Resilience Training

Composure

The 2nd Domain

ACTIV(THERAPY) COUNSELLING CLINIC
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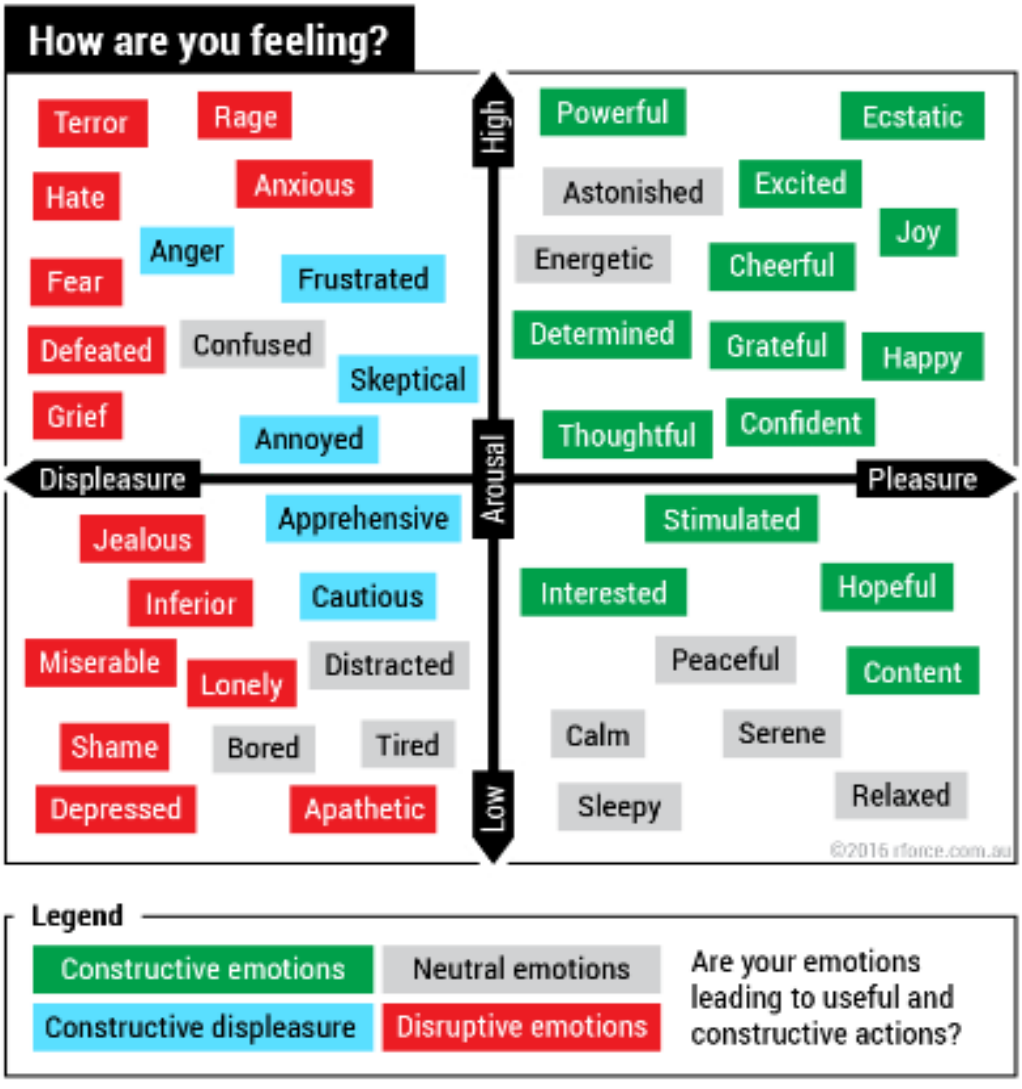
COMPOSURE

Composure is your ability to stay calm and in control when facing stress or adversity.

This domain helps you recognise and understand emotional reactions and allows you to respond quickly to regain your composure. Lower levels of composure can result in impulsive actions. This is when you might say and do things that you later regret. It's that feeling of getting 'carried away'.

A higher sense of composure means you can keep your emotions in check even in very difficult situations. You probably know people like this already, who always seem calm and in control, and always know what to do in difficult situations. This is not to say that nothing should ever affect you. Some situations will still result in an emotional reaction, such as loss or heartbreak. On the other hand, there are many situations that can be stressful and affect you emotionally but require clear thinking so you can respond intelligently.



Using this technique

There are two parts to remember so you can effectively apply this technique in the future. One part is about managing difficult emotions in the moment, and the other part is about preventing these emotions from reoccurring.

1. In the moment, if you feel a strong emotional reaction, label the emotion and say it out loud or internally as "I feel (name of emotion)". This immediately gives you a choice – do you want to keep feeling this way, or should you shift your mindset? Practice identifying emotions over the next week and then move on to the next activity about Reappraisal.
2. For the future, when you have experienced a disruptive emotion, ask yourself why you experienced that – what underlying belief or expectation caused you to react that way? Question your beliefs and work on them if they are not helping you stay constructive.

Over the next week

Monday through to Friday:

- At your chosen time, label as accurately as you can what you were feeling before starting this activity.
- Once you've labelled the emotion, consider if the emotion is useful for the situation, you are in and what you are working on.
- If you feel the emotion is not useful, take a step back and ask yourself why you are feeling that emotion and what you could do to change your emotional state to be more constructive.
- Practice labelling emotions to use in the moment if you find yourself having a strong emotional reaction to something. This will help you bring yourself back to a constructive space.

Mindful Breathing

Mindful breathing is a tried and trusted technique for these times and can be done in the middle of a situation without others noticing.

Regaining composure during these times is important as it helps you to respond in a more constructive and strategic way to support your goals.

Here's how to do it.

Step 1 - Recognise the signs

First you must be able to recognise when to use this. Breathing techniques are mainly useful when you are feeling stressed, anxious, or emotionally affected by something. During these times, the impulsive brain activates, resulting in the following symptoms:

- Increased heart rate
- Fast and shallow breathing
- Tense muscles
- Sweating
- Flushed skin
- Shaking hands
- Difficulty speaking
- Dryness in the mouth

Remember these symptoms so you can recognise them early on and take effective action.

Step 2 - Breathe

Mindful breathing is about slowing down in order to consciously let your body know that it is ok to calm down, lowering the fight-or-flight response.

1. **Breathe in** slowly into your stomach (not into your chest) for 4 seconds
2. **Hold** the breath for 2 seconds
3. **Breathe out** slowly for 4 seconds
4. **Pause** for 2 seconds before taking the next breath.

While you breathe, let go within your mind:

- Focus on listening and experiencing
- Free yourself from judging anything or anyone - even yourself
- Be in the present moment, letting go of concerns about the past or future

This is a deceptively simple technique and learning it easy. The hard part is remembering to use it when you need it, so keep practicing!

Take the next week to practice this technique. The great thing about it is that you can do it anywhere, anytime, without anyone noticing.

The microtasks for the next week are designed to be quick, so try not to spend more than 2 minutes on them each day.

Do only one day's microtask per day.

Most of these are about self-reflection so you can take a few minutes to check in with yourself to see where you're at.

Over the next week

This activity will help you gain a greater awareness of yourself, which will be important for later skills as well.

Monday through to Friday: When this appointment pops up, practice breathing for two minutes regardless of where you are.

1. Breathe in slowly into your stomach (not into your chest) for 4 seconds
2. Hold the breath for 2 seconds
3. Breathe out slowly for 4 seconds
4. Pause for 2 seconds before taking the next breath

While you breathe, let go within your mind:

- Focus on listening and experiencing
- Free yourself from judging anything or anyone - even yourself
- Be in the present moment, letting go of concerns about the past or future

Take note of how you feel before you start, and also how you feel afterwards.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (before)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (after)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (before)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (after)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (before)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (after)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (before)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (after)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (before)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (after)

As you practice, become aware of how your heart rate slows down, especially when breathing out. Remember that feeling and know you can achieve it any time through mindful breathing.

Over the next week

Practice the reappraisal technique gradually using the two steps below:

> **Step 1.** Recognise a disruptive emotional reaction so you can take a step back and think about it differently.
>
> **Step 2.** Reinterpret the situation to be less severe or relabel your emotion from disruptive to constructive.

For step 1, use the guidelines in the Calm Breathing and Label Emotions activities to help you become more in tune with when you have a disruptive emotional reaction.

For step 2, reinterpretation can be accomplished in various ways. Consider these lines of thought:

- How might the situation be a good opportunity, or how could it help you grow?
- How might this be a good thing in the long run?
- What advice you would give someone else in the same situation?
- How could you relabel the emotion you're feeling? (e.g., relabel 'anxious' as 'excited')

Take one of the scenarios below per day and reappraise the situation and the emotion. If you prefer, you can use real situations you are currently experiencing instead of these scenarios.

Write down your answers to the reinterpretation questions above to help you clarify your thoughts.

- **Monday:** You're terrified about a big presentation you have to give in front of a lot of people.
- **Tuesday:** You're ashamed of yourself after advice you gave to a colleague turned out to be wrong.
- **Wednesday:** You're very upset at a friend for saying something that hurt you.
- **Thursday:** You feel jealous when seeing your partner talking to someone else.
- **Friday:** You're feeling miserable after a project you were running failed.

Over the next week

The next week

Over the next week, practice your ability to recognise when you are feeling stressed and your ability to manage the symptoms of stress. Doing this will help you better manage difficult situations.

Try one technique each day as below, particularly if you are currently feeling stressed. Take note of how you feel both before and after as a way to determine which technique works best for you.

Monday: Go for a 2-minute walk. If you can, go outside for a quick walk and a change of scenery.

Tuesday: Breathe deeply for 2 minutes (breathe into your belly for 4 seconds, hold for 2 seconds, breathe out for 4 seconds, and hold for 2 seconds).

Wednesday: Take a moment to consider what you are working on at the moment and how it fits into your larger goals. Is it something that is important in the long run, or if not, is it worth investing less mental energy into it so you can spend more time on more important things?

Thursday: Practice the Reappraisal technique. For example, think about how your current situation might be a good opportunity, or how it will help you grow, or what advice you would give someone else in the same situation.

Friday: Take a few minutes and talk to someone else about what you're currently working on, especially if it's stressful at the moment.

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