful as you tense these muscles. Face forward and then pull your head back slowly, as though you are looking up to the ceiling.
9. **Shoulders.** Tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring your shoulders up towards your ears.
10. **Shoulder blades/Back.** Push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward.
11. **Chest and stomach.** Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air.
12. **Hips and buttocks.** Squeeze your buttock muscles
13. **Right upper leg.** Tighten your right thigh.
14. **Right lower leg. !!!** Do this slowly and carefully to avoid cramps. Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle.
15. **Right foot.** Curl your toes downwards.
16. **Left upper leg.** Repeat as for right upper leg.
17. **Left lower leg.** Repeat as for right lower leg.
18. **Left foot.** Repeat as for right foot.

Practice means progress. Only through practice can you become more aware of your muscles, how they respond with tension, and how you can relax them. Training your body to respond differently to stress is like any training – practising consistently is the key.

Grounding Techniques to Manage Stress



Flashbacks and intrusive memories are common experiences following trauma, and can make you feel as though you are re-experiencing the trauma in the present moment. The exercise below is designed to halt flashbacks by developing the ability to recognize that what you are feeling right now has something to do with a memory from the past. Becoming aware of where you are, in the here and now, can help establish separation from the memory of the past. Think of it as having one foot in the present even if your other foot is being pulled into the past. Below is a script you can use to try and keep yourself grounded in the present moment, even if you are remembering events from the past.

Say the following sentences, filling in the blanks.

Right now I am feeling _____ (name current emotion, usually fear)

And I am sensing _____, _____, _____ in my body (name at least 3 current bodily sensations - i.e., tension, tingly, shakiness, numbness, bubblyness, shortness of breath, shallow breath, etc.)

Because I am remembering _____ (name the trauma by title only, no detail)

At the same time, I know that I am here, in _____ (the current year) and I am in _____ (name the place where you are - i.e., my living room, my office, the grocery store, the park, etc.)

And I can see _____ (describe some of the things you can see around you right now)

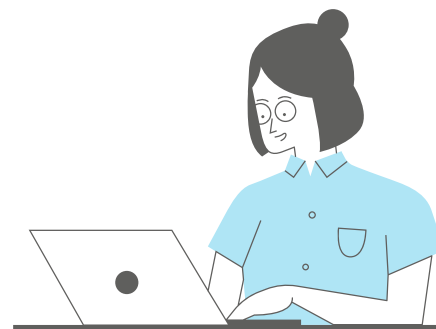
And so I know _____ (name the trauma again) is not happening any more.

Adapted from: Rothschild, B. (2000). The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment. New York: W.W. Norton.

Additional Resources

Websites

- Healing from Trauma (Ryerson University's *Office of Sexual Violence Support and Education*):
<https://www.ryerson.ca/sexual-violence/get-support/healing-from-trauma/>
- Sexual Assault Survivors' Toolkit:
<https://survivortoolkit.ca/>
- DBT Distress Tolerance Skills: Your 6-Skill Guide to Navigate Emotional Crises:
<https://www.sunrisertc.com/distress-tolerance-skills/>
- Lynne Fraser Stillpoint - Breathe, Relax, Heal:
<https://lynnfraserstillpoint.com/>
- Guided Self-Compassion Exercises (Kristin Neff):
<https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#exercises>
- Community Legal Education Ontario:
<https://www.cleo.on.ca/en/resources-and-publications/resources-topic>



Apps

- Stop, Breathe, and Think:
<https://www.stopbreathethink.com/meditations/>
- Insight Timer: <https://insighttimer.com/>
- Calm: <https://www.calm.com/>
- WorryTime: <https://au.reachout.com/tools-and-apps/reachout-worrytime>
- HOPE by CAMH:
<https://www.camh.ca/hopebycamhapp>

Books

- *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk
- *The Road to Calm Workbook* by Carolyn Daitch and Lissah Lorberbaum
- *Healing the Fragmented Selves of Trauma Survivors* by Janina Fisher
- *Healing Sex: A Mind-Body Approach to Healing Sexual Trauma* by Staci Haines



Additional Resources

24-hour Emergency/Crisis Resources

- Assaulted Women's Helpline (24-hr anonymous crisis phone line): 416-863-0511
- Toronto Rape Crisis Centre (24-hr anonymous crisis phone line): 416-597-8808
- Gerstein Centre (crisis support, including mobile crisis team): 416-929-5200
- Femaide (telephone crisis support for francophone women): 1-877-336-2433
- Distress Centre: 416-408-4357
- Victim Support Line: 416-314-2447
- Toronto Central Intake (to find a shelter space): 416-397-5637
- Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres
 - Scarborough Health Network: 416-495-2555
 - Women's College Hospital: 416-323-6040
- Community Crisis Program, Scarborough Health Network 416-495-2891

Counselling and Additional Support

- Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic (counselling, legal support, housing support, support groups): 416-323-9149 <https://www.schliferclinic.com/>
- Family Service Toronto (counselling, walk-in counselling, group support): 416-595-9618 <https://familyserVICEToronto.org/>
- YWCA Toronto <https://www.ywcatoronto.org/>
 - Healing through the Arts group: 416-487-7151 Ext.266
 - Parenting After Abuse group: 416-266-1232
 - Employment and Training: 416-264-5788
 - Transitional and Housing Support Program: 416-693-6978 x236
- Scarborough Women's Centre (counselling, workshops, and webinars): 416-439-7111 <https://www.scarboroughwomenscentre.ca/>
- Woodgreen (walk-in counselling): Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Register for a same day appointment by calling (416) 645-6000 ext. 1990 between 4:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. <https://www.woodgreen.org/services/programs/walk-in-counselling/>
- Victim Witness Assistance Program (Scarborough court): 416 325-0351
- Police non-emergency line: 416-808-2222

Additional Resources

Housing and Food Resources

- SCHC Housing Help Services: (416)-847-4143 <https://www.schcontario.ca/schc-housing-help-services.html>
- Housing Connections (apply for subsidized housing): 416-338-8888 <https://www.housingconnections.ca/>
- The Housing Help Centre: 416-285-8070 <https://www.shhc.ca/>
- SCHC Food Bank: (416) 847-4147 <https://www.schcontario.ca/schc-food-bank.html>
- Daily Bread Food Bank <https://www.dailybread.ca/need-food/>