

SELF-SOOTHING

Self-Soothing

Self-Soothing involves coping activities focused on calming the emotions and comforting oneself. It is thought to help because it regulates the nervous system and encourages the brain to produce serotonin, a calming neurochemical.

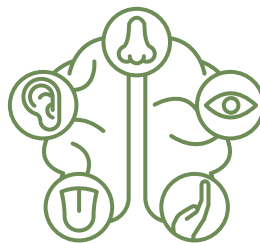
Self-soothing is personal. What is soothing for one person may not be for someone else.



The **Most Soothing Activities** typically involve:



Familiarity: Activities that are associated with pleasant memories from the past will be particularly helpful in soothing distress.



Multi-Sensory: Our limbic brain responds best when activities are multi-sensory (sound, sight, taste, touch, and smell). Pleasant activities that involve two or more senses are most soothing. E.g., walking in nature, smelling flowers, feeling the breeze, and hearing wind rustling the trees.



Repetitive Motion: Our bodies are naturally inclined towards repetitive motion, like pacing, when we are agitated. E.g., chewing gum, knitting, walking, rocking in a chair.

Adapted From: Fatter, D. (2022). Trauma Treatment Certification Training; Fatter, 2023; Moore, 2005.

ACTIVITY

Experiment with some of the self-soothing activities for 3-10 minutes each, both when you are and are not actively stress activated or dysregulated.

Pay attention to their effect on your state to learn what is the most effective for you.

- visit a favorite place or recall it in as much vivid detail as possible.
- enjoy a favorite meal.
- put on your most comfortable clothes.
- listen to favorite music.
- engage in a favorite activity from childhood or current life hobby.
- wear familiar perfume or cologne.
- make one space in a room familiar and pleasing to look at.
- wrap yourself in layers of blankets.
- listen to soothing or invigorating music.
- sing to your favorite songs while dancing.
- take a long hot bath or shower.
- take a cold shower, or use an ice pack.
- put a creamy, scented lotion on your body.
- wrap your arms around yourself for at least a twenty second hug.
- cuddle with a pet or stuffie.
- walk in nature and notice the natural scents and sounds.
- go window shopping and slow down to take in the displays.
- visualize a calm place or a happy memory.
- give yourself a hand massage.
- doodle fluid, abstract shapes and patterns.
- pay attention to your heart beating.
- do some drumming with or without an actual drum.
- walk intentionally in nature.
- do some baking and handmix things.
- rock yourself in a rocking chair.
- play fetch with the dog.
- do some dancing.
- knit, crochet, or do some other repetitive hand activity.
- let yourself have a cry.
- take a drive with the car windows rolled down.
- hum a familiar and soothing tune.
- do a sound bath meditation.
- sample flavours at an ice cream shop, slowing down to really taste them.
- count your chews while eating for several minutes.
- suck on a hard candy.
- light a candle and watch the flame.
- look at photos or pictures you enjoy.
- go to a museum or really appealing space with beautiful art or decor.
- starting upwards, relax your body from head to toe.
- stand up and shake your body for a minute.
- prepare and slowly drink your favorite soothing drink, e.g., coffee, tea, cocoa.

