

To identify ahead of stressor:

What are your triggers?

- States of being & emotions - H.A.L.T.

(hungry/"horny"/hurting, anxious/angry/afraid/ashamed, lonely, tired)

- Past hurts (father/mother wounds, picked on at school, etc.)
- Fears (work stress, rejection, etc.)

What happens to your body when stressed (physiological signs)?

- Heartbeat quickens, muscles tense, palms sweat, flush of heat, etc.

In the moment self-soothing skills:

1. Be aware of what's happening in your body and recognize you're being triggered.
2. Take deep breaths.

The "4-7-8" technique is highly researched and is a natural tranquilizer to the nervous system.

- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of eight.
- This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

When a person is stressed/triggered and the heart rate goes above 95 beats per minute, the body tells the brain that survival is at stake. Essentially, the body and brain think they're about to die (or that they need to procreate to continue life) and the fight/flight/freeze (or sexual) instinct housed in the limbic system takes over. When this happens, the higher functions of the brain (reason, planning, compassion, etc.) in the prefrontal cortex shut down until the threat/stimulus is neutralized. Basically, nearly all the knowledge, love, and care for others we have goes out the window. - This is why addiction is so powerful.

You can learn all about the dangers and harms of pornography, alcohol, drugs, overeating, etc. but it's not going to mean a thing if you can't calm down. This is why developing self-soothing skills is so important!

3. Tell yourself true messages, such as: "This is not an emergency." "I am not going to die." "I do not have to react.," along with other relevant messages such as "I am accepted, loved, safe, etc."

Again, your body actually thinks it (or its progeny) is going to die when it is stressed. This is even if the stress logically wouldn't lead to death (your kid is throwing a tantrum, your spouse is upset

Self-Soothing Skills How to Deal with Stress, Bad Habits, and Addictions

with you, or you're about to go into a meeting that may go badly). Train yourself to repeat these things as you're taking deep breaths.

4. Once your heart rate is back to normal and your brain is back to calm, you no longer have to REact,
you can now decide how you want to act.

Mastering self-soothing, along with developing your own identity and healing from past wounds, are the keys to freedom from unhealthy habits and addictions.