

VCSS - Self Soothing Information

Self Soothing

We all have methods for soothing ourselves but sometimes the methods we use may not always be adequate to the challenges we face. To feel better and cope more effectively we can improve the ways we soothe our feelings. The goal with self-soothing skills is to comfort yourself emotionally by doing things that are sensually pleasant and, most especially, not harmful. At the same time, focusing your full attention on sensory inputs — on what you are physically experiencing in the moment (mindfulness) usually will assist people to stay aware of and connected to self yet outside of their own heads in a helpful ways (away from troubling thoughts, feelings, and impulses). The techniques listed below are a starting point only. Everyone has to find what works for them, and it may be things that are not on these lists.

With vision

Notice what you see, find soothing things to look at:

- Make one space in a room or a room feel restful.
- Observe the majesty of the natural landscape river, beach, and bush whatever you enjoy.
- Light a candle and watch the flame.
- Enjoy meal times, creative table setting, using your best or favorite things, for a meal
- Go to a museum or art gallery.
- Enjoy architecture, the buildings, or the design or engineering aspects.
- Look at nature around you, watch the sun set; consider light, reflection, shade.
- Go out in the middle of the night and watch the stars.
- Walk where you feel connected and safe e.g. visit the beach and watch the waves roll in.
- Take care of your appearance, do something that makes you feel better about being you.
- Take in images that are inspiring; books, photo albums, magazines fashion to classic cars.
- Go to the movies, watch a DVD, watch your favorite TV program, see a play – be mindful of choosing content will enrich you not upset you.
- Be mindful of each sight that passes in front of you, not lingering on anything.

With hearing

Notice what you hear:

- Listen to beautiful or soothing music, or your favorite music (try to avoid music with depressing lyrics). Classical can be very good, since there are no lyrics to trigger specific thoughts.
- Be mindful of any sounds that come your way, pay attention to the sounds of nature. (waves, birds, rainfall, leaves rustling) or listen to tapes of nature sounds.
- Sing your favorite songs or hum a soothing tune.
- Learn to play an instrument.
- Call a friend or relative to hear a human voice.

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With smell

Notice what you smell and be aware of the memories that smell can bring

- Use your favorite perfume, after shave or lotions or try them on in the store.
- Spray fragrance in the air.
- Light a scented candle.
- Put lemon oil in an oil burner.
- Put potpourri in a bowl in your room.
- Boil cinnamon.
- Bake cookies, cake, or bread or try a barbeque.
- Smell flowers.
- Walk in a wooded area and mindfully breathe in the fresh smells of nature.
- Notice the scent of your soap or shampoo while showering.
- Enjoy the smell of your meal.
- Sit quietly in a room for a few minutes and try to identify all of the smells that you notice.

With taste

Notice what you taste:

- Have a good meal and enjoy the flavours.
- Have a favorite soothing drink such as herbal tea or hot chocolate (no alcohol).
- Treat yourself to a dessert, your favorite ice-cream or cake.
- Put whipped cream on your coffee (or, if you're like me, your cereal, toast, ice cream, rocks, put whipped cream on almost anything and I'll eat it).
- Suck on a piece of peppermint candy (or other flavors that you like - hard candy is recommended, though, since for many people soft candies can be triggering).
- Chew your favorite gum.
- Get a little bit of a special food you don't usually spend the money on, such as fresh-squeezed orange juice.
- Really taste the food you eat; eat one thing mindfully.

With touch

Find comfort in touch

- Take a bubble, essential oil or Epsom salt bath.
- Put clean sheets on the bed and savor the feeling of crisp, clean sheets.
- Pat your dog or cat.
- Have a massage (with a professional that you trust — there are people who specialize in therapeutic massage specifically to release body memories, etc.).
- Soak your feet (try a foot bath of Epsom salts and pieces of lemon).
- Put moisturizer on your whole body.
- Put a cold compress on your forehead or wrap your face in a very warm, damp facecloth (wonderfully relaxing).
- Sink into a really comfortable chair in your home.
- Notice the texture of fabric on your skin, cotton, silk, flannelette, micro fiber.
- Brush your hair for a long time.
- Hug someone.
- Experience whatever you are touching; notice touch that is soothing.

www.psyke.org/coping/self_soothing/