

Surviving Distress through the Senses

Trent Durham Counselling Services

When experiencing a situation of emotional distress it can be helpful to try soothing oneself by engaging in an activity that includes one of the five senses.

Touch

1. Take your favourite, soft blanket and wrap yourself or simply enjoy how it feels on your skin.
2. Pet your animal and hold it in your lap.
3. Wear comfortable clothes and enjoy how it feels on your skin.
4. Take a shower or a bubble bath and enjoy the warm and soothing water. You can also take a cold shower if you find that more suitable.
5. Get a massage or if you don't have the time, you can massage yourself.
6. Receive a hug or give your self a hug.
7. Touch something smooth, velvety or fluffy.

Sight

1. Go to nature (it can be a park nearby) and look at the beautiful way how the sky, the trees, the grass, the benches and the people make a collage of colors and life.
2. Find pictures on the Internet of places that you find soothing to look at. It can be different cities, nature, or artistic images and pictures.
3. Go through your own pictures you enjoy.
4. Go to a museum or a gallery and enjoy the visual art presented there.
5. Watch a movie that is famous for its beautiful cinematography (like "2001 Space Odyssey"). Make sure that its story won't be something that will be difficult for you to watch.
6. Start a collection of pictures that you find pleasurable and soothing to look at, and look at them when needed.

<p>Hear</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Talk to a person that you like and whose voice makes you happy or you enjoy hearing. 2. Listen to your favorite music that usually makes you more relaxed. 3. Listen to soothing jazz, or instrumental live radio on YouTube. You might also enjoy classical music, opera or new age music (like the music of Enya). 4. Go to a park nearby and enjoy the liveliness of sounds around you (birds, wind, people chattering). 5. If you play a musical instrument or sing in your free time, you can try to do that. 6. Listen to an audio book, a podcast or a TV show that you enjoy and see if it makes you feel more relaxed.
<p>Smell</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wear a perfume or cologne whose smell you enjoy. 2. Light up a scented candle in your room. 3. Cook a meal that smells delicious to you. 4. Buy some flowers or indoor plants that you would enjoy smelling. 5. Hug a person you love whose smell makes you feel calm. 6. Go someplace where you enjoy the scent (flower shop, perfume shop, restaurant, bakery) 7. Smell a calming essential oil.
<p>Taste</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cook your favorite meal, eat it slowly and savor its taste. 2. Go to your favorite place to eat and buy your favorite meal. 3. Get some snacks or comfort food (chocolate, ice cream, potato chips) and enjoy it (but don't overdo it). 4. Make yourself a cup of coffee, tea, cocoa or anything else that you enjoy drinking (avoid alcohol). 5. Eat a fresh piece of fruit and enjoy its taste. 6. Chew gum, eat some sweets, eat something sour.

Now, you can create your own kit of items from your senses to bring with you places, if distress arises.

