

Affect Regulation Training: A Participant's Manual



Matthias Berking and Brian Whitley

Affect Regulation Training: A Participant's Manual

Matthias Berking and Brian Whitley

© 2013 Matthias Berking and Brian Whitley

This participant manual was written to assist participants during an Affect Regulation Training program. This training program has been described in detail (including relevant research) in **Affect Regulation Training: A Practitioners Manual** and can be ordered at www.Springer.com in both hardcover and e-book formats. For more information, please visit www.AffectRegulationTraining.com.

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	4
1.1	What is Affect Regulation Training?	4
1.2	The ART Skills and the ART Sequence	5
2.	Understanding stress and emotions	7
2.1	What causes stress and negative emotions?	7
2.2	What is the purpose of stress and negative emotions?	9
2.3	Vicious cycle: Amygdala and muscle tension/rapid breathing	12
3.	ART Skill #1 - Muscle Relaxation & ART Skill #2 - Breathing Relaxation	14
4.	Practice, practice, practice!	17
5.	ART Skill #3 - Nonjudgmental Awareness	23
5.1	Vicious cycle: Amygdala activation and negative thinking	23
5.2	ART Skill #3 - Nonjudgmental Awareness	26
6.	ART Skill #4 - Acceptance and Tolerance of Emotions	30
6.1	Vicious cycle: Amygdala activation and avoidance	30
6.2	ART Skill #3 - Acceptance and Tolerance of emotions	31
7.	ART Skill #5 - Compassionate Self-Support	38
7.1	Vicious cycle: Amygdala activation and self criticism/negative secondary emotions	38
7.2	ART Skill #5 - Compassionate Self-Support	38
7.2.1	Foundational Element #1: Placing value on ourselves	39
7.2.2	Foundational Element #2: Self-care by engaging in activities that result in positive emotions	45

7.3	Elements of ART Skill #4 – Compassionate Self-Support and exercises to practice	48
8.	Analyzing Emotions	51
8.1	Vicious Cycle: Amygdala activation and difficulty analyzing emotions	51
8.2	ART Skill #6 - Analyzing Emotions	51
9	Modifying Emotions	58
9.1	Vicious Cycle: Amygdala activation and difficulty modifying emotions	58
9.2	ART Skill #7 - Modifying Emotions	58
10.	Closing Words	69
	Appendices	71

1. Introduction

1.1 What is Affect Regulation Training?

We all experience stress, painful emotions, and negative moods, otherwise called “negative affect.” Stress, painful emotions, and negative moods reduce our enjoyment in life and, if left unchecked, have the potential to cause:

- Relationship problems
- Reduced well-being
- Mental health problems
- Physical health problems
- Problems at work

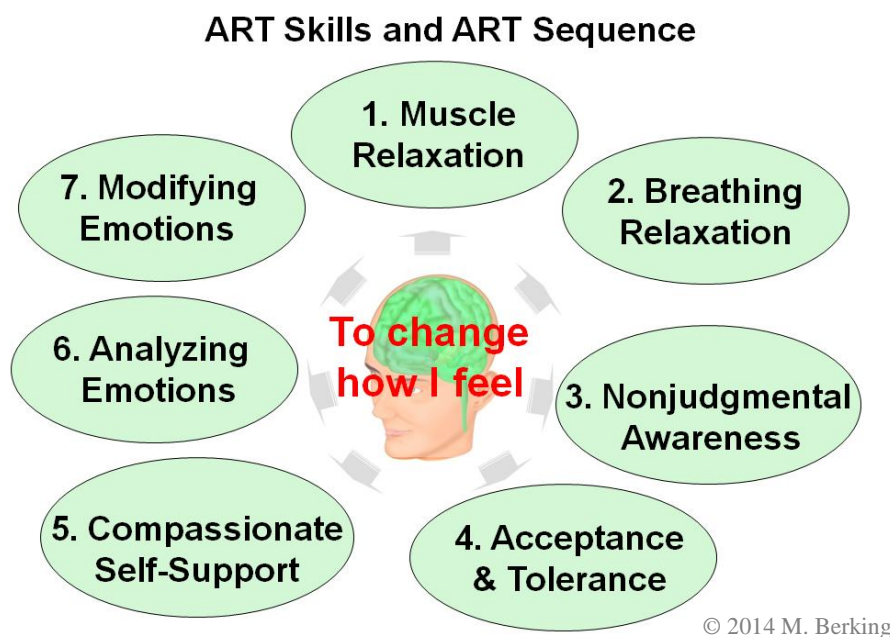
All of these problems cause additional stress and negative feelings, which only makes these problems even worse. So eventually a vicious cycle develops in which problems just keep getting worse and worse, and the whole cycle of stress, negative emotions, and problems just seems more and more difficult to get rid of!

So ... to prevent this from happening, we need to interrupt this vicious cycle! Or even better, we need to prevent this vicious cycle from happening in the first place! But how do we do this? By learning how to improve our abilities to cope with negative affect more effectively! This is exactly what Affect Regulation Training teaches us how to do!

Affect Regulation Training (ART) is an intense training program specifically designed to strengthen your abilities to regulate stress as well as challenging emotions and moods by teaching you seven specific emotion regulation skills called “ART Skills.” The goal is for you master these skills so that you will eventually be able to use them automatically, without a lot of thought or effort. However, that won’t happen overnight. You will first need to learn and practice each ART Skill **extensively**. If you do that, you will increasingly learn how to apply these skills quickly and effectively. This Participant Manual was designed to reinforce the concepts and material that are taught during the Affect Regulation Training class.

The ART curriculum is divided into nine modules, which we will go through during the training sessions. First, we will talk about the scientific research that explains the development of stress and negative emotions. On the basis of this information, we will begin to discuss each of the seven ART Skills that can help us cope with negative affect more effectively.

1.2 The ART Skills and the ART Sequence



The first two of these are the skills of *muscle* and *breathing relaxation* that are used to calm the brain and body. The skill of *nonjudgmental awareness* is the third skill which enables us to take a mental “step back” when we are stressed and just observe what is happening. The fourth skill is *accepting and tolerating* emotions. This skill is important because we often can’t change stress reactions and feelings by sheer force of will. Often, the only alternative is to tolerate negative feelings as best we can, without engaging in a struggle to change them. This, of course, is a big challenge, and we will explain how we can meet this challenge with the fifth skill of *compassionately supporting ourselves* in difficult situations. The final two skills, *analyzing and modifying emotions*, help us understand what is causing our emotions and choose a plan of action to modify or change them. This is great news and what makes this training worthwhile! We can change how we feel!

As we learn each new skill, we will practice linking it to the skills we have already learned. This will result in a step-by-step process, called the ART Sequence. The ART Sequence can be practiced regularly at home, in order to strengthen your emotion regulation skills. With practice, the ART Sequence can then be applied in stressful situations as a powerful tool to help you cope with difficult stress reactions, emotions, and moods.

Goal Setting Exercise

It can be very helpful to create a personal goal for this training program. Goals help motivate us and cause us to experience joy and satisfaction when we achieve them. Sometimes though it can be very difficult to think of what we want to achieve. Here is a series of questions you could ask yourself to help you form your own ART goal:

1) What would I like to achieve as a result of this training? (e.g., less anxiety and fear)

2) What scene could I imagine that would show that I have achieved this goal? (e.g., smiling as I window shop at the mall) _____

3) What catchphrase would describe my goal for this training? (e.g., mall joy) _____

2. Understanding stress and emotions

2.1 What causes stress and negative emotions?

Before learning how to manage stress and negative emotions, it can be helpful to have a good understanding of what causes us to experience stress and negative emotions and the purposes they serve. In the past few years, our knowledge about stress and emotions has increased dramatically. This increase is due to enormous technical progress in this field. For example, research methods like functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) allow us to practically look into the brain and watch it work. In fMRI studies, people are put into a magnetic tube while being exposed to different images or tasks, which trigger stress reactions or specific feelings.

An area of the brain called the amygdala constantly “scans” our environment and interprets whether or not our goals are potentially being threatened. If the amygdala thinks our needs and goals are threatened, it becomes active.¹



No threat to our needs and goals



Decreased amygdala activation



Threat to our needs and goals

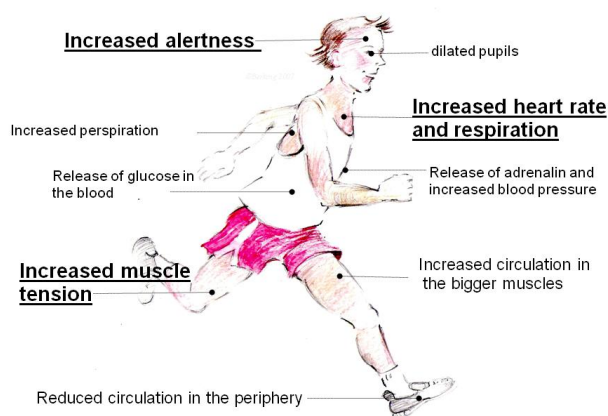


Increased amygdala activation

Then the nerve cells in the amygdala fire and send electrical signals to other areas of the brain, for example to the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus causes the release of stress hormones like adrenalin, noradrenalin, and cortisol. These stress hormones then cause massive changes in the body. For example, they increase the muscles' energy, so the muscles become as efficient as possible in potentially dangerous situations. The amygdala also releases

¹ We realize that it is scientifically inaccurate to anthropomorphize brain regions. However, since we have found it to be very helpful in explaining important complicated processes, we have decided to continue utilizing this approach in spite of appropriate concerns.

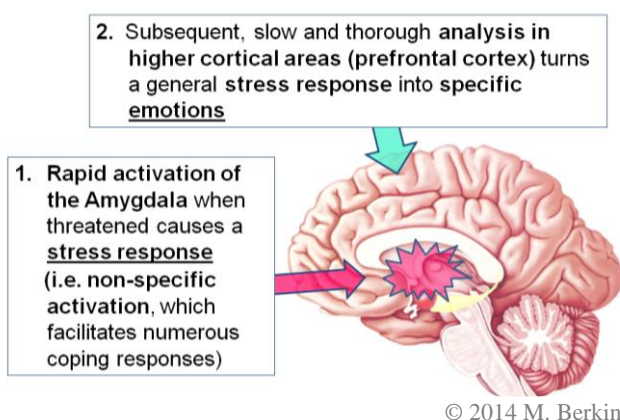
The Stress Response Prepares for Action



neurotransmitters, such as acetylcholine, in the brain that cause the mind to become attentive and alert. Finally, the amygdala sends electrical signals into the body, activating the sympathetic nervous system, which does things like increase heart rate and respiration.

All of these physical and mental changes have a specific purpose. They prepare us for any action that is needed to ward off potential threats. The increased mental focus ensures that we are mentally wide awake, so we can be vigilant for any threats and respond quickly at even the slightest hint of danger. The increased muscle tension ensures we can flee or fight with speed, strength, and dexterity. Increased heart and breathing rates ensure that our muscles have more blood and oxygen to make them more efficient. Thus, the stress reaction is the result of a rapidly triggered, nonspecific activation that prepares our body for actions to help protect us from possible threats by fighting, fleeing, or even freezing. Freezing is a state in which we are able to remain motionless to avoid detection, such as from a predator whose eyes are very sensitive to even the slightest amount of movement.

As part of this stress response, the prefrontal cortex (PFC) and the hippocampus are also activated and begin another slower, more thorough evaluation than the evaluation initially conducted by the amygdala. Depending on the outcome of this more thorough (cognitive) analysis, the stress reaction is either inhibited (if the more thorough analysis shows that danger does not in fact exist) or turns the stress response into specific emotions, such as anxiety, anger, shame, guilt, sadness, etc. These emotions facilitate more specific responses to cope with the challenging circumstance.



© 2014 M. Berking



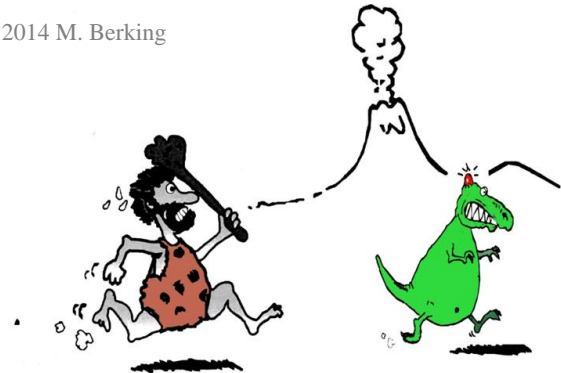
Fear: Helps detect threats & facilitates escape

goals, because I am being attacked by a dinosaur!” and (2) “I can’t handle the threat, because he is much stronger than I am,” then the feeling *anxiety or fear* will be activated. The feeling of fear will help us quickly turn around and flee, which is likely the most appropriate behavioral response to this situation.

On the other hand, if the analysis determines: (1) “Yes, there is a real threat to my needs and goals, because I am being attacked by a dinosaur!”, **but** (2) “Because it is much smaller than me I can handle the threat; I have this big club to use; and how dare this thing disturb me while I am sleeping!” then the feeling *anger* will be triggered instead. The emotion “anger” helps prepare the body and mind for assertive action like fighting. Fighting back in this situation is probably the most appropriate response for the cave man in our example, since it will allow him to kill the mean dinosaur before it has the chance to attack him as a full-grown dinosaur.

For example, a situation such as seeing a hungry dinosaur would cause the amygdala to trigger a stress response. The prefrontal cortex would then conduct a more thorough assessment of the situation. If the prefrontal cortex-based analysis determines that: (1) “Yes, there is a real threat to my needs and

© 2014 M. Berking



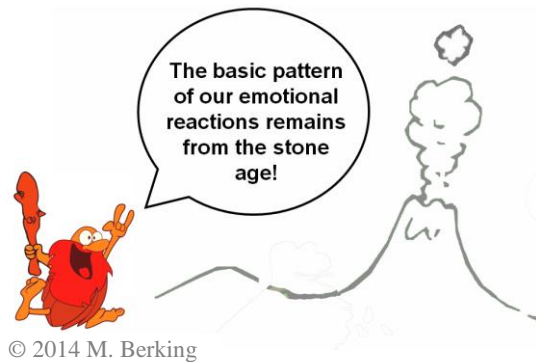
Anger: Facilitates assertiveness & fighting back

2.2 What is the purpose of stress and negative emotions?

Over the course of human evolution, we developed the ability to constantly analyze situations and to react with specific emotions in order to help us protect our needs and reach our goals as efficiently as possible. It is important to keep in mind that the basic patterns of our emotional reactions remain from the Stone Age. During that time, it was usually very helpful and adaptive to react with muscle tension and maximum activation in threatening situations.

However, while tensing your muscles, raising your shoulders, and flashing your teeth might have helped to intimidate a prehistoric opponent, it is completely useless when trying to make your computer boot up faster. In this situation, such a reaction is not helpful at all. Instead the smart thing to do in this situation is to relax and wait.

But watch out !!!



So we have carried this outdated emotional reaction system with us into our modern times. This system wants to help us and to protect us, but it may not assess situations accurately and the response it suggests may not always be the most appropriate one. Thus, while recognizing our emotions as well-intentioned friends, it is also important to critically decide whether the information included in an emotion is correct and whether its suggested action would indeed be helpful.

However, when we learn how to use our emotions effectively, they can become helpful allies, even now in modern times. They provide us with valuable information. For example, fear tells us that our needs and goals are being threatened. Anger tells us that someone is hindering our attempts to attain our goals. Sadness tells us that despite our current efforts, we will not be able reach an important goal.

Emotions such as these also help us to engage in *specific actions* in order to cope effectively with challenging situations. For example, fear encourages us to be vigilant and to respond quickly. Anger gives us energy to assert our legitimate rights, even if we have to fight for these rights. Finally, sadness helps us to let go of goals that we will not be able to attain and instead find other more attainable goals.

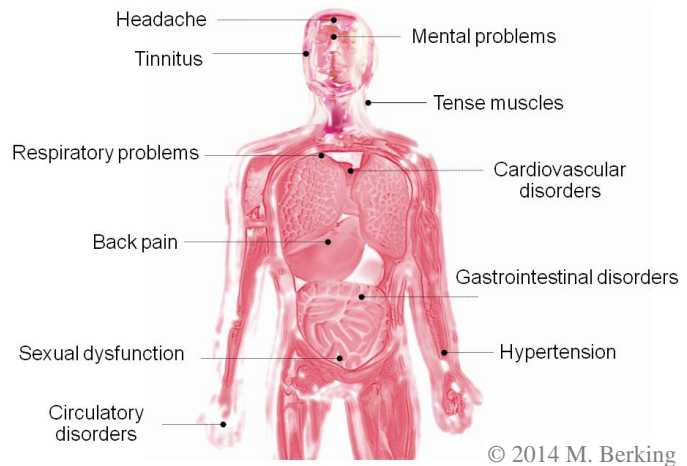
We also need to remember that intense short-term stress reactions and negative feelings may not necessarily be helpful, but they are not dangerous for the healthy body. For example, our heart beats faster when we are scared, but it also beats faster when we work out or even walk up a flight of stairs.

However, if we constantly experience high levels of stress or continually have intense negative feelings, the situation can look quite different.

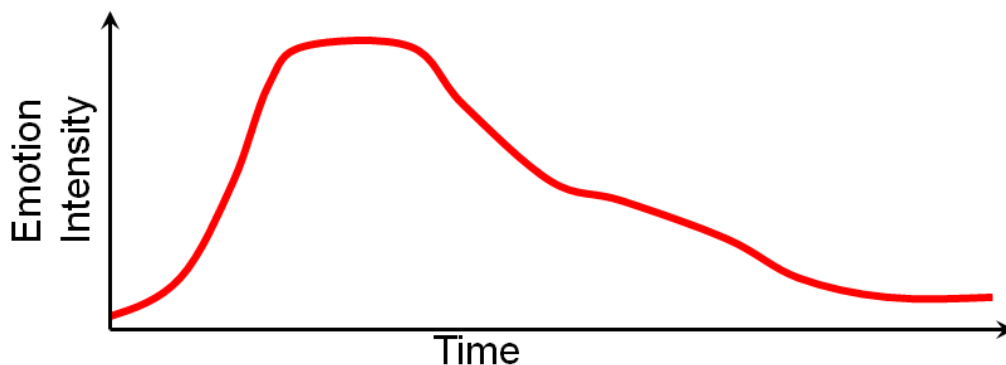
Long-term, intense stress can lead to a series of physical and mental

problems. Physical difficulties can include muscle tension, chronic pain, tension headaches, migraines, sleep

disturbances, heart attacks, skin problems, breathing problems, etc. Mental difficulties can include anxiety disorders, uncontrolled anger, social anxiety, burn-out, low energy level, concentration difficulties, and symptoms of depression.



Stress reactions and negative feelings are *not* designed to last forever. Our body is equipped with mechanisms to ensure these reactions do not continue indefinitely.

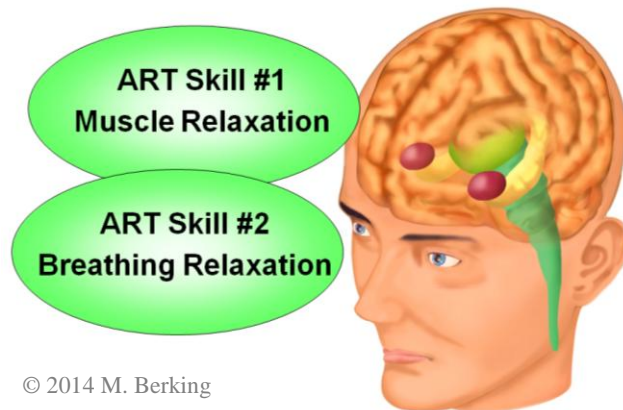


Emotional reactions are signals that are intended to communicate information to us such as when our needs or goals are being threatened. A signal that is always “on” is no longer communicating any information. That’s why emotions need to “shut down” after a while; otherwise they lose their power to communicate. Emotions are *not* designed to be permanent. They are temporary phenomena. If we do not avoid, fight, suppress, or in some way keep them going, the body will naturally regulate them, reducing their intensity.

But, sometimes stress and negative feelings remain intense for longer periods of time. How does this happen? **Stress responses and negative emotions last longer when different areas of the brain and body start to mutually activate each other.** If this happens, these vicious cycles can override the natural regulation mechanisms in the brain and in the body.

2.3 Vicious cycle: Amygdala and muscle tension/rapid breathing

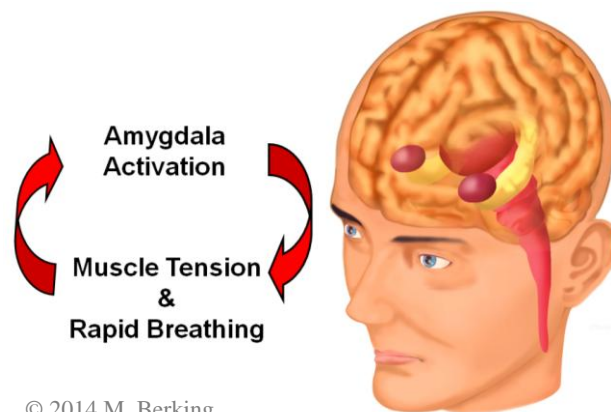
For example, when the amygdala is activated by a situation that is interpreted as potentially threatening, the amygdala facilitates an increase in muscle tension, which can be helpful in situations that require an immediate fight or flight response. Since we have normally experienced this muscle tension during



© 2014 M. Berking

threatening situations in which the amygdala was activated, the muscle tension itself becomes a danger signal to the amygdala. Thus, a vicious cycle develops: Activation of the amygdala causes increased muscle tension and increased muscle tension causes further activation of the amygdala, which causes even more muscle tension.

Similarly, the amygdala also facilitates rapid breathing. Since we have typically experienced this rapid breathing during threatening situations in which the amygdala was activated, rapid breathing itself, just like muscle tension, becomes a danger signal to the amygdala. This creates another vicious cycle: Activation of the amygdala causes rapid breathing, and rapid breathing causes further activation of the amygdala, which causes even more rapid breathing.



© 2014 M. Berking

Whenever we realize that we are experiencing stress or negative emotions, we can break through these two vicious cycles by consciously relaxing our muscles and calming our

breathing. By doing this we are telling the amygdala that it can go off “high alert” since the situation is really not so threatening. Relaxing our muscles and calming our breathing may not make the original stress or negative emotions go away, but it can keep them from spiraling out-of-control, intensifying, and lasting longer than they should. So let’s take a look in the next chapter at ART Skills #1 and #2 that can help us break these vicious cycles by relaxing our muscles and calming our breathing.

3. ART Skill #1 - Muscle Relaxation & ART Skill #2 - Breathing Relaxation

In these first two ART Skills, we will learn how to connect muscle relaxation with slow, calm breathing with a focus on long exhalations. Let's talk about how to do this. ART Skill #1 is based on something called progressive muscle relaxation. Progressive muscle relaxation, or PMR, is a form of relaxation training. In PMR, various muscle groups in the body are tensed for a short time and then deliberately relaxed ... very slowly ... and with focused attention. The goal of PMR is to create relaxation for the body and the mind. PMR is the most well-researched relaxation method, and many studies have shown that PMR can help decrease physical and mental discomfort.

In ART Skill #1 we use a modified version of PMR. In this modified version we will first learn to tense and relax muscles in large groups, in four different areas of the body. Later in the training program, we will learn to tense all four muscle groups simultaneously and then relax all four groups simultaneously. By the end of ART, we will learn how to relax all of the muscle groups simultaneously, without tensing them beforehand.

Muscle Relaxation

Take a moment to try tensing and releasing the muscles in your hands.

- 1) Make a fist with both of your hands.
- 2) Hold the tension for 3 seconds. Feel the tension in your hands.
- 3) Release the tension on the next exhalation.
- 4) Notice the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now.

Repeat these steps a couple of times, so you become familiar with this technique.

Now as we talked about before, we are combining ART Skill #1 (muscle relaxation) with ART Skill #2 (breathing relaxation). So let's spend a little time now talking about breathing relaxation taught in ART Skill #2. Breathing relaxation consists of deliberately calming and slowing down our breathing. We'll pay particular attention to the exhalation or the out-breath, doing our best to exhale as slowly and calmly as possible. Since we are combining ART Skills #1 and #2, we begin muscle relaxation by focusing on deepening and calming our breathing. We will also relax our muscles only when we exhale, focusing on lengthening the exhalation as we intentionally allow the muscles to relax even more.

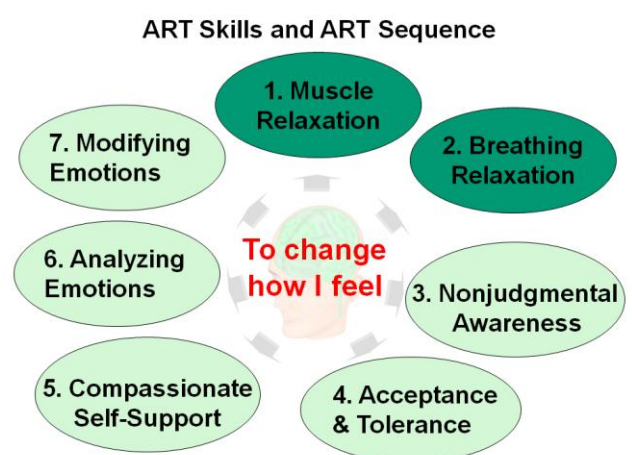
Breathing Relaxation

Take a moment to practice calming your breathing.

- 1) Breathe in deeply and slowly.
- 2) Consciously exhale as long as possible and then for 3 seconds more as you let go of all the tension you have gathered during the day.

Repeat this a couple of times, so you become familiar with this technique.

In ART we practice connecting the ART Skills together in what is called the ART Sequence. Once you have had a chance to practice muscle and breathing relaxation separately, try connecting these two skills together in the ART Sequence using the ART Sequence Exercise #1 audio file. This is a guided exercise that will walk you through the steps of tensing and releasing four groups of muscles and the steps to slow and calm your breathing. The written version of each ART Sequence Exercise can be found in the appendix.



© 2014 M. Berking

Here are a few tips to remember before you begin your practice:

With practice, eventually you will be able to relax your muscles in any posture. However, it is helpful to start practicing with a seated posture. We recommend placing both feet flat on the floor and shoulder width apart. Sit upright as much as is comfortable for you, and make sure your back is well supported. Your head should be balanced upright and be positioned in the middle of your shoulders. You can lay your hands on your thighs or on the armrests of the chair you are in. You can close your eyes or focus your gaze on a point in your lap or in the room.

When you practice this exercise, you will probably find that your attention will wander and you will start thinking about other things. This is very normal and completely fine. In fact, it's important for you to accept this as a natural process of your brain that happens to everyone. When you notice that your attention is wandering, just make a short mental note of what is happening by using words like: "planning," "worrying," "remembering," etc. and then gently bring your attention back to the exercise. When your attention wanders again, simply make another mental note and then again gently bring your attention back to the training.

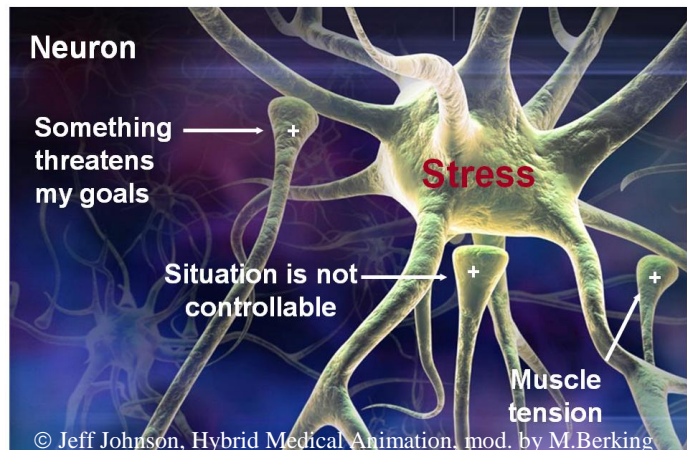
Just continue doing this any time you notice your attention wandering, even if it happens 100 times during the exercise! If you become distracted during the exercise by something else, like noise or physical sensations, just make another mental note to yourself like: "noise," "ache," etc. and then gently direct your attention back to the exercise.

4. Practice, practice, practice!

We all know that it takes a lot of practice to learn a new skill. In order to learn the ART Skills and feel confident applying them in stressful situations, it will be very important to practice the ART Skills each day during the training program and after the classes have concluded. However, it can be difficult to find the time and energy to practice! Sometimes, knowing how consistent practice actually changes the brain can help motivate us to find the necessary time and energy to practice the ART Skills.

The brain is comprised of approximately 100 billion nerve cells called neurons. Each neuron receives information from a multitude of other neurons through electrical and chemical signals. These signals either inhibit or activate the neuron. When a neuron is activated to a certain threshold, it sends a signal on to other neurons.²

Earlier, we talked about the role the amygdala plays in the stress response. The amygdala consists of a large number of neurons, which tend to react together. For the moment, let's focus on just one neuron in the amygdala. If neurons from other regions in the brain report that my goals are threatened and that I may not be able to handle the

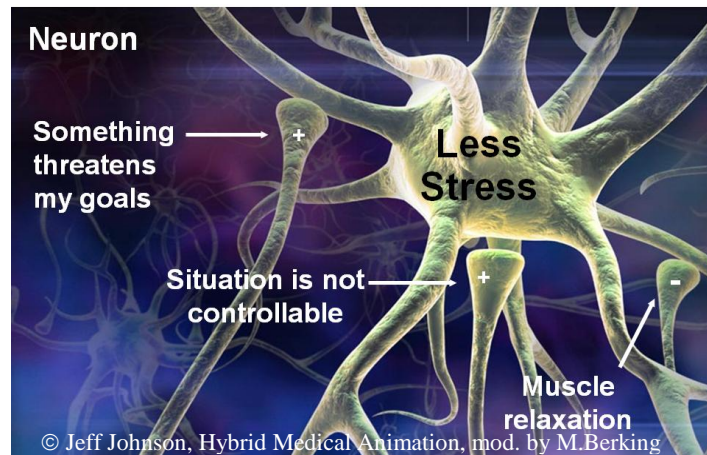


threat, these neurons send activating signals to this amygdala neuron. If my muscles are tense, this amygdala neuron could also receive activating signals coming from the tense muscles. The multiple activating signals eventually reach the threshold level causing the amygdala neuron to send a signal to other neural layers in the body, such as the muscles, the respiratory center, or to the prefrontal cortex, leading to the overall stress reaction.

However, if the muscles in the body are relaxed, this same amygdala neuron could receive inhibitory signals from the relaxed muscles. Since the amygdala neuron is receiving inhibitory signals from the relaxed muscles, it will now be more difficult for the amygdala neuron to

² For those interested in learning more about neurons, refer to the Wikipedia article at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neuron>. Also, the website www.BrainU.org has short educational videos about neurons at <http://brainu.org/movies>.

reach its activation threshold even though the amygdala neuron is still receiving activating signals from the perceived threat. The significance of this is that the inhibiting signals from the relaxed muscles decrease the chance that this amygdala neuron will send activating signals to other neural layers in the body, which also



decreases the overall stress reaction. This shows us the importance of strengthening neurons that inhibit the stress response, such as the neurons responsible for relaxation, in order to help us reduce negative emotions while increasing positive ones. So the big question is, “How do we do this?” The answer is ... practice, practice, practice the skills offered in this training!

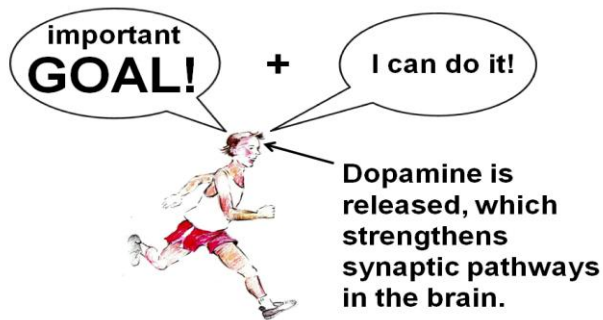
Through frequent practice, we activate the neurons and the connections between them, called synapses. This activation through practice causes the synapses to become stronger and even creates additional synapses. The strengthened and additional synapses allow neurons to activate more easily, including the neurons that are responsible for relaxation. An influential neuroscience researcher Donald Hebb is often paraphrased as saying “neurons that fire together, wire together.”³ Practicing relaxation, just like practicing anything else, changes the structure of the brain, so that relaxation can occur more easily in the future.

The processes that strengthen and increase the number of synapses tend to be even more effective when certain substances are released in the brain. One of these substances is called dopamine. Dopamine is released when we believe that our current behavior will help us eventually achieve the personal goals that we have set for ourselves.

Here is what this means to you: To activate dopamine, you need to practice frequently and be aware of why you are practicing. What are your goals for the training? Why do you want to improve your emotion regulation skills? What makes this goal important enough to justify the effort and practice necessary for improving these skills? Finding your personal motivation and

³ Carla Shatz, Ph.D. (director of the Shatz Lab and professor at Stanford University) is credited with this paraphrase of Hebbian theory, although the precise phrase she coined was “cells that fire together, wire together.”

Motivation



© 2014 M. Berking

To summarize, neurons function like muscles. The more you train them, especially when you are working toward an important personal goal, the stronger they become. We want areas in the brain that are responsible for relaxation, facilitating positive emotions, or inhibiting negative emotions to become stronger and more developed.

then being aware of your motivation (i.e., by imagining the fulfillment of your goal) while you practice is critical to fostering dopamine releases, which can lead to helpful changes in your brain.

Neurons are like muscles...

They get stronger with training!



Atrophy of Neurons Through Lack of Use

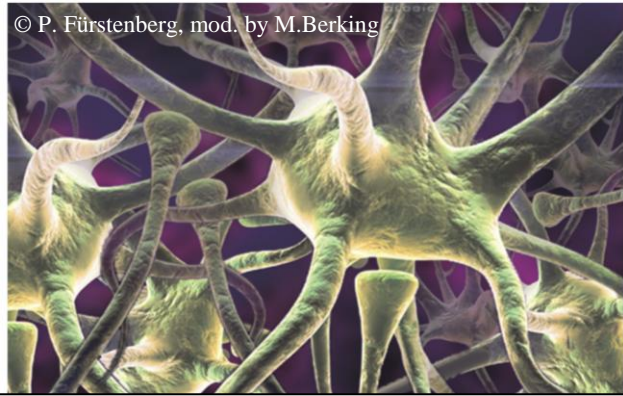
© A. Vester



If we rarely use certain neurons, these neurons and their connections will become weaker. The connections between the neurons will disintegrate, and the neurons themselves will deteriorate. Ultimately, these areas in the brain will become smaller. If you study the brains of people suffering from depression, you will find that the areas in the brain responsible for positive emotions are often smaller, and the areas responsible for negative emotions and stress reactions are often larger.

Well-Developed Neurons in the Brain

© P. Fürstenberg, mod. by M. Berking



Instead we want the areas in the brain related to stress and negative emotions to atrophy and the areas related to positive emotions and relaxation to strengthen. This can be accomplished by training with the ART Skills. We are teaching you how to “train your brain.”

We have described the importance of practicing the ART Skills, but even if you make a commitment to practice, actually taking the time out of your busy schedule to practice regularly can be hard to do. Common obstacles include feeling too tired, not wanting to practice at the moment, or feeling like you just do not have the time.

Since we all know how hard it can be to get ourselves motivated, we have thought a long time about ways we can help you develop a successful practice routine. In the end we came up with several tools that you may find helpful. In addition to this participant manual, these tools include: (1) an audio training program, (2) an e-coaching program, and (3) a printed training calendar.

This participant manual describes in detail the skills we are working on in the training, explains why they are important, and provides you with exercises that can be used to build these skills.

The audio training program consists of CDs containing the same ART Sequence Exercises that we practice during the training sessions. The audio training guides you through the ART Sequence Exercises with step-by-step instructions. We ask that you set aside 20 minutes each day to practice one of the ART Sequence Exercises using the audio training program. We know that finding 20 minutes each day can be difficult. However, we strongly encourage you to make the choice to take this time each day to practice the skills that can help you make positive changes in your life.

In addition to the audio training program, we encourage you to utilize the ART e-coaching program as well. The e-coaching program will send you a few short exercises each day either by text message or by email. Each exercise will only take a few minutes of your time. For

example, at 11:15, you might receive a text message or email saying, “Relax your lower jaw for a moment.” You can focus on relaxing your jaw for about three seconds and then continue going about your day. The same short exercises that can be received via text message or email are also available in a printed calendar format.

Whether you use the printed training calendar or the e-coaching tool, practicing these short exercises just a few times a day will help you resist falling into old vicious cycles, especially when the short exercises are practiced alongside the ART Sequence Exercises contained in the audio training program.

However, regardless of how many helpful tools we provide you with, the training will still require substantial time and effort. Ultimately, it depends on you deciding whether this effort is worthwhile and whether you want to invest your time and energy strengthening your emotion regulation skills. We spent some time in the beginning of the training thinking about the goals each of you have for yourselves. Using the Goal Review on the next page, we invite you to think again about what goals you hope to achieve by participating in this training:

Goal Review

Take a moment to review what you wrote in response to the Goal Setting Exercise in Section 1.2. Is there anything you would like to change? Maybe you would like your responses to be more specific. Maybe you would like to revise your original goal, or create an additional goal. If so, use the space below to make any changes you would like. If you are still satisfied with the way you wrote your original goal, use this space to reinforce your goals by writing them again.

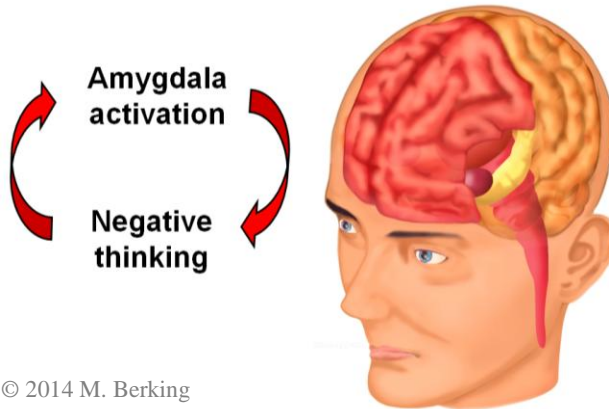
1) What would I like to achieve as a result of this training? (e.g., less anxiety and fear)

2) What scene could I imagine that would show that I have achieved this goal? (e.g., smiling as I window shop at the mall) _____

3) What catchphrase would describe the goal I have for ART? (e.g., mall joy) _____

5. ART Skill #3 - Nonjudgmental Awareness

In the last chapter we described vicious cycles in which the amygdala in the brain activates muscle tension and rapid breathing in the body, both of which further activate the amygdala,



© 2014 M. Berking

causing even more muscle tension and rapid breathing and so on. Now we are going to look at another vicious cycle that can occur, and then we will describe a skill that we can use to break it.

As a review, the amygdala detects potential threats. It can be thought of as a smoke detector. If it senses danger, it alerts the prefrontal cortex area in the brain. The prefrontal cortex focuses attention and thought onto this threat. This is very helpful in evaluating potential threats and determining the most effective action. However, if the focus by the prefrontal cortex on the problematic aspects of the situation does not lead to a solution to the problem, this problem-focused thinking will further activate the amygdala and could result in another type of vicious cycle.

5.1 Vicious cycle: Amygdala activation and negative thinking

In this vicious cycle, the negative thinking generated by the prefrontal cortex causes the amygdala to sound the alarm more loudly, resulting in negative emotions. This may cause the prefrontal cortex to focus even more attention on the problem, resulting in even more negative thinking and even stronger negative emotions and so forth. In other words, negative thinking likely leads to negative emotions which then reinforce our negative thinking. Have you ever experienced something like this yourself? Take a moment to complete the exercise on the next page.

Negative Thinking

Describe a situation in which you experienced negative emotions. _____

What negative thoughts were you having at the time? _____

How did your thoughts contribute to your negative emotions and your negative emotions contribute to your negative thoughts? _____

So, if negative thinking and negative emotions can cause each other, what can we do to break this vicious cycle? We could try to *not think* negative thoughts. So, let's test this strategy by not thinking about something for a few minutes. Please close your eyes. For one minute, you may think about anything that you would like, except for a pink elephant. Remember you are free to think about anything you wish, but keep your mind completely free of pink elephants.

Were you successful in your attempt to keep pink elephants out of your mind? Oftentimes when people try this exercise, they almost immediately begin to think of pink elephants. Let's look at why trying *not* to think of something usually doesn't work very well.

When you remind yourself not to think of something, like a pink elephant, you create an intentional thought of the very thing you do not want to think about. Also, by intending not to think about the pink elephant, you are setting up a monitoring process to constantly watch out

for thoughts of a pink elephant. As you monitor for any thoughts about a pink elephant (e.g., *Am I thinking of a pink elephant?*) even more thoughts about a pink elephant are created (e.g., *Oh no! I am having thoughts about a pink elephant!*). This is how attempts at avoiding or suppressing thoughts can keep them going and even make the thoughts stronger.

So if avoiding and suppressing thoughts is not helpful, what could be helpful instead? What about trying to think positively? It does make sense, because positive thoughts can be a signal of safety for the amygdala. But there's a problem with this strategy. It's often very difficult to think positively when negative emotions are activated. Even more importantly, it's often impossible to actually *believe* these positive thoughts when our emotions are signaling something completely different to us, and if we have trouble believing these thoughts, they will not affect our emotions. Have you ever had this experience?

Thinking on the Bright Side of Life

Describe a situation in which you experienced negative emotions. _____

What negative thoughts were you having at the time? _____

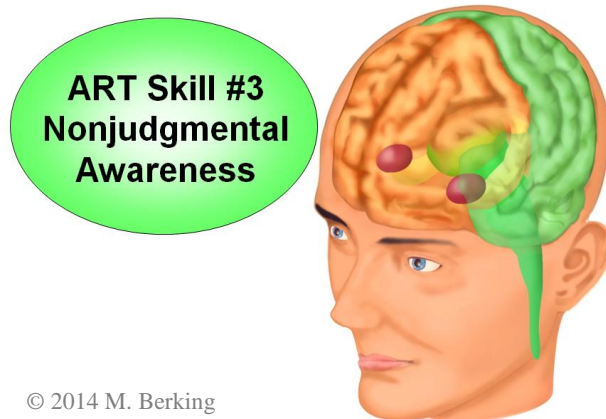
If you tried to replace your negative thoughts with positive thoughts, did you have difficulty doing so? If so, what kept you from simply thinking positively in this situation? _____

Fortunately, there is another helpful way to cope with this vicious cycle of negative thoughts and negative emotions. You can take a moment to draw your attention away from the worries about potential threats and instead allow yourself to be aware of what's happening at that very moment. Now, we are not asking you to *not think* the thoughts you have, because that usually backfires. Instead we are encouraging you to take the first step in breaking this vicious cycle by taking a “mental step back” in these situations and objectively observe the situation and your own emotions without interpreting, judging, or reacting.

5.2 ART Skill #3 - Nonjudgmental Awareness

We call this skill *nonjudgmental awareness*. This skill involves different areas of the brain than the areas in the brain related to automatic thought. We can, metaphorically speaking, “take cover in the back part of the cortex”

in distressing situations, breaking out of thinking and ruminating and into simply feeling and perceiving. This involves taking a mental step back and allowing ourselves to view a situation and our emotions in a nonevaluative way by simply noticing what is happening.



The skill of *nonjudgmental awareness* of emotions involves neutrally *feeling* and *labeling* emotions.

Feeling Emotions

“Feeling an emotion” involves neutrally and nonjudgmentally exploring what it is like to experience the particular emotion. Negative emotions can, however, trigger the tendency to automatically judge and react, especially when those negative emotions are intense.

Labeling Emotions

“Labeling emotions” is the process of using words to name the feelings we are experiencing. Labeling our emotions may seem unnatural at first, but it is extraordinarily important because of this reason; when we label feelings, we activate connections between the areas in the brain where these feelings develop and the areas in the brain that are responsible for our thoughts and awareness. By actively recruiting our thinking abilities, we can start to understand the

emotion we are experiencing, discover the information it is trying to communicate, and make decisions about what we could do to accept or modify the emotion.

One method to nonjudgmentally explore an emotion by *feeling* and *labeling* is to:

- 1) Focus your attention on the most intense emotion you are experiencing at the time.
- 2) Label the emotion as best you can (anxiety, happiness, sadness, boredom, etc.).
- 3) Rate the intensity of the feeling on a scale from 0 to 10 (with 0 being the least intense and 10 being the most intense).
- 4) Identify where you feel the emotion in your body.

The process may then be repeated with other emotions that are experienced less intensely.

In order to work through this process of *feeling* and *labeling* emotions, it can be helpful to have an inner-conversation that sounds something like this, “Okay, this is anxiety. On a scale from 0 to 10, it’s about a 9. I feel it in my body as muscle tension in my back. I also notice that my heart is pounding.” Then after a while, you can start the process all over again with another emotion you are experiencing.

This process of neutrally *feeling* and *labeling emotions* avoids making judgments about the emotions or our experience of them. For example when we feel fear, we try to focus our awareness on the fear, noticing how and where we experience this feeling in our body. We then say to ourselves, “There is fear.” We do not say, “Oh how awful! This fear is back again. It will never end! My body probably can’t take it any longer!” Instead, we try to describe emotions neutrally, without judgment - “There is fear,” and become aware of what fear feels like in the moment.

In order to build the skill of nonjudgmental awareness, it is helpful to practice focusing intensely on something. Intense focus on something causes us to enter a mode in which we are observing our experience instead of evaluating and judging it. An observing mode can have a peaceful and calming effect. Your breath can be used as a focus of your attention as it has for millions of people in various cultures throughout history to help engage in nonjudgmental awareness and to regulate emotions.

In ART, we direct our focus on our breath by observing the physical sensation of our breath, such as the rise and fall of our chest and belly as our lungs expand and contract, or how the air feels as it flows in and out of our nostrils. We simply notice our breathing without trying to control it. We merely pay attention to the calm and steady inhalation and exhalation of the breath. We just focus on how it feels when we breathe in ... and out again ... flowing ... without doing anything. Take a moment to try this.

In order to make it easier to focus your attention on your breathing, it may be helpful to say to yourself the word “in” when inhaling and “out” when exhaling. You will notice that maintaining focus on your breath even when saying these words to yourself is not easy to do. Our brain tends to almost immediately begin to divert our focus away from our breath and onto thoughts such as, “I wonder what traffic will be like going home today.”

When we realize that our attention has wandered to our thoughts, we make a short “mental note” of the distraction. We can say to ourselves something like: “thinking,” “planning,” or “worrying,” and then gently draw our attention back to our breathing. If we start to feel angry with ourselves because we “can’t focus on our breathing for even one minute” (or sometimes even 10 for seconds), it can be helpful to simply allow ourselves to be aware of this anger and make a neutral mental note of it, “There is anger.” - and then gently draw our attention back to our breathing.

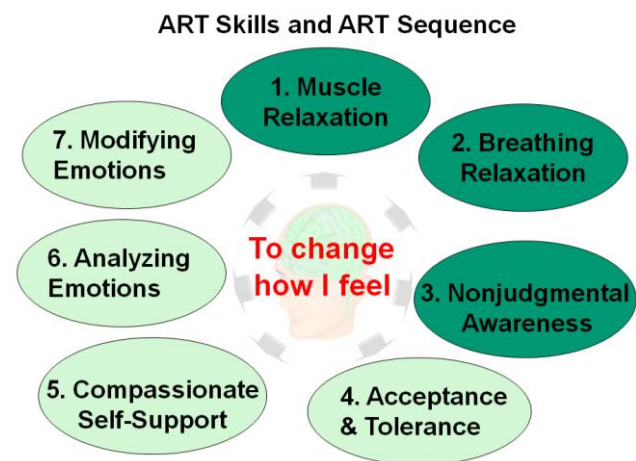
You can do the same thing if you find yourself becoming anxious or discouraged by the fact that your mind wanders. You may need to repeat this process multiple times, which is absolutely fine and very normal. Actually, the process of becoming aware that our minds have wandered and then gently and lovingly leading our attention back to the sensation of our breathing is the core of this exercise!

After focusing our attention onto our breath, the next step in our practice of nonjudgmental awareness is to expand attention to anything we can perceive in the moment. For example, what bodily sensations (e.g., hunger, pain, etc.) do you currently feel? What sounds do you hear? What smells do you notice? What is the next thought that crosses your mind? ...and what’s the next thought after that...and after that? Now, imagine what you would do if anything was possible. Where would you be? What would you be doing? (*pause*) Based on what you see in these images, what is it that you are longing for? Maybe it is some time to

yourself without pressure to get something done. What impulses to act (stand up, lay down, run out of the room, etc.) are present right now? Also, attention is directed to noticing and labeling any emotions you are experiencing. What emotions are you feeling right now? While you are labeling your emotions, rate their intensity. For example, “My anger is at an 8.” In addition, notice any bodily sensations that correspond with the emotions. How do you feel your emotions in your body right now? (e.g., tense shoulders)

You can use the ART Sequence Exercise #2 audio file to practice ART Skill #3 – Nonjudgmental Awareness along with the previous two skills we learned earlier (ART Skill #1 – Muscle Relaxation and ART Skill #2 – Breathing Relaxation). As you may remember, in the previous ART Sequence Exercise we intentionally slowed our breathing by exhaling completely and then 3 seconds longer.

Starting with this ART Sequence Exercise, we will now let go of our attempts to control our breathing and simply observe it. The written version of ART Sequence Exercise #2 can be found in the appendix.



© 2014 M. Berking

6. ART Skill #4 - Acceptance and Tolerance of Emotions

6.1 Vicious cycle: Amygdala activation and avoidance

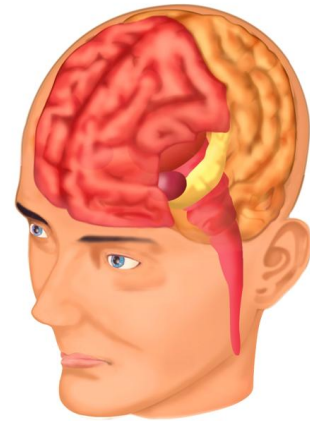
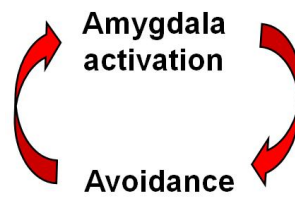
So far in our training, we have reviewed three examples of vicious cycles that can cause negative emotions to increase in their intensity and duration. Now, let's explore another vicious cycle that can also develop. In the process of regulating amygdala activation, the prefrontal cortex may activate more on the left or on the right. Leftward activation has been associated with approach behavior, while rightward activation has been associated with avoidance behavior such as forming a goal "to not feel emotions."

This goal of not feeling emotions, however, is hard to attain. Emotions cannot be controlled by sheer force of will. They are usually beyond the realm of direct conscious control. The reason for this is that the amygdala and other parts of the limbic system act largely autonomously from the areas of the brain that initiate willfully controlled behavior. This functional autonomy of the limbic system was a significant evolutionary advantage to our ancestors. If those prehistoric men had been able to consciously control their feelings, they would have likely given in to the temptation to simply shut down unpleasant emotions. By doing so, they would not have received the important benefits of negative emotions such as "anger," which prepared our ancestors' bodies and minds for assertive action such as self-defense.

Another reason why it is difficult to control emotions is that emotional reactions often cause significant changes in the body. These changes take time to dissipate, and as long as they are present, they impede the ability to make emotional changes. For example, it is difficult to quickly stop being angry when the body is flooded with stress hormones. Since emotions cannot be controlled by will alone, and since changes in the body make it difficult to control emotions, we see why the goal of getting rid of an emotion instantly and completely is often unattainable.

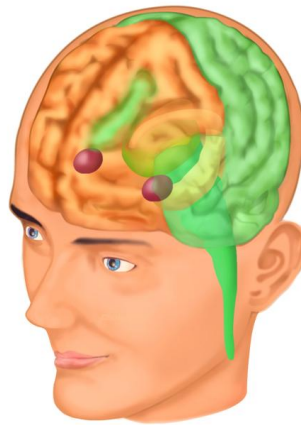
When a person is unsuccessful at their attempts to instantly rid themselves of a negative emotion, their failure will consequently lead to increased amygdala activation. The goal of getting rid of these negative emotions now becomes even stronger and more important, since the person is also experiencing increased distress due to the additional amygdala activation. However the goal of avoiding the emotions is more difficult at this point, because of the

heightened negative arousal. This leads to an even greater likelihood of failure to avoid the negative emotions, which causes more amygdala activation and so on. Thus, in this vicious cycle, the more the person attempts to get rid of the negative emotions, the stronger the emotions become.



© 2014 M. Berking

6.2 ART Skill #3 - Acceptance and Tolerance of emotions



© 2014 M. Berking

So if fighting to avoid our negative emotions is likely to make them stronger through the vicious cycle just described, what can we do instead? The opposite - accept and tolerate our emotions. But what does it mean to *accept* and *tolerate* our emotions?

Let's look at what acceptance and tolerance **does** and **does not** mean:

Acceptance and Tolerance of Emotions

Acceptance and tolerance ...

- ✓ does not mean you have to like or enjoy the emotion you are trying to accept
- ✓ does not mean you have to accept everything always
- ✓ does not mean you accept the *situation* that triggered the negative emotion (only the emotions cued by the situation)
- ✓ does not mean you give up and stop fighting to improve the situation

Instead, acceptance and tolerance does mean ...

- ✓ I intentionally permit negative emotions to be present, at least for the amount of time necessary for them to change. This is helpful, because fighting against emotions is likely to make them even stronger.

Emotions exist to convey information to us. Once emotions have delivered their information, they will naturally change or subside unless we maintain them through avoidance. Accepting and tolerating, and hence openness to experiencing an emotion, is paradoxically, an effective way of eventually changing the emotion. The concept of how acceptance and tolerance can change a negative emotion can be understood with the following metaphor:

Since the purpose of emotions is to convey important information, emotions can be thought of as a highly motivated mailman who wants to deliver a letter to us. Since he is conscientious, he will knock on your door and try to deliver it to you in person instead of just leaving it in your mailbox.

Now, say you are at home and you hear the mailman knocking at your front door. You look out of the window and see him. However, you decide not to open the door and receive the letter because you feel that it contains unpleasant information. The good mailman leaves, but he returns later in the day and knocks on your door again to deliver the letter. If you keep

ignoring the mailman, he will continue to come back, since his/her sole purpose of existence is to deliver important letters. Thus, regardless of whether you barricade the door, put land mines in your front yard, and get a nasty watchdog, this highly dedicated mailman will keep trying to deliver the letter.

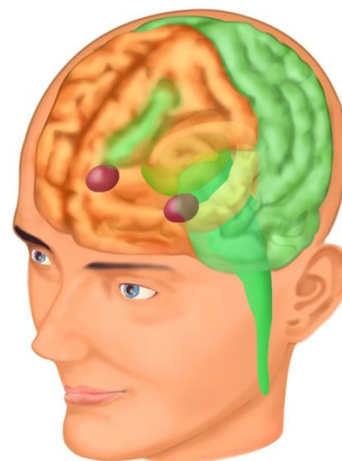
The most effective way to make him stop bothering you is to simply accept the letter. You don't have to follow the advice written in the letter, but you need to accept it and find out what it says. Emotions function in much the same way as the mailman in this story. Your emotions will keep bothering you unless you experience them and consciously process the information your emotions want you to have.

For example, if you feel anxious, you could choose to allow yourself to focus on your anxiety and experience it without fighting against it. You could say to yourself, "This is anxiety," and then begin to explore what this emotion is trying to tell you. The anxiety may be telling you there is a really important exam coming up, and you should study hard in order to get a good grade on it. You could then determine if this information is correct. Regardless of whether or not the information is correct, the first step is to simply allow the emotion to tell you the information it wants to tell you. Once the emotion has done its job, it is far more likely that the body's regulatory functions will naturally kick in and reduce or change the emotion.

So we see how avoidance maintains our negative emotions, while acceptance and tolerance can begin the process to change them. Acceptance and tolerance of painful or challenging emotions can be difficult to achieve. Thankfully, there is a step-by-step process we can use to help us called the 5-Step Acceptance and Tolerance Plan.

5-Step Acceptance & Tolerance Plan

- 1) Set acceptance and tolerance as a goal
- 2) Give reasons for focusing on acceptance and tolerance
- 3) View your emotions as allies
- 4) Remind yourself how tough and resilient you are
- 5) Remind yourself that emotions are temporary



© 2014 M. Berking

Step 1. Set acceptance and tolerance as a goal

Since accepting and tolerating negative emotions can be challenging, we will probably not do so without intentional effort. So first we must intentionally decide to make acceptance and tolerance of our emotions our goal. For example you could say to yourself, “I will work to accept and tolerate my current emotion, even if it is difficult for me at the moment.”

Step 2. Give reasons for focusing on acceptance and tolerance

Since the brain prefers changing things instead of accepting and tolerating them, we need to give our brain good reasons for engaging in this “second-rate” strategy. One of the most convincing reasons is that fighting against negative emotions often makes them stronger. Thus, it is smart to use acceptance and tolerance as a tool to calm down the system. This will significantly increase our ability to eventually change the emotion. For example, you could say to yourself, “I can’t just turn off my feelings. If I try to fight them, I will only make them stronger, so I will accept and tolerate them at least for a certain period of time. This can bring me a sense of peace and calm that will help me eventually change my emotions.”

Step 3. View your emotions as helpful

Viewing your emotions (especially challenging ones) in a more positive light can help you be more accepting and tolerating of them. One way to view emotions more positively is to see them as your allies, which are trying to give you important information and facilitate helpful behaviors.

So what are our emotions telling us? Positive emotions tell us that our needs and goals are generally being met, and because they feel good, they reinforce the behaviors that helped us meet our needs and goals. Since our needs and goals are being met, positive emotions are generally signals that we do not need to change anything or that we have attained a goal and can now rest and allow the positive emotions to recharge our “mental batteries.”

Negative emotions, on the other hand, signal that our needs and goals are not being met. When we experience negative emotions, we can remind ourselves that our emotions are trying to let us know that our needs and goals are in some way not being met, and the *specific kinds of emotions* we experience provide us with important clues about what specific goals and

Negative emotions can be thought of as well-intentioned friends that are trying to communicate important information to us.

What are they trying to say?

needs are not being met. For example, you could say to yourself, “Although painful, these emotions are providing me with valuable information. They are helping me protect my needs and goals.” You could also ask yourself, “Which needs and goals are they telling me are not being met? What are they telling me I should do about these unmet needs and goals? What beneficial behaviors are facilitated by these feelings?” Say you are experiencing anger. You may find that anger is telling you that somebody or something is purposefully hindering your efforts to attain a certain important goal and that it might be helpful to prepare to fight and assert your rights, so you do not continue to be exploited by others. Think of what happens to individuals who are unable to get angry and use the anger to assert themselves. Right! They get exploited at work, end up with selfish partners, are unable to meet their needs and eventually get severely depressed. So anger in this situation is providing you with really important information.

Step 4. Remind yourself how tough and resilient you really are

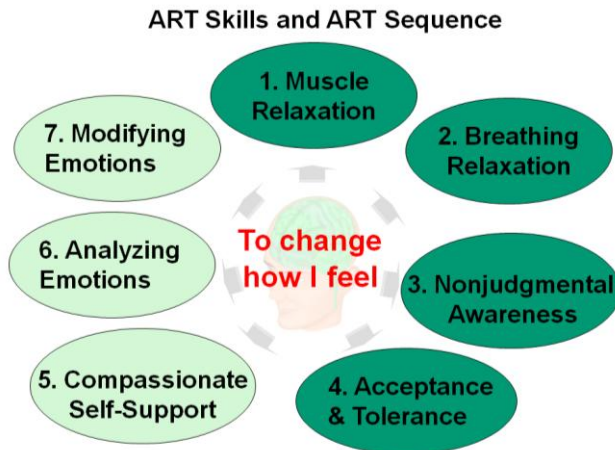
In Step 4, you take steps to remind yourself how tough and resilient you really are. Difficulties with accepting negative emotions are often caused by underestimating your ability to tolerate them. The influential psychologist Albert Ellis jokingly called this “syndrome” *I-can't-stand-it-itis*. It can be helpful to remind yourself that you may be underestimating your ability to endure negative emotions. To strengthen this argument, it is often helpful to remember that you have been able to endure negative feelings in the past on numerous occasions. Given such evidence of your resilience, you could say to yourself, “I have frequently proven that I can endure negative feelings, so I can do it again. I can tolerate these feelings even though they are painful!”

Step 5. Remind yourself that emotions are temporary

In the final step of the plan, you remind yourself that an emotion does not last forever. Emotions communicate information. So, if you give the emotion an opportunity to convey its information, it will fade away sooner or later. Reminding yourself that no emotion lasts forever can help you better accept a negative emotion, since you will only need to tolerate it for a limited period of time. You may find it helpful to tell yourself something like, “This emotion is only temporary. I will not have to endure it forever.”

Maybe you would like to practice the 5-Step Acceptance and Tolerance Plan. If so, pick an emotion that has been difficult for you to accept and tolerate in the past. With this emotion in mind, practice each step of the plan on the next page.

After you have completed the steps of the plan, try closing the exercise by creating a personal Acceptance and Tolerance Statement. This should be a summary of the phrases that you developed in the individualized 5-Step Acceptance and Tolerance Plan. For example, *“It’s okay that I feel the way I do. This emotion is helping me see how I can get my needs met. I can tolerate these feelings for a while if necessary, and I know that they won’t last forever.”*



© 2014 M. Berking

You may also use the ART Sequence Exercise #3 audio file to practice ART Skill #4 – Acceptance and Tolerance. So far, in the ART Sequence Exercises we have tensed and relaxed our muscles in groups of specific muscles. However, starting with this ART Sequence Exercise, we will now tense and release all of these muscles at once. The written version of ART Sequence Exercise #3 can be found in the appendix.

5-Step Acceptance and Tolerance Plan

1. Set acceptance and tolerance as a goal

State your goal of accepting and tolerating your emotion: _____

2. Give yourself a reason for focusing on acceptance

Describe your reason for setting the goal of acceptance and tolerance of your emotions:

3. View your emotions as helpful

List what your emotions are trying to tell you regarding your needs: _____

List the helpful response(s) they facilitate: _____

4. Remind yourself how tough and resilient you are

Write a sentence reminding yourself that you have managed challenging emotions in the past: _____

5. Remind yourself that emotions are NOT permanent

In your own words, state that this emotion will pass: _____

6. Personal Acceptance and Tolerance Statement

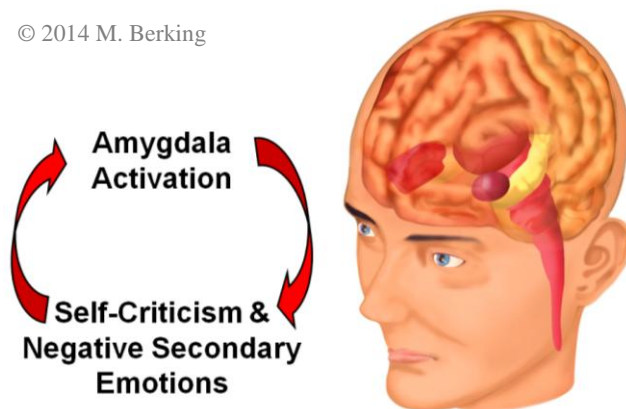
In a few sentences, summarize the 5-Steps in a meaningful way that would encourage you in times of stress to accept and tolerate your emotions: _____

7. ART Skill #5 - Compassionate Self-Support

7.1 Vicious cycle: Amygdala activation and self criticism/negative secondary emotions

We have previously explored four vicious cycles that can cause negative emotions to increase in their intensity and duration. Now we are going to focus on yet another vicious cycle that can develop. This vicious cycle begins when someone who feels stressed or upset starts to blame or criticize themselves. They may say to themselves, “I can’t do anything right. My reaction to this situation proves that I am weak. I am a complete a failure. Something is wrong with me.” Some people believe these self-statements are necessary to keep themselves motivated by “whipping” themselves into shape.

© 2014 M. Berking



These statements, however, are self-inflicted attacks that threaten the need to feel valued as a person. The amygdala then activates, sounding the alarm that the need to feel valued and worthwhile is under attack. The amygdala activation increases the stress response in the body and in the brain. At the same time, self-criticism leads to additional negative emotions such as anger, shame, and guilt.

The vicious cycle then plays out like this: Self-criticism leads to a threatened sense of self-worth that activates the amygdala and increases the current stress response. At the same time, self-criticism triggers negative emotions that lead to additional amygdala activation. This dual activation of the amygdala increases the stress response in the body and in the brain, leading to more negative feelings, which leads the person to be even more self-critical. Tragically, additional criticism only continues to fuel this vicious cycle.

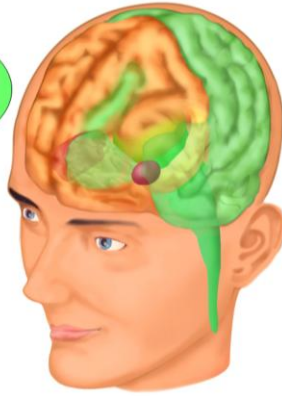
7.2 ART Skill #5 - Compassionate Self-Support

So if self-criticism fuels this vicious cycle and does not help us regulate our negative emotions, what could we do instead to help us regulate our emotions? The answer is that we

**ART Skill #5
Compassionate
Self-Support**



© 2014 M. Berking



could compassionately support ourselves instead of criticizing ourselves and beating ourselves up. Compassionate self-support is a sympathetic attitude you have for yourself that is kind, encouraging, and soothing. During stressful events, this attitude helps prevent us from sliding into the vicious cycle we just described caused by self-criticism. Compassionate self-support also helps develop positive feelings that inhibit the negative ones.

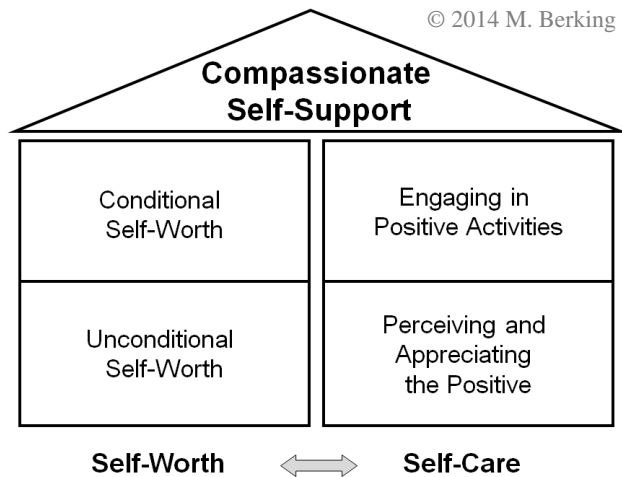
The ability to compassionately support ourselves requires two foundational elements. The first is that *we place value on ourselves*. If we do not do this, it will be very difficult to compassionately support ourselves in times of distress. The second foundational element of compassionate self-support is that *we regularly take care of ourselves by engaging in activities that result in*

positive emotions. By regularly engaging in positive activities, we strengthen the areas in the brain that are responsible for generating positive emotions. If these areas are strong, it will be far easier to activate positive emotions in times of distress.

Before we talk about the skill of compassionate self-support in challenging situations, let's look at each of these foundational elements in a little more detail.

7.2.1 Foundational Element #1: Placing value on ourselves

One way to increase our self-esteem is to identify and appreciate our positive qualities and attributes, strengths, skills, and achievements. When doing so we may notice feelings of joy and pride that feel positive and increases our energy level and self-esteem.



Take a moment to list some of your achievements. _____

What strengths or abilities contributed to your achievements? _____

What else do you like about yourself that is not related to achievements? (e.g., good sense of humor, pretty hair, your taste in music or fashion) _____

Identifying achievements, abilities, strengths, and positive qualities can lead to feelings of joy and pride that increase our energy level and self-esteem. However, identifying these can also trigger a variety of responses that generate negative emotions. One common response that people have is a dismissive attitude toward their achievements and strengths. People who tend to dismiss their achievements and strengths typically do so because the standards they have set for themselves are impossibly high, or are based on comparisons with others who have significant advantages. Since they will never be able to achieve their own self-imposed standards, they continue their pattern of devaluing themselves.

Do you sometimes dismiss your achievements or strengths? If so, what achievement or strength were you dismissive of? _____

How were you dismissive of the achievement or strength? (e.g., Made a comparison to someone else? Held an impossibly high expectation for yourself?) _____

Another common response that can occur when thinking about achievements and strengths is an internal voice which says that talking about achievements and strengths is egotistical and arrogant. This response often leads to emotions such as shame and guilt.

Does it feel egotistical or arrogant to appreciate your achievements or strengths? If so, are you aware of what causes you to view appreciation of your achievements or strengths as arrogance? _____

Finally, another common response to noting achievements and strengths is the activation of a deep-seated negative self-image. For example, a person may say, “If you want, I can write down all the successes I have had, but this feels like a lie. Deep down I know that I am a worthless person no matter what I achieve.” In this example, the person’s negative self-image has been triggered, which activates a range of negative emotions and overrides the positive benefits that could result from acknowledging his/her achievements and strengths.

So we see there are many responses we could experience when we try to appreciate our strengths and achievements that may result in negative emotions. These responses become hindrances to our intentional efforts to use our achievements and strengths to enhance our self-esteem. One valuable tool for managing these hindrances is ART Skill #3 - Nonjudgmental Awareness.

When we focused on the sensation of our breathing during our practice of Nonjudgmental Awareness, we noticed any distractions (e.g., sounds, thoughts, emotions), labeled them (e.g., noise, thinking, anger), and redirected our focus back onto the sensation of our breathing. This technique can be used when we notice that hindrances are interfering with our attempts at focusing on our strengths and achievements in order to build self-esteem. When we notice and become aware of a hindrance (e.g., dismissing our strengths), we can label it, (e.g., dismissive), and then gently refocus our attention onto our strengths and achievements.

It is important to remember that the effect of these hindrances is completely dependent on the way in which we respond to them. If we give in to the hindrances and allow them to stop the exercise, we will not receive the boost to our self-esteem this exercise can provide. If we rigidly fight the hindrances, we will be giving them even more attention which could cause make them even stronger. However, if we are able to patiently observe the hindrances, label them, and then gently redirect our focus onto the exercise, we will find that over time these hindrances will become quieter. With practice managing the hindrances effectively, it will become easier to appreciate our strengths and achievements even though the hindrances may never disappear completely.

Daily Self-Esteem Building Exercise - Part 1

There is a helpful exercise we can practice daily at home that involves noting our strengths and achievements. In this Daily Self-Esteem Building Exercise, we stand in front of a mirror at the end of each day and look back on what we achieved during that day, listing at least three examples. For example, our achievements may consist of meeting a deadline, acting kindly toward someone, or getting out of bed even though we didn't feeling like doing so.

For each achievement, we think of the strengths or abilities that enabled us to attain this achievement. As we do this, our minds may bring a hindrance to this exercise into your awareness. For example when you are creating your list of achievements, an inner, critical voice in your mind may say, "You have done nothing important today!" or "This is a very stupid exercise!" or "These are all lies; the truth is that you are a complete failure!". When a hindrance like this occurs, we can try to simply label it (e.g., critical thought, judgmental voice from the past, etc.) and gently refocus our attention back onto the task of identifying our achievements and the strengths and abilities that enabled them to occur.

While it can be difficult to appreciate our strengths and achievements, with the help of Nonjudgmental Awareness we can successfully learn to appreciate them and experience powerful benefits from doing so.

Although appreciating our strengths and achievements is a helpful way to build our self-esteem, there are some disadvantages of this self-esteem building strategy. First, our self-esteem can become dependent on our achievements, strengths, abilities, and positive qualities. This can become a problem if our strengths decrease over time or we are no longer able to achieve what we once could, because our self-esteem would decrease. Also, if we believe that our self-esteem is based on our achievements, we could feel intense pressure to continue to achieve in order to maintain our self-esteem.

So even though appreciating our achievements and strengths is a helpful way to build self-esteem, it also seems wise to complement this strategy with another strategy in which we build our self-esteem in a way that is *not* conditioned on our strengths and achievements. This can be difficult to do, so let's first look at an example of unconditional self-esteem:

If a child comes back from school with a good grade, "good parents" praise the child. The child feels good, proud, and motivated to work hard in the future and also has a higher level of self-esteem. This is how we recognize "good parents." They praise the child and give him/her love and affection at times when the child is successful. But what happens if the parents *only* give love and affection when the child is successful? The child is very likely to feel more and more pressure to always be successful, so he/she will continue to receive the parents' praise, which helps the child maintain their high level of self-esteem.

While "good parents" help build a child's conditional self-esteem, "excellent parents" help a child develop unconditional self-esteem. How do we recognize excellent parents? By how the parents respond when the child comes home with a bad grade. Excellent parents may say that this bad grade is certainly a set-back, but at the same time they will take the child in their arms and let the child know that they love him/her with all their heart regardless of the type of grades he/she receives at school. This is how we can recognize excellent parents.

Now, many of us may not have been so fortunate to have such excellent parents. However, as adults we have the opportunity to decide if we would like to be excellent parents for ourselves and to treat ourselves as excellent parents would. So what could you say to yourself that would express unconditional self-esteem for yourself? Please take some time to develop a statement that an excellent parent would say – something that expresses that you are a valuable person regardless of your successes and abilities. For example, you may say to yourself “I love you, not for what you do, but for who you are,” or “I love everything about you: strengths, flaws, and all,” or “You are valuable – just the way you are.” Now, please take some time to create a statement that you can use to build unconditional self-esteem.

My statement that expresses unconditional self-esteem for myself: _____

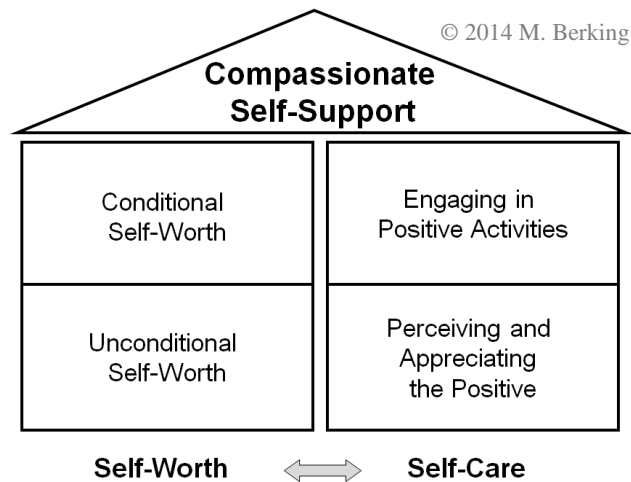
Daily Self-Esteem Building Exercise – Part 2

In Part 2 of the Daily Self-Esteem Building Exercise we will add unconditional self-esteem to the exercise. So the exercise looks like this: At the end of the day, look at yourself in the bathroom mirror. Review the day in your mind and think of at least three achievements that you can be proud of (e.g., meeting a deadline, an act of kindness, or getting out of bed even though you didn’t feeling like it). Then, think about which of your strengths and abilities enabled you to attain these achievements. Next, look yourself in the eyes, pat yourself on the shoulder, and use some appropriate words to express that you are proud of yourself. If negative reactions cause resistance to doing this, label the negative reaction, and return your focus back to the exercise. Do this until you feel at least a little bit of pride toward yourself. Then give yourself a particularly warm smile, look deeply into your eyes, and repeat the unconditional affirmation statement you developed that in some way says that you “love yourself” regardless of your achievements and successes.

7.2.2 Foundational Element #2: Self-care by engaging in activities that result in positive emotions

So far we have explored the first foundational element of compassionate self-support, placing value on ourselves.

We will now talk about the second foundational element of compassionate self-support, which is self-care by engaging in activities that result in positive emotions. The rationale behind this second pillar of compassionate self-support is that it will be easier to improve our mood during distressing times if we have regularly practiced improving our mood during less challenging times.



People often make lifestyle choices that lead to stress and result in physical and emotional problems. Some are insightful enough to realize they are experiencing stress related to their choices. Unfortunately many take an unhelpful approach in remedying the problem. Instead of making changes to their current lifestyle, they try to cope with it.

What does your daily schedule look like? What are the practical changes you could make to reduce stressful activities, while increasing fun activities that could result in positive emotional experiences?

Here is an exercise you may find helpful. Take some time to list on the next page the activities you consider as “duties or work” and the activities you consider to be “leisure or fun” that you experience during an average day. Take a look at your list. Are there duties that are unnecessary and could be removed to reduce stress in your life? Is there a fun activity you

have put off doing for a while? Feel free to make adjustments, so that your daily activities feel more balanced between work and play.

Duties/Work	Leisure/Fun
08:00 – 09:00 _____	_____
09:00 – 10:00 _____	_____
10:00 – 11:00 _____	_____
11:00 – 12:00 _____	_____
12:00 – 01:00 _____	_____
01:00 – 02:00 _____	_____
02:00 – 03:00 _____	_____
03:00 – 04:00 _____	_____
04:00 – 05:00 _____	_____
05:00 – 06:00 _____	_____
06:00 – 07:00 _____	_____
07:00 – 08:00 _____	_____
08:00 – 09:00 _____	_____
09:00 – 10:00 _____	_____



© 2014 M. Berking

This exercise can also be used in another way. At the end of each day you could write down all of the things you did that day to see if during the day you achieved a proper balance between stressful and pleasurable experiences. If you realize you did not experience sufficient pleasurable experiences during the day, you have a chance to do something (however small) that would be pleasurable. Also, you could plan for how you could achieve the desired balance between stressful and pleasurable experiences during the following day. Many people have difficulty including pleasurable experiences into their schedule. A helpful rule of thumb is to engage in at least one pleasurable experience during the day if you are feeling well and three if you are feeling poorly.

When you do experience pleasurable experiences, appreciate and savor them! When we intentionally focus on the goodness of these positive experiences we experience positive emotions as a result. It is important to remember that *just doing* a positive activity does not, in and of itself, result in positive emotions. As long as we keep thinking of all of our problems, even the most enjoyable activity or beautiful scenery will not improve our mood.

Tips for Seeking Pleasure

- 1) Pleasure can take time to develop.
- 2) Pleasure should be allowed to occur instead of forced to occur.
- 3) Pleasure is a matter of personal preference. Everyone has their own opinions about what is pleasurable.
- 4) Focused concentration on a pleasurable experience can increase the amount of pleasure gained from the experience.
- 5) “Less can be more” when focusing on a potentially pleasant experience (e.g., focusing on a small bite of cookie and chewing it carefully instead of wolfing down the whole cookie at once).
- 6) The ability to experience pleasure is a learned skill that needs to be practiced; practice leads to mastery.
- 7) It is important to integrate pleasure into everyday life. What type of “pleasure exercise” could you do today?

In addition to intentionally doing pleasurable things, we can also intentionally look for positive things in our lives. Many people experience positive things (e.g., plenty of food to eat, a comfortable home, or family and friends that they care about), without an awareness of the inherent goodness of these things. Consequently, these positive experiences do not elevate their mood. Thus, it is important to consciously focus attention on the positive aspects of our present experiences and intentionally appreciate them in order for these enjoyable experiences to result in positive emotions.

Ideally this focus on positive things leads us to feel “thankful.” Thankfulness is a powerful emotion that improves our sense of well-being. We can foster thankfulness by intentionally focusing on positive things and allowing the feeling of thankfulness to arise if it chooses to do so. It should be noted that thankfulness cannot be pressured, forced, or expected to

occur. Many people have difficulties experiencing thankfulness as a result of past experiences when they have been shamed into “being thankful” by society, parents, or religious institutions. No one *has* to be thankful. However, since thankfulness has the capacity to improve our sense of well-being, we are wise to foster it.

The Exercise of Gratitude audio file is a great way to practice focusing on the positive aspects of life in order to generate positive emotions. The written version of the Exercise of Gratitude can be found in the appendix.

Are there positive things in your life that you typically take for granted? Take a moment to list some of them here. _____

7.3 Elements of ART Skill #4 – Compassionate Self-Support and exercises to practice

Now that we have reviewed the the foundational elements of compassionate self-support: (1) valuing ourselves and (2) continuously taking care of ourselves by engaging in activities and appreciating the positive, we will look at how to specifically provide compassionate self-support. In ART, compassionate self-support consists of (1) fostering empathy for ourselves and (2) taking active steps to encourage and soothe ourselves. Compassion is a warm, strong, and encouraging feeling which is associated with the desire to help. Therefore, compassionate self-support can provide motivation for constructive action. In contrast, self-pity is associated with feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and passivity, and, hence, impedes constructive action.

Two imaginative exercises can specifically help us learn to generate compassionate self-support.

Compassion and Loving Kindness Exercise

- 1) Think of a difficult situation you were involved in recently, one in which you experienced negative emotions. Visualize yourself in this situation as it occurred.

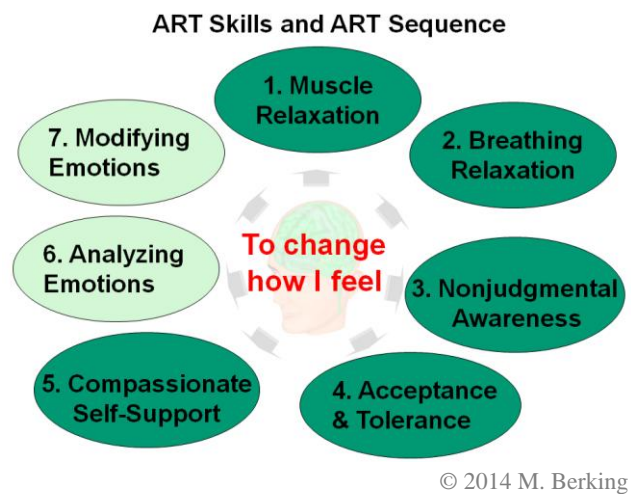
- 2) Imagine that you are above this scene observing what is happening to you.
- 3) Try to see what triggered your negative emotions. Determine what emotions you are experiencing and how those emotions are being manifested (e.g., posture, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.).
- 4) Intentionally react to your negative emotional state with a warm and powerful feeling of empathy.
- 5) Visualize entering the situation directly and approaching yourself.
- 6) Communicate to yourself that this is a difficult situation. Normalize the negative emotions, and provide reassurance by saying that you are there to support and comfort yourself (not to give advice). If it seems appropriate, visualize giving yourself a physical gesture of compassion (e.g., laying a hand on your shoulder or giving yourself a hug).
- 7) Provide encouragement to yourself. (e.g., You've gone through a lot in the past and you can get through this too. I'll be with you as you work through this. We will get through this together.)
- 8) Give yourself a big, kind, reassuring smile.
- 9) Say goodbye to yourself for now with the understanding that you will gladly return again when needed.

Sympathetic Joy Exercise

- 1) Visualize yourself in a past situation in which you experienced happiness or any other form of positive emotion. Imagine that you are floating above this scene observing yourself.
- 2) As the observer, see how the positive emotions are expressed as joy in your facial expression and body posture.
- 3) As the observer, allow this joy to arise within yourself leading to "sympathetic joy," or in other words a feeling of happiness that you are seeing yourself happy in this scene. Allow the possibility that feelings of gratitude for this joy may arise within you.

- 4) Imagine that you are now entering this visualized scene.
- 5) Tell yourself you are happy for the positive emotions you experienced in this scene. Remind yourself that positive emotions are important sources of strength and energy. Tell yourself, “My wish for you is that you may be able to appreciate positive feelings and use the energy from these feelings to overcome difficulties and challenges in life.”
- 6) Give yourself another big, kind, reassuring smile. Say goodbye to yourself and then bring your attention back into this room.

You can use the ART Sequence Exercise #4 audio file to practice ART Skill #5 – Compassionate Self-Support. During this exercise you will notice the practice of Acceptance and Tolerance is shortened by only focusing on the Acceptance and Tolerance Statement instead of going through each of the five steps to develop the Acceptance and Tolerance Statement. The written version of ART Sequence Exercise #4 can be found in the appendix.



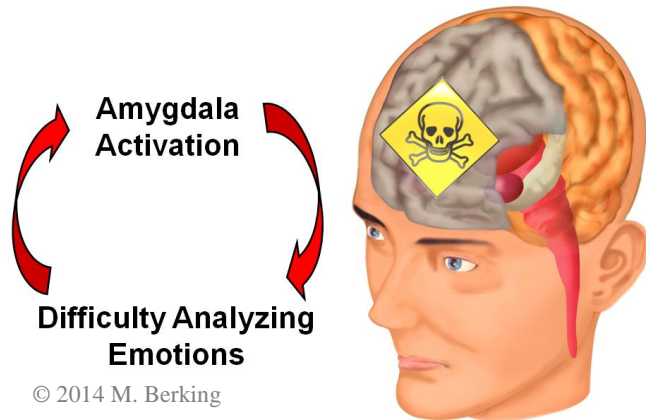
8. Analyzing Emotions

8.1 Vicious Cycle: Amygdala activation and difficulty analyzing emotions

We will now discuss yet another vicious cycle that maintains negative emotions.

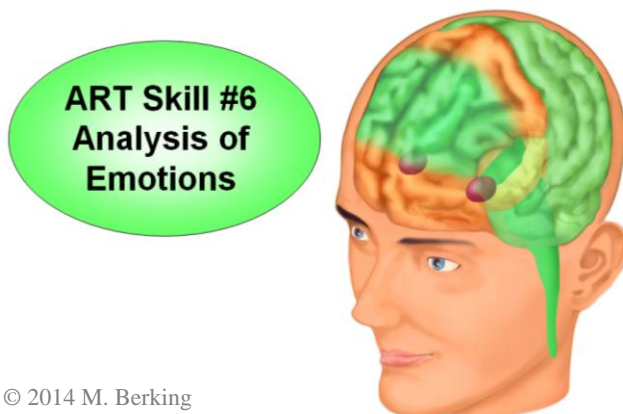
When we are under stress, the amygdala initiates the release of stress hormones into our brain and body. These stress hormones strengthen amygdala functioning but weaken other areas in the brain including the prefrontal cortex

and the hippocampus, which play important roles in the analysis of what cued our emotions. The ability to analyze and understand why we feel the way we do provides a sense of mastery and control that reduces activation in the amygdala.



If, through weakened prefrontal and hippocampal functioning, we lose our ability to analyze our emotions, we will probably feel confused and out-of-control. A vicious cycle now develops, since feeling confused and out-of-control unfortunately triggers the amygdala to sound the danger alarm even louder. Now even more stress hormones are released and the vicious cycle is repeated as the stress hormones further weaken prefrontal and hippocampal functioning and increase amygdala activation.

8.2 ART Skill #6 - Analyzing Emotions



We can prevent or break this vicious cycle by analyzing our emotions during times of distress. By analyzing our negative emotions we gain a better understanding of why we feel the way we do. This knowledge reassures us that we are in control of our emotions, which calms the amygdala activation and facilitates effective emotion regulation.

The good news is that we can practice the ability to analyze and understand of our emotions. ART Skill #6 - Analyzing Emotions consists of a series of steps we can take to better understand how and why we feel the way we do. These steps can be practiced until we are able to conduct an analysis of our emotions, almost automatically, even during times of stress.

Here are a few important points to keep in mind before we begin to work through the steps to analyze an emotion:

- Challenging situations normally trigger more than one “negative” emotion. However, since it is difficult to analyze more than one emotion at a time, it is important to be aware of the various emotions we are experiencing but pick only one at a time to analyze.
- Our emotions are often triggered by specific events, circumstances or situations. Our emotions are influenced by our current physical and emotional state.
- Our emotions are determined by how we appraise situations.
- Our appraisals are determined by how our needs, wishes, and goals are impacted by a situation.
- Our emotional response can be influenced by how we have reacted to past situations in a similar manner.
- The primary emotional response can also be appraised and trigger secondary emotions.
- Specific body sensations accompany emotions.
- Emotions can compel us to engage in various behaviors.
- While our emotions can compel us to engage in various behaviors, we always retain the option of choosing actions that are different than the actions that our emotions compel us to do.

The Analyzing Emotions Worksheet outlines a step-by-step process to analyze emotions, and it will be our guide for thoroughly understanding how and why we feel the way we do.

Analyzing Emotions



**Needs
Goals
Desires
Expectations**

Preceding Emotional Vulnerability

How did I feel emotionally & physically at the time the situation occurred?

3

Attention, Interpretation & Evaluation

What caught my attention?
How did I interpret the situation?
What was my evaluation of the situation?

4

Is the emotion part of an old pattern?
What can I call this pattern?

6

Old Response Pattern

Emotion

1

Impulses to Act

9

Behavior

10



Prompting Situation

The facts of what occurred.

2

Emotion in the Body

How and where did I feel the emotion in my body?

7

Secondary Emotion

How did I feel about my emotional reaction?

8

Advantages of Emotion

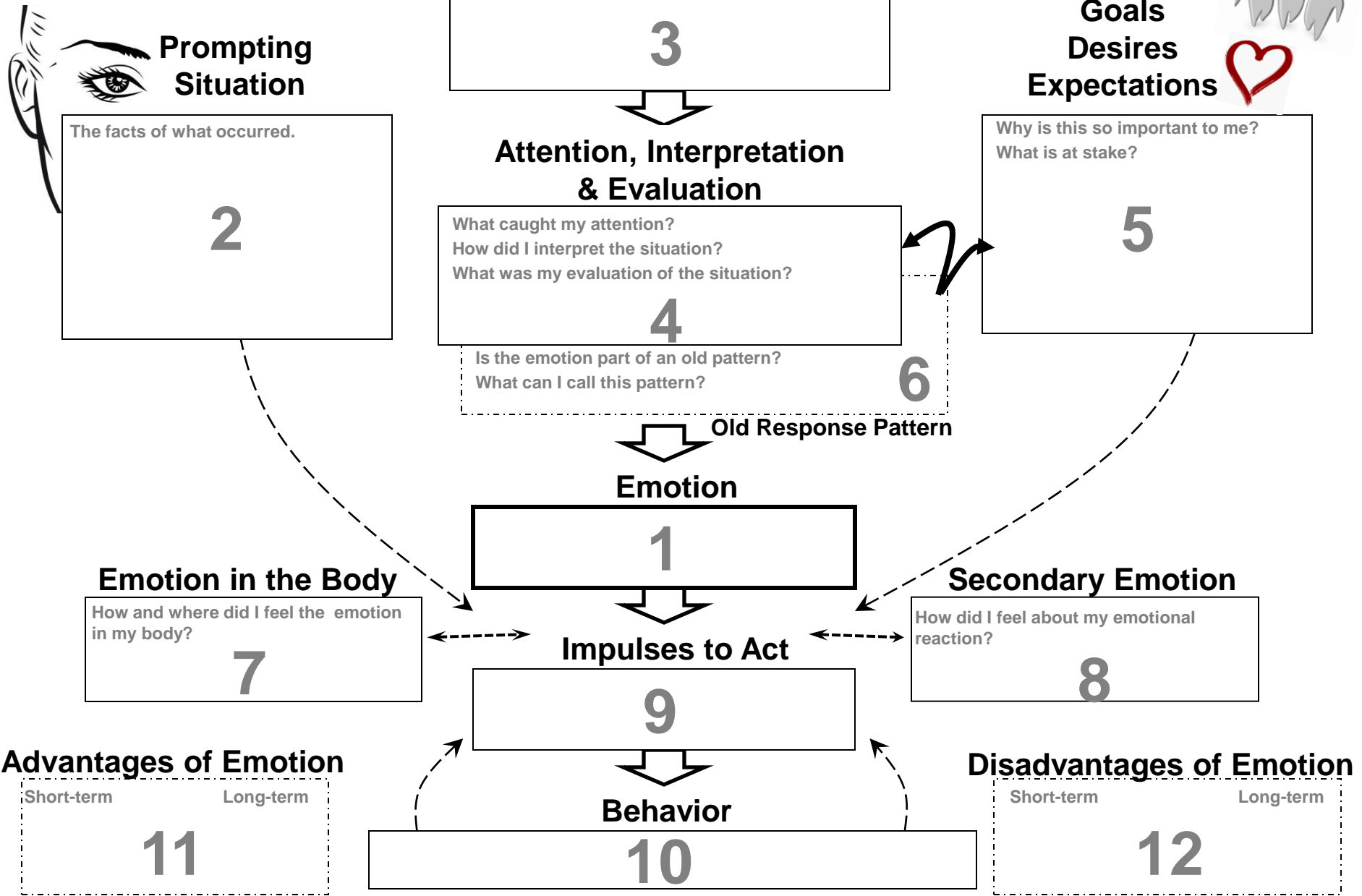
Short-term Long-term

11

Disadvantages of Emotion

Short-term Long-term

12



If you are thinking, “This sure is complex!” you are correct. It is! Emotions are complicated things, but don’t worry, with practice you will be able to go through the steps quickly in times of stress. In order to practice going through the steps on the worksheet, we will use the emotion “anxiety” that has resulted from a hypothetical situation that happened to us at work. In this situation our boss told us to increase our sales numbers by 10%.

Okay, here we go. To start with, we need to remember that we can only analyze one emotion at a time. This means that the first step in analyzing an emotion is to be aware of the different emotions we are experiencing and then to decide which specific one we would like to analyze. Using our hypothetical situation at work, we may have felt a mixture of fear, anger, and anxiety. Since we cannot analyze all of these different emotions at once, I will choose “anxiety” to analyze. So I would write “anxiety” in Box #1 on the Analyzing Emotions worksheet.

Then, I determine what situation triggered the emotion. This should only include the facts of what occurred. “My boss told me to increase my sales numbers by 10%.” Be careful *not to include* opinions or interpretations of what occurred. So for Box #2, I would write the objective facts of what occurred such as “told to increase sales by 10%.”

I next look at how I felt, both emotionally and physically, just before I experienced the anxiety, since our emotional vulnerability often plays a role in our reactions. For example, at the time that my boss told me to increase my sales numbers, I may have been fighting a cold or had been in a heated argument with my spouse earlier that morning. These types of emotional and physical states can cause us to view difficult situations more negatively than we would if we were healthy and happy at the time. For Box #3, I would describe my physical and emotional state at the time. For example, I could write in Box #3 that, “I was already irritated from an earlier argument with my spouse,” or “I was fighting a cold at the time.”

The next step is to examine how I appraised the situation. This can be broken down by asking three questions:

- 1) What did I focus my attention on during the situation?
- 2) How did I interpret the thing that caught my attention?
- 3) How did I evaluate the overall situation based on how I interpreted the thing that caught my attention?

For example, as my boss told me to increase my sales numbers, I could have focused on the irritated tone in his voice. Maybe I interpreted his irritated tone of voice as a signal of his displeasure with my overall performance. Since I believed at the time that he viewed my overall job performance poorly, I evaluated this interaction with my boss negatively. In Box #4, I would write down my appraisal of the situation. More specifically, I would write (1) what caught my attention, (e.g., boss' irritated tone of voice), (2) how I interpreted the situation (e.g., "My boss thinks I am a bad employee!"), and (3) my evaluation of the overall situation (e.g., "This is awful!").

The evaluation of a situation has a crucial impact on our emotions. As soon as we evaluate something, we generate an emotion. If we evaluate something as negative, we generate a negative emotion. If we evaluate something as positive, we generate a positive emotion. Situations are not inherently "good" or "bad." Instead, we evaluate situations as good or bad according to how a situation either facilitates or hinders the attainment of goals that are important to us.

Using our example, if my boss demands increased sales numbers, I might believe that I may be fired soon. If I am the sole provider of income for my family of five and my primary goal is to create financial security for my family, the possibility I could be fired would probably cause me to feel anxious. In this case, I would write down my goal that is being threatened, "ensure financial security for my family" in Box #5. On the other hand, if I am unhappy because I hate my job, I have plenty of money saved up, and my goal is "to have more time for myself," then the possibility that I may be fired could actually bring relief instead of anxiety. This example illustrates the point that the type of goals we have impact how we feel about various situations. Therefore, it is important to identify the goals that are related to the emotion we are analyzing.

In the next step, we explore the possibility that our response to this situation is similar to how we have typically responded in the past in similar situations. This old response pattern could consist of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that we have consistently used in the past. If we believe that our present response to this current situation is part of an old response pattern, we try to label it and then write the label in Box #6. For example, using our hypothetical scenario at work, I may realize that my anxiety in this situation is related to an old response pattern to difficult situations in which I typically believe, "Bad things are going to happen to me!" I

could use this thought to label my old response pattern and write, “Bad things are going to happen to me!” in Box #6.

It is important to remember that not every response to a situation is based on an old response pattern, so in these cases, Box #6 would simply be left blank. While old response patterns will not be relevant for every situation, this is still an important step to explore. The identification of an old response pattern can provide a sense of understanding and order when our own responses feel confusing and disorganized. The awareness of these patterns also provides us with ways that we can positively intervene in these types of situations.

After we look for old response patterns that may be contributing to our current reactions, we look at how the emotion manifests itself in our body, such as increased heart rate and respiration. This is an important step in the analysis process since many physical complaints are related to emotional responses. In these cases, the physical symptoms will persist unless the emotion is effectively regulated. In Box #7 we describe how and where the emotion is experienced in the body, such as “tightness in my chest and a pit in my stomach.”

In the next step, we identify the emotions that were triggered as we evaluated our emotional state. The human brain tends to evaluate significant experiences. Since intense emotions feel significant, they are very likely to be evaluated. As we have said before, “Every evaluation triggers an emotion.” Thus, assigning a negative evaluation to a challenging emotion will inevitably trigger a “secondary” challenging emotion.

We can identify secondary emotions by asking, “How do I feel about my emotional reaction?” Examples of common secondary emotions include feeling helpless about being anxious or feeling shame for becoming angry. So in Box #8, I would write something like “felt hopeless about being anxious.” Since negative secondary emotions hinder efforts to regulate the initial emotional response, it is important to identify and eventually learn to reduce negative secondary emotions.

The next step in this process is to identify the urges or impulses to act that are triggered by our emotional response. These urges can be viewed as knee-jerk reactions. For example, my impulse in the hypothetical scenario may have been to “work through the night, so I could increase my sales numbers,” which I would write in Box #9. Just because we have an impulsive urge to do something does not mean that we must carry it out. This is the point at

which we are able to choose to either follow our impulse or to act differently. For example, although my impulse in the hypothetical scenario may have been to “work through the night, so I could increase my sales numbers,” I actually chose to go home at 11pm. I would write my actual behavior “going home at 11pm” in Box #10.

Finally, it is important to consider the short- and long-term advantages and disadvantages of my emotional response. This is important information we can use to decide whether and how we want to modify our emotion. Using our current example, a short-term advantage of my anxiety could be that it motivates me to stay more focused at work, which in the long-term could help me keep my job. I would list these short- and long-term advantages in Box #11. On the other hand, a short-term disadvantage could be that anxiety causes me to miss having dinner with my family. A long-term disadvantage could be that anxiety causes me to end up hating my job. I would write these short- and long-term disadvantages of my emotional response in Box #12.

Sometimes it can be very difficult to analyze an emotion. So when this process feels difficult or maybe even impossible, remember to give plenty of compassionate self-support (ART Skill #5), so you are able to successfully work through this analyzing process. It is absolutely fine if you do not have answers for each and every box on the worksheet. With time and practice you will feel more and more confident with the steps involved in analyzing your emotions.

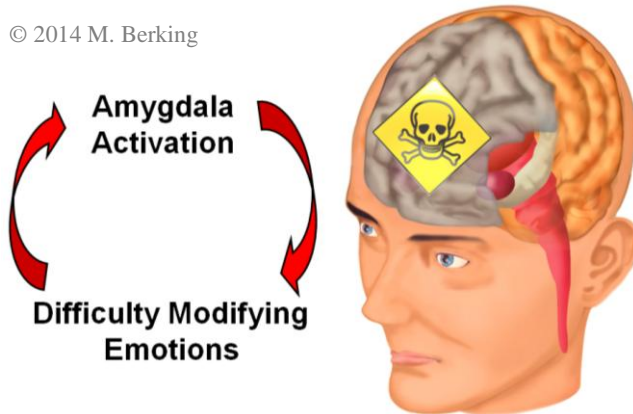
Try using the Analyzing Emotions worksheet to analyze an emotion that you have recently experienced. You can also practice the steps of the analyzing process by listening to the audio file of ART Sequence Exercise #5. During the last several ART Sequence Exercises, we tensed several specific muscles together at once and then relaxed them. Starting with this particular ART Sequence Exercise we will shorten the muscle relaxation technique even further by consciously relaxing specific muscles without tensing them first. The written version of ART Sequence Exercise #5 can be found in the appendix.

9 Modifying Emotions

9.1 Vicious Cycle: Amygdala activation and difficulty modifying emotions

Let's take a look at one last vicious cycle and the seventh and final ART Skill we can use to interrupt it. This vicious cycle is in some ways related to the vicious cycle we reviewed in the

© 2014 M. Berking



last chapter. To review, when we are under stress, the amygdala begins processes that release stress hormones into our brain. These stress hormones strengthen amygdala functioning, but weaken other areas in the brain including the prefrontal cortex and the hippocampus. As we discussed before,

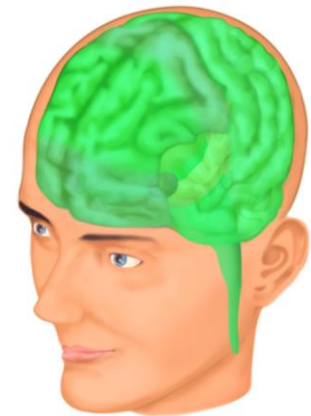
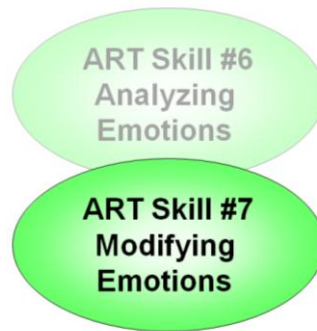
both the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus play important roles in the analysis of emotions. These regions also play important roles in our ability to systematically find solutions to problems. When we are able to use problem solving techniques to modify our emotions, we achieve a sense of mastery and control over our emotions.

If, however, through weakened prefrontal and hippocampal functioning, we lose our ability to modify our emotions, we are likely to feel out-of-control. A vicious cycle now develops, since feeling out-of-control triggers the amygdala to sound the danger alarm even louder. Now even more stress hormones are released, which further weakens prefrontal and hippocampal functioning and increases amygdala activation even more.

9.2 ART Skill #7 - Modifying Emotions

We can prevent or break this vicious cycle through the ability to modify our emotions during times of distress. The availability of effective modification skills helps us maintain or regain a sense of mastery and control and thus reduces the stress response in the amygdala. ART Skill #7 - Modifying Emotions consists of a series of steps we can take to change our negative emotions. With practice, we can learn to modify our emotions, almost automatically during

times of stress. Any type of problem, including persistent negative emotions, can be addressed using a set of general problem-solving steps.



© 2014 M. Berking

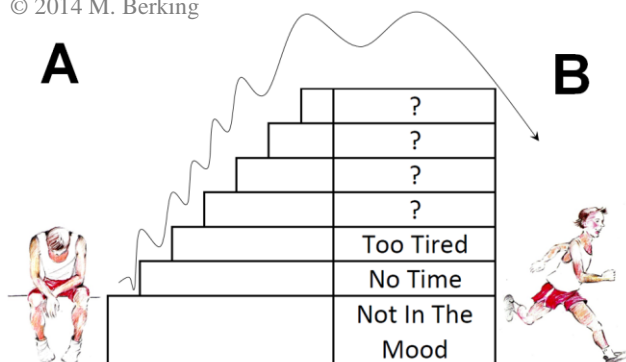
General Problem Solving Steps

- 1) Approach the problem with a positive attitude
- 2) Describe and analyze the problem
- 3) Set a goal
- 4) Brainstorm ways to achieve the goal and create a plan
- 5) Put the plan into action
- 6) Evaluate the outcome
- 7) Praise yourself for successes

Let's review these general problem-solving steps. As we look at each step we will see how the ART Skills we have learned so far, and the new one (ART Skill #7) we are learning, can help us implement these general problem-solving steps in order to effectively manage our negative emotions.

General Problem-Solving Step #1 - Approach the problem with a positive attitude

© 2014 M. Berking



Developing a positive attitude toward our problems is critical to reduce feelings of shame and inadequacy that can prevent us from dealing openly and effectively with a problem. It is important to understand that it is okay to have problems; we do not need to be ashamed of them. However, we

do have a responsibility to ourselves to work through our problems in healthy ways. ART Skills 1-5 (Muscle & Breathing Relaxation, Nonjudgmental Awareness, Acceptance & Tolerance, and Compassionate Self-Support) all help us develop and maintain a positive attitude toward the “problem” of persistent, challenging emotions.

General Problem-Solving Step #2 - Describe and analyze the problem

Regardless of the type of problem you want to solve, you first need to understand what the problem is and how it is maintained. With the help of ART Skill #6 (Analysis of Emotions), you can develop a better understanding of a problem involving unwanted emotions. The information gained from the analysis forms the basis for effectively modifying an emotion.

General Problem-Solving Step #3 - Set a goal

The next step in the general problem-solving model is to set a goal for resolving the problem. Sometimes we spend so much time trying to get rid of a problem we become completely focused on it. If this focus leads to ruminating on its causes and consequences, we are likely to get stuck in the problem. Instead, at some point is important to proceed from thinking about the problem to setting a goal for resolving it. This is where our new skill, ART Skill #7 - Modifying Emotions, comes into play. ART Skill #7 begins with setting a goal to experience a more positive emotion that we would like to feel instead of the one that is causing us problems. We will discuss ART Skill #7 in more detail after we finish reviewing the general problem-solving model.

General Problem-Solving Step #4 - Brainstorm ways to achieve the goal and create a plan

After setting a goal for resolving a problem, the next step is to brainstorm various ways to achieve the goal and then to use the most appropriate options to create a plan. When we are in the middle of a problem, it often feels as though we have very few options for getting out of the mess we are in. However, there are usually many options available to us that we have not discovered, because we have not intentionally sought them out. Sifting through the options and creating a plan to achieve our goal gives us the best chance of efficiently and effectively

resolving our problem. ART Skill #7 - Modifying Emotions provides a step-by-step process that can be used to build a thoughtful plan to achieve the goal of modifying a challenging emotion.

General Problem-Solving Step #5 - Put the plan into action

Plans in and of themselves do not solve problems. A plan that we have developed must be implemented in order to achieve our goal of resolving a problem. This requires courage and motivation to take the necessary steps to achieve a goal.

General Problem-Solving Step #6 - Evaluate the outcome

After the plan has been put into action, it should be evaluated to see if it has been successful in achieving the goal. If the goal has in fact been achieved, the plan was successful! If the goal has *not* been achieved, it might be helpful to put more effort into implementing the plan, or maybe the plan needs to be modified to achieve the desired goal. If neither of these strategies is successful, thoughtful consideration should be directed at deciding whether or not the goal is attainable. If the goal is determined to be unattainable, the goal can be modified. When trying to modify an emotion, sometimes it can be helpful to change the original goal to “acceptance of the current negative emotion” and flexibly switch from using ART Skill #7 (Modification of Emotions) to using ART Skill #4 (Acceptance and Tolerance).

General Problem-Solving Step (Step #7) - Praise yourself for successes

The final step in the general problem-solving model is to praise yourself for any and all types of successes that have occurred while addressing the problem. While it is important to remember to praise yourself in the final stage of the problem-solving model, it is also helpful to look for successes and to praise yourself during all of the steps of the general problem-solving model. The more difficult it is to modify an emotion, the more important it becomes to praise yourself solely for trying.

To summarize, the general problem-solving model can be used to solve any type of problem, and the ART Skills can help us implement the steps of the problem-solving model to resolve

persistent, challenging emotions. ART Skill #7 - Modifying Emotions can specifically help us work through the final steps of the problem-solving model.

ART Skill #7 utilizes the Modifying Emotions Worksheet as a guide. The Modifying Emotions Worksheet uses the information learned from the steps in the Analyzing Emotions Worksheet to explore various ways a negative emotion could be modified.



Prompting Situation

How can I change the situation?

2

Preceding Emotional Vulnerability

How can I improve my physical and emotional health?

3

**Needs
Goals
Desires
Expectations**



Attention, Interpretation & Evaluation

How else can I look at this situation?

4

Are other needs, goals, etc. really more important?
Can I reduce the significance of this need, goal, etc. to a lower level of significance?

5

What would be a new more adaptive pattern?
What can I call this new pattern?

6

Old Response Pattern

Emotion in the Body

How can I foster changes in my body that would trigger the target emotion?

7

Emotion

1

Secondary Emotion

Can I change how I think about the emotion (in order to feel better about the emotion)?

8

9 Behavior

Effective change process:

1. Identify target feeling
2. Brainstorm ideas about how to activate target feeling
3. Make a plan
4. Put plan into action
5. Success: Reward yourself

Strategy #1 (Use the Blues) – Identify the helpful actions suggested by the emotion and then implement them.

Strategy #2 (Opposite Action) – Identify the unhelpful action suggested by the emotion and then engage in the opposite behavior.

Strategy #3 (Distraction) – Do something pleasurable to distract yourself. The goal is distraction, NOT avoidance!

Failure / Partial Success:

1. Reward yourself for trying!
2. Try more of the same
3. Try other strategies
4. Change target or Accept & Tolerate

Let's go through the steps of the worksheet. To explain the steps, I will use the same hypothetical situation that was used to explain the steps for Analyzing Emotions in the previous module. If you remember, in this situation, my boss told me to increase my sales by 10%.

The Modifying Emotions Worksheet begins with setting a goal. Setting a goal using the Modifying Emotions Worksheet involves selecting a *target* emotion, which is how a person would rather feel. The target emotion must be realistically possible to achieve. Examples of *unrealistic* target emotions include wanting to feel "completely calm" before an important job interview or "happy" immediately after something unfortunate happens. A realistic target emotion can provide motivation for changing a negative emotion. It also clarifies the question, "What exactly am I working toward?" and guides decisions on how best to achieve the target emotion.

The target emotion may simply be a reduction in the intensity of the present negative emotion. For example, someone who is feeling "extremely anxious" could realistically set a target emotion of "slightly anxious." Since it is most helpful to form *positive* goals, it is best to combine goals that simply reduce the intensity of a negative emotion with a positive goal of experiencing a positive emotion. For example, the person who is feeling "extremely anxious" could make a target emotion of "less anxiety and more peace." Other examples include "less tension, more relaxation" and "less fear, more courage."

If you remember, during the analysis of my emotion in the hypothetical situation, I identified that I felt "anxious." I may decide that for my target emotion, I would like to decrease the amount of anxiety I feel (i.e., "less anxious"). I may also want to add a goal of experiencing a positive emotion to my original target emotion of "less anxious," so I could add something like "more calm." My target emotion, therefore, would be "less anxious, more calm," which I would write in Box #1 of the worksheet.

In the next step of the Modifying Emotions Worksheet, we think of ways we could change the situation (identified in our analysis as the situation that originally triggered our negative emotion), which would facilitate our current target emotion. For example, using my hypothetical situation, I could write "quit my job" in Box #2. How else could I change the situation in order to become "less anxious, more calm?" What other ideas do you have?

Next, we think of ways to improve our physical and emotional health, so we are less likely to experience the negative emotion we identified in our analysis and more likely to experience our target emotion. For example, in Box #3 I could write something like “improve my diet,” “exercise,” or “spend time with friends.”

In the next step, we review from our previous analysis how we appraised the situation at the time, and we consider all of the ways we could appraise the situation differently that would help us achieve our target emotion. For example, in Box #4, I could write, “My boss thinks I am up for the challenge. It would not be hard to increase my sales by 10%.” I could also write, “My boss is just having a bad day. My job is not really in jeopardy.” These modified appraisals would likely lead me to feel my target emotion of “less anxious, more calm.”

In the following step of the worksheet, we explore ways we can reduce the importance of our needs, goals, desires, and expectations (identified in our analysis) that originally facilitated the negative emotion. One way to do this is to critically examine why we consider the needs, goals, etc. that are related to the negative emotion to be so important. Maybe we have overestimated the importance of these goals. It could be that while it would be disappointing for me to lose my job, it would not actually be as catastrophic as it feels it would be. In Box #5, I could write “maybe losing my job would not be a catastrophe.”

Another way to reduce the importance of our needs, goals, etc., which originally triggered the negative emotion, is to set new goals that *can* be attained in the problematic situation. For example, I may choose to set new goals for myself in Box #5, such as “being a good father” or “living an exciting life.” I could attain both of these goals even if I lose my job. In fact, losing my job would actually help me attain these goals. If I am able to refocus on these new goals, the situation becomes less threatening and may be actually viewed as a good opportunity. This reorientation of my goals would foster my target emotion of “less anxious, more calm.”

In the next step, we check to see if our negative emotion is part of an old response pattern that we labeled during the analysis process. If the negative emotion is in fact part of a response pattern, we can brainstorm new, more positive patterns we could begin instead. For example, if my anxiety was part of an old response pattern to difficult situations in which I typically believe, “Bad things are going to happen to me!”, I could try to come up with a new pattern I would rather experience instead that would foster my target emotion. Then I would attempt to

label this new pattern. This new pattern may be that when faced with difficult situations I choose to believe, “I am a survivor!” I would write the label for this new pattern, “I am a survivor!” in Box #6.

In the next step, we review from our previous analysis how our emotion was expressed in our body. We then look at how we can make changes in our body that would likely trigger the target emotion. For example, I could write “muscle and breathing relaxation to induce feeling “less anxious, more calm” in Box #7.

In the following step, we review our analysis for the ways we evaluated our negative emotion in unhelpful ways. We then think of ways we could evaluate the negative emotion differently that would foster positive secondary emotions and would facilitate our target emotion. For example, I could remind myself that the anxiety I felt in my situation is a good thing in that it keeps me from overlooking the threat of being fired. Thus, in Box #8 I may choose to write, “My anxiety is helpful, since it alerts me to the risk of losing my job. It encourages me to take steps to ensure this does not happen.” This new evaluation could lead to feeling grateful for my anxiety and help me achieve my target emotion of “less anxious, more calm.”

In the final step of the worksheet, we review, in our previous analysis, the impulses to act that were triggered by our negative emotion. We then brainstorm other behaviors we could implement instead that would likely trigger our target emotion. Strategies to brainstorm helpful behaviors include:

- 1) **Strategy #1 (Use the Blues)** - Identify the *helpful* behavior the emotion suggests and then engage in this behavior (e.g., Listening to the urgency in my anxiety, I decide to call a few old business contacts to make some sales deals, which would help me feel “less anxious, more calm”).
- 2) **Strategy #2 (Opposite Action)** - Identify the *unhelpful* behavior the emotion suggests and then do the opposite. (e.g., Even though my anxiety prompts me to rush around my office I will intentionally slow down and take my time in order to “reduce my anxiety and experience more calm”). This strategy is a key component of dialectical behavior therapy.
- 3) **Strategy #3 (Distraction)** - Do something pleasurable to distract yourself (e.g., I decide to take a walk outside.) Remember that the intent of doing something

pleasurable is distraction, NOT avoidance! Distraction is an effective emotion regulation technique that intentionally directs attention away from a negative emotion while still *being willing* to experience the negative emotion if necessary. On the other hand, avoidance is used when a negative emotion is feared and there is an *unwillingness* to experience it. While distraction can reduce a negative emotion, avoidance paradoxically intensifies and maintains it.

Having explored these three behavioral strategies to achieve my target emotion, I would write down a few options in Box #9.

Ideally, we have brainstormed multiple options for each of the steps on the Modifying Emotions Worksheet. We then select the idea or ideas from each step that have the highest chance of success at achieving our target emotion by circling these options on the worksheet. Finally, we number the options on the worksheet in the order in which we intend to carry them out.

By selecting the brainstorming options that have the highest chance of success and determining the order for implementing the options, we have created our very own personalized emotion modification plan. However, the process is not quite finished. The plan must be implemented, and after the plan has been put into place, it should be evaluated.

The plan is evaluated by determining the degree to which the target emotion has been achieved. If the target emotion has in fact been achieved, the plan was successful. In this case, we should appreciate all of our hard work! If the goal was NOT achieved or only partially achieved, it is important to remember not to give up. The following steps can help deal constructively with setbacks:

- 1) Reward yourself for trying!
- 2) Keep working the same plan with increased intensity.
- 3) Modify the plan; try other strategies.
- 4) Modify the target emotion. Maybe make “Acceptance & Tolerance” (ART Skill #4) the goal.

The final step in the Modifying Emotions Worksheet is to praise yourself for any and all types of successes that have occurred during the modification process. Praising ourselves for

successes gives us the encouragement we need to continue to work hard to modify our emotions.

Praising ourselves for successes gives us the encouragement we need to continue to work hard to modify our emotions.

Try using the Modifying Emotions Worksheet to modify an emotion that you have recently experienced. Remember to start by analyzing the emotion with the Analyzing Emotions Worksheet and then use the information from the worksheet to complete the Modifying Emotions Worksheet. You can also practice the steps of the modification process by listening to the audio file of ART Sequence Exercise #6. The written version of ART Sequence Exercise #6 can be found in the appendix.

10. Closing Words

During this training you have learned a lot about how our brains and bodies work, and the roles they play in our emotions. You have learned the seven ART Skills that can help you manage your emotions. You have also learned how to chain these skills together to form the ART Sequence. The ART Sequence provides an organizing step-by-step process to help you implement the ART Skills. The ART Skills and the ART Sequence can be practiced at home using the audio exercises. Remember, these skills must be practiced to become effective emotion regulation tools.

When working through the ART Sequence in a real-life situation, you may find it helpful to cue yourself with a phrase such as “To change how I feel, I will ... ”

- take a few moments to relax my muscles. (ART Skill #1)
- calmly and consciously breathe in and out a few times. (ART Skill # 2)
- observe what is happening within me, without judgment. I will try to label my emotions as specifically as possible. (ART Skill #3)
- accept my emotions as they are occurring in the moment. I am aware that emotions are not permanent and that I can tolerate unpleasant emotions for a time. (ART Skill #4)
- actively support myself in a compassionate and caring way. (ART Skill #5)
- constructively analyze why I feel the way I do (ART Skill #6), and
- identify how I want to feel and switch to a problem-solving mode to modify my emotions. (ART Skill #7)

It works best at first to go through the entire ART Sequence when applying the ART Skills to a challenging emotion. Later, when you are more comfortable with all of the ART Skills and the ART Sequence, you may begin to pick and choose which skills are most helpful for you. You may also decide the skills in the ART Sequence are more helpful for you in a different order. Again, please become very familiar with the ART Skills and applying the ART Sequence in its entirety and in its original order before you begin making adjustments to it. It is very common to become distracted as you are working through the ART Sequence. When this occurs, utilize ART Skill #3 (Nonjudgmental Awareness), by noticing what has occurred (e.g., “I am planning, worrying, thinking, etc.”), and then gently shift your attention back to the ART Sequence.

While emotions are the “spice of life,” we are wise to practice ways to manage them skillfully in times of distress in order to maintain good health and well-being. Our hope is that the skills you have learned during this training will help you to do so in a life-long pursuit of growth and wellness.

Appendices

ART Sequence Exercise #1	72
ART Sequence Exercise #2	75
ART Sequence Exercise #3	80
Exercise of Gratitude	83
ART Sequence Exercise #4	85
ART Sequence Exercise #5	89
ART Sequence Exercise #6	93

ART Sequence Exercise #1

Sound of the meditation bell

Find a comfortable posture in which you can sit for a while without difficulties. Make sure that your feet are flat on the ground and that your back is properly supported. You can put your hands on the armrests or on your thighs. Close your eyes or focus on a point in the room. Allow yourself permission to take this 15-minute break in order to relax, build some strength, and recharge your batteries. Relax your muscles. Breathe in deeply and slowly and consciously exhale as long as possible and then for 3 seconds more, letting go of all the tension you have gathered during the day ... as much as possible at this given moment. (5 s pause)

Then bring your attention to your hands and arms. Now tense the muscles in your hands and arms by clenching your hands into fists. Angle your fists inward. Angle the forearms toward your upper arms, and pull the fists toward your shoulders so that the shoulder muscles are tensed as well. Feel the tension in your hands and arms. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Pay attention to your muscle tension. Hold the tension (3 s pause), and then release the tension very slowly with the next long out-breath. Let the muscles relax. Release your arms back to a resting position, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. Be aware of even the smallest changes you can perceive as you now release your muscles more and more. (15 s pause)

Now bring your attention to your hands and arms again. Tense these areas again by clenching your fists, angling them inward, angling your forearms toward your upper arms, and pulling the fists toward your shoulders so that the shoulders are tensed again. Feel the tension in your hands and arms. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Pay attention to your muscle tension again. Hold the tension (3 s pause), and release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Let the muscles relax. Release your arms back to a resting position, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. Be aware of even the smallest changes you can perceive as you now release your muscles more and more. (15 s pause) Breathe calmly and regularly, and feel how each muscle relaxes more and more with every out-breath ... how the pleasant feeling of relaxation expands more and more. (15 s pause)

Continue by bringing your attention to your face. Now tense all the muscles in your face by clenching your teeth together, pulling the corners of your mouth outward, and pressing your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Carefully squeeze your eyes shut and furrow your eyebrows very slightly. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Feel the tension in your face. Hold the tension (*3 s pause*), and release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Let the muscles in your face relax, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. (*15 s pause*)

Then bring your attention back to your face. Again, tense all the muscles in your face by clenching your teeth, pulling the corners of your mouth outward, and pressing your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Carefully squeeze your eyes shut and furrow your eyebrows very slightly. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Feel the tension in your face. Hold the tension (*3 s pause*), and release it very slowly with the next long out breath. Let the muscles in your face relax, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. (*5 s pause*) Breathe calmly and regularly and feel how the muscles relax with every long and conscious out-breath ... more and more—how the pleasant feeling of relaxation expands more and more and becomes deeper and deeper. (*15 s pause*)

Continue by bringing your attention to your neck and back. Tense your neck by pulling your shoulders as near to your ears as possible. Then tense your upper and lower back by pulling your shoulders as far back as possible and simultaneously tilting your hips forward and slightly arching your back. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Feel the tension in your neck and back. Hold the tension (*3 s pause*), and then release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Let the muscles relax, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. (*15 s pause*)

Now return your attention again to your neck and back. Again, tense your neck by pulling your shoulders as near to your ears as possible. Then tense your upper and lower back by pulling your shoulders as far back as possible and simultaneously tilting your hips forward and slightly arching your back. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Feel the tension in your neck and back. Hold the tension (*3 s pause*), and then release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Let the muscles relax, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. (*15 s pause*) Breathe

calmly and regularly, and feel how the muscles relax more and more with every long and conscious out-breath ... how the pleasant feeling of relaxation expands more and more.

Now bring your attention to your buttocks, your belly, and your legs. Tense these muscles by pressing your buttock cheeks together while straightening your legs in front of you and slightly lifting your feet off of the floor. Also, point your feet downward. Feel the tension in your buttocks, your belly, and your legs. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Feel the tension. Hold the tension (*3 s pause*), and then release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Release your legs back to a resting position. Let your muscles relax, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. (*5 s pause*)

Now bring your attention back to your buttocks, your belly, and your legs. Tense the muscles again by pressing your buttock cheeks together while straightening your legs in front of you and slightly lifting your feet off of the floor. This time, point your feet back toward your face. Feel the tension in your buttocks, your belly, and your legs. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Feel the tension. Hold the tension. (*3 s pause*) Then release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Release your legs back to a resting position. Let your muscles relax, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. (*5 s pause*) Breathe calmly and regularly, and feel how the muscles relax more and more with every out-breath ... how the pleasant feeling of relaxation becomes deeper and deeper. (*15 s pause*)

Now take some time to enjoy the feeling of relaxation ... to rest ... and to gain new strength. (*30 s pause*) And now, when you are ready ... slowly ... at your own pace ... bring your attention back from the relaxation exercise by breathing in deeply, stretching and flexing your body, opening your eyes, and lightly tapping on your thighs a few times so that you become fully awake again.

Sound of the meditation bell

ART Sequence Exercise #2

Sound of the meditation bell

Find a comfortable posture in which you can sit for a while without difficulties. Make sure your feet are flat on the ground and that your back is properly supported. You can put your hands on the armrests or on your thighs. Close your eyes or focus on a point in the room. Allow yourself to take a break right now in order to relax, build some strength, and recharge your batteries. Relax your muscles. Breathe in deeply and slowly and consciously breathe out, and let go of all the tension you have gathered during the day ... as much as possible at this given moment. (5 s pause)

Now bring your attention to your hands and arms. Tense the muscles in your hands and arms ... clench your hands into fists ... angle your fists inward ... angle the forearms toward your upper arms ... and pull your fists toward your shoulders, so that the shoulder muscles are tensed as well. Feel the tension in your hands and arms. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Pay attention to your muscle tension. Hold the tension (3 s pause), and now release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Let the muscles relax. Release your arms back to a resting position, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. Be aware of even the smallest changes you can perceive as you release your muscles more and more. (15 s pause)

Now bring your attention to your hands and arms again. Tense these areas again by clenching your fists, angling them inward, angling your forearms toward your upper arms ... and pull your fists toward your shoulders, so the shoulders are tensed. Feel the tension in your hands and arms. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Pay attention to your muscle tension again. Hold the tension (3 s pause), and now release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Let the muscles relax. Release your arms back to a resting position, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. Be aware of even the smallest changes that you can perceive as you now release your muscles more and more. (15 s pause) Breathe calmly and regularly, and feel how each muscle relaxes more and more with every out-breath ... how the pleasant feeling of relaxation expands more and more. (15 s pause)

Continue by bringing your attention to your face. Now tense all the muscles in your face by clenching your teeth, pulling the corners of your mouth outward, and pressing your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Carefully squeeze your eyes shut and furrow your eyebrows very slightly. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Feel the tension in your face. Hold the tension (*3 s pause*), and now release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Let the muscles in your face relax, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. (*15 s pause*)

Then bring your attention back to your face. Again, tense all the muscles in your face by clenching your teeth, pulling the corners of your mouth outward, and pressing your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Carefully squeeze your eyes shut and furrow your eyebrows very slightly. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Feel the tension in your face. Hold the tension (*3 s pause*), and now release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Let the muscles in your face relax, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. (*5 s pause*) Breathe calmly and regularly and feel how the muscles relax more and more with each long, conscious out-breath—how the pleasant feeling of relaxation expands more and more and becomes deeper and deeper. (*15 s pause*)

Continue by bringing your attention to your neck and back. Tense your neck by pulling your shoulders as near to your ears as possible. Then tense your upper and lower back by pulling your shoulders as far back as possible and simultaneously tilting your hips forward and arching your back. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Feel the tension in your neck and back. Hold the tension (*3 s pause*), and now release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Let the muscles relax, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. (*15 s pause*)

Now return your attention again to your neck and back. Tense your neck again by pulling your shoulders as near to your ears as possible. Then tense your upper and lower back by pulling your shoulders as far back as possible and simultaneously tilting your hips forward and arching your back. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Feel the tension in your neck and back. Hold the tension (*3 s pause*), and now release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Let the muscles relax, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. (*15 s pause*) Breathe calmly and

regularly, and feel how the muscles relax more and more with each long and conscious out-breath ... how the pleasant feeling of relaxation expands more and more.

Now bring your attention to your buttocks, your belly, and your legs. Tense the muscles there by pressing your buttocks cheeks together, while straightening your legs in front of you and slightly lifting your feet off of the floor. Also, point your feet downward. Feel the tension in your buttocks, your belly, and your legs. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Feel the tension. Hold the tension (*3 s pause*), and now release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Release your legs back to a resting position. Let your muscles relax, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. (*5 s pause*)

Now bring your attention back to your buttocks, your belly, and your legs one more time. Tense the muscles again by pressing your buttocks cheeks together, while straightening your legs in front of you and slightly lifting your feet off of the floor. This time, point your feet back toward your face. Feel the tension in your buttocks, your belly, and your legs. Release all other muscles in your body. Keep on breathing. Feel the tension. Hold the tension (*3 s pause*), and now release it very slowly with the next long out-breath. Release your legs back to a resting position. Let your muscles relax, and be aware of the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel now. (*5 s pause*) Breathe calmly and regularly, and feel how the muscles relax more and more with each out-breath ... how the pleasant feeling of relaxation becomes deeper and deeper. (*15 s pause*)

Now allow yourself to switch into the mode of nonjudgmental awareness. Focus your attention on the sensation of your breathing in your lower abdomen. Do not try to control your breathing; simply observe it. If it is shallow, it is shallow. If it is deep, it is deep. That's fine—just observe it. In order to help you focus on your breathing, you may mentally say “in” when breathing in, and “out” when breathing out. However, try to concentrate on the sensation of breathing with at least 80 % of your awareness. (*20 s pause*) If you realize that you get distracted or that other thoughts cross your mind, make a short mental note, such as “thinking” or “planning” and compassionately bring your attention back to your breathing. If you start to get angry at yourself for constantly getting distracted, again just make a short mental note, such as “Ah, there is anger” or simply “anger,” and gently return to the observation of your breathing. Also, when you hear noises or feel distracting body sensations,

just allow yourself to be aware of them, make a mental note such as “noises” or “sensations,” and then return your attention to the sensation of your breathing. Bringing your attention back to the physical sensation of your breathing, while compassionately supporting yourself as you do this over and over again, is the very core of the exercise. Try practicing this now for the next 3 min. (3 min pause)

Now release your attention from your breathing. Broaden your awareness and focus on what body sensations you can feel in this given moment. Make a short mental note of what you can feel in your body. For example, “There is warmth in my hands. There is tension in my forehead,” and so on. Just observe your sensations and briefly describe them without evaluating them. (15 s pause) Now allow yourself to focus on the sounds you can hear. What sounds can you hear coming from your left side? (5 s pause) What sounds can you hear coming from your right side? (5 s pause) What sounds can you hear behind you? (5 s pause) What sounds can you hear in front of you? (5 s pause) Now focus on what you can smell. If you can’t smell anything, just focus on the sensation of your breathing in the inner parts of your nose. (5 s pause) Now do your best to become aware of what thoughts are crossing your mind at this given moment. You might find yourself thinking “Oh no, my mind is blank. I’m not thinking any thoughts,” but that *itself* is a thought. Just allow yourself to be aware. What is the next thought that crosses your mind? (2 s pause) ... and what’s the next thought after that ... and after that? (10 s pause) Now, imagine what you would do if anything was possible. Where would you be? What would you be doing? (pause) Based on what you see in these images, what is it that you are longing for? Maybe it is some time to yourself without pressure to get something done. (10 s pause) Next, notice any impulses to act that may be present ... maybe it’s an urge to stand up or laugh. Try to put a label on these impulses. (10 s pause)

Now please shift your focus to the emotions you are experiencing right now. How do you feel in this given moment? (5 s pause) Which emotions feel the strongest right now? Which ones are less intense but are still present in the background? Try to label your feelings with short mental notes without evaluating them. Just name your emotions as accurately as possible in this moment. (10 s pause) Maybe you can also estimate the intensity of these feelings on a scale from 0 to 10. For example, “There is anxiety, and its intensity is about 8.” Take a moment to do this now. (10 s pause) Maybe you can also identify which bodily sensations go along with this feeling. For example, “There is anxiety. Its intensity is about 8, and I feel it as

tension in my forehead.” Please take a moment to label your emotions, rate their intensity, and notice any bodily sensations that go along with the emotions. Please try this with all of the emotions you are currently experiencing. *(30 s pause)*

Now slowly bring your attention back from the mode of nonjudgmental awareness into this room at your own pace by breathing in deeply, stretching and flexing your body, opening your eyes, and lightly tapping on your thighs a few times, so that you become fully alert again.

Sound of the meditation bell

ART Sequence Exercise #3

Sound of the meditation bell

Find a comfortable sitting position. Close your eyes. Exhale slowly. Relax your body, and bring your attention to your muscles. In a moment, we will begin tensing and then relaxing our muscles. (3 s pause) Now, tense the muscles in your body by doing the following: Clench your fists. Angle your fists inward. Angle your forearms toward your upper arms. Pull your fists to your shoulders. Clench your teeth. Pull the corners of your mouth outward. Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Carefully squeeze your eyes shut. Furrow your eyebrows. Pull your shoulders up and then back. Tilt your hips forward and arch your back. Press your buttocks cheeks together. Straighten and slightly lift your legs in front of you, and point your feet downward. Now hold the tension for a moment. (Slight pause) Continue breathing as calmly and deeply as possible. (Slight pause) Now, with the next out-breath ... relax your muscles. Pay attention to the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel right now. Keep breathing calmly and regularly, and let your muscles become more and more relaxed with each out-breath. (5 s pause)

Now, we will tense the muscles again, just like last time. Clench your fists. Angle your fists inward. Angle your forearms toward your upper arms. Pull your fists to your shoulders. Clench your teeth. Pull the corners of your mouth outward. Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Carefully squeeze your eyes shut. Furrow your eyebrows. Pull your shoulders up and then back. Tilt your hips forward and arch your back. Press your buttocks cheeks together. Straighten and slightly lift your legs in front of you, and this time point your feet back toward your face. Now hold the tension for a moment. (Slight pause) Continue breathing as calmly and deeply as possible. (Slight pause) With the next out-breath ... relax your muscles. Pay attention to the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel right now. Keep breathing calmly and regularly, and let your muscles become more and more relaxed with each out-breath. (5 s pause)

Now, we will start to practice nonjudgmental awareness. Focus your attention on the sensations of your breath—the way it flows ... in ... and out again ... without trying to control it. Say to yourself “in” when breathing in and “out” when breathing out, and do your best to focus on the sensation of your breathing in your abdomen. When you realize that

you're getting distracted or that other thoughts are crossing your mind, use a word to label what is happening, such as "planning," "worrying," or "remembering," and gently bring your attention back to your breathing. Every time you become aware that you are distracted, praise yourself for noticing it, and then focus on your breathing again. We'll now spend a minute simply focusing on our breathing. Remember to say to yourself, "in" ... and ... "out." When you become distracted, use a word to label what is happening such as "planning," "worrying," or "remembering," and gently bring your attention back to your breathing. (40 s pause)

Now we are going to practice shifting our focus and awareness onto other things. First, gently shift your attention from your breathing onto any sensations you are feeling in your body at the moment. (20 s pause) Now pay attention to what you are hearing at the moment. (20 s pause) Next, notice any smells you are aware of. (20 s pause) Now see what thoughts are crossing your mind. (20 s pause) Notice any desires you have right now. (20 s pause) Be aware of any emotions you are experiencing right now. Label each emotion. (5 s pause) Which of these emotions do you feel more strongly? (20 s pause) What other emotions are maybe more subdued but are still present in the background? (20 s pause) Estimate the intensity of each emotion you have labeled on a scale from 0 to 10, and become aware of how you feel these emotions in your body. (20 s pause)

Now I will guide you through the 5-Step Acceptance and Tolerance Plan to specifically address either a negative feeling that you have become aware of presently or a negative feeling that has been challenging for you in the past. Select which emotion you would like to work with. First, set a goal to accept your present emotion as much as possible, and strengthen this goal with a reason. For example, you might tell yourself, "I will work on accepting my feeling, because I need to experience my emotion before I can regulate it," or "If I fight against my feeling, I will only make it stronger." Take some time now to set a goal for yourself to accept your emotion. Also decide for yourself why this goal is important to you. (20 s pause)

Now do your best to create a positive attitude toward your feeling. For example, complete the following sentences in your head, "This feeling is helpful; it is telling me that... ." (15 s pause) "It is trying to help me to... ." (15 s pause) Next, remind yourself that you can tolerate challenging emotions, at least for a period of time. Think of ways you have been able to endure intense negative feelings in the past. Perhaps say to yourself, "I can tolerate this

feeling. I have already endured difficult feelings in the past, so I am able to tolerate my present feelings.” Take some time now to create a sentence you can believe in that reminds you why you are able to tolerate your present feelings. *(10 s pause)* Now continue by reminding yourself that feelings are not permanent. Maybe you say to yourself, “Feelings come and go, and even difficult and distressing feelings will not last forever.” Keep experimenting with this sentence until you believe it. *(10 s pause)*

Finally, take the most helpful ideas from the 5-Step Acceptance and Tolerance Plan and summarize them to create an Acceptance and Tolerance Statement. For example, you may say, “It’s okay that I feel this way. These feelings are an important part of me, and they are trying to help me by providing me with valuable information. I can tolerate them for a period of time if I have to, because I know they won’t last forever.” Take some time to create this Acceptance and Tolerance Statement for yourself, and then repeat this statement several times in your head. *(15 s pause)*

Now relax all the muscles in your body: hands, forearms, upper arms, face, neck, back, stomach, buttocks, and legs. Breathe calmly and regularly, and let your muscles become more relaxed with each out-breath. *(5 s pause)* Now slowly bring your attention back into the room at your own pace by breathing in deeply, stretching and flexing your body, opening your eyes, and lightly tapping on your thighs a few times, so that you become fully alert again.

Sound of the meditation bell

Exercise of Gratitude

Sound of the meditation bell

Find a comfortable sitting position. Close your eyes. Exhale slowly. Relax your body, and bring your attention to your muscles. In a moment, we will begin tensing and then relaxing our muscles. (*3 s pause*) Now, tense the muscles in your body by doing the following: Clench your fists. Angle your fists inward. Angle your forearms toward your upper arms. Pull your fists to your shoulders. Clench your teeth. Pull the corners of your mouth outward. Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Carefully squeeze your eyes shut. Furrow your eyebrows. Pull your shoulders up and then back. Tilt your hips forward and arch your back. Press your buttocks cheeks together. Straighten and slightly lift your legs in front of you, and point your feet downward. Now hold the tension for a moment. (*slight pause*) Continue breathing as calmly and deeply as possible. (*slight pause*) Now, with the next out-breath ... relax your muscles. Pay attention to the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel right now. Keep breathing calmly and regularly, and let your muscles become more and more relaxed with each out-breath. (*5 s pause*)

Now, we will tense the muscles again, just like last time. Clench your fists. Angle your fists inward. Angle your forearms toward your upper arms. Pull your fists to your shoulders. Clench your teeth. Pull the corners of your mouth outward. Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Carefully squeeze your eyes shut. Furrow your eyebrows. Pull your shoulders up and then back. Tilt your hips forward and arch your back. Press your buttocks cheeks together. Straighten and slightly lift your legs in front of you, and this time point your feet back toward your face. Now hold the tension for a moment. (*slight pause*) Continue breathing as calmly and deeply as possible. (*slight pause*) Now, with the next out-breath ... relax your muscles. Pay attention to the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel right now. Keep breathing calmly and regularly, and let your muscles become more and more relaxed with each out-breath. (*5 s pause*)

Now, we will start to practice nonjudgmental awareness. Focus your attention on the sensations of your breath, the way it flows ... in ... and out again ... without trying to control it. Say to yourself “in” when breathing in and “out” when breathing out, and do your best to focus on the sensation of your breathing in your abdomen. When you realize that you’re

getting distracted or that other thoughts cross your mind, use a word to label what is happening, such as “planning,” “worrying,” or “remembering,” and gently bring your attention back to your breathing. Every time you become aware that you are distracted, praise yourself for noticing it, and then focus on your breathing again. We’ll now spend a minute simply focusing on our breathing. Remember to say to yourself, “in” ... and ... “out” as you breathe. When you become distracted, use a word to label what is happening such as “planning,” “worrying,” or “remembering” and gently bring your attention back to your breathing. *(40 s pause)*

Now, gently shift your focus onto the good things in your life. Maybe begin by becoming aware that your basic needs are being met. For example, think about the food you have eaten today, and remind yourself that many people do not have enough to eat. *(15 s pause)* Now think of where you live. Remind yourself that many people in the world do not have proper housing, so this may not be something you wish to take for granted. *(15 s pause)* Think of the country you live in. Remind yourself that the safety, freedom, and daily comforts in this country do not exist in many others. *(15 s pause)* Then think of your own physical health. Remind yourself that many people suffer from extremely painful injuries or diseases and how fortunate you are not to suffer in this way. *(15 s pause)*

Now begin searching on your own for the good things in your life. Do your best to find these nuggets even if they are deeply buried under the tendency to take these good things for granted. What is going well in your life? *(15 s pause)* If you experience feelings of thankfulness, become aware of these feelings. Allow the feelings to expand and grow, since they can be an important source of positive energy and joy. *(15 s pause)*

And now at your own pace, shift your attention from your appreciation of the good things in your life to the present moment, here and now. *(5 s pause)* Focus your attention on any physical sensations occurring in your body right now. *(15 s pause)* Be aware of your breath as you breathe in ... and ... out. *(15 s pause)* As this exercise begins to close, take some time to stretch the muscles in your body, and when you are ready, you may open your eyes.

Sound of the meditation bell

ART Sequence Exercise #4

Sound of the meditation bell

Find a comfortable sitting position. Close your eyes. Exhale slowly. Relax your body, and bring your attention to your muscles. In a moment, we will begin tensing and then relaxing our muscles. (*3 s pause*) Now, tense the muscles in your body by doing the following: Clench your fists. Angle your fists inward. Angle your forearms toward your upper arms. Pull your fists to your shoulders. Clench your teeth. Pull the corners of your mouth outward. Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Carefully squeeze your eyes shut. Furrow your eyebrows. Pull your shoulders up and then back. Tilt your hips forward and arch your back. Press your buttocks cheeks together. Straighten and slightly lift your legs in front of you, and point your feet downward. Now hold the tension for a moment. (*slight pause*) Continue breathing as calmly and deeply as possible. (*slight pause*) Now, with the next out-breath ... relax all of your muscles. Pay attention to the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel right now. Keep breathing calmly and regularly, and let your muscles become more and more relaxed with each out-breath. (*5 s pause*)

Now, we will tense the muscles again, just like last time. Clench your fists. Angle your fists inward. Angle your forearms toward your upper arms. Pull your fists to your shoulders. Clench your teeth. Pull the corners of your mouth outward. Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Carefully squeeze your eyes shut. Furrow your eyebrows. Pull your shoulders up and then back. Tilt your hips forward and arch your back. Press your buttocks cheeks together. Straighten and slightly lift your legs in front of you, and this time point your feet back toward your face. Now hold the tension for a moment. (*brief pause*) Continue breathing as calmly and deeply as possible. (*brief pause*) Now, with the next out-breath ... relax your muscles. Pay attention to the difference between the tension you felt before and the relaxation you feel right now. Keep breathing calmly and regularly, and let your muscles become more and more relaxed with each out-breath. (*5 s pause*)

Now, we will start to practice nonjudgmental awareness. Focus your attention on the sensations of your breath, the way it flows ... in ... and out again ... without trying to control it. Say to yourself “in” when breathing in and “out” when breathing out, and do your best to focus on the sensation of your breathing in your abdomen. When you realize that you’re

getting distracted or that other thoughts are crossing your mind, use a word to label what is happening, such as “planning,” “worrying,” or “remembering,” and gently bring your attention back to your breathing. Every time you become aware that you are distracted, praise yourself for noticing it, and then focus on your breathing again. We’ll now spend a minute simply focusing on our breathing. Remember to say to yourself, “in” ... and ... “out.” When you become distracted, use a word to label what is happening such as “planning,” “worrying,” or “remembering,” and gently bring your attention back to your breathing. (40 s pause)

Now we are going to practice shifting our focus and awareness onto other things. First, gently shift your attention from your breathing onto any sensations you are feeling in your body at the moment. (20 s pause) Now pay attention to what you are hearing at the moment. (20 s pause) Next, notice any smells you are aware of. (20 s pause) Now see what thoughts are crossing your mind. (20 s pause) Notice any desires you have right now. (20 s pause) Be aware of any emotions you are experiencing right now. Label each emotion. (5 s pause) Which of these emotions do you feel more strongly? (20 s pause) What other emotions are perhaps more subdued but are still present in the background? (20 s pause) Estimate the intensity of each emotion you have labeled on a scale from 0 to 10, and become aware of how you feel these emotions in your body. (20 s pause)

Now take a moment to develop an Acceptance and Tolerance Statement for a negative emotion that you have become aware of presently or one that has been challenging for you in the past. For example, you might say something to yourself like, “It’s okay that I feel this way. These feelings are an important part of me, and they are trying to help me by providing me with valuable information. I can tolerate them for now, because I know they won’t last forever.” (1 min pause)

We will now begin to shift our focus onto fostering compassionate self-support. Begin by imagining a situation that was difficult for you in the past or something more recently—some situation in which you experienced negative emotions. Now do your best to visualize that you are observing yourself from above this scene. (5 s pause) What do you see as you are looking down at this scene? (brief pause) Where are you? (brief pause) What is happening that is triggering your negative emotions? (brief pause) Which negative emotions are you experiencing? (brief pause) How are your negative emotions reflected in your body posture, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.? (5 s pause) Now do your best to let the feeling of

compassion toward yourself arise within you ... a strong and warm feeling of empathy for yourself that is accompanied by the desire to help yourself and a desire to end your suffering. (5 s pause) Visualize yourself entering this scene as well, and approach yourself, who is in some way hurting in this scene. (5 s pause) Communicate to yourself that this is a difficult situation. Normalize the negative emotions, and provide reassurance by saying that you are there to support and comfort yourself (not to give advice). (10 s pause) If it seems appropriate, visualize giving yourself a physical gesture of compassion (e.g., laying a hand on your shoulder or giving yourself a hug). (10 s pause) Provide encouragement to yourself. Maybe you could say something like, “You’ve gone through a lot in the past, and you can get through this too! I’ll be with you as you work through this. We will get through this together!” (10 s pause) Give yourself a big, kind, reassuring smile. (5 s pause) Take your time as you give yourself all the support you need in this situation. (15 s pause)

Then, when the moment feels right, you can ... at your own pace ... begin mentally saying goodbye to yourself. Be aware that this is not goodbye forever. You will always be able to mentally come back to this place and provide support for yourself when needed. If there is something you want to say to yourself before parting ... feel free to do so now. (10 s pause) Now, at your own pace, bring your attention back to this room. Allow your muscles to relax. Take a deep breath, and on the exhale, allow your muscles to relax even further. (5 s pause)

You may keep your eyes closed, as we continue on, shifting our focus onto a positive experience in order to foster feelings of joy. Start by imagining a situation from the past week that was pleasant for you. Pick any pleasant situation. It does not have to be some extremely euphoric experience. Any slightly positive feeling is fine. (10 s pause) Once you have remembered a situation involving a pleasant experience, imagine you are floating above this scene observing yourself. As the observer, notice how the positive emotions are expressed as joy in your facial expression and body posture. (10 s pause) As the observer, allow this joy to arise within yourself leading to “sympathetic joy” or a feeling of happiness that you are seeing yourself happy in this scene. (10 s pause) Allow the possibility that feelings of gratitude for this joy may arise within you. (10 s pause)

Now imagine that you enter this visualized scene. Tell yourself you are happy for the positive emotions you experienced in this scene. (10 s pause) Remind yourself that positive emotions are important sources of strength and energy. Tell yourself, “My wish for you is that you may

be able to appreciate positive feelings and use the energy from these feelings to overcome difficulties and challenges in life.” (10 s pause) Give yourself another big, kind, reassuring smile. Maybe there is something you want to say to yourself before you go. If so, feel free to do so now. (10 s pause) When you are ready, say goodbye to yourself. (10 s pause) Now, at your own pace, slowly begin bringing your attention to your body again. Bring your attention to your breathing. Notice how the breath flows in and out. (brief pause) Now bring your attention from this exercise into the present moment. Stretch your body. Open your eyes, and return to the present experience of being in this room.

Sound of the meditation bell

ART Sequence Exercise #5

Sound of the bell

Find a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Allow your body to relax as much as possible. Focus your attention on your muscles. Breathe in ... and out. As you exhale, relax the muscles in your hands ... forearms ... upper arms ... face ... neck ... shoulders ... back ... belly ... buttocks ... and legs. (*slight pause*) Now focus your attention on your breathing. Breathe in ... and out. With each exhale, allow your muscles to relax even more. (*5 s pause*)

Now, shift into the state of nonjudgmental awareness by observing your breath without trying to control it. (*5 s pause*) Simply notice how it feels when you breathe in and out. (*5 s pause*) Now prepare to broaden the focus of your attention. Remember that when you realize you're getting distracted or that thoughts are crossing your mind, use a word to label what is happening, such as "planning," "worrying," or "remembering," and then gently refocus your attention. Be aware of any sensations in your body (*5 s pause*), any sounds you can hear (*5 s pause*), or any odors you can smell. (*5 s pause*) Notice what you can see even though your eyelids are closed. Maybe you see patterns or maybe you notice lighter and darker areas. (*5 s pause*) Notice what thoughts are coming into your mind (*5 s pause*), and what needs, desires, goals, or impulses to act are currently activated in your mind. (*5 s pause*) Notice what emotions or moods you are currently experiencing. (*5 s pause*) Briefly label these feelings. (*5 s pause*) Rate the intensity of your feelings on a scale from 0 to 10. Be aware of the places where you feel these emotions in your body. (*10 s pause*)

Now take a moment to develop an Acceptance and Tolerance Statement for a negative emotion that you have become aware of presently or one that has been challenging for you in the past. For example, you might say something to yourself like "It's okay that I feel this way. These feelings are an important part of me, and they are trying to help me by providing me with valuable information. I can tolerate them for now, because I know they won't last forever." (*1 min pause*)

We will now begin to shift our focus onto fostering compassionate self-support. Begin by imagining a situation that was difficult for you in the past or something more recently, some situation in which you experienced negative emotions. Now do your best to visualize that you are observing yourself from above this scene. (*5 s pause*) What do you see as you are looking

down at this scene? (*brief pause*) Where are you? (*brief pause*) What is happening that is triggering your negative emotions? (*brief pause*) Which negative emotions are you experiencing? (*brief pause*) How are your negative emotions reflected in your body posture, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.? (*5 s pause*)

Now do your best to let the feeling of compassion toward yourself arise within you ... a strong and warm feeling of empathy for yourself that is accompanied by the desire to help yourself and a desire to end your suffering. (*5 s pause*) Visualize yourself entering this scene as well, and approach yourself, who is in some way hurting in this scene. (*5 s pause*) Communicate to yourself that this is a difficult situation. Normalize the negative emotions, and provide reassurance by saying that you are there to support and comfort yourself (not to give advice). (*10 s pause*)

If it seems appropriate, visualize giving yourself a physical gesture of compassion (e.g., laying a hand on your shoulder or giving yourself a hug). (*10 s pause*) Provide encouragement to yourself. Maybe you could say something like, “You’ve gone through a lot in the past, and you can get through this too! I’ll be with you as you work through this. We will get through this together!” (*10 s pause*) Give yourself a big, kind, reassuring smile. (*5 s pause*)

Now, let’s practice the skill of analyzing a negative emotion. Maybe you would like to analyze a negative emotion that was triggered in the scene you just visualized. Maybe you would like to analyze a negative emotion from a situation in the past or even one you are currently experiencing. Select a feeling that you want to analyze. (*10 s pause*) I will guide you through the analysis process by suggesting a series of questions that you can ask yourself based on the worksheet we just completed.

Imagine that you are asking these questions of the part of you that is experiencing challenging emotions. Try to give your attention to each question. First, what situation prompted this feeling? (*10 s pause*) Did a particular emotional or physical state leave you vulnerable to this emotional reaction? (*10 s pause*) What in particular caught your attention about the situation that triggered the emotion? (*10 s pause*) Also, how did you interpret and evaluate the situation? (*10 s pause*)

Which needs, goals, desires, or expectations were associated with this interpretation and evaluation? In other words, what was at stake in this situation? (*10 s pause*) Was your

interpretation and evaluation related to ways you have commonly responded in the past during similar situations? What label could you give to these old response patterns? (10 s pause) How do you feel about having this emotion? (10 s pause) How and where do you feel this emotion in your body? (10 s pause) Do these body sensations cause the emotion to last longer or feel more intense? (10 s pause) What impulses to act are triggered by the emotion? (10 s pause) If you have already acted on these impulses, what did you end up doing? (10 s pause) What are the short-term and long-term advantages of this emotion? (10 s pause) What are the short-term and long-term disadvantages of this emotion? (10 s pause) Take some time now to review and reflect on what you have discovered in the analysis process. (30 s pause)

Now, at your own pace, bring your attention back to this room. Allow your muscles to relax. Take a deep breath, and on the exhale, allow your muscles to relax even further. (5 s pause) You may keep your eyes closed, as we continue on, shifting our focus onto a positive experience in order to foster feelings of joy. Start by imagining a situation from the past week that was pleasant for you. Pick any pleasant situation. It does not have to be some extremely euphoric experience. Any slightly positive feeling is fine. (10 s pause)

Once you have remembered a situation involving a pleasant experience, imagine you are floating above this scene observing yourself. As the observer, notice how the positive emotions are expressed as joy in your facial expression and body posture. (10 s pause) As the observer, allow this joy to arise within yourself leading to “sympathetic joy” or a feeling of happiness that you are seeing yourself happy in this scene. (10 s pause) Allow the possibility that feelings of gratitude for this joy may arise within you. (10 s pause)

Now imagine that you enter this visualized scene. Consider telling yourself that you are happy for the positive emotions you have experienced in this scene. (10 s pause) Ask yourself to consider which of your strengths and abilities contributed to these positive feelings. Maybe it was your courage to try something new that led to these positive feelings. You may want to say to yourself, “My wish for you is that you may be able to appreciate positive feelings and use the energy from these feelings to overcome difficulties and challenges in life.” (10 s pause) Now try to give yourself another big, kind, reassuring smile.

Maybe there is something you want to say to yourself before you go. If so, feel free to do so now. (10 s pause) When you are ready, say goodbye to yourself. (10 s pause) Now, at your own pace, slowly begin bringing your attention to your body again. Bring your attention to

your breathing. Notice how the breath flows in and out. (*brief pause*) Now bring your attention from this exercise into the present moment. Stretch your body. Open your eyes, and return to the present experience of being in this room.

Sound of the meditation bell

ART Sequence Exercise #6

Sound of the meditation bell

Find a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Breathe in ... and out. Exhale slowly. Relax your body, and focus your attention on your muscles. Relax the muscles in your hands ... forearms ... upper arms ... face ... neck ... shoulders ... back ... belly ... buttocks ... and legs. (*slight pause*) Focus your attention on your breathing. Breathe in ... and ... out. With each exhale, allow your muscles to relax even more. (*5 s pause*)

Now, shift into the state of nonjudgmental awareness by observing your breath without trying to control it. (*5 s pause*) Simply notice how it feels when you breathe in ... and ... out. (*5 s pause*) Now broaden the focus of your attention. Remember that when you realize you're getting distracted or that thoughts are crossing your mind, use a word to label your thoughts, such as "planning," "worrying," or "remembering," and gently refocus your attention. Be aware of any sensations in your body, (*5 s pause*) of any sounds you can hear, (*5 s pause*) or any odors you can smell. (*5 s pause*) Notice what you can see even though your eyelids are closed. Maybe you see patterns or maybe you notice lighter and darker areas. (*5 s pause*) Notice what thoughts are coming into your mind, (*5 s pause*) and what needs, goals, desires, or impulses to act are currently in your mind. (*5 s pause*) Notice what emotions or moods you are currently experiencing. (*5 s pause*) Briefly label these feelings. (*5 s pause*) Rate the intensity of your feelings on a scale from 0 to 10, and be aware of the places you feel these emotions in your body. (*10 s pause*)

Now take a moment to develop an Acceptance and Tolerance Statement for a negative emotion that you have become aware of presently or one that has been challenging for you in the past. For example, you might say something to yourself like, "It's okay that I feel this way. These feelings are an important part of me, and they are trying to help me by providing me with valuable information. I can tolerate them for now, because I know they won't last forever." (*1 min pause*)

We will now begin to shift our focus onto fostering compassionate self-support. Begin by imagining a situation that was difficult for you in the past or something more recently, some situation in which you experienced negative emotions. Now do your best to visualize that you

are observing yourself from above this scene. (5 s pause) What do you see as you are looking down at this scene? (brief pause) Where are you? (brief pause) What is happening that is triggering your negative emotions? (brief pause) Which negative emotions are you experiencing? (brief pause) How are your negative emotions reflected in your body posture, facial expression, tone of voice, etc.? (5 s pause)

Now do your best to let the feeling of compassion toward yourself arise within you ... a strong and warm feeling of empathy for yourself that is accompanied by the desire to help yourself and a desire to end your suffering. (5 s pause) Visualize yourself entering this scene as well, and approach yourself, who is in some way hurting in this scene. (5 s pause)

Communicate to yourself that this is a difficult situation. Normalize the negative emotions, and provide reassurance by saying that you are there to support and comfort yourself (not to give advice). (10 s pause) If it seems appropriate, visualize giving yourself a physical gesture of compassion (e.g., laying a hand on your shoulder or giving yourself a hug). (10 s pause) Provide encouragement to yourself. Maybe you could say something like, "You've gone through a lot in the past, and you can get through this too! I'll be with you as you work through this. We will get through this together!" (10 s pause) Give yourself a big, kind, reassuring smile. (5 s pause)

Now, let's practice the skill of analyzing a negative emotion. Maybe you would like to analyze a negative emotion that was triggered in the scene you just visualized. Maybe you would like to analyze a negative emotion from a situation in the past or even one that you are currently experiencing. Select a feeling you want to analyze. (10 s pause) I will guide you through the analysis process by suggesting a series of questions that you can ask yourself. Imagine that you are asking these questions of the part of you that is experiencing challenging emotions. Try to give your attention to each question.

First, what situation prompted this feeling? (10 s pause) Did a particular emotional or physical state leave you vulnerable to this emotional reaction? (10 s pause) What in particular caught your attention about the situation that triggered the emotion? (10 s pause) Also, how did you interpret and evaluate the situation? (10 s pause) Which needs, goals, desires, or expectations were associated with this interpretation and evaluation? In other words, what was at stake in this situation? (10 s pause) Was your interpretation and evaluation related to ways you have

commonly responded in the past during similar situations? What label could you give to these old response patterns? (10 s pause) How did you feel about having this emotion? (10 s pause)

How and where did you feel this emotion in your body? (10 s pause) Did these body sensations cause the emotion to last longer or feel even more intense? (10 s pause) What impulses to act were triggered by the emotion? (10 s pause) If you have already acted on these impulses, what did you end up doing? (10 s pause) What are the short-term and long-term advantages of this emotion? (10 s pause) What are the short-term and long-term disadvantages of this emotion? (10 s pause) Take some time now to review and reflect on what you have discovered in the analysis process. (30 s pause)

As soon as you have gained a more thorough understanding of this particular feeling, you can go one step further and encourage the part of you that is experiencing difficult emotions to practice actively modifying the problematic emotion. To modify the emotion, encourage the part of you that is experiencing the challenging emotion to follow the steps listed on the modifying emotions worksheet we reviewed together.

Visualize the worksheet (5 s pause) and begin this process by first asking yourself how you actually want to feel in this situation. What is your “target emotion?” (10 s pause) I will now guide you through a series of questions you can ask yourself in order to brainstorm ways you could achieve your target emotion. First, how could I change the situation in order to achieve my target emotion? (10 s pause) How could I improve my physical and emotional health in order to foster my target emotion? (10 s pause) In order to encourage my target emotion, could I consider the possibility that other needs, goals, etc. are really more important than the ones I currently have that are related to my situation? (10 s pause) Could I reduce the significance of my threatened need, goal, etc. to a lower level of significance in order to foster my target emotion? (10 s pause)

Which old response patterns could be modified that would encourage my target emotion? (10 s pause) What label could I use for these new response patterns? (10 s pause) Could I change how I feel about my emotion in order to foster my target emotion? (10 s pause) How could I facilitate changes in my body that would trigger the target emotion? (10 s pause) What behavior could I engage in that would cue the target emotion? (10 s pause)

Considering all of the ideas you thought of to achieve your target emotion, which ideas have the highest chance of successfully cueing your target emotion? (10 s pause) In your mind, make a specific plan of how, when, and where you will put these ideas into action. (15 s pause) Now, imagine yourself implementing the plan. Do your best to visualize yourself putting your plan into action. Imagine every single step of your plan. (20 s pause)

Now check if maybe you can already feel your target emotion appearing even a little bit. (5 s pause) If so, be aware of your success, and praise yourself. Give yourself a pat on the back. It is okay to feel proud of yourself. Remind yourself that it is important to praise yourself for any progress you have made ... or, if you did not make any progress, to praise yourself for the effort you spent trying. (5 s pause)

If you do not get closer to your target emotion, remember that you have three options. First, try the same plan with even more dedication than before. If this does not work, choose other strategies and try a different plan. If this still does not work, you can always modify your target emotion and increase your level of acceptance and tolerance.

As we prepare to end this exercise, briefly focus on any positive emotion you may have experienced while working through the emotion modification process. Do your best to become aware of even the smallest positive emotion that you may have experienced. When you have found such an emotion, gently encourage the feeling of joy to arise. Appreciate your positive feeling. Remind yourself to appreciate positive feelings such as these and to use the energy from these feelings to overcome difficulties and challenges in life. (10 s pause) Ask yourself to consider which of your strengths and abilities contributed to these positive feelings. Maybe it was your courage to try something new that led to these positive feelings. (10 s pause)

Now bring this exercise to an end by saying goodbye to yourself. Maybe there is something you want to say to yourself before you go. If so, feel free to do so now. (5 s pause) Now, at your own pace, slowly begin bringing your attention to your body again. Bring your attention to your breathing. Notice how the breath flows in and out. (brief pause) Now bring your attention back from this exercise and into the present moment. Stretch your body ... open your eyes ... and return back to the present and into this room.

Sound of the meditation bell