

Noticing and Connecting with the Body

Noticing and connecting with our emotions can be an empowering skill to build. Often, we can become disconnected from what we think vs. what we are feeling. Therefore, the more we practice building a connection between our mind and body the more proactive we can be managing our emotions and self-regulating when situations become challenging.

The following framework is an invitation to test/learn an approach to cultivate a connection between your mind and body. The objective is not to disprove anything, but rather practice building/connecting your mind/body to experiences. You are building the mental muscle to identify/differentiate/respond to experiences as you aspire to.

Sensory exercise: 5-4-3-2-1

Notice

- 5 perform a body scan, notice the various sensations, across and within your body. (Interoception)
 - Or be creative and expose yourself, in a safe manner, to 5 different tactile experiences and notice what your body does.i.e., walk in sand/grass/dirt barefoot, wash your feet or someone else's, stand/sit in very cold water, splash your face or submerge it in cold water, hold an ice cube, squeeze a tomato/egg until smashed in your hand, etc.
- 4 images, funny/sad/anger/disgusting and notice how your body responds...
- 3 varying odors/smells and notice how your body responds...
- 2 sounds that your body responds to...
- 1 taste of something good/bad or new and notice how your body responds.

Notice how/where your body responds. In addition, try to notice the primary emotion, the physical response/stimulus, as well as the secondary emotions that you consciously/unconsciously have associated with it...

- **Primary emotions** are your initial reactions to external events. You FEEL the primary emotions in your body. A chemical reaction occurs. They are natural reactions to things around us. For example, being sad when a loved one dies, or being frustrated in traffic, are natural initial responses.
- **A secondary emotion** is when you feel or think something *about the feeling itself*. This is typically where your brain jumps into the situation and adds its opinion on the situation. For example, you may feel anger about being hurt, or shame about your anxiety. Secondary emotions increase the intensity of your reactions and can push you into destructive behaviors.

Connect

- Hold an ice cube or a couple ice cubes in your hand(s), notice your body as it might shiver or recoil, as it becomes cold in your extremities, your belly may warm up, possibly adrenaline kicks in, you may pull your arms in closer, you may get brain freeze, you may notice you smile or grit your teeth all the while holding the ice cube(s), etc.
 - Next, notice your thinking/thoughts. E.g., "that's cold, it feels like it's burning my hand!" "I'm crazy, why am I doing this?" "I want to quit, I can't hold this much longer, I suck, I can't do it.."

After you've completed the ice cube exercise take a few minutes to document the experience. Notice the wave of emotions that came/went and then what feelings followed and passed through. Even recall what was your body/mind doing leading up to grabbing one or multiple ice cubes in anticipation? Notice what/how/where throughout your body you experienced the responses.

While the experience may have felt like it lasted a while, notice how quickly the experience came and went. Where did the emotions/feelings go? Are you stuck in the emotions of the experience? I.e., still shivering? Still cold? Have any of the feelings anchored in you? I.e., "I am crazy for trying this..."

Practice

Practice the previous exercise with a range of other objects or stimuli to practice connecting the mind/body and building self-awareness and eventually self-trust.

A by-product of connecting the mind/body is that you become more comfortable and pro-active with your emotions, responses, and how to manage situations. Confidence comes as you build awareness, develop an understanding, and demonstrate a belief you can self-regulate your emotions when situations arise.