

Troubleshooting Emotion Regulation Skills: When What You Are Doing Isn't Working

1

CHECK YOUR BIOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY

- **ASK:** Am I biologically more vulnerable?
Do I have untreated physical illness or distress?
Am I out of balance on eating, use of drugs, sleep, exercise?
Have I taken medications as prescribed?
- **WORK** on your PLEASE skills.
 1. Take care of physical illness and distress.
 2. Take medications as prescribed. Check if others are needed.
 3. Try again.

2

CHECK YOUR SKILLS

- **REVIEW** what you have tried.
Did you try a skill likely to be effective?
Did you follow the skill instructions to the letter?
- **WORK** on your skills.
 1. Review and try other skills.
 2. Get coaching if you need it.
 3. Try again.

3

CHECK FOR REINFORCERS

- **ASK:** Do my emotions . . .
COMMUNICATE an important message or influence people to do things?
MOTIVATE me to do things I think are important?
VALIDATE my beliefs or my identity?
FEEL GOOD?
- **IF YES:**
 1. Practice interpersonal effectiveness skills to communicate.
 2. Work to find new reinforcers to motivate yourself.
 3. Practice self-validation.
 4. Do **PROS AND CONS** for changing emotions.
(See *Emotion Regulation Worksheet 1.*)

(continued on next page)

4

CHECK YOUR MOOD

- ASK: Am I putting in the time and effort that solving my problem will take?
- IF NO:
 1. Do PROS AND CONS for working hard on skills.
 2. Practice RADICAL ACCEPTANCE and WILLINGNESS skills.
 3. Practice the mindfulness skills of PARTICIPATING and EFFECTIVENESS
(See *Mindfulness Handouts 4 and 5.*)

5

CHECK FOR EMOTIONAL OVERLOAD

- ASK: Am I too upset to use complicated skills?
- IF YES, ask: Can the problems I am worrying about be easily solved now?
 - IF YES, do PROBLEM SOLVING.
(See *Emotion Regulation Handouts 9, 12.*)
 - IF NO, practice mindfulness of CURRENT EMOTIONS.
(See *Emotion Regulation Handout 22.*)
- IF your emotions are too high for you to think straight:
 - Go to TIP skills.
(See *Distress Tolerance Handout 5.*)

6

CHECK FOR EMOTION MYTHS GETTING IN THE WAY

- CHECK FOR:
 - Judgmental myths about emotions (e.g., “Some emotions are stupid,” “There is a right way to feel in every situation”)?
 - Beliefs that emotions and identity are the same (e.g., “My emotions are who I am”)?
- IF YES:
 1. Check the facts.
 2. Challenge myths.
 3. Practice thinking nonjudgmentally.