

SELF-REGULATION FOR MENTAL WELL-BEING

Self-regulation is the cornerstone of mental well-being, it empowers you to effectively manage your stress while establishing a foundation for healthy behaviors and relationships. This practice can be easily incorporated into your daily routine, all you need is just 5 minutes a day!

Self-regulation is the ability to monitor and manage your energy states, emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in ways that produce positive results such as well-being, loving relationships, and learning. Without it, engaging in services, activities, and following advice is challenging.

What Happens When You Are Dysregulated?

With dysregulation, your thinking, behavior, heart rate, and breathing can become erratic. Everyone experiences dysregulation at times, but it is prevalent in people who have experienced trauma.

You may experience sudden panic or depression, intense emotional reactions, or physical symptoms like numbness, clumsiness, forgetfulness, or feeling scattered. In these states, it becomes challenging to accurately perceive reality, often mistaking safe situations for threats or vice versa. Your judgment may falter, leading to repetitive mistakes.

Regulating your brain can take hours or even days once you become dysregulated. Some people may resort to semi-effective strategies like overeating carbs, smoking, drinking, or engaging in risky behaviors to expedite the process. However, when you are dysregulated, it becomes challenging to be present, productive, responsible, and maintain connections with others.

Key Signs Your Brain is Dysregulated

You feel spaced out, at a loss for words, can't remember where you are.

You feel scattered, trying to do a lot of things at once and finishing nothing.

You are in a rage.

You can't feel parts of your body — hands, mouth, face, nose, feet.

The good news is that you can re-regulate your brain. With practice and paying attention, you can notice when it's happening and identify the triggers, allowing you to take steps to re-regulate.*

IT TAKES JUST 5 MINUTES

Benefits of Self-Regulation for Your Mental Health

Improved self-esteem

Better sleep

Decreased anxiety symptoms
(i.e. panic attacks)

Lower risk of medical issues
*(i.e. heart disease,
high blood pressure)*

Improved communication
and relationships

Higher motivation

AND MUCH MORE!

Self-regulation is not about eliminating feelings like stress, anxiety, anger, frustration, fear, etc., because these are all normal human feelings. Instead, it's about being able to handle those feelings when they inevitably show up.

How to Practice Self-Regulation

If you're just getting started with implementing new self-regulation techniques into your life, be intentional about setting aside time in your day to do it. For example, you can set an alarm on your phone for 12:00 pm every day as a reminder to do a 5-minute guided meditation. Or, right when you wake up, ease your body into the day with 5 minutes of stretching.

Try different techniques and find what works best for you. After a while of consistently scheduling these self-regulation practices, they will start to feel more natural and become a familiar part of your routine.

Check out the following worksheets for different daily self-regulation ideas that you can do in just 5 minutes! Or, create your own calendar using the blank template with your favorite ways to self-regulate.

MONTH:



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Grasp your hands tightly for 5 seconds, then release and notice how they feel. Keep your attention focused on the feeling for as long as you can.	Sing along to your favorite song! Pay attention to how it makes you feel. Savor these emotions and see if they carry over throughout the day.	Set aside 5-30 minutes and turn off the television, the radio, and your phone, while giving your mind the gift of quiet.	4-4-4 breathing: Inhale for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4, then exhale for a count of 4. Repeat 4 times.	Smile at 5 random people. Intentionally making eye contact and smiling at someone you don't know can unintentionally make their day.	Fidget toys or soft things that occupy your hands are great for when you feel stressed, anxious, or need help focusing.	Take a 5-30 minute break to go outside, look up at the sky, and soak up the sunlight.
Do some spring cleaning! Remove objects in your home that might trigger negative thoughts or habits.	Think about a time or place where you were happy or having fun. What were you doing, where were you, who were you with?	Hug a family member, friend, pet, or a stuffed animal. Hugging often creates a feeling of calmness and relaxation.	5 minute dance break! Dancing reduces levels of cortisol (the stress hormone) and increases endorphins (the body's "feel-good" chemicals).	Channel your creativity by drawing, doodling, painting, or building something.	Spend 5 minutes in silence and appreciate your surroundings. Keep your eyes closed to block out stimulation and sharpen your non-visual awareness.	Add a new 5 minute activity to your bedtime routine for better sleep, like reading a book, taking a bath, or brewing a cup of noncaffeinated herbal tea.
Spend 5 minutes doing something to challenge your brain, like a puzzle, sudoku, brain teasers, crosswords, or playing an instrument.	Write down affirmations or notes that you can look at throughout your day.	Stimulate your sense of smell with a candle, essential oils, or a diffuser.	Notice 4 things in your day that generally go unnoticed. For example, the sound of children giggling, the fresh scent of soap, or the brightest flowers in your garden.	Write down things you are thankful for. Practice gratitude throughout the day, for 5 minutes at a time.	If you sit a lot for work, stand up and walk around or stretch for the last 5 minutes of every hour.	Complete one thing that's been on your to-do list that you could finish today, like scheduling your dentist appointment or putting away the laundry.
Play! As we get older, we forget how important play is. Find a fun game, bring a volleyball to the beach, or hang out with that friend you can be silly with.	Use Your vocal cords for things like humming to stimulate your vagus nerve. This helps get us out of the "fight or flight" response and into a more relaxed state.	Cross your arms over your chest and tap back and forth on your opposite shoulders with your finger tips. This "bilateral stimulation" helps calm the nervous system.	7/11 breathing: Inhale for a count of 7, and slowly exhale for a count of 11 to help regulate both respiration and heart rate and calm the sympathetic nervous system.	Place your index and middle fingertips at the temple just beside the eyes. With light pressure, begin 6 to 8 clockwise circular movements, then repeat counterclockwise.	Notice 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 sounds you can hear, 2 smells, and 1 taste. Using your 5 senses is a great way to practice grounding and mindfulness.	Sit or stand in direct sunlight within the first 5 minutes of waking up. This helps sync your circadian rhythm, giving you more energy during the day and a better night's sleep.
Take 5 minutes to text a friend. This could be a simple hello to catch up, tell them about something you did today, or send something funny and share a laugh.	Cook a new recipe, but do it mindfully. Notice all the colors, smells, textures, and tastes of each ingredient.	Give yourself a compliment for something you accomplished today, no matter how big or small.	Use your non-dominant hand in a daily activity, like brushing your teeth or using your fork. Studies show this activates both sides of your brain and increases creativity.	Do slow head movements for 1 minute each. Roll your head around clockwise, then counterclockwise, then up and down, and lastly side to side.	Listen to a 5 minute meditation before bed to ease your mind and body into falling asleep.	Read a book, a short story, or an article and let your mind be immersed in the narrative.

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