

Pocket Reference: Emotional Regulation

Taking care of your physical health enables you to cope better with mental distress and emotional challenges. The acronym *PLEASE Master* can remind us what we can do regularly in order to keep ourselves healthy and stable.

- Treat **Physical Illness** (take care of yourself both physically and mentally)
- **Eat** healthy (diet, especially sugar, affects your mood and can cause mood swings)
- **Avoid** mood-altering substances (don't use alcohol or drugs in response to emotional distress)
- **Sleep** well (practice good habits: no electronics before bed, limiting caffeine)
- **Exercise** regularly: walking or stretching for 15 minutes in the morning or evening counts even if you're not a gym rat.
- **Master:** Do something daily (outside of your job or family responsibilities) that gives you a sense of achievement or ability.



Strategies for Controlling Anger: It can be hard to harness anger and keep it from getting out of control. These strategies aren't about how you handle the anger when you're feeling it, but setting yourself up to better respond to the feeling.

1. Learn how to identify warning signs your body gives you, like suddenly your muscles tense, your breathing quickens, or it feels like your blood pressure jumps higher. Now's the time to use the relaxation technique you've been practicing. Step away when you begin to get annoyed or frustrated. Take a time-out. Calm yourself before engaging.
2. Let go. Don't dwell on what made you mad. Learn to recognize and avoid the triggers to your anger.
3. Think differently, Focus on solutions, actions, flexibility. Think before you speak. Use humor to release tension. Use "I-statements" to talk about what made you angry.
4. Take care of yourself: relax, this includes getting enough exercise. Use the relaxation/mindfulness technique that works for you: deep breathing, relaxing imagery, progressive muscle relaxation.
5. Sharpen your communication game: listen before reacting--make sure you understand what someone is saying; before speaking then pause to think through what you want to say, then take a breath before you say anything. Make the conversation about the issue not the feeling.
6. Don't go it alone. Know when to get help, whether it is turning to someone you trust or a professional.

Homework for becoming a more positive thinker:

- Think about how your mind may race when you've got a few minutes to spare – sitting in your in the car-pool line or at the corner waiting for school bus to drop-off your child. Are you replaying the feedback you got at work from your boss, or the argument at breakfast that morning? If you focus your awareness on the present moment, feeling each breath, how the sun or drizzle feels on your skin, or how the ground feels under your feet, you are detaching your mental energies from your usual preoccupations.
- By working these muscles routinely, when faced with an upsetting situation or confrontation, you will be able to respond from a position of better well-being, a position of

strength; the kind of strength that allows you to draw on your inner resources not in an impulsive, emotional way, but in a manner that will allow for a resolution where everyone comes out a winner.

- This may not come naturally, and you learn to do it by repeating the effort; think of the movie “Groundhog Day” as a kind of metaphor for working toward developing this kind of mental refocusing.

Active Listening:

The basics:

1. Be present. Don’t multitask – that means put the phone on mute and put all electronic devices away.
2. Re-set your own mind to assume that you can learn something from the conversation.
3. Show that you are listening: use non-verbal signs to show that you are listening: make eye contact; sit or stand facing the person, give them your full attention.
4. Give cues along the way: nod your head, smile in encouragement, or say “un-huh,” “wow,” “oh” or by repeating something the other person has said, restating it to show that you heard and understand. You can also echo what they say to show you understand: “it sounds like you are still upset.”
5. Ask open-ended questions. Use who, what, where, when, or how. Ask “What was that like?” instead of “Was that terrible?” or “How are you feeling?” instead of “Are you still angry?” Ask questions that seek to make clear what the person is telling you.
6. Summarize what the person has said. This demonstrates that you heard what was said and allows the other person to clarify any misunderstanding.
7. Empathize. Show that you hear what the other person is saying. You don’t have to agree, but it’s important to acknowledge that you understand what the person is saying.

Hints on putting this into practice: *Active Listening Skills – 4 Tips to Practice*

<http://bemycareercoach.com/soft-skills/communication-skills/active-listening-skills.html>

Tune in to any (or all) of these TedTalks/YouTube videos hear and see what it takes to really listen to someone and turn any conversation into a meaningful exchange.

TedTalk--Celeste Headlee: 10 Ways to Have A Better Conversation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1vskiVDwl4>

6 Tips for Active Listening

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWe_ogA5YCU

The Power of Listening

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saXfavo1OQo>

A Teen’s Summary of Active Listening

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WER63AY8zB8>

Emotional Regulation is the process of reorganizing, labeling and adjusting emotions. The term *emotion regulation* is used to describe one component of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy -- which combines cognitive and behavioral therapy, incorporating techniques from various traditions and

was developed to treat certain types of mental health issues. Learning how to self-regulate emotions is an important part of a child's development, and as we know from experience, and life-long quest.

The techniques formalized in DBT can be used by all of us to identify and change negative patterns of thinking. Basically, it provides ways to help get "unstuck" and shift how you think and act in a more positive direction. In addition to emotional regulation, the other components of the therapy are strengthening tolerance for distress and negative emotions, teaching mindfulness strategies and improving interpersonal effectiveness. To learn more about DBT specifically:
<https://psychcentral.com/lib/an-overview-of-dialectical-behavior-therapy/>

What is Emotion Regulation

<http://www.selfinjury.bctr.cornell.edu/perch/resources/what-is-emotion-regulationsinfo-brief.pdf>

Letting go and Thinking Differently: Change the way you think

4 Articles from Psychology Today on changing the way you think

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/collections/201709/change-the-way-you-think>

7 Little Habits That Can Change Your Life, and How to Form Them

<https://zenhabits.net/7-little-habits-that-can-change-your-life-and-how-to-form-them/>

Tricks to Becoming A More Positive Thinker https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2016/12/12/positive-thinking-day-steps_n_5810744.html

Cheat Sheet for Finding Your Funny Bone: 15 Funniest Websites for the Best Humor on the Web

<https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/15-funniest-websites-best-humor-web/>

Self-Care

TedTalk: The Importance of Self-Care

https://www.ted.com/talks/guy_winch_the_case_for_emotional_hygiene?referrer=playlist-the_importance_of_self_care

Self-care is Active Participation in Enhancing the Quality of Your Health

<https://counseling.dasa.ncsu.edu/self-care/>

Controlling Anger

10 Steps for Controlling Anger

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/anger-management/art-20045434>

Strategies for Controlling Anger

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/controlling-anger.aspx>

Active Listening and Better Communication

The Skill of Listening

<https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/healthy-communication/the-skill-of-listening/>

7 Ways to Reinforce Active Listening at Home

<http://truparenting.net/getting-kids-listen-7-ways-reinforce-cycles-active-listening-home/>

Mindfulness

*On our website, www.spenj.org, you can find these related articles: *Mindful Parenting: Getting Your Emotions Under Control* and *Can Meditation Positively Impact Your teenager? It Absolutely Can! At the end of each article there are links to additional resources.**

Benefits of Mindfulness

<https://www.helpguide.org/harvard/benefits-of-mindfulness.htm>

Free Mindfulness Apps

<https://www.mindful.org/free-mindfulness-apps-worthy-of-your-attention/>

Free web-based guided meditations

<https://heromovement.net/blog/free-guided-meditation-resources/>

All It Takes Is 10 Mindful Minutes

https://www.ted.com/talks/andy_puddicombe_all_it_takes_is_10_mindful_minutes?language=en#t-74188

Breathe. Exhale. Repeat: The Benefits of Controlled Breathing

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/09/well/mind/breathe-exhale-repeat-the-benefits-of-controlled-breathing.html>

Bill Murray's Surprising Wish + Meditation

<https://www.improvisedlife.com/2015/07/06/bill-murrays-surprising-wish-meditation/>

◆ ◆ ◆

Share ideas with other parents, join our Facebook group: COPE Center - Supporting Parents of Essex County, NJ (a closed group, you must be invited to participate):
(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/copespenj/>)