



Managing emotions – manual

Dear students, dear colleagues,

in this difficult time, many of us are experiencing negative emotions that we have to deal with. We have prepared a short manual for you on how to cope with the most difficult ones – anger, fear (anxiety) and sadness.

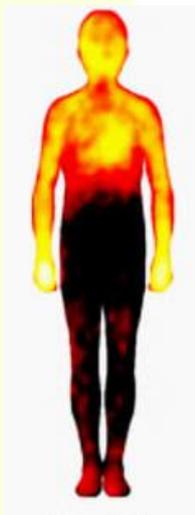
If you need us, if you need to talk, yell, advice,... we are here for you.

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ANGER

Very often, anger is just other emotion in disguise (helplessness, fear, sadness, shyness, disappointment, etc.).

Anger is often accompanied by:

- heat and hotness (face), increased blood pressure,
- shaking and increased heartbeat,
- incoherent and scattered thoughts, irrationality,
- headache or abdominal pain,
- anxiety or restlessness,
- helplessness,
- crying,
- yelling.

How to cope with anger?

Anger is a very strong emotion, but a person is much stronger. When we are overwhelmed by anger, we mustn't allow it to take control.

- the main aim is to gain the time for calming down (anger is the strongest in the first moments),
- the fastest way to prevent an outburst of anger is to move away from the person, place or situation that has triggered this emotion (for example, say that you need to go to the bathroom),
- breathe deeply (inhale slowly and count until you can't breathe in anymore, during slow exhaling, repeat "easy, easy, easy") - you will oxygenate your brain and support rational thinking,
- drink water or wash your face with cold water,

- force yourself to think about anything pleasant present at the moment (fresh air, cosy blanket, pet, ice-cream,),
- after an acute outburst of anger, talk about it; exercising (physical activity) can help as well.

If we fail to manage the anger, it can grow into affect (we also know it as amok, or Hulk syndrome). If we are overwhelmed by an outburst of anger, like Bruce Banner over the Hulk, we have no control over it and we act irrationally, often on the unconscious level.

What to do when someone is in affect?

If we are confronted by the person in amok (out of control), we follow these rules:

Non-verbal communication:

- our posture mustn't be neither confronting, nor defensive – we don't have crossed arms on our chest or stand with hands on hips,
- we control our mimics and our gestures,
- we keep the distance of at least 1 m from the person in affect and do not touch him or her,
- we maintain eye-contact.

Verbal communication:

- we try to maintain calm and clear voice tone,
- we ignore verbal attacks and insults, we adhere to the factual substance,
- we can try to give simple instructions (for example "let's sit",...),
- we don't oppose.

Sometimes it is not possible to calm a person in affect (amok), then we move away from him/her and try to ensure that he/she does not hurt himself/herself, we call for help.

After a strong emotional shock (for example after loss of a loved one), a person tries to manage the situation even by looking for the culprit. He/she often finds the culprit in who is "at hand" and turns his/her anger on him. If he/she does not find the culprit, he/she often blames (turn the anger on) himself/herself. It is a fairly common, natural reaction. In such situations, amok occurs most often.



FEAR and ANXIETY

Fear is a reaction in a specific, potentially dangerous situation. Fear is tied to a specific object (situation, person, object, ...) that a person perceives on a conscious level. In the dangerous situation, natural instincts are activated, which help him/her to manage the threat (fight-or-flight response).

Anxiety arises in a safe environment where there are seemingly no outside factors threatening the person. At the conscious level, a person does not perceive any threat, but subconsciously he/she is afraid.

Anxiety is basically a non-specific fear. Fear and anxiety are often accompanied by:

- tense muscles, overall tension,
- pain in the chest,
- stomach dizziness, absence of appetite, overeating (stress eating),
- lump in the throat,
- pain in the various parts of the body,
- problems with concentration, incoherent thoughts (blackout),
- bursts of anger, yelling, arguing, (self)blaming, isolation,
- restlessness,
- troubles with sleep (insomnia), fatigue,
- crying,
- psychoactive substances (alcohol, medication, drugs, cigarettes).

What to do when you are overwhelmed by fear or anxiety?

During an acute fear or anxiety, our breathing speeds up, a signal that our body is in fight-or-flight mode. Rapid breathing sends a clear signal that we are in danger, but slow, deep breathing helps to turn off the fight-or-flight response.

A specific type of acute anxiety is the panic attack, which may resemble a heart attack, as it is often accompanied by chest pain and difficult rapid breathing. At that time, one is convinced that he/she will die, which exacerbates panic. However, we can distinguish a heart attack from a panic attack relatively quickly. The panic attack starts rapidly, but it also subsides quickly, usually within 10 minutes.

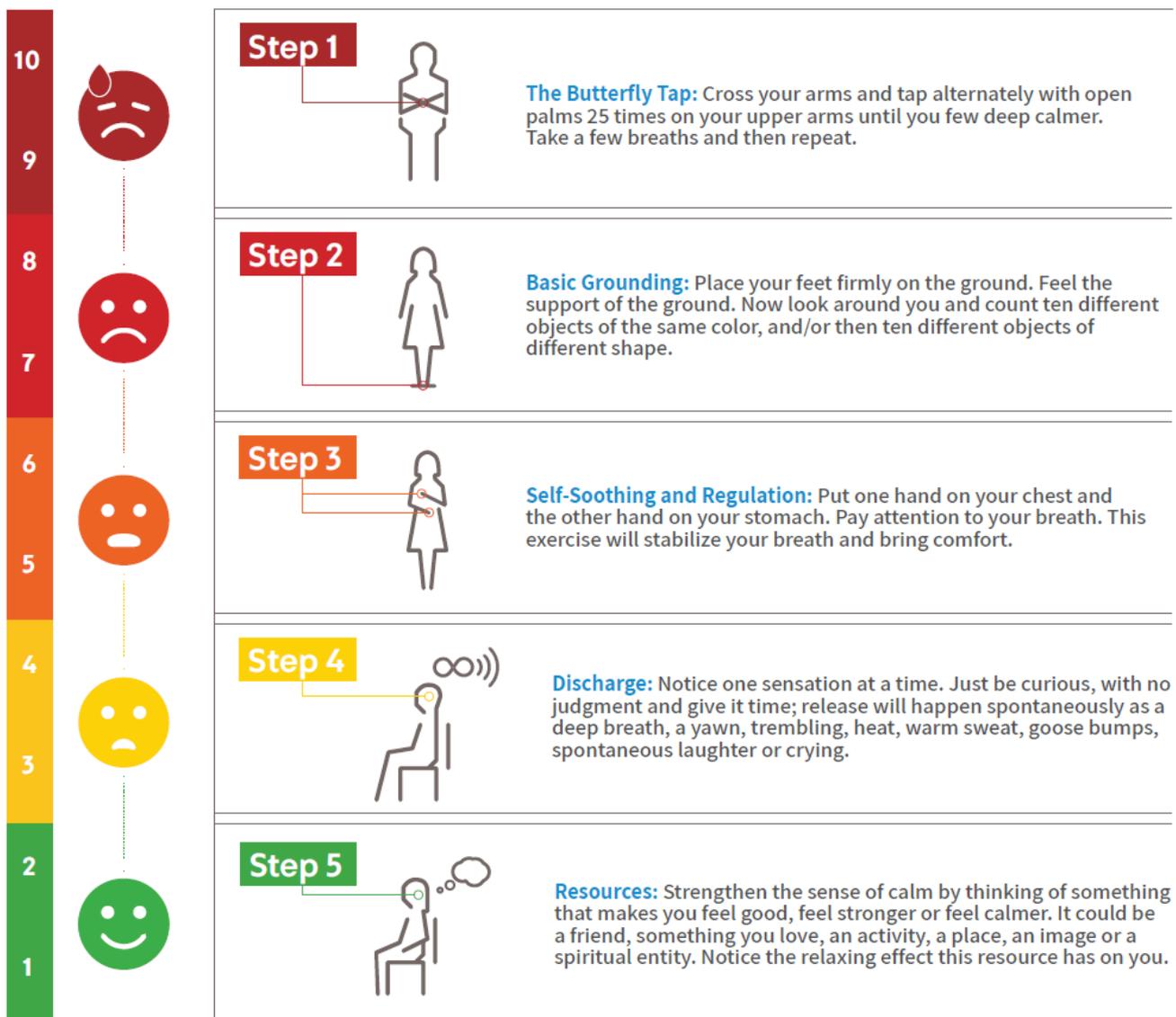


5 – step protocol for managing fear and anxiety:

(<https://emotionaid.com>)



Stress (fear, panic, anxiety) is the normal reaction for the abnormal situation.



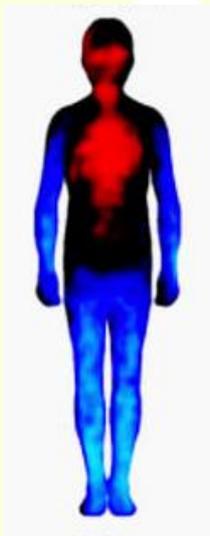
How to help a person who is experiencing fear or anxiety?

- try to comfort the person experiencing fear or anxiety (“I am here with you”, “You are safe with me”, “We are here together”, “Your reaction is natural, it is okay”, “Don’t worry, I know where to find help”),
- if a person is experiencing panic attack try to rationalise, explain patiently in a calm voice,
- provide information that can help to calm down a person experiencing fear or anxiety,
- the very presence of the other person and their sincere interest often help.

What else can help:

- favourite music + singing and humming,
- pet,
- physical activity, exercising (walking, running, ...),
- comfort food.

Do not forget to breathe



SADNESS

Every human being has to deal with a large number of losses during life – we lose loved ones, friends, health, sometimes even body parts (due to illness, amputations), youth, attractiveness, freedom, dreams, illusions, property, belongings, home, employment, ...

The main emotion that accompanies loss is sadness.

Every person deals with sadness and grief individually and these emotions are accompanied by a wide range of feelings, physiological sensations, thoughts and behaviours. Sadness is most often accompanied by:

- anger, fear and anxiety, panic,
- lethargy, loneliness, helplessness, numbness,
- grief, crying, (self)blame, hopelessness, despair,
- somebody can also feel relief – very often accompanied by (strong) sense of guilt,
- emptiness, chest pains and tensions, lump in the throat, difficult breathing,
- noise oversensitiveness,
- dizziness, overall weakness, dry mouth,
- loss of appetite, insomnia, nightmares, night terrors,
- confusion, obsessive thinking about object of loss,
- problems with concentration, lack of interest, scattered thoughts.

Feeling angry after loss is a normal, natural reaction. We get angry at others, at ourselves, when we lose a loved one we are also angry at the person who left us - it's okay!

People who go through a loss differ in adapting to it. Some adapt better, some worse. Some people refuse to believe that a loss (for example of a loved one) is real and get stuck in the task of accepting the reality of the loss because it is very painful.

How to help managing sadness? What can help?

- it is very important not to try to suppress sadness, grief and pain. The pain, particularly soon after the loss, could be devastating. But we can't avoid it. When we try, we just lengthen the process of grief.
- crying can help releasing tension and emotions,
- talk about the loss, do not suffocate your feelings inside you,
- social support – friends, family, anybody close and willing to help,
- „Empty chair“ – imagine that somebody who you have lost is sitting in that chair and tell him/her everything that you haven't (couldn't). Cry if you need to, yell if you need to, express your feelings.
- music, art therapy (painting, drawing, sculpting,...).

Because sadness is a very complicated emotion, every reaction to it is natural – laughing, crying, yelling, (self)blaming, anger, guilt, shame, hopelessness, helplessness, grief, ...

A person who experiences grief can often behave irrationally; this is a normal reaction to loss. If we provide him/her with social support, as with anger, we ignore personal attacks and insults, we try to be empathetic, we pay attention only to factual information. A person who is in pain does not realise that his/her actions could hurt us.

A time a person needs for grieving varies greatly. Sometimes it takes years to deal with the loss.

You can also ease your pain by medication (prescribed by specialist).

Unfortunately, psychoactive substances do not work 😞