

## REGULATION AND DISTRESS TOLERANCE

### **BRAIN:**

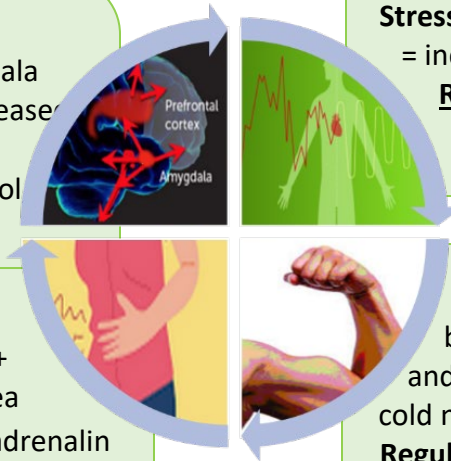
**Stress response:** shut down of cortex, amygdala takes over = lost access to information + increase emotional reactivity

**Regulation response:** To gain cognitive control focus, and to stay present, try self talk, the Table mindfulness, or thought stopping

### **Stomach:**

**Stress response:** digestion shut down + adrenalin released into system = nausea

**Regulation response:** To disperse adrenalin try exercise burst, snack, tea, carbonated drink



### **Heart:**

**Stress response:** blood rushes to heart to power body = increased and erratic HR

**Regulation response:** To slow heart rate which turns off the stress response, try deep, slow breathing

**Muscles:** **Stress response:** tighten to power body + blood drawn to bigger muscles required and away from extremities = muscle tension and cold numb, tingling fingers

**Regulation response:** To relax the muscles and body and turns off the stress response, try PMR, toe breathing, sensory ring, brain stress ball

### **These are general distress tolerance strategies:**

- which can be **used in the moment** – class, studying, exams, networking, interviews etc.
- will need to **individualize** for best results
- will need to **practice** for best results – if you introduce a new skill when your brain and body are stressed it will raise your reactivity more
- be **proactive** with your strategies – write them out and put on your laptop and on your bathroom mirror – every time you see the note take a breath, relax your muscles and say some empowering self-talk

Take a moment to be aware of what your strategies are for in the moment distress tolerance,  
or create a plan for what you may like to try

## Regulation Response Step by Step Instructions

### Self-talk (cognitive focus)

"Leave it on the table", "It's not my experience" "It's on The Table" "it's on the classroom" "This is content only", "I can relax my body", "This is normal just keep it steady", "Just breathe", "This too shall pass", "I can do it" or "I am triggered but I can settle myself"

### The Table (boundary formation to remain objective)

- Imagine a table in between you and you classroom/study materials
- Leave the sensitive content there on the table, don't bring it inside your body/brain, this allows you to be objective which is the best position to be in when trying to cope with sensitive materials.
- Affirmation to use: "Leave it on the table", "It's not my experience" "It's on The Table" "It's on the classroom" "This is content only"
- Use additional regulation strategies to help you form and keep the boundaries strong
- Don't forget self-care after.

### Mindfulness (being present and not ruminating about past, present or future)

Pay attention to the internal and external world in this moment, open up your senses, and notice: "In this moment I can see.....", "In this moment I can hear.....", "In this moment I can smell.....", "In this moment I can touch/feel....." and "In this moment I can taste...."

### Thought Stopping (cognitive control)

1. Stop! (to control negative persistent thoughts and emotions)
  - Say the word "STOP" loudly in your mind
  - You can combine this with a small pinch at the same time.
2. Deep breath: (to ground and calm yourself)
  - Breathe in through your nose, push the air down deep into your tummy, breatheout through your mouth.
  - Visualize yourself gathering up the negative thoughts (and emotions) and blowing them out with your breath. Say to yourself: "Blow it away" or "Let it go"
3. Affirmation: (to empower yourself and create positive energy)
  - Say your affirmation to yourself loudly in your mind: "I know this, I got this".

### Deep breathing (turns off stress response)

1. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Push the air down into your tummy.
2. Concentrate on moving your tummy and keeping your chest still. Focus on the sound and feel of your breathing...in.....out....in.....out.....in through your nose.....push the air deep into your tummy.....then breathe out through your mouth.....in and out.....in and out.

### Exercise bursts (disperses adrenalin)

5 jumping jacks, 5 sit ups, shake the body (or parts of the body)

### Progressive Muscle Relaxation (relaxes the body)

- Tense the muscles....hold....feel the tension .... and then release....feel the muscles relax. Repeat.
- Tense and relax different parts of the body (shoulders, hands, toes, stomach, jaw) in turn.

### Toe Breathing (combines breathing and PMR)

1. Breathe in through your nose.
2. Visualize the air moving down your body all the way to your toes.
3. Use the air to push your toes into the ground. Feel the tension...hold.
4. Release your toes.
5. Pull the air back up your body and breathe out.