

SHIFTING YOUR GEARS: Emotional Balancing and Release Technique

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Energy release exercises can be significantly beneficial when faced with challenging emotions and dysregulation.

Most anger, anxiety, and stress that we experience are actually the result of a mind/body dysregulation in which the mind is thinking of something that does not exist in this very moment, but eliciting a physical response as if it is (i.e. emotions). Once the body and mind recognize that the mental event does not currently exist and that the body's reactivity is counterproductive, then we can effectively move back towards a state of health and balance. Here is a quick and effective technique for calming and balancing during time of dysregulation.

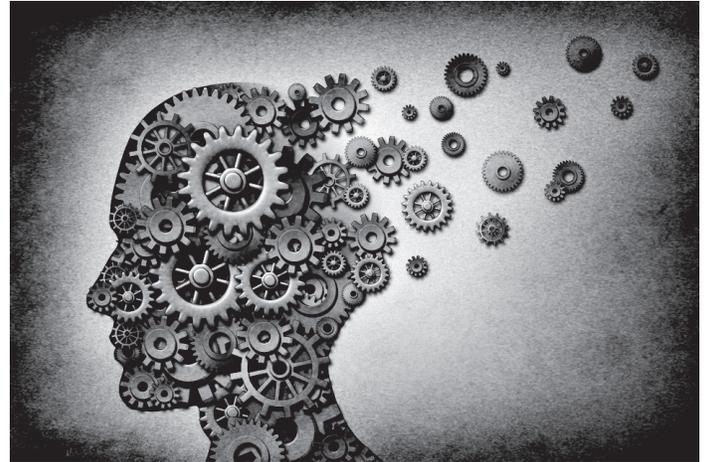
Bringing awareness of the mind/body dysregulation is the most crucial part of this process. Without awareness of our mind and body, we tend to react in unconscious survival-based patterns. My "monkey mind" drives my life when I don't catch this; and as we all well know... monkeys aren't very good drivers. Once you are aware that the mind and body are overreacting in a dysregulated manner, take the following steps to reset your system in a more adaptive way. The most important thing is awareness and taking time to practice. With practice you will become more efficient and effective in this process.

When possible find a quiet safe space. As you sit or lay down, begin by placing yourself into the perspective of the "observer." Imagine being a psychologist or a biologist observing what the body is doing with curiosity and interest. Where is tension collecting, what is the breathing like, what are muscles doing, where is uncomfortable vibration? This step in observing helps to separate you from your body that is reacting in survival mode.

After a minute or so of being the observer, focus in on your breath. Take a slower deeper breath while expanding the belly on the inhale to bring in more oxygen. Doing longer exhales than inhales while contracting the belly to help release more CO2. Ride the breath in and out. When mind chatter happens (because it will) don't judge it, don't follow it, or get upset about it. Just recognize that it is the mind doing what it does and then let it drift off. Focusing back in on the breath will help to reduce the mind chatter and wandering.

After a period of time, continue breathing the same calming way while using your imagination to collect all of the energy/-discomfort in the body into your belly during the inhale. Once collected, imagine releasing all of the energy/discomfort with your breath upon the exhale. Play around with different exhales... (blowing out birthday candles, loud sighing, etc.), doing this will enhance the process. Repeat this step a number of times while quieting/focusing the mind.

Make sure to notice and appreciate any positive changes. This appreciation and acknowledgement will help further your primitive minds responsiveness to helping your system reboot. An example might be "Thank you body and mind for trying to keep me safe. We are safe and it is OK for us to let go and relax. That's it... thank you for calming down and feeling better." It



doesn't need to be in this much detail, a quick "Good" or "That's it" will do.

The next step is adding a word or words while you exhale. The words that you say in your mind while you exhale will be more effective if they have value and at least a grain of truth to you. If not, the primitive mind won't accept it.

Words you can use are:

- Release
- It's OK.
- Let it go.
- We're safe.
- Not that big of a deal.

Say these word(s) over and over again in your mind to the part of yourself that is activated in fight/flight trying to unnecessarily protect you. I speak to this part as if it is a child that I am trying to help. I regularly call mine "Buddy" because that is what I call little boys. It is a respectful, caring, and compassionate way of addressing the part of myself that is trying to protect you. I think of it like a small dog trying to protect you by barking at a grocery bag that is floating around in the air. You wouldn't yell at the dog, you would appreciate it for trying to protect and let it know it is not necessary. When the primitive mind realizes that there is no current threat in existence, it returns to a state of calm alertness. By communicating with the primitive mind in its own language (imagination, visualization, symbols, bodily movement, breath, etc.) you will be much more successful than trying to force or power through it.

Next think of a visual or kinesthetic approach of further releasing the discomfort. Here are examples that I as well as clients have found to be helpful. Feel free to think of your own. Use whatever works.

Imagining the uncomfortable feeling/thoughts as water in a pool or bathtub. Pulling the plug, noticing the water (tension) circle round and round as it is being pulled down by gravity into the drain, seeing/feeling the tension flow into the pipes, then the river, and releasing into the ocean.

Imagine putting the discomfort into the basket of a hot air balloon and then releasing it. As it drifts further and further away, seeing it move up through the clouds, becoming smaller

and smaller as it rises further and further becoming even smaller. You can enhance the image by using your breath to further blow it into the atmosphere and into the great expanses of outer space.

Imagining it being a color that matches the discomfort and shifting the hue to a color that you would like to experience with each breath.
Waves taking out the discomfort and replacing it with better feelings.

Next, think of a word (or words) that you would like to replace the uncomfortable feeling/thoughts with. It should be something that you can relate to and can imagine. On your inhale, feel strength and energy start to fill the body as you say the positive word(s) over and over to yourself. Feel it expand and move through your bloodstream and nervous system. Examples include "peace," "I am enough," "free," "clear," "wisdom," etc.

You can also use a symbol or metaphor to focus on to enhance the process. Examples include a wild animal or insect, a place in nature, someone you know or a famous person with the desired qualities, opening to God/Source etc. to bring the desired feeling/energy.

While in this space, it can be very beneficial to open your mind up to guidance from your wiser self, spirit, God, or any other source of positive influence. It doesn't happen every time, but I've been amazed on numerous occasions with the insights and clarity of answers that have "just come to me" in this space.

The final step is to imagine taking the new feeling/energy into your future; seeing yourself successfully feeling and acting upon these qualities in a number of situations. Identifying a word that summarizes this can be helpful so that you can repeat it to yourself throughout the day or to write it on sticky notes to place around.

If you are too upset/activated to do this particular exercise, here are some alternative suggestions:
-Writing it out... (See my "Emotional Vomiting (safely)" article)

-Going for a walk where you are focusing on the outside world and breathe.
-Talking with someone who gets you and has clarity/wisdom. Not someone who will fuel your fire. Anger, anxiety, being the victim, etc. loves an audience that feeds it.

Here is an abridged outline of the steps that you can print for quick access:

Space: find a quiet safe space and position yourself in a comfortable relaxed position of either sitting or lying down.

Body: observe your body, the position, where tension lies, what your muscles are doing, how your body feels, your breath etc.

Breathe: focus solely on your breath, breathe deeply fully filling your belly on the inhale, longer exhales as you breathe out. Ride the breath.

Imagine: maintaining your breath, consolidate and collect the energy and discomfort within your body, put it into your belly and release it on your exhale.

Appreciate: show appreciation and acknowledgment for your ability to regulate your body at this time.

Exhale: maintain your breath and upon your exhales recite in your mind a chosen word phrase/affirmation.

Visualize: envision your discomfort, your congested/stuck energy leaving your body through a kinesthetic action.

Inhale: in place the removed discomforts and energy repeat on the inhale your empowering word(s).

Future: sit with this feeling as you shift your focus to envision yourself taking this new feeling/energy into your future.

*Note: I would like to give Dr. Jon Connelly, founder to Rapid Resolution Therapy, credit for some of the ideas used and inspiring this article