

Managing strong emotions with here-and-now exercises

These exercises provide different ways for managing strong emotions and coping with overwhelming feelings, particularly when you feel like you are spending too much time dwelling on things that happened in the past or focussing on things that might happen in the future.

The rationale for the here-and-now exercises

Here-and-now exercises can help you to deal with overwhelming thoughts or feelings, and help you to feel more in control.

They work by focussing your mind on the environment around you – the here and now – rather than on distressing thoughts about the past or the future. In turn, they can help break the cycle of unhelpful thoughts that can make you feel more distressed. You can use these exercises anytime and anywhere.

Practise one of the here-and-now exercises

When doing the here-and-now exercises, avoid making judgments about how well you are doing or whether you're doing it 'right' (e.g., beating yourself up over persistent thoughts of the past or future). Instead, focus on what is going on around you and the present, rather than the past or the future.

Before you start, write down your subjective units of distress scale (SUDS).

Completely relaxed										Completely stressed out
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Practise one of the following here-and-now exercises. You can choose whichever one you feel more comfortable with.

Instructions for the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 exercise

Take a couple of breaths, in... and out...
Notice all the different things you can see and hear around you.
Now, name 5 things you can see. You don't have to say this out loud, just in your head.
Now, name 4 things you can hear... 3 things you can touch or feel...
2 things you can smell. And, finally, 1 thing you like about where you are.
What did you notice?

Instructions for the Noticing exercise

Pay close attention to the objects around you. While you are doing this, try to avoid analysing your thoughts or what is happening. Simply notice things in your environment in the present moment and then move onto the next thing...
Notice the chair that you are sitting on, pay close attention to the colours, the texture and the shape of it... How does it feel to sit in the chair? Is it soft or firm?
Where do you notice it making contact with your body?

After you have finished practising one of the above exercises, think about how you feel and re-rate your SUDS.

Completely relaxed										Completely stressed out
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Choose one of the exercises to practise throughout the week.

It is best to practise a new skill when you are feeling calm, have some privacy, and have enough time to practise. Then, when you are feeling confident that you've got it mastered, you can try a here-and-now exercise at times when you are feeling stressed, or dwelling on things that happened in the past or focussing on things that might happen in the future.