



Skills for Success

ADHD Strategies for Adults



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Build your better future by learning new ways to manage your ADHD.

Skills for Success: ADHD Strategies for Adults
by Elisabeth Baerg Hall, MD, and Candice Murray Ph.D

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The authors wish to dedicate this manual
to Don and Ruth James, who have worked
tirelessly to support ADHD care in B.C.
and in Canada.

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Toolbox of ADHD Self-Management Skills

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Introduction

The *Skills for Success: ADHD Strategies for Adults* manual presents the material covered during an eight-session facilitated group program. This program teaches weekly, practical, evidence-based strategies designed to improve self-management and self-care for those experiencing symptoms of ADHD.

This *Skills for Success* manual is intended to be used in groups facilitated by health care professionals who are trained specifically in this capacity. The manual contains in-depth content, worksheets, and take-home exercises.



NOTES TO PARTICIPANTS

Using This Workbook
This *Manual* is not intended to be a stand-alone treatment.

DEEPER DIVES

Each session ends with a section labelled **DEEPER DIVE!** Deeper Dives are identified by this icon in the **TOP RIGHT CORNER** of the page:



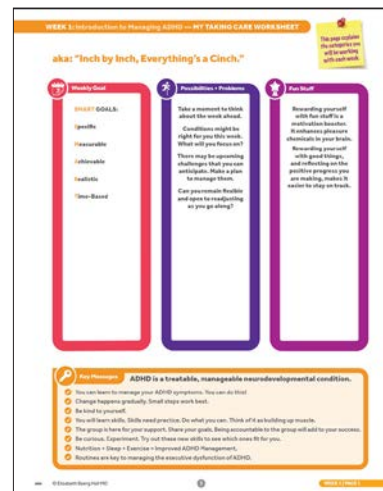
These **HOMEWORK** exercises invite you to practice and to integrate what you have learned into your life.

My Taking Care Worksheets

The first page of each session is the *My Taking Care Worksheet* (TCW). This metacognitive tool is designed to help you think forward. It develops executive function skills by encouraging you to plan for the week ahead. You may find it helpful to display your *My Taking Care Worksheet* so you can refer to it between sessions. Maintain this habit each week to help you stay on track.

When the program is completed, you may want to continue completing this sheet on a weekly basis. You can also transfer the headings into your planner to integrate this tool into your weekly activities.

Maintain this habit each week to help you refocus and stay on track.





This page explains the categories you will be working with each week.

my **TAKING CARE** worksheet explained

aka: "Inch by Inch, Everything's a Cinch."

Weekly Goal

SMART GOALS:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time-Based

Possibilities + Problems

Take a moment to think about the week ahead.

Conditions might be right for you this week. What will you focus on?

There may be upcoming challenges that you can anticipate. Make a plan to manage them.

Can you remain flexible and open to readjusting as you go along?

Fun Stuff

Rewarding yourself with fun stuff is a motivation booster. It enhances pleasure chemicals in your brain.

Rewarding yourself with good things, and reflecting on the positive progress you are making, makes it easier to stay on track.

Key Messages

ADHD is a treatable, manageable neurodevelopmental condition.


- ✓ You can learn to manage your ADHD symptoms. You can do this!
- ✓ Change happens gradually. Small steps work best.
- ✓ Be kind to yourself.
- ✓ You will learn skills. Skills need practice. Do what you can. Think of it as building up muscle.
- ✓ The group is here for your support. Share your goals. Being accountable to the group will add to your success.
- ✓ Be curious. Experiment. Try out these new skills to see which ones fit for you.
- ✓ Nutrition + Sleep + Exercise = Improved ADHD Management.
- ✓ Routines are key to managing the executive dysfunction of ADHD.


WEEK 1: Introduction to Managing ADHD


Think about your upcoming week.
PLANNING is an antidote to **OVERWHELM.**

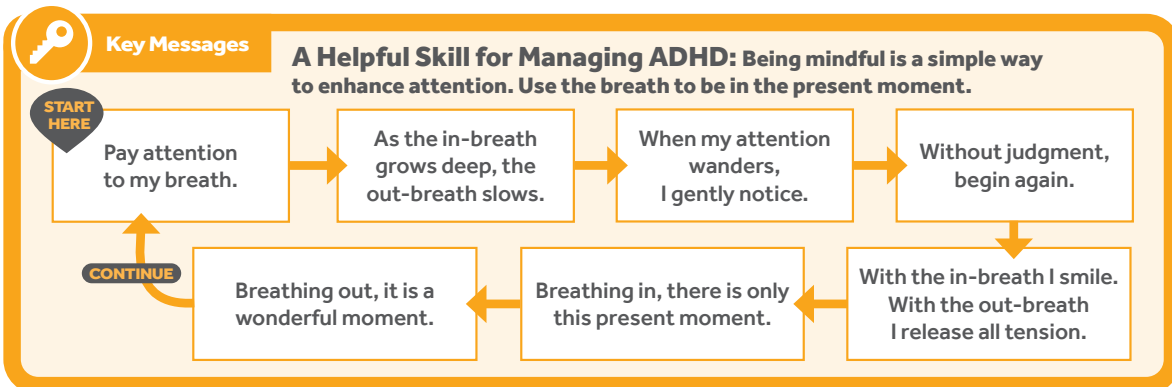
my **TAKING CARE** worksheet

aka: "Inch by Inch, Everything's a Cinch."

 **Weekly Goal**

 **Challenges**

 **Fun Stuff**





What is Your SMART Goal?



<p>Specific</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ State clearly and simply what you want to achieve. ✓ Break it into the smallest components. 	
<p>Measurable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How will you know that you achieved your goal? ✓ What will you be doing less of, or more of? What will be different? 	
<p>Achievable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ After you set a goal, aim for 75 per cent success, which helps to keep SMART goals attainable. ✓ Focus on the small goals that lead to bigger goals. 	
<p>Realistic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Do you have what you need (time, energy, money) to accomplish this goal? ✓ What challenges might you encounter? How will you address them? 	
<p>Time-Based</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What is a reasonable time to achieve this goal? Accomplishing small steps enhances motivation. 	



DEEPER DIVE!

Being SMART About Your Goals
ENSURE EACH GOAL IS SMART

✔ Use this chart to indicate which SMART elements are included in each goal. Discuss which goals would work for you.

	Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Realistic	Time-Based
<p>1 On Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, I will make a list of three things to get done the next day.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Would this goal be realistic and achievable to you? Why or why not?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				
<p>2 Three days a week, I will get off the bus three stops early, and will reward myself by noticing how much healthier I feel each time.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Would this goal be realistic and achievable to you? Why or why not?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				
<p>3 I will get up at the same time Monday through Wednesday, no matter when I go to sleep.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Would this goal be realistic and achievable to you? Why or why not?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				



Self Care Tips

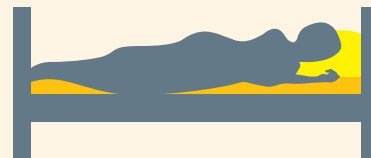


NUTRITION

- ✓ Eat healthy, regular meals & snacks
- ✓ Limit caffeine, sugar, salt
- ✓ Limit alcohol and drug use
- ✓ Supplements like Omega 3 and Vitamin D support mood and cognition

SLEEP HYGIENE

- ✓ It's important to get enough sleep.
- ✓ Don't use ADHD medications to mask fatigue.
- ✓ Afternoon naps can be problematic. If you must nap, keep it to less than 20 minutes.
- ✓ Limit screen time one hour before bed, and use a UV-light filter.
- ✓ Establish a bedtime routine. For example, take 30 minutes to get ready for bed. Maintain a distinct end to daily activities.
- ✓ Invest in a traditional alarm clock so your phone can be kept out of your bedroom, or at least away from your bed.
- ✓ Get up and go to bed at approximately the same time on most days.
- ✓ Check that your bed and room temperature are comfortable, and that it is quiet and dark enough.
- ✓ Restrict time in bed. If you can't sleep, don't toss and turn. Get up.
- ✓ When we worry about not getting enough sleep, we are likely **Catastrophizing**: making the problem worse than it is. Dial back worry with reassuring self-talk like, "It's not the end of the world if I don't get enough sleep tonight." Try using some CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) skills directed at sleep. Evidence shows that CBT therapy is helpful for chronic sleep problems.
- ✓ Maintain a **sleep diary** to understand your patterns more effectively.
- ✓ Because apps change frequently, few are listed here. Explore various white noise, guided relaxation, automatic phone shut down, and mindfulness apps. **MindShift** is a popular Canadian app and website offering helpful handouts and tools. Check out **tips for getting a good night's sleep**, or learning how to do **progressive muscle relaxation** (Week 6 Page 9).
- ✓ Changes in sleep routine are best done gradually.





Self Care Tips cont.

EXERCISE

- ✓ Clears the mind. Helps your mood. Helps you to sleep.
- ✓ Get out and move.



MELATONIN

- ✓ Melatonin is a hormone that regulates circadian rhythms and is secreted in response to dim light and darkness. It has been demonstrated to help individuals with ADHD to fall sleep.
- ✓ Always use melatonin only for short periods of time, and in conjunction with behavioural interventions like bedtime routines, sleep hygiene, and CBT Skills for Insomnia.
- ✓ Buy big name brands such as Webber Naturals, as they are more likely to contain actual melatonin.



Methods of Use:

Recommendations change regularly. Please review this guidance with your doctor.

- 1 To Promote Drowsiness.** Most common method: 1–3 mg 30 to 60 minutes before bed (stay within this window). Use with other sleep hygiene measures as found on the previous page. Trial 1–3 mg for three nights, then gradually increase every three nights. Maximum dose 10 mg for short-term use. It is best to find the lowest dose that works. Always take breaks, and try cutting back melatonin whenever possible.
- 2 For Circadian Rhythm Advance.** Physiologically accurate but less common method: No more than 0.5 mg–1 mg. This area is under study, but using a small amount of melatonin at dusk (three to four hours before bed) will help you to feel drowsy around your normal bedtime. This approach is based on Dim Light Melatonin Onset, which normally occurs a few hours before bedtime and is when melatonin begins to be released.
- 3 To Stay Asleep.** If you can't stay asleep, consider trying a *time-release*, *sustained-release*, or *controlled-release* melatonin preparation. These preparations release small amounts of melatonin throughout the night. Usual dose 3 mg at bedtime. Total melatonin dose should not exceed 9–10 mg for short-term use.
Side effects may include morning drowsiness or vivid dreams. Consult your doctor if you need to rely on melatonin on a regular basis, or if you are needing doses higher than 9 mg.



DEEPER DIVE!
Self Care Tracker

- 1 Set a Self-Care SMART goal. Goals should be set up for maximum SUCCESS.

Examples:

- I will use an old-fashioned alarm clock (placed far enough away that I can't hit snooze) and set it for 8am.

FREQUENCY>>AT LEAST THE FIRST THREE DAYS EACH WEEK

- I will drink a full glass of water in the morning after my coffee and/or breakfast.

FREQUENCY>>AT LEAST FOUR DAYS PER WEEK

- I will leave my phone in another room or out of reach from my bed.

FREQUENCY>>AT LEAST THREE NIGHTS PER WEEK

- I will take an Omega-3 pill with my breakfast.

FREQUENCY>>AT LEAST FOUR DAYS PER WEEK

- I will get off the bus one stop earlier and walk.

FREQUENCY>>THREE DAYS PER WEEK



- 2 Use the table on the next page to record your behaviour and to monitor your progress.

- 3 **IMPORTANT:** Reward yourself if the frequency goal is met.


- 4 Review your Progress. Revise your goal if there were problems meeting your SMART goals or frequency.

- 5 It's easier to stay motivated when you focus on your successes, however small they may be.

WEEK 1: Introduction to Managing ADHD
DEEPER DIVE



DEEPER DIVE!
Self Care Tracker

SELF CARE TRACKER	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT	SUN	REWARD IF FREQUENCY IS MET 
SAMPLE Drink a full glass of water AT LEAST 4 DAYS/WEEK								Watch 15 minutes of funny Tik Tok videos each time I meet my goal.






WEEK 2: Plan for Success

my
**TAKING
CARE**
worksheet

aka: "Failing to Plan is Planning to Fail."

Think about your
upcoming week.
PLANNING
is an antidote to
OVERWHELM.

 Weekly Goal	 Possibilities + Problems	 Fun Stuff



Key Messages

Planner: The most important tool to de-stress your life

- ✓ Keep only one planner, or minimize planners. Honestly, paper is better than electronics.
- ✓ *Always* keep your planner with you. Keep a pen attached.
- ✓ Enter all appointments, meetings, tasks, projects, and fun stuff.
- ✓ Check it regularly: two to three times daily, or at transition times throughout the day.
- ✓ Avoid the pitfalls of planners: the system *doesn't have to be perfect*.
- ✓ In order to have the system work, you must *use it*. Enter all events and check regularly.
- ✓ Use rewards to encourage new habits.



Fun Stuff

Remember, rewards happen **AFTER** the task!



Fun stuff or rewards encourage your brain to produce dopamine and reinforce your positive changes that you are making.

- ✓ They should be frequent
- ✓ They can be very small
- ✓ They don't need to be expensive

Rewarding yourself is a skill:

- ✓ Be kind
- ✓ Pay attention to your progress
- ✓ Have the courage to accept that you have made progress, even when it seems small and insignificant

"Inch by Inch, Everything's a Cinch."

What is an Awe Walk?

When you turn your ordinary walk into an *Awe Walk*, you choose to become more conscious about the wonders in the world that surround you: nature, moments, people, structures. Take photos of these things, and photograph yourself in awe. Evidence suggests this habit can positively impact your levels of happiness, gratitude, and connection.

Sturm, V. E., Datta, S., Roy, A. R., Sible, I. J., Kosik, E. L., Veziris, C. R., ... & Keltner, D. (2020). Big smile, small self: Awe walks promote prosocial positive emotions in older adults. *Emotion*.

NICE IDEAS FOR REWARDS

Try a few of these, or create your own.








- ✓ Get a new audiobook from your local library, or download one from an audiobook app
- ✓ Protect a full hour to listen to an audiobook or podcast
- ✓ Watch one hour of a show that you love, taking care to end this reward at the allotted time.
- ✓ Buy a magazine that you wouldn't normally purchase
- ✓ Treat yourself to fresh flowers
- ✓ Keep a list of free days at local museums (most will have an evening or a day that is free for locals)
- ✓ Get a nice pen for your planner
- ✓ Connect with a friend by phone/text/zoom
- ✓ Take 15 minutes to do NOTHING but listen to music that you enjoy
- ✓ Buy a fancy coffee at your local coffee shop
- ✓ Go for a walk in a park, in the forest, or by the sea, and make it an **'Awe Walk'**
- ✓ Do an afternoon of crafts
- ✓ Watch the sunset in a park or from your balcony
- ✓ Have a hot bath



DEEPER DIVE!
Tracking Your Tasks



- ✓ When tracking habits, start small.
- ✓ Track that you **CHECK YOUR PLANNER** every morning, noon, and evening. 
- ✓ Don't forget to plan a **REWARD** for accomplishing these habits. 
- ✓ Use this Habit Tracker **EVERY WEEK** during this program to build upon this new habit.
- ✓ When habits are well-established, add new ones you'd like to work on. Use **SMART GOALS** to keep them attainable. 
- ✓ Put a blank **HABIT TRACKER** into your planner and gradually add new habits.

TASK	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT	SUN	REWARD 
CHECK PLANNER (2-3 TIMES DAILY)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			Get a new audio book
ADD YOUR OWN HABIT: _____	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		Listen to a podcast
ADD YOUR OWN HABIT: _____	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	Watch one hour of a show
ADD YOUR OWN HABIT: _____	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	Buy a cool magazine
REWARD 	Get some fresh flowers	Go for ice cream	Catch the sunset	Connect with a friend	Have a hot bath	Order a fancy coffee	Go for an 'Awe Walk'	



BENEFITS OF TRACKING ALL TASKS

- ✓ I will feel more calm and in control of what I am doing throughout my days and week.
- ✓ I will be better prepared. I will know what I'm doing. I can pivot when the plan changes.

WEEK 2: Plan for Success
DEEPER DIVE



DEEPER DIVE!
Habit Tracker

Pick tasks that you want to reward. Be SMART about your goals. You don't need to track every task every single day.



TASK	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT	SUN	REWARD 
CHECK PLANNER (2-3 TIMES DAILY)								
ADD YOUR OWN HABIT: _____								
ADD YOUR OWN HABIT: _____								
ADD YOUR OWN HABIT: _____								
REWARD 								

TASK	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT	SUN	REWARD 
CHECK PLANNER (2-3 TIMES DAILY)								
ADD YOUR OWN HABIT: _____								
ADD YOUR OWN HABIT: _____								
ADD YOUR OWN HABIT: _____								
REWARD 								



Think about your
upcoming week.
PLANNING
is an antidote to
OVERWHELM.

aka: "Goals: You Gotta Set 'em
to Get 'em!"



Weekly Goal



Possibilities + Problems



Fun Stuff

Large empty red rectangular box for writing the Weekly Goal.

Large empty purple rectangular box for writing Possibilities + Problems.

Large empty purple rectangular box for writing Fun Stuff.



Key Messages

Why prioritize?

- ✔ Chances are that you have too much to do, and not enough time to do it.
- ✔ "Creativity thrives within structure."
~Julia Cameron (author, teacher)
- ✔ Prioritizing keeps your values and personal goals front and centre.
- ✔ Set up your To Do list based on your priorities for each day.
- ✔ You may be surprised at the disconnect between where you *want* to spend your time and where you *do* spend your time.
- ✔ Commit to addressing your priority tasks. You will have more time for Fun Stuff.



Prioritize Using The Eisenhower Method of Urgency + Importance

This matrix describes an approach to prioritizing that is attributed to former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower. You will look at activities and time spent in each quadrant. This tool highlights how time spent relates to what we see as important to our values.

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<p style="text-align: center;">QUADRANT 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">URGENT + IMPORTANT</p> <p>How to handle Quadrant 1: <u>DO</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Deadline-driven tasks <input type="radio"/> Crises <input type="radio"/> Last-minute preparations <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ 	<p style="text-align: center;">QUADRANT 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOT URGENT + IMPORTANT</p> <p>How to handle Quadrant 2: <u>DECIDE/SCHEDULE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Life goals <input type="radio"/> Friendships <input type="radio"/> Relationships <input type="radio"/> Exercise <input type="radio"/> Health
NOT IMPORTANT	<p style="text-align: center;">QUADRANT 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">URGENT + NOT IMPORTANT</p> <p>How to handle Quadrant 3: <u>DELEGATE/COLLABORATE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Tasks or favours requested by others <input type="radio"/> Some emails + meetings <input type="radio"/> False busy tasks <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ 	<p style="text-align: center;">QUADRANT 4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOT URGENT + NOT IMPORTANT</p> <p>How to handle Quadrant 4: <u>DELETE/REDUCE/USE AS REWARD</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Social media <input type="radio"/> Film streaming sites or shows <input type="radio"/> Computer or video games <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____



DEEPER DIVE!
Matrix of Urgency + Importance

Review priorities and adjust To Do lists to be calmer, and to spend less time in Quadrant 1.



- 1 Write your daily and weekly tasks, activities, and projects in the Quadrant where they fit for you. There are no correct answers!
- 2 Quadrant 2 activities are guided by what is important to you, what you value, who you want to be. It is also a great way to lighten the load from Quadrant 1. You must set time aside deliberately for this Quadrant.
- 3 Review those tasks, activities, and projects, estimating the amount of time you are spending in each Quadrant.
- 4 Does the estimated time in each quadrant reflect what you want for your life, and who you want to be?
- 5 How can you free up more time for Quadrant 2 activities?

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<p>QUADRANT 1</p> <p style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 2px;">URGENT + IMPORTANT</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Estimated time per week: _____</p>	<p>QUADRANT 2</p> <p style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 2px;">NOT URGENT + IMPORTANT</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Estimated time per week: _____</p>
NOT IMPORTANT	<p>QUADRANT 3</p> <p style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 2px;">URGENT + NOT IMPORTANT</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Estimated time per week: _____</p>	<p>QUADRANT 4</p> <p style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 2px;">NOT URGENT + NOT IMPORTANT</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Estimated time per week: _____</p>






WEEK 4: Procrastination

my
TAKING
CARE
worksheet

Think about your
upcoming week.
PLANNING
is an antidote to
OVERWHELM.

aka: "Getting Started is an Art.
Break it Down to the Smallest Part."

 Weekly Goal	 Possibilities + Problems	 Fun Stuff



Key Messages

Procrastination is a choice. It's up to you.

- ✓ There is no perfect state for working. Embrace imperfection.
- ✓ **Start small:** Break tasks down and down again.
- ✓ Work for brief time segments.
- ✓ Tired? Do easy work. Focused? Do the challenging.
- ✓ Be **accountable** to others. Tell someone your plan or goal.
- ✓ Engage in friendly competition.
- ✓ Be inspired! Use motivational phrases or images.
- ✓ Celebrate the smallest successes.



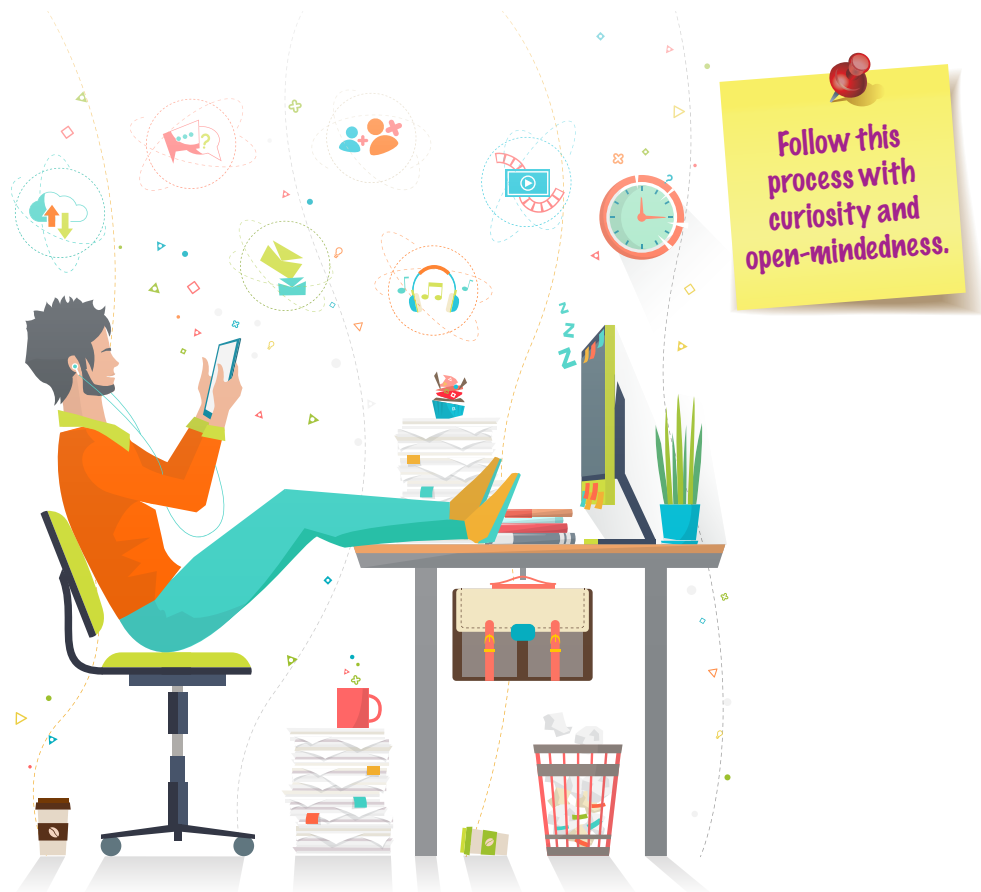
Take Action on PROCRASTINATION

PROCRASTINATION is the act of postponing a task intentionally, despite a negative impact.

- ✓ Procrastination is a *central* symptom of adult ADHD.
- ✓ People with ADHD often rely on deadlines, using **TIME PRESSURE** for motivation to complete tasks.
- ✓ Adding other approaches to your ADHD Toolkit expands your procrastination management resources.

RE-WRITE YOUR PROCRASTINATION STORY

The tool on the next page prompts you through the process of re-writing your procrastination story and changing your habits.





ProcrastinAction Path

Follow these steps to dig deeper into your reasons for procrastinating.



START HERE

SELECT A SITUATION

Think about a procrastination scenario:

- What story are you telling yourself for delaying the task? What is your explanation?
- Say your delay explanation out loud. Acknowledge it without judgment.

CURRENT FEELINGS

What are your feelings in THIS moment?

- How do you feel while you are delaying? Without judgment, consider both physical feelings and emotions.
- Examples of how you might be feeling **RIGHT NOW:** relaxed, anxious, frustrated, fearful, justified, relieved, defiant, tight-in-the-throat, tense.

CHOOSE NOT TO DO THE TASK

VISUALIZE THE FUTURE

How will you feel in either scenario?

- Imagine your feelings, physical sensations, and thoughts. Visualize.
- Does it impact others? Imagine telling them. How do you feel?

CHOOSE TO DO THE TASK

CONSIDER ALTERING

Can you alter your story AT THIS TIME?

- Stop. Close your eyes.
- Think about what you want for yourself.
- Consider your values.
- Ask, "How does this story fit into how I see myself, and what I value?"

NO I CANNOT

I cannot alter my story AT THIS TIME.

- Continue as you have been.

YES I CAN

I choose to alter my story AT THIS TIME.

REPEAT THE PATTERN

Accept that you're not ready to change AT THIS TIME.

- Examine your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours after making this decision.

RE-WRITE YOUR STORY

What can you do AT THIS TIME?

- Review *Helpful Thoughts/Actions* in the *ProcrastinAction ReThink* on Pages 4-5.



ProcrastinAction ReThink

This table outlines typical procrastination scenarios broken down to illustrate unhelpful thoughts, common underlying issues, and alternative perspectives.



SITUATION	UNHELPFUL THOUGHT	UNDERLYING ISSUE	HELPFUL THOUGHT / ACTION
I am really tired.	I can't do the task until I am more rested.	Fatigue. Energy depletion.	I can do an easy part. I can power nap for 15 minutes and then start. I may feel less tired once I start working.
My friends are going out.	I don't want to miss out on the fun. I always miss out.	Reward seeking. Thrill seeking. Loneliness. History of feeling left out or of being the outsider.	If I get some of it done, I can join my friends later. Being with my friends may not be that much fun. I can see them another time. My friends will be there for me next time.
I don't have what I need to complete this task.	I need to wait until I have all of the materials before I can start.	Perfectionism. Disorganization. Fear of success.	I can start with what I have now. I can collect the things I need so I can start right away next time.
I don't have a big chunk of time to do it now.	I will wait until I have a full day with no distractions.	Relying on hyperfocus. Can't shift attention. Wishful thinking.	I have a few minutes now. I will do a small amount. A day without distractions? Unlikely.

TABLE CONTINUES



ProcrastinAction ReThink cont.



Continue with this table, which outlines typical procrastination scenarios broken down to illustrate unhelpful thoughts, common underlying issues, and alternative perspectives.

SITUATION	UNHELPFUL THOUGHT	UNDERLYING ISSUE	HELPFUL THOUGHT / ACTION
I have plenty of time to do it.	I can put it off until tomorrow. I only work well under pressure.	Optimism-based time management. Needs deadlines or a sense of urgency to focus.	What if a Quadrant 1 emergency arises? Things often take longer than expected, so it's best to get started now. I can start the parts that I do well without time pressure.
I don't know how to do it.	I must know everything before I start.	Perfectionism. Anxiety. Shame.	I will learn as I go. I have to start somewhere. Five per cent is better than zero per cent. Accomplishments are built on lessons learned from mistakes.
I don't want to do it.	This project has no purpose. This task is a waste of time. I don't like being told what to do.	Stubbornness. Don't like rules. Need for control.	I choose to do this project for myself. Doing things that I don't want to do is just a part of life.
I have many other things to do.	I will do some other stuff first to build some momentum.	Prioritization. Overwhelmed.	I need to prioritize. What is most important today?

**WEEK 4: Procrastination
DEEPER DIVE**



DEEPER DIVE!

ProcrastinAction Path

Refer to Page 3 of this session for instructions to fill in each step along the path.

**START
HERE**

**SELECT A
SITUATION**

Think about a procrastination scenario:

**CURRENT
FEELINGS**

What are your feelings in THIS moment?

**YOU CHOSE
NOT TO DO
THE TASK**

**VISUALIZE
THE FUTURE**

How will you feel in either scenario?

**YOU CHOSE
TO DO
THE TASK**

**CONSIDER
ALTERING**

Can you alter your story AT THIS TIME?

**NO
I CANNOT**

I cannot alter my story AT THIS TIME.

**YES
I CAN**

I choose to alter my story AT THIS TIME.

**REPEAT THE
PATTERN**

Accept that you're not ready to change AT THIS TIME.

**RE-WRITE
YOUR STORY**



HOMEWORK

If you get stuck, look at the ProcrastinAction ReThink (Pages 4-5) especially at the Unhelpful + Helpful Thoughts



WEEK 5: Focused on Time

my
TAKING
CARE
worksheet

aka: "Do, or do not. There is no try."
~ Yoda

Think about your
upcoming week.
PLANNING
is an antidote to
OVERWHELM.



Weekly Goal



Possibilities + Problems



Fun Stuff



Key Messages

Focused on Time.

- ✓ Make **ONE** daily To Do List.
 - ✓ Prioritize according to **THE EISENHOWER METHOD**.
 - ✓ Break tasks into short time segments of less than 30 minutes each.
 - ✓ Schedule tasks into your Planner. Mark when complete.
 - ✓ Review your priorities **AND** your To Do List regularly.
 - ✓ Be guided by what is most important to you (Quadrant 2).
- ✓ **Ask:**
 - What **must** be done this week?
 - What can wait?
 - When must these waitlist tasks be completed?
 - What good things happen if they are completed?
 - What happens if they don't get done?



Managing Your TIME

BEFORE YOU START

- 1 **Schedule your breaks in advance.** Plan to complete 25–30 minutes of work, then take a five-minute break. Repeat.
- 2 **Deal with predictable distractions.** Turn off your phone and internet!
- 3 **Schedule to your strengths.** Plan to do challenging tasks at the time of day when you do your best work. If you take medications for ADHD, consider that your optimal time is often when your medications are working best.



KEEP ON TASK:

Discover which of these options work best for you

- ✓ **During your break.** SNACK, HYDRATE, MOVE.
- ✓ **Break tasks into small components.** Break tasks down, put half of these tasks on your list, then cut the list in half again.
- ✓ **See time pass.** Use a watch that beeps on the hour, or use '*Time Timer*'®.
- ✓ **Adjust.** Expect to under/overestimate time needed for tasks. Adjust your time without self-criticism. Be curious, and apply what you have learned next time.
- ✓ **Timely check-in.** Write out one or two prioritized tasks for each hour, and cross off when done.
- ✓ **Flexibility.** If you are tired, do something less demanding.
- ✓ **Chunking.** Setting aside larger blocks of time allows you to be flexible with tasks. Put these chunked times directly into your planner. For example, you may chunk two hours every Friday afternoon to work on a project. At the designated time, divide it up in to smaller time segments to stay accountable.



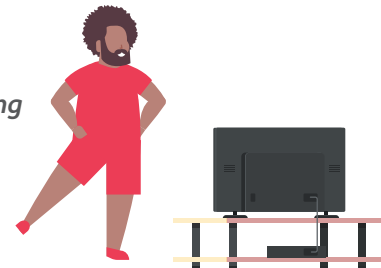


Managing Your TIME cont.



OTHER TIPS

- ✓ **Set routines.** Set a regular day each week for laundry, groceries, and bill payment.
- ✓ **Limit errands to down time.** Do household, social, and personal errands when you are less alert and less focused.
- ✓ **Be accountable for your time.** Tell members of the group or your friends what you plan to do. Monitor your progress.
- ✓ **Hard things first.** Do easier, more enjoyable tasks as rewards after other tasks are complete.
- ✓ **Pair activities.** Pleasant + Unpleasant
For example, TV + Exercise. Phone calls + Cleaning



THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE

Tools Required: manual kitchen timer, TimeTimer®, or app such as Pomodoro Focus Timer

- 1 Decide on a task.
- 2 Set your timer to 25 minutes.
- 3 Work on the task until the timer rings.
- 4 While working on the task, write down distractions that pop up, but return to the task immediately.
- 5 When the timer rings, put a check mark on a piece of paper and take a short, *digital-free* break of up to five minutes.
- 6 Return to the task for another 25-minute segment.
- 7 Repeat this process until you have four check marks on your paper (4 x 25-minute segments). ✓✓✓✓
- 8 Next, take a longer break of 30 minutes.
- 9 Review the distractions you have written down. If they fit with your priorities, move them to your To Do list.
- 10 Restart 4 x 25-minute segments.

Cirillo, F. (2018). *The Pomodoro technique: The life-changing time-management system*. Random House.



DEEPER DIVE!
Managing Your TIME

DESC SCRIPT

Consider that some of your time challenges are best managed by addressing the demands that others place on you. See *Quadrant 3* in the *Priorities* session, Week 3 Pages 2 + 3. Become familiar with the **DESC SCRIPT** for managing difficult conversations:

- 1 **D = DESCRIBE** the problem or behaviour that has upset you. Be specific about what you observed with your eyes and ears. "When you..."



- E = EXPLAIN** how you feel or how the behaviour impacts you. Use an "I" statement: "It causes problems for me because..."



- 3 **S = SPECIFY** what needs to happen or what you'd like changed. Make a reasonable and fair request: "I would like..."



- 4 **C = CONSEQUENCE.** Tell the person how things will improve for both of you if there is a resolution: "That will help because...:"



AVOID:

- ✗ Making assumptions about the person's motivation or intention
- ✗ Attacking the person's character
- ✗ Unleashing an emotional outburst
- ✗ Making threats or give an ultimatum

WEEK 5: Focused on Time
DEEPER DIVE



DEEPER DIVE!
TIME Tracker



HOMEWORK

*What do you observe?
Keep in mind you will
identify both helpful
and unhelpful patterns.
Remain curious and
avoid self-criticism.*

TIME AWARENESS EXERCISE

Complete this task in 30-minute increments for at least two days this week. Be specific. Review for common themes and time traps.

TIME	ACTIVITY	OBSERVATIONS
5:00–5:30 am		
5:30–6:00 am		
6:00–6:30 am		
6:30–7:00 am		
7:00–7:30 am		
7:30–8:00 am		
8:00–8:30 am		
8:30–9:00 am		
9:00–9:30 am		
9:30–10:00 am		
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9:00–9:30 pm		
9:30–10:00 pm		
10:00–10:30 pm		
10:30–11:00 pm		
11:00–11:30 pm		
11:30 pm –12:00 am		
12:00–12:30 am		
12:30–1:00 am		
1:00–1:30 am		
1:30–2:00 am		



DEEPER DIVE!
Estimating Your TIME

TIME ESTIMATION EXERCISE

Awareness of estimated and actual time spent on common activities will help you to prioritize. Many tasks are easier if you can be flexible about how they are done and about the end result. **ASK:** Can a task be broken down? e.g., Can you prepare your morning beverage the night before?

TASK	BREAK IT DOWN INTO STEPS (visualize the end result)	TIME ESTIMATION (include preparation and completion time)	ACTUAL TIME	TIME TRAPS	TIME SAVERS can I do it well, but less perfectly? are there easier ways?
SAMPLE Make coffee	filter coffee beans grinder coffee maker water travel mug + lid condiments spoon	grind beans + put water in coffee maker the night before + make coffee = 10 minutes	12 minutes	forgetting to organize it before bed scrolling on my phone	turning my phone off putting my phone out of sight
Shower					
Pay phone bill					
Get out of house in the morning					



DEEPER DIVE!
Managing Your TIME

Monitor your time estimates to check if they are becoming more accurate. Review your chart daily and weekly.

TO DO LIST

Use the following chart to learn to manage your **TO DO LIST**.

- ✓ Sometime before your week begins, brainstorm everything you have to do this week. Write down family, work, meals, exercise, appointments, etc.
- ✓ If there is a deadline, note it in Column 2. If there is no deadline, consider adding one, or deleting the task because it is not well enough defined.
- ✓ In Column 3, estimate how long each task will take.
- ✓ List the quadrant that each task falls into. Remember, there are no right or wrong ways to assign quadrants to your tasks. The same task may fall into Quadrant 2 for one person and into Quadrant 4 for another.
- ✓ To Do Lists reflect what we want for ourselves in life as well as our responsibilities. If the list is all Quadrant 3 (other people's requests), perhaps it's time to reassess.
- ✓ Priorities are assigned by **Quadrants 1-4**:
Quadrant 1 = MOST Important/Urgent
Quadrant 4 = LEAST Important/Urgent

TASK/Activity	Deadline (if none, set one)	Estimated Time Required	Quadrant #1-4

- ✓ Review your **TO DO LIST** above.
- ✓ Consider completing only Quadrant 1 + 2 tasks.
- ✓ Choose three key tasks to do this week.
- ✓ Mark completed tasks, review time estimates and revise your To Do List.
- ✓ Does the order of your list make sense to you? Can you explain why? Does it reflect a balance between what you must do and what you value most?



Know Your Attention Challenge WHAT IS YOUR MAIN PROBLEM AREA?

FOCUS is the ability to pay attention to specific sounds, sights, or touch **in the moment**.

Individuals with ADHD have different types of focus challenges. The following attention challenges are listed in order from easiest to most difficult.

1 SUSTAINED

The ability to maintain attention during a continuous or repetitive activity when no clear distractions are present, such as listening to audiobooks, reading, playing musical instruments, or writing emails. Also known as *concentration*.



2 SELECTIVE

The ability to maintain attention in the face of distraction, such as reading or listening with distractions going on around you.



3 ALTERNATING

The ability to shift attention between several tasks, such as cooking while following a recipe, or reading/listening to a book on the bus while checking for your stop.



4 DIVIDED

The ability to pay attention to multiple tasks or demands at the same time, such as multi-tasking or taking notes while listening.



Based on the work of Sohlberg and Mateer: Sohlberg MM, Mateer CA (1989). *Introduction to cognitive rehabilitation: theory and practice*. New York: Guilford Press. ISBN 978-0-89862-738-1.

For these tips to work, you must make the commitment to deal with your distractions.

MANAGING INTERNAL DISTRACTIONS

PHYSIOLOGICAL

- ? Are you hungry?
- ? Are you tired?
- ? Is your medication wearing off?
- ? Have you exercised today?

GOAL SETTING

- ? Are they SMART Goals?

PREPARATION

- ? Do you have everything you need to do this work?

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

- ✓ Use assistive technology tools such as those found at sites like *ADDitude Magazine*.

DELAY DISTRACTIONS

- ✓ **Brain Dump:** Write down your distracted thoughts to clear your brain. Review them later. Plan time to follow up on the important ones.

PRE-PLAN REWARDS

- ✓ Make rewards a priority, such as a scheduled tea break.

OTHER STRATEGIES

- ✓ Add novelty to mundane tasks to avoid boredom, such as dancing while you do the dishes.
- ✓ Create time pressure challenges with friends. Make artificial deadlines.
- ✓ **Re-focus:** Use visual reminders to stay on track. On the wall by your workstation, place an image of the positive outcome that will occur when the task is completed.

MANAGING EXTERNAL DISTRACTIONS

AUDITORY



- ✓ Wear headphones/earplugs.
- ✓ Play lyric-free music to mask sounds, or use a white noise app.
- ✓ Select a quiet environment, or move elsewhere if it becomes noisy.

VISUAL



- ✓ Clear your work space.
- ✓ Block out distractions. Use a cubicle, or close your eyes to listen or think.
- ✓ Use visual reminders such as a clock and post-it notes.

INTERNET



- ✓ Use assistive technology tools such as those found at sites like *ADDitude Magazine*.

Three ways to deal with online distractions:

- 1 Monitor.
- 2 Block.
- 3 Manage.



DEEPER DIVE!
Managing INTERNAL Distractions

1 My typical attention challenges are:

2 The following internal management strategies work for me:


3 The following external management strategies work for me:

4 Use your **HABIT TRACKER** to add mindful moments to your day. You can put timed reminders on your phone. You may consider trying Mindshift, Headspace, or another app to help.




Think about your
upcoming week.
PLANNING
is an antidote to
OVERWHELM.


aka: "Don't Believe
Everything You Think!"



Weekly Goal



Possibilities + Problems



Fun Stuff

 **Key Messages** Use CBT skills to alter thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

- 1 Become aware of your uncomfortable feelings and identify them.
- 2 Identify the thoughts, behaviours, and physical sensations that go with your uncomfortable feelings.
- 3 Learn about the common **thinking traps** that underly your thoughts.
- 4 Challenge yourself to **THINK** your way to a healthier story. Ask, "Is this thought really **True? Helpful? Inspiring? Meeting Needs** of my healthy self? **Kind?**"
- 5 Practice body calming strategies when uncomfortable feelings arise.
- 6 Surprise Yourself! Consider doing the opposite of what you'd usually do
- 7 Deepen this impact by adding a visual of how you will feel, think, and act.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) treats mood, anxiety, and other mental health concerns. If you find this introduction to CBT helpful, consider taking an MSP-funded CBT course to learn the skills.



Cognitive Behavioural Therapy



CBT addresses how our feelings, thoughts, body sensations, and actions are interrelated. It focuses on modifying our thoughts and behaviours. Our feelings change in response to a change in our thoughts, body sensations, and behaviours.

This diagram shows how our thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and behaviours are interrelated. A change in one area influences the other areas.

Expand your awareness by paying attention to all four areas—thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and behaviours—while remaining curious and open-minded.



The main way to change feelings of anxiety and depression is to change our thoughts, actions, and body sensations.

To manage intense feelings, use strategies organized within these three areas:

- 1 Re-frame Thoughts
- 2 Change Behaviour
- 3 Calm the Body

CBT SKILLS + ADHD

The neurodevelopmental symptoms of ADHD (such as poor concentration, forgetfulness, and difficulty with problem solving) lead to impaired functioning in a number of life areas.

- ✓ When you have ADHD, your thoughts can become negative and distorted because of a history of both real and perceived setbacks.
- ✓ Persistent negative and distorted thoughts set the scene for developing problems with sadness and anxiety.

- ✓ The things that you do, and how you feel in your body, can also make you feel sad or anxious.
- ✓ Strategies used in CBT can help you to alter strong feelings.
- ✓ Target thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations that you want to change. Apply a strategy (described later).
- ✓ Changing your patterns takes time. You will need to practice.

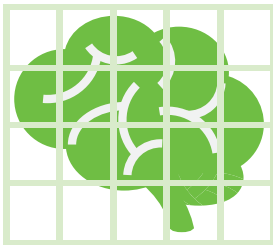


Thinking Traps

IDENTIFY AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

Before thoughts can be re-framed, you need to be able to identify them.

- 1 In a kind and open-minded way, identify the moment when you feel depressed or anxious. If it's hard to identify your feelings in the moment, notice a change in your physical sensations (e.g., you feel your heart racing) or a change in your actions. (e.g., you raise your voice).
- 2 With curiosity, identify what you are thinking in this moment. You may not have a clear thought. It could be an image that pops into your mind (e.g., a critical boss).



RE-FRAME THOUGHTS

Once the **AUTOMATIC THOUGHT** is identified, you can identify the **THINKING TRAP**.

The next page describes common Thinking Traps for people with ADHD.

- 1 With an open mind, challenge the Thinking Trap. Ask:
 - ✓ Is it really **T**True?
 - ✓ Is it **H**elpful?
 - ✓ Is it **I**nspiring?
 - ✓ Does this way of thinking meet the **N**eeds of my healthy self?
 - ✓ Is it **K**ind (to me)?



Dive deeper
by completing
the exercise
on Page 10
of this session.



Thinking Traps

ALL-OR-NONE THINKING

(also known as *Black and White Thinking*)
There is no grey. You are either perfect or a complete failure. There is no in-between.

MENTAL FILTERING

Negative Mental Filtering: Seeing only the failures.

Disqualifying the Positive: Acknowledging positives but minimizing them and finding excuses to turn them into negatives.

OVERGENERALIZING

"People never listen to me." "I never do well in school." "Nothing good ever happens to me."

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

Mind Reading: Imagining that we know what others are thinking.

Fortune Telling: Predicting how things will work out—usually not well—without evidence.

CATASTROPHIZING

Magnification: Over-exaggerating negatives. Going directly to the worst-case scenario.

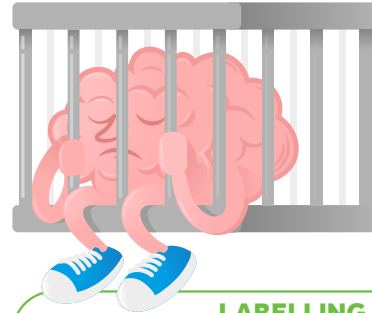
Minimization: Minimizing positive experiences. Downplaying the importance of positives.

PERSONALIZATION

Taking things personally, which leads to a direct and personal reaction to what others do or say, even if it is unrelated. Assuming you have been excluded intentionally or targeted.

BLAMING

Blaming other people or circumstances for negative events that are your responsibility.



LABELLING

Assigning judgment to yourself or to others based on one negative incident.
"I'm stupid." "I'm such a loser."

ALWAYS BEING RIGHT

Needing to be right, always. Internalizing personal opinions as facts. Going to great lengths to demonstrate being correct.

SHOULD STATEMENTS

Enforcing 'should do', 'must do', or 'shouldn't do' statements as rules for oneself and for others.

EMOTIONAL REASONING

Any feelings must be true. Accepting emotion as fact and blocking all logical reasoning. Assuming that the negative feeling is the only truth.

CONTROL FALLACIES

External: Thinking that life is completely controlled by external factors, which leads to a sense of powerlessness.

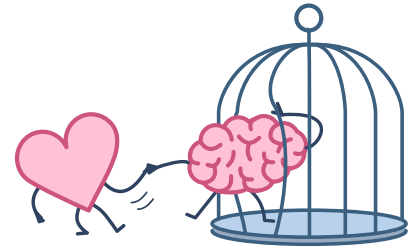
Internal: Believing that by having control of ourselves and our surroundings we are responsible for the feelings of others.

FAIRNESS IS THE NORM

Belief that all things must always be fair and equal.



Thinking Traps

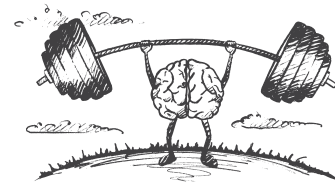


UNHELPFUL (AUTOMATIC) THOUGHT	THINKING TRAP	CHALLENGE THE TRAP	HEALTHIER THOUGHT
I will never get this job.	Catastrophizing Over-Generalizing All-or-None Thinking	I might have enough experience to qualify for this job. I won't know if I don't try.	I will use the experience to practice my interview skills. If this job doesn't work out, I will be ready for my next interview.
Everyone else seems to know what to do. What's wrong with me?	Jumping to Conclusions Personalizing Mind Reading	How do I know the experience of others? Is comparing myself to others helpful?	Other people might be confused. If I ask for clarification, it will probably help someone else too. I am capable in many ways.
I should be able to get my work done on time.	Should Statement	This task was much harder than the others.	Next time, I will double the time I think I need for this type of work.
The only way I can get work done is at the last minute. I need the pressure.	All-or-None Thinking Mental Filter	What emotional cost does this pattern have on me and on others around me?	I am choosing to get my work done with less stress. Inch by inch, everything's a cinch.
I don't deserve to be here.	Magnification Personalization Disqualifying the Positive	What do I experience by blowing things out of proportion? Whose voice is this?	I may feel awkward here, but I deserve the chance! Feelings aren't facts. Thoughts aren't facts.



Behaviour Change

This chart shows how we can challenge ourselves to change our behaviours.



EMOTION	UNHELPFUL THOUGHT	PHYSICAL SENSATIONS	MALADAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR URGE	CHALLENGE THE URGE!
Anxious Nervous Scared	Themes of threat, judgment by others. I am in danger. I will be humiliated or embarrassed.	Muscles tense Sweaty palms Racing heart Butterflies/nausea	Flee (flight response) Freeze Avoid	Fake It, Literally! By acting confident, our physical sensations adjust to the new feeling. Master the Fear! Do what you are avoiding, even just a little bit. Name It! Helps you to get distance.
Sad Down Hopeless	Themes of loss, self-criticism, hopelessness. I am worthless. Nobody likes me. Nothing ever goes well. I am a failure.	Lethargic Foggy Run down Craving food or substances	Withdraw Pull away Isolate	Get Active! Exercise. Act Happy! see <i>Fake It</i> above. Connect! Reach out. Take the Initiative! Schedule Your Day! Get Pro-Active! Plan for good things.



Behaviour Change



While it may feel comfortable in the short term, following our habitual urges and usual patterns can lead to bigger problems.

Work through these imaginary scenarios. Be curious and open-minded. People with ADHD often struggle with being on time. This example works through several scenarios: arriving barely on time; arriving late; not going at all; and, arriving early.

Typically, if you're already a bit late, you avoid going to a meeting or appointment. When you feel this way, experiment by behaving in the opposite way from your urge. Rather than avoiding, get to the meeting as best you can.

- 1 Imagine arriving to the meeting right on time. What would be your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and behaviours?"

- 2 Imagine arriving a few minutes late for the meeting. What would be your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and behaviours?"

- 3 Imagine that you didn't change your behaviour and instead stayed home. Write down your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and behaviours.

- 4 Imagine that you arrive five minutes early for your meeting. What are your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and behaviours?"



Calming the Body

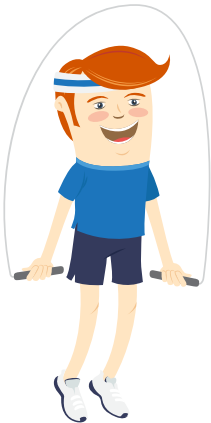
Changing body sensations changes how you feel and think. These strategies are scientifically proven; experiment to find the one that works best for you. It will take practice and time before you see results.

SLOW BREATHING

- 1 Breathe in, then breathe out. Your goal is to inhale *less air* than you exhale.
- 2 Breathe from your abdomen, not from your chest. Put your hand on your abdomen and make sure that it is moving up and down.

Options:

- ✓ Breathe in through your nostrils (five seconds in), then breathe out through your mouth (five seconds out).
- ✓ Breathe in for five seconds, then breathe out for seven seconds (adjust time as needed).
- ✓ Continue this exercise for one to two minutes.



EXERCISE

- ✓ Do physical activity that raises your heart rate.
- ✓ 45 minutes of brisk walking is ideal, but anything done for 10 minutes or more is better than nothing.
- ✓ You can walk, run, or skip rope.
- ✓ Put on your favourite music and dance.



7-MINUTE WORKOUT

This popular workout method, also called High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), doesn't require a gym or weights. Very short exercises help to raise your heart rate. Search for 7-minute HIIT workout apps or online.



Calming the Body

"Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy."

~ Thich Naht Hanh



MONA LISA SMILE

- 1 Keep your mouth closed, and turn the corners of your mouth slightly upward.
- 2 Stay like that for at least 20 seconds. Notice any difference in how you feel?

COLD WATER

- ✓ Splash cold water on your face. Even better, dunk your face in a sink full of cold water and hold your breath for 20–30 seconds.



PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

- ✓ Starting from toe to head, tense one muscle group for five seconds, then release. Tense your toes and release, then your calf muscles, thigh muscles, abdomen, triceps, fists, and jaw in succession, then scrunch your face. You can also reverse the order.
- ✓ Notice the difference in feeling when your muscles are tensed and when they are relaxed.

BOX BREATHING

This popular breathing technique can be used anytime, anywhere. Practice will make the technique second nature.

- 1 Breathe in through your nose while counting to four slowly. Feel the air enter your lungs.
- 2 Hold your breath inside while counting slowly to four. Keep your mouth and nose relaxed.
- 3 Begin to slowly exhale for four seconds.
- 4 Repeat Steps 1 to 3 at least three times.

OPTIONAL TECHNIQUE: 4-4-4-4 BREATHING

- ✓ Breathe in for four seconds, hold for four seconds, breathe out for four seconds, hold for four seconds.





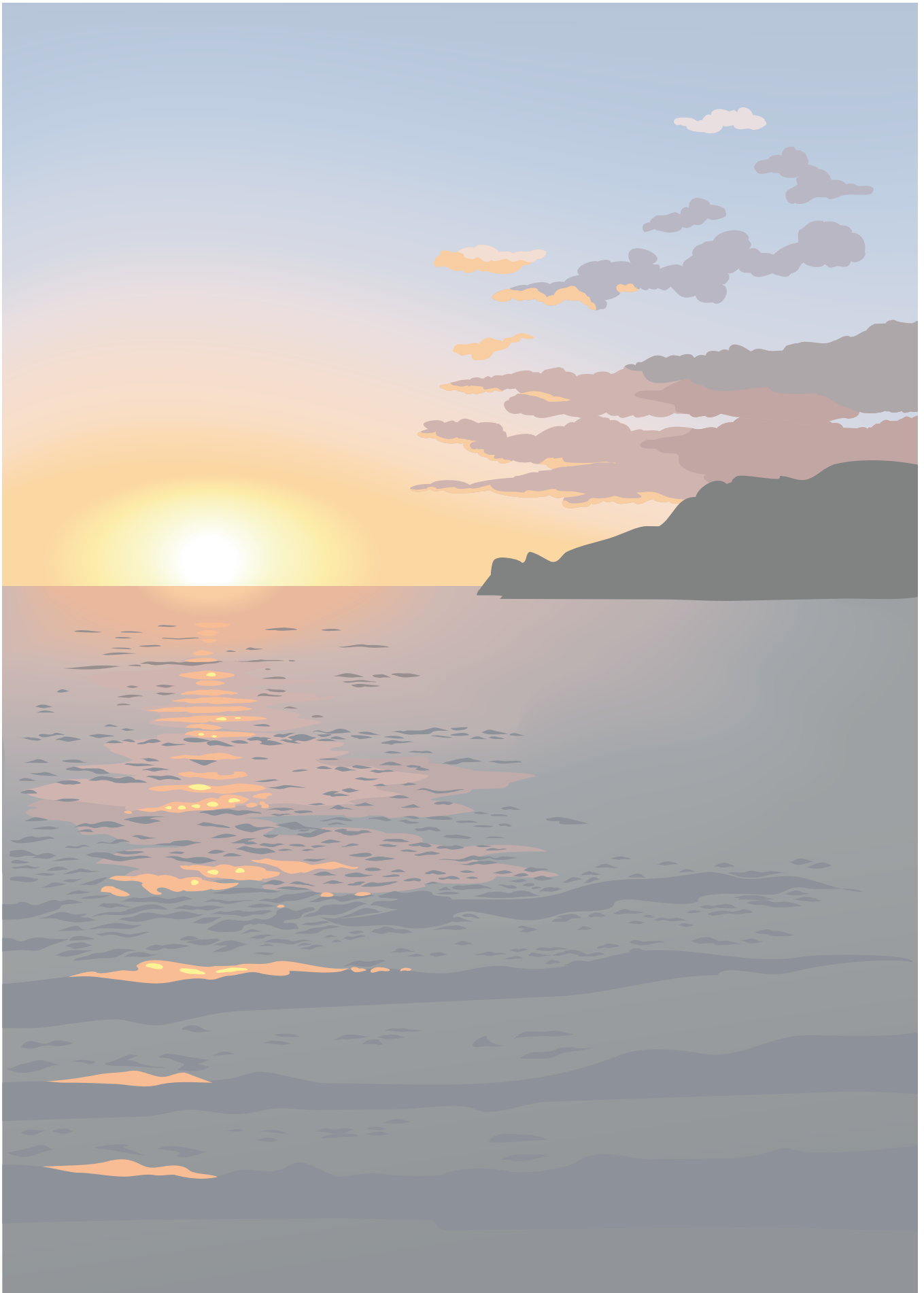
DEEPER DIVE!
Putting it All Together

Practice the three strategies:

- ✔ Change Thoughts
- ✔ Change Behaviours
- ✔ Calm the Body

This week, use an example from a situation when your mood or anxiety were activated. When you get to **Column 6** (Putting it Together) select your response from EITHER **Column 3, 4, or 5**. Then, in **Column 6**, modify that response by using a skill that you have learned in this course. How does this new response feel to you?

1 SITUATION	2 WHAT I'M FEELING: EMOTIONS	3 WHAT I'M FEELING: BODY SENSATIONS	4 WHAT I'M THINKING: THOUGHTS + THINKING TRAPS	5 WHAT I'M DOING	6 PUTTING IT TOGETHER
SAMPLE I have a team deadline this week.	Worried Hopeless Overwhelmed	Shaking Heart Racing Tensed Muscles	"Others will see that I don't know what I'm doing. I am sure to slow everyone else down with my terrible work." <i>Labelling, Disqualifying the Positive, Catastrophizing</i>	I am avoiding doing my part of the work. I am eating a lot of food. I am cleaning my house.	I feel my heart racing. I will do a breathing exercise, noticing how the sensation may change and how I may feel differently.






WEEK 7: Staying on Top of Emotions

my
TAKING
CARE
worksheet

aka: "Feelings are like waves. We can't stop them from coming, but we can choose which ones to surf."

Think about your upcoming week.
PLANNING
is an antidote to
OVERWHELM.

 Weekly Goal	 Possibilities + Problems	 Fun Stuff



Key Messages

Strategies for Regulating Emotions

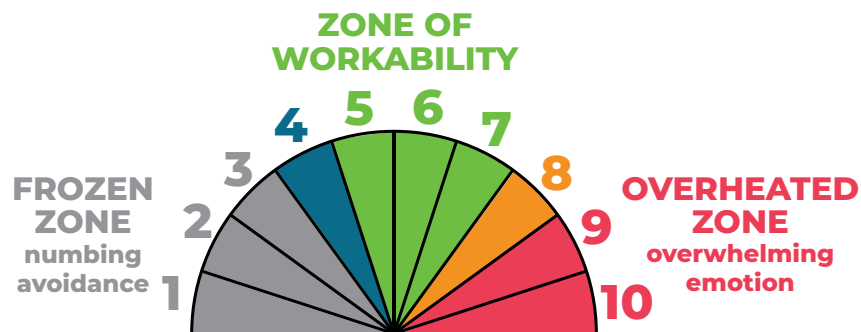
- ✓ The idea behind regulating emotions is not to suppress or to deny our emotions, but to turn *toward them*. We want to face our feelings with courtesy, self-respect, and kindness.
- ✓ When we begin to explore our feelings on a regular basis, we often find that they are less intense than we had imagined.
- ✓ We can identify scenarios where we are likely to experience intense emotions.
- ✓ By preparing in advance, we can use healthier approaches to expand our toolbox.
- ✓ It's not how we feel that causes problems, it's what we *DO* that matters.



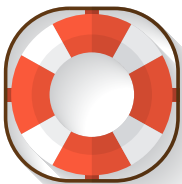
Managing Strong Emotions

1 Awareness

- ✓ Identify what zone you are in by noticing your thoughts, actions, body sensations, and feelings.

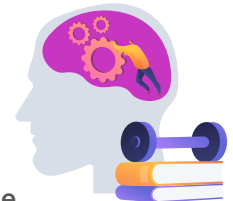


- ✓ What is your usual range of zones?
- ✓ When irritated or angry, where do you go on the dial? Do you jump immediately to the **OVERHEATED ZONE**? Or do you go in the opposite direction, to the **FROZEN ZONE**, and avoid expressing strong emotions altogether?
- ✓ What are you feeling? What is the sensation in your body? Refer to Page 4 of this session for a list of emotions you might be feeling.
- ✓ Identify **SET OFF SCENARIOS (SOS)**. Notice when you feel particularly upset, when you react at lightening speed, and when you shift out of your **ZONE OF WORKABILITY**. This situation is an **SOS!**



2 Look in Your Toolbox

- ✓ Reflect on what thoughts and behaviours you already use that could bring you back to your **ZONE OF WORKABILITY**.





Managing Strong Emotions

3 Practice Strategies

- ✓ Challenge yourself to try out a new approach to dealing with intense emotions.
- ✓ Practice the strategies on Pages 6–11 of this session to develop emotional flexibility and to expand your reaction toolkit.

4 Practice Self Compassion

- ✓ Learning to manage intense emotions is a **PROCESS**. Time and practice are required.
- ✓ There will always be challenges, opportunities, and room for improvement.





Labelling Emotions

JOY

amused
blissful
cheerful
connected
delighted
eager
ecstatic
elated
energized
enthused
euphoric
excited
exhilarated
friendly
gay
glad
gleeful
happy
hopeful
jolly
joyful
jubilant
optimistic
proud
rapturous
relaxed
relieved
satisfied
thankful
zany
zestful

ANGER

aggravated
aggressive
bitter
defensive
disrespected
enraged
exasperated
frustrated
furious
grouchy
hateful
hostile
irritated
jealous
mad
outraged
resentful
scornful
vengeful
wrathful

FEAR

afraid
anxious
apprehensive
dreading
edgy
frightened
horrified
insecure
jumpy
nervous
overwhelmed
panicky
scared
shocked
terrified
uneasy
worried

SADNESS

agonized
apathetic
blue
crushed
defeated
dejected
depressed
despairing
disappointed
discontented
disheartened
disillusioned
dismayed
displeased
gloomy
glum
grief-stricken
hopeless
hurt
melancholic
miserable
sorrowful
unhappy
woeful

SHAME

abashed
ashamed
bad
chagrined
discomfited
disgraceful
dishonourable
embarrassed
horrible
humiliated
ignominious
mortified
sheepish

GUILT

blameworthy
censurable
contrite
culpable
delinquent
liable
penitent
regretful
remorseful
reprehensible
rueful
sinful
sorry
treacherous
wrong

If you can name it, you can tame it!
~ Dr. Daniel Siegel, Psychiatrist/Author



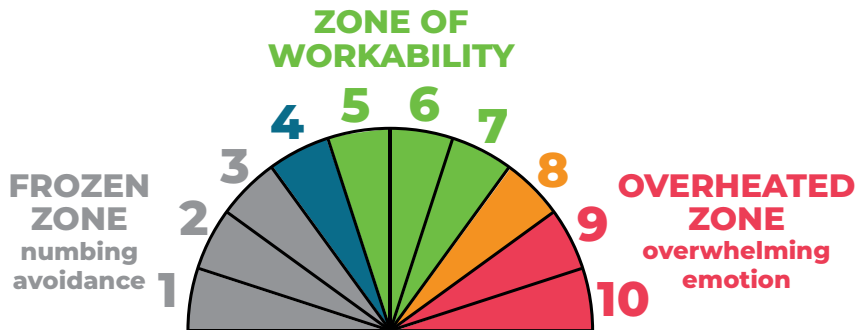
Set Off Scenarios (SOS)



Strategies to regulate emotions can be broken down into tools you can use **before**, **during**, and **after** an **SOS**.

The charts on the next few pages will help you to figure out which strategies you can use before, during, and after an **SOS** occurs. The charts also break down the strategies within each timeframe into things you can do to **Change Yourself** and things you can do to **Change Your Situation**. These strategies will help you to expand your toolkit of responses in difficult situations.

Refer to the table on Page 6 of this session for a summary of the strategies before, during and after an **SOS**.





Summary of SOS Strategies

	BEFORE SOS Look/Think Ahead	DURING SOS Notice/Be Present	AFTER SOS Reflect/Revise	
CHANGE YOURSELF		STOP	p62	
		CALM BODY (i.e. BOX BREATHING)	p51	
		COGNITIVE REFRAME (TAKE PERSPECTIVE, THEN REFRAME)	p63	
		COPING THOUGHTS	p63	
		DISTRACT/ CHANGE FOCUS	p66	
		DISTRACT/ SENSORY AWARENESS	p66	
		BE ASSERTIVE (DESC)	p63	
			ROLL WITH IT	p69
			PRACTICE SELF- COMPASSION	p57
			REPAIR (HEART)	p69
CHANGE YOUR SITUATION	AVOID	ESCAPE/ TAKE A BREAK	AVOID	
	CHANGE		CHANGE	



BEFORE SOS

LOOK/THINK AHEAD

What could set you off? Close your eyes and visualize the situation:

- ✓ Who is there?
- ✓ What are they doing?
- ✓ What are they saying?
- ✓ What emotions are they showing?

What difficult feelings are showing up for you? What feelings might show up? See Week 7 Page 4.

CONSIDER STRATEGIES

Look at the following strategies and consider which ones you could use before you get into a difficult situation. You'll need to anticipate problems and remain aware, which will take some practice. For example, you may need to:

- ✓ **Notice** to develop more awareness
- ✓ Use **Calm Body** to help you stay calm and focused
- ✓ Come up with **Coping Thoughts** ahead of time
- ✓ Prepare to **Be Assertive**



BEFORE SOS STRATEGIES TO CHANGE YOURSELF

NOTICE (STOP)

Notice your thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and behaviour without trying to change anything. You may find the STOP technique helpful to use.



thoughts

What thoughts/
images
are going through
my mind?

emotions

How am I feeling
right now?

body

What physical
sensations do I
feel in my body?

I will do a quick
body scan
and notice my
heart rate, any
muscle tension,
or other physical
reactions.

behaviour

What am I doing?



BEFORE SOS STRATEGIES TO CHANGE YOURSELF

CALM BODY (4-7-8 BREATHING)

- ✓ Notice and then slow down your breathing. Breathe out for longer than you breathe in. Repeat a few times.
- ✓ With your mouth closed, inhale through your nose while counting to four in your head.
- ✓ Hold your breath for a count of seven.



- ✓ Exhale through your mouth, making a whoosh sound for a count of eight.
- ✓ Repeat this process three or four times. If you find this exercise difficult, count faster, but keep the speed of counting the same for each of the three parts.



COGNITIVE REFRAME (TAKE PERSPECTIVE, THEN REFRAME)

- ✓ **Take Perspective:** How would someone I look up to handle this situation? What would I want to be treated if I made a mistake?
- ✓ **Reframe:** People are not necessarily trying to annoy me.

COPING THOUGHTS (POSITIVE SELF-TALK)

- ✓ Remind yourself of a strength or tool you have:
 - ✓ "I have a few different tools I can use to get myself through this situation."
 - ✓ "I am respected by many people."



BE ASSERTIVE (DESC)

Express yourself in a way that doesn't attack others or minimize your needs.

Practice the DESC Script in Week 5 Page 4, to talk about a problem with someone. Aim for one sentence for each step:

DESC = Describe. Explain. Specify. Consequence.



BEFORE SOS STRATEGIES TO CHANGE YOUR SITUATION

AVOID SITUATION

- ✓ Some situations may be so difficult that you may need to avoid them. If you identify a recurring pattern that leads to an **SOS**, consider not putting yourself in that position anymore.
- ✓ Ask yourself:
 - ✓ “Do I really need to do this thing?”
 - ✓ “Is this thing essential?”
 - ✓ “What will be the consequences if I don’t do this thing?”
- ✓ On the other hand, if you are avoiding certain situations repeatedly, it could be time to learn or use other strategies.



CHANGE SITUATION

- ✓ Sometimes changing things about the situation can reduce an SOS. Ask yourself:
 - ✓ “Can I change the time of the meeting?”
 - ✓ “Can I shorten the length of the meeting?”
 - ✓ “Can I bring someone with me?”
 - ✓ “Can I avoid certain people at the meeting by sitting away from them?”
 - ✓ “Can I bring a distraction or soothing tool to the meeting?”



DURING SOS STRATEGIES TO CHANGE YOUR SITUATION



NOTICE (STOP)/BE PRESENT

- ✓ Use the STOP Technique in the moment (Week 7 Page 8) to be aware of difficult thoughts, feelings, or body sensations that are showing up during the situation.
- ✓ It will take considerable practice to remember to use this technique. Try using a visual cue as a reminder: write STOP on a sticky note for your fridge or computer, wear a red ribbon around your wrist, write STOP in a reminder app, or put a red dot on your hand.

CONSIDER STRATEGIES

If you're having trouble thinking in the moment, ask yourself:

- ✓ Can I change myself, i.e. my thoughts, body sensations, and/or behaviour?
- ✓ Can I leave the situation?



DURING SOS STRATEGIES TO CHANGE YOURSELF

NOTICE (STOP)

Week 7 Page 8

CALM BODY (4-7-8 BREATHING)

Week 7 Page 9

COGNITIVE REFRAME (TAKE PERSPECTIVE, THEN REFRAME)

Week 7 Page 9

COPING THOUGHTS (POSITIVE SELF-TALK)

Week 7 Page 9

BE ASSERTIVE (DESC)

Week 7 Page 9



DISTRACT/CHANGE FOCUS

- ✓ Explore something in the environment using all five of your senses.
- ✓ Play a distracting game on your phone.
- ✓ Listen to music with lyrics on headphones.
- ✓ Check your social media feed.
- ✓ Watch people walking by and try and guess their names or where they are going.

DISTRACT/SENSORY AWARENESS

- ✓ Look at anything close by—a tree, a traffic light, or a wrapper on the ground—and absorb it using all of your senses. What would it feel, smell, taste, or sound like?





DURING SOS **STRATEGIES TO CHANGE YOUR SITUATION**

ESCAPE/TAKE A BREAK

- ✓ It is reasonable to leave a situation and give yourself a break when you feel you are in an **SOS** and are too upset to use other tools.
- ✓ If the **SOS** is recurring and involves a close personal relationship, talk about having a **take a break cue** (a word or hand signal) to use in these situations.





AFTER SOS

REFLECT/REVISE

- ✓ Notice (i.e. STOP Technique: Week 7 Page 8) after the moment to become aware of the difficult thoughts, feelings, and body sensations that are showing up. Ask yourself:
 - ✓ Am I being too hard on myself? (check for Catastrophizing, Magnification, or Labelling)
 - ✓ Am I minimizing inappropriate or unfair behaviour toward others?
- ✓ If you lost control of your feelings and behaved in a way that hurt someone, review the strategies that you can use.

CONSIDER STRATEGIES

- ✓ What can I change about myself right now? (thoughts, body sensations, behaviour)
- ✓ How can I avoid or change the situation in the future?



AFTER SOS STRATEGIES TO CHANGE YOURSELF

NOTICE (STOP)

Week 7 Page 8

CALM BODY (4-7-8 BREATHING)

Week 7 Page 9

COGNITIVE REFRAME (TAKE PERSPECTIVE, THEN REFRAME)

Week 7 Page 9

COPING THOUGHTS (POSITIVE SELF-TALK)

Week 7 Page 9

BE ASSERTIVE (DESC)

Week 7 Page 9

DISTRACT/CHANGE FOCUS

Week 7 Page 12

DISTRACT/SENSORY AWARENESS

Week 7 Page 12

ROLL WITH IT

- ✓ Accept that everybody has flaws. Decide to let it go, even just this once
- ✓ Think of this problem as one grain of sand in a very large ocean.

PRACTICE SELF COMPASSION

Week 7 Page 3



REPAIR (HEART ACRONYM)

Sometimes, things don't go the way you wanted them to. You lose your cool and regret how you acted. You may feel shame. Being hard on yourself won't change anything, it will only make things worse. Follow these steps to make a reparation.

HEART =

H – HEAR the person out if they want to vent when you contact them. It may not be easy to do. Use other strategies in this section to cope, such as Calm Body.

E – EMPATHIZE. Put yourself in the person's shoes and name their feelings.
"I understand that you are really upset."

A – APOLOGIZE. Using an 'I' statement, be brief and sincere. "I realize that I hurt your feelings and I am sorry."

R – RESOLVE. If relevant, try to fix the problem. Ask, "What can I do to make this situation right?"

T – THANK them for giving you the chance to talk.



AFTER SOS **STRATEGIES TO CHANGE YOUR SITUATION**

REMEDIATE SITUATION

Week 7 Page 10

CHANGE SITUATION

Week 7 Page 10

PLAN TO CHANGE SITUATION NEXT TIME

Week 7 Page 10



Key Points

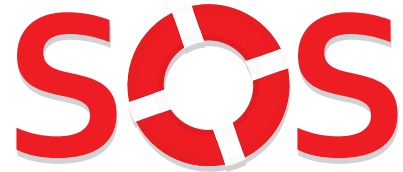
REGULATING EMOTIONS

KEY POINTS

- 1** Feelings are not facts.
- 2** Feelings get less intense over time.
- 3** Ignoring your feelings and negative thoughts over time can make them worse.
- 4** Combine the tools if you find that helpful.
- 5** Practice, practice, practice!
- 6** Remind yourself that it is good to face these tricky situations. Stay present and calm. Use the Mona Lisa smile!



DEEPER DIVE!
Regulating Emotions



2 SET OFF SCENARIOS (SOS)

- ✓ Complete your own **Staying on Top of Emotions Strategies Chart** for an **SOS** that happen this week. It could be a situation you handled to your satisfaction, or an incident where you would like to add some new tools. Refer to the Summary of **SOS** Strategies Chart on Pages 6 for guidance.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION STRATEGIES CHART

SOS	THOUGHTS	FEELINGS	BEHAVIOURS	BODY SENSATIONS	STRATEGY THAT I WILL APPLY






WEEK 8: Staying on Track

my
TAKING
CARE
worksheet

Think about your
upcoming week.
PLANNING
is an antidote to
OVERWHELM.

aka: "If you find yourself in a hole,
grab a ladder, not a shovel."

 Weekly Goal	 Possibilities + Problems	 Fun Stuff



Key Messages

Reviewing, revising and re-instituting strategies is an important part of ADHD management. Celebrate the process, not the product.

My favourite take-home points:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



DEEPER DIVE!
Review + Refocus



AFTER THIS COURSE:

1 What unhealthy thoughts or behaviours will I leave behind? _____

2 What past unhelpful labels, feelings of shame, and ways I saw myself have I let go of? _____

3 What productive thoughts, feelings, or behaviours will I start or keep using? _____



DEEPER DIVE!
Review + Refocus cont.

4 What are my favourite new ADHD management strategies?

5 Of these, which ones are the easiest to use?

6 Which ones are more challenging to implement but are still useful? _____

7 What factors might get in the way of implementing and sustaining these changes?



DEEPER DIVE!
Review + Refocus cont.

8 What will I do if I start going back to my old patterns?

9 Who will I talk with?

10 What supports can I access?

11 How will I know to seek help?

Tip: To re-orient yourself when you lose momentum, consider going back to the simplest and easiest strategies: "Inch by Inch. Everything's a Cinch."



Which Skills Worked Best for You?

Throughout this *Skills for Success: ADHD Strategies for Adults* program, many executive functioning skills have been presented so that you can experiment with various strategies. It is not expected that you will remember or benefit from all of these skills—some will likely resonate with you, or impact you, more than others.

Take a moment flip through the *Manual* and list which skills worked best for you, so that you can find them easily. The Toolbox of ADHD Self-Management Skills (p. i) may be helpful.

Skill	Page Number
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
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UP-TO-DATE ONLINE RESOURCES

Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance
caddra.ca

ADDitude Magazine
additudemag.com

Odin Books (for useful books + your own TimeTimer)
odinbooks.com

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY (CBT) SKILLS GROUPS

Week 6 focuses on developing skills that help you to manage your own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. This practice is referred to as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). If you find this session to be helpful and would like to explore CBT further, the B.C. government provides MSP-funded, eight-week CBT Skills group courses with a physician referral. For information, visit cbtskills.ca.



Acknowledgments



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