

WEEK 4

EMOTION REGULATION

*Make sure you take time to acquaint yourself with this curriculum, so you can be as engaged, energetic, and confident as possible when working with the kids!

BRAIN INJURY AND EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION

GOALS/OBJECTIVES:

This module contains information to teach participants to better understand how their brain injury is related to their emotional dysregulation (lability). This module should be utilized to help participants learn how to identify and label their emotions and develop coping and emotional regulation skills.

The primary goals of this week will be for participants to:

- Identify what occurs during their mood swings
- Better understand their emotional responses to various situations
- Practice coping skills to reduce or navigate emotional outbursts
- Provide psychoeducation on how emotional dysregulation is related to brain injury
- Facilitate discussion during group about coping with emotional dysregulation.

TIME:

Allow 1.5 hours for the session.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

A minimum of four participants is recommended.

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PREPARATION



VIDEO

Watch the following video:

<https://youtu.be/fZReF6XmphU>



HANDOUTS/MATERIALS

For trainer information on emotional dysregulation and TBI, see: <http://braininjuryeducation.org/TBI-Basics/Behavioral-and-Emotional-Impacts-of-TBI/>

Handouts (Make copies for parents, guardians and/or probation officers):

- Bodily Map of Emotions Handout
- Emotion Log
- One-Minute Breathing Space
- The Body Scan Meditation
- Befriending Fear Exercise
- Emotional Recognition & Regulation
- Take-Home Impressions (optional)

Additional Supplies needed:

- Pencils
- Bag of colored candy (M&M, Skittles, Jelly Beans, etc.)
- Colored pencils or crayons

*At the start of group take time to greet the participants, thank them for coming, ask them their names and share yours as well. Overall, you want to establish a fun and engaging environment.



WRITE

Write **Module Outline** on the whiteboard for reference by participants throughout the treatment group:

- Structure and Topic
- Applied Practice Review
- Mood Dysregulation & Brain Injuries
- Mindfulness Break
- Group Activity
- Reflection
- Applied Practice Assignment

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INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

ESTABLISH GROUP RULES

2-5 MINUTES

WRITE the following group rules on the white board for reference for participants throughout the treatment group:

1. Confidentiality
2. Respect
3. Participation

I am going to go over the rules for this group. If you have any questions about any of the group rules, please ask, and I can help to explain what that rule means.

There are 3 main rules:

The first is:

- 1. Confidentiality:** This means that what we discuss today stays in this room and is not shared with others.

That brings us to our second rule:

- 2. Respect:** Please be kind to one another, by...
 - Listening when someone else is speaking,
 - Not talking over each other,
 - And encouraging one another

The last rule is:

- 3. Participation:** We ask that you take part in the discussion. Your ideas are important to the group. At times, I may need to cut discussion short. I will tell the group when discussion time is over.

Note: As a reminder, rules only need to be reviewed in depth if there are new members who have not participated in previous weeks. Rules are discussed at the start of each group and only a brief reminder should be utilized for groups with no new members.



DISCUSSION PROMPT

What other rules does the group want to establish?

WRITE Group Rules on the whiteboard for participants to reference throughout the treatment group.

1. Confidentiality
2. Respect
3. Participation
4. Practice

*If additional rules were agreed upon, be sure to include each additional rule during this review.



ICE BREAKER

5 MINUTES

ASK participants if they have any food allergies prior handing out candy or food.

WRITE the candy colors and correlated questions for each:

- Brown: If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you choose?
- Orange: What is one of your favorite hobbies?
- Red: If you could have an endless supply of your favorite food, what would it be?
- Green: What is your favorite holiday and why?
- Yellow: If you were an animal, what would you be and why?
- Blue: What is one of your favorite songs or music genres at the moment?

TO DO: Open a small bag of colored candies. After explaining the activity to the group, the facilitator(s) should participate first as an example. The bag should then be handed to the participant on your right. Have participants continue passing the

bag around in a circle after they have chosen their two candies and shared their fun facts/answers.

Let's take a minute to get to know each other a little better. I'm going to open this bag of M&Ms and pass it around in a circle. When the bag is in your hands, please share your name with the group and then pour (not grab) two candies into your hand. Each candy color is associated with a fun question to answer before passing the bag along to the next group member. I'll start us off.



APPLIED PRACTICE REVIEW

5 MINUTES

Last week you worked on Communication Skills. You were asked to practice these skills on your own when you had a conflict with someone.

- What went well?
- What were some challenges?
- What will you do differently or the same next time?

Note: *If participants have not completed the applied practice, please ask the following questions:*

- *What led to your decision to not use the communication skills you learned?*
- *What would help you try them?*

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CONTENT



UNDERSTANDING OF MOOD SWINGS & EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS

5-10 MINUTES

Distribute Handout (page 82) and crayons/colored pencils. Review with the group to illustrate and explain how brain injury can impact an individual's ability to regulate their emotions. Discuss how participants can recognize their emotions using the Body Map of Emotions. Ask participants to identify where they feel specific emotions and to describe the sensation.

It can be difficult to figure out what emotion you're feeling, but your body gives you cues to help! Think about what your body feels like for each emotion and label it on the map.

- What happens in your body when you feel sad?
- What happens in your body when you feel angry?
- What happens in your body when you feel excited?
- What happens in your body when you feel anxious?
- What does it feel like when your emotions are getting out of control?

Share your map with your parents, team and P.O.!

Note: *If participants are struggling to engage, reassure participants that there is no wrong answer and provide applicable examples for each of these emotions to help lead discussion.*



DISCUSSION: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING EMOTIONS

5-10 MINUTES

WRITE the following bolded words on the whiteboard to facilitate ease of discussion with the participants. The following section provides information regarding common strategies for regulating emotions.

Since we've discussed some ways to physically identify emotions, let's talk about a few strategies you could use to manage those emotions.

- **Deep breathing** reduces stress hormones in your body and makes you feel calmer. Just taking a few deep breaths when your emotions feel out of control can help!
- **Distractions** can help you move your attention elsewhere when you're feeling strong, negative emotions. Distracting yourself with an activity you enjoy, and/or positive thoughts can lead to happier feelings and put you back in control.
- **Positive humor** helps regulate emotions by decreasing negative feelings and increasing positive feelings. Sharing a funny joke with a peer, watching a funny video, and trying to have more laughter during your day are easy ways to boost your mood!



DISCUSSION

- Have you used any of these strategies?
- Did they work for you?
- Why or why not?

Prompt for other approaches (healthy and unhealthy) participants have used to manage their moods. If medications are brought up, point out that it can be a helpful tool for some people and should be discussed with their treatment team.

MINDFULNESS BREAK

5 MINUTES

See Body Scan Meditation Handout (page 82-83) for an activity.

Pick the mindfulness activity based on what you think is most useful and relevant to the students in your group.

- *Now we're going to take a five-minute break.*
- *We will be doing a mindfulness activity. Mindfulness helps to bring our attention to the present and allows us to experience the world around us without judgment, worries, or a need to analyze. It's all about becoming aware of what you're feeling inside your body, what you're thinking about, and what physical sensations you're having.*

After the break is finished, encourage the participants to do mindfulness on their own if they found it useful.

*There are TONS of free apps available for download that guide meditation and mindfulness. If you found this practice helpful there are a variety of popular top-rated applications such as **Headspace**, **Mindfulness Daily**, **Aura**, and **Smiling Mind**.*

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GROUP ACTIVITY

MANAGING EMOTIONS

15 MINUTES

Hand out **Emotional Regulation Plans** (pages 88-92) and work through steps with participants.

Now we're going to create a plan for managing your emotions in the moment. Let's go through the activity together.

- Think of a situation that triggers a difficult emotion for you. It could be anything that you have noticed causes a sudden change in how you're feeling. If the situation is listed on the first section of the emotional regulation plan, you can check its box. If not, you can just write your situation at the top.
- How does that situation make you feel? Draw that feeling on the figure.
- Think of the things you might already do when you are in that emotional situation. On your handout, check all the boxes that apply.
- Let's come up with an action plan that can help you respond to the situation more calmly.
 - These can be things you do yourself or with the help of someone else. You can either check one of the listed actions or write out your own. Consider using one of the strategies we talked about today!
- Share your action plan with your parents, team and P.O.! If you had trouble identifying triggers, or a plan to help you better respond to them, they can help you with the process.

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REFLECTION & APPLIED PRACTICE



5-7 MINUTES

Handout **Emotion Log** (page 83)

We're almost out of time, but before we go, let's take a minute to reflect on the topics we've discussed today.

- I would like you to notice and log your emotions each day for the next week.
- Throughout each day, notice your emotions and their intensity. On the log, identify which emotions you feel. Feel free to write in any other emotions you may be feeling that are not listed in the "other" section.
 - It can be helpful to also note what you or someone else was doing at the time you experienced the emotion.
- At the end of each day, write down what emotional regulation strategies you used.
- Keep the handouts and action plan you so you can share them with your PO and continue to use them.



DISCUSSION

What would you like to discuss in more depth, such as a confusing topic or activity before we wrap up today?

As we mentioned at the beginning, we would love your feedback!

- What are some skills we talked about today?
- How do you feel this will/won't help you understand and manage emotions?

- What did you learn today that was most helpful?
- What were your favorite and least favorite parts of today?

Note: *If time doesn't allow for discussion, Facilitator should pass out the "Take Home Impressions" handout (found in handout section for this week). Please take your time and complete this worksheet, because it will help you to reflect on what you learned in this session. Please bring it with you to our next meeting and share your responses with your group leader.*

WEEK 4

HANDOUTS

WHERE DO I FEEL?

EMOTION LOG

ONE-MINUTE BREATHING SPACE

THE BODY SCAN MEDITATION

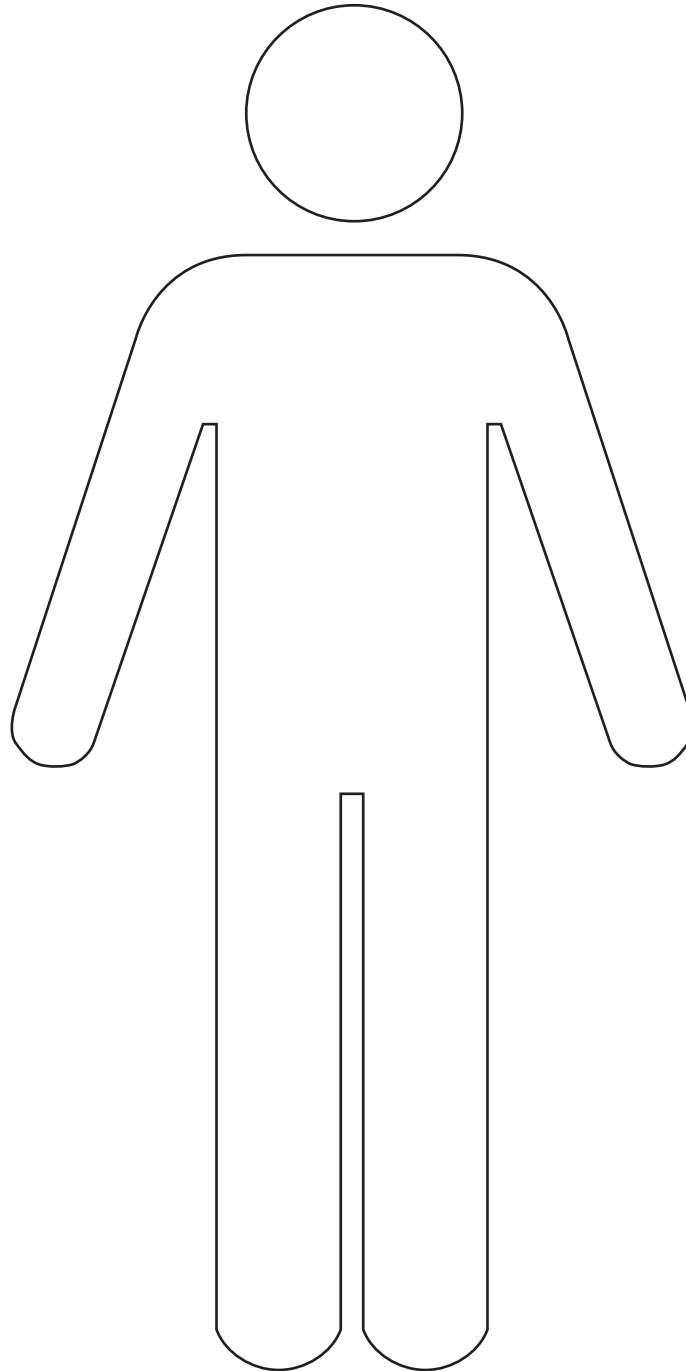
BEFRIENDING FEAR EXERCISE

EMOTIONAL RECOGNITION & REGULATION HANDOUT

TAKE-HOME IMPRESSIONS (OPTIONAL)

WHERE DO I FEEL?

We can recognize emotions by feeling them in our body. Label where you feel each emotion in your body and describe that feeling to the group. Feel free to draw on your body to help describe what happens.



EMOTION LOG

INSTRUCTIONS

Put a checkmark or color the box next to the emotions you feel daily (it can certainly be more than one!) and rank the emotion on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 = felt this emotion very little; 10 = felt this emotion an overwhelming amount). If you felt an emotion other than those listed, write the emotion in the "Other" section and rate it on a 1 to 10 scale.

	HAPPY	ANGRY	SAD	ANXIOUS	CALM	AFRAID	OTHER (SPECIFY)
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							

At the end of the week, think back to any emotion regulation skills you used (e.g. listening to music, sharing your emotion with someone else, exercise, etc.). If you used any skills, write them below:

Did you find them helpful? Why or Why not?

ONE-MINUTE BREATHING SPACE

Haven't there been times when you just needed some "breathing space"? This practice provides a way to reconnect with the "here and now". You are just tuning in to what is happening right now, without expecting anything specific. If you remember nothing else, just remember the word "STOP".

S

STOP AND TAKE STOCK

Bring yourself into the present moment by deliberately asking:

What is my experience right now?

Head: Thoughts... *(What are you saying to yourself? What images are coming to mind?)*

Heart: Feelings... *(Enjoying, not enjoying, neutral, upset, excited, sad, mad, etc.)*

Body: Sensations... *(Actual present-moment sensations, tightness, holding, lightness)*

Acknowledge and register your experience, even if it is uncomfortable

T

TAKE A BREATH

Directing awareness to breathing. Gently direct full attention to breathing, to each in breath and each outbreath as they follow, one after the other.

Your breath can function as an anchor to bring you into the present and help you tune into a state of awareness and stillness.

O

OPEN AND OBSERVE

Expanding awareness outward. Expand the field of your awareness around and beyond your breathing, so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and facial expression, then further outward to what is happening around you: sights, sounds, smells, etc. As best you can, bring this expanded awareness to the next moments.

P

PROCEED/NEW POSSIBILITIES

Continuing without expectation. Let your attention now move into the world around you, sensing how things are right now. Rather than react habitually/mechanically, you can be curious/open, responding naturally. You may even be surprised by what happens next after having created this pause.

THE BODY SCAN MEDITATION

The body scan is not for everybody, and it is not always the meditation of choice even for those who love it. But it is extremely useful and good to know about and practice from time to time, whatever your circumstances or condition. If you think of your body as a musical instrument, the body scan is a way of tuning it.

SCRIPT:

When we practice the body scan, we are systematically and intentionally moving our attention through the body, attending to the various sensations in the different regions.

Before we begin this activity, you can choose to stand or sit on the floor, whichever you'd like. Start by bringing your attention into your body.

You can close your eyes if that's comfortable for you.

Notice your body seated or standing. Feel the weight of your body in your seat, or your feet firmly grounded to the floor. Stack your ribs over your waist, and your head and shoulders over your ribs so that your body is aligned.

Take a few deep breaths. Bring your attention to your breath. Feel your lungs expand and lift your ribs on the inhale and feel them relax and drop down again as you exhale.

As you continue to take deep breaths, bring in more oxygen to enliven your body. Notice it filling you up and giving you energy while also relaxing you. And as you exhale, hold on to that sense of relaxation throughout your body.

There might be moments throughout this activity where your mind wanders or your attention leaves your body. That's okay. Remind your thoughts where you want them to be and gently bring them back without judgment.

Notice your feet on the floor, the sensations of your feet touching the floor. The weight and pressure, vibration, temperature. If you're seated, notice your legs and heels pressed into the floor. Maybe your hands are touching the floor too.

Bring your attention to your stomach area. Feel free to stretch your arms above your head. Expand your stomach and feel your muscles appreciate the stretch. Now relax your arms back down, notice any newfound softness around your stomach.

Notice your hands. Are they tense or tight? See if you can allow them to soften. Take a moment to massage your hands, feel them warm up and release any tension they might have.

Notice your neck and shoulders. Are they tense? Release that stress by taking a deep, mindful breath and allowing them to soften. Maybe roll your shoulders forward a few times, and then backward. Take a moment to stretch your neck to one side and feel your opposite shoulder drop a bit more. Switch sides. Drop your head down and feel the back of your neck appreciate that stretch.

Notice the muscles in your face now. Are your temples tight? Your jaw? Scrunch up your face, make the weirdest face you can, and then relax. Feel your jaw loosen, your mouth might even fall open a little bit. You can do this a couple more times if that's helpful. If there is still tension in any part of your face, take a moment to massage them with your fingertips. Appreciate the relaxation and warmth you feel.

Now, open your eyes and take in the space around you.

What do you hear? What do you see? What do you feel?

What feelings or emotions does this bring out in you? Allow yourself to experience any emotions or thoughts you are having. Let them come in, and then feel them go past you. You don't need to become attached to these emotions. Let them go. You experience emotions, but you are **not** your emotions.

Reconnect with your breath again.

Deep breaths in.... And out.

Be aware of your whole body as best you can. Take a moment to appreciate the relaxation your body has given you, and the new energy you have. Take one more deep, energizing breath. And then when you're ready, stretch out your body one last time and come back to the group.

BEFRIENDING FEAR EXERCISE

This next exercise uses the mindfulness of breathing exercise and incorporates promises on the in-breaths and out-breaths.

When we are aware that what we are feeling is fear, we say to our fear:

'Breathing in: **'I know you are there my fear.'**

'Breathing out: **'I will take care of you.'**

We simply practice this over and over. We may also practice with our anger, or loneliness.

EMOTIONAL RECOGNITION & REGULATION HANDOUT

EXERCISES FOR YOUNGER CLIENTS

THE FEELING EXERCISE

Collect a number of interesting objects such as feathers, putty, stones, or anything else that might be interesting to hold. Give each child an object and ask them to spend a minute just noticing what it feels like in their hand. They can feel the texture, if their object is hard or soft, and the shape. Afterwards, ask the children to describe what they felt. With bigger groups, pair children off to take turns completing the exercise together.

THE SEEING GAME

Ask the children to spend one minute silently looking around the room. Their goal is to find things in the room that they've never noticed. Maybe there are some big things like a poster or a picture, or just little details like cracks in the ceiling or an interesting pattern on the door. After the minute is up ask the kids to share the most interesting new things they noticed.

THE FIVE SENSES EXERCISE

Take the children outside if the weather is nice and have them lie silently in the grass. Begin to call out each of the five senses in turn (sight, smell, sound, taste, touch), and ask the children to notice everything they can with that particular sense, until you call out the next one. This exercise can also work well on walks, and in a number of other situations.

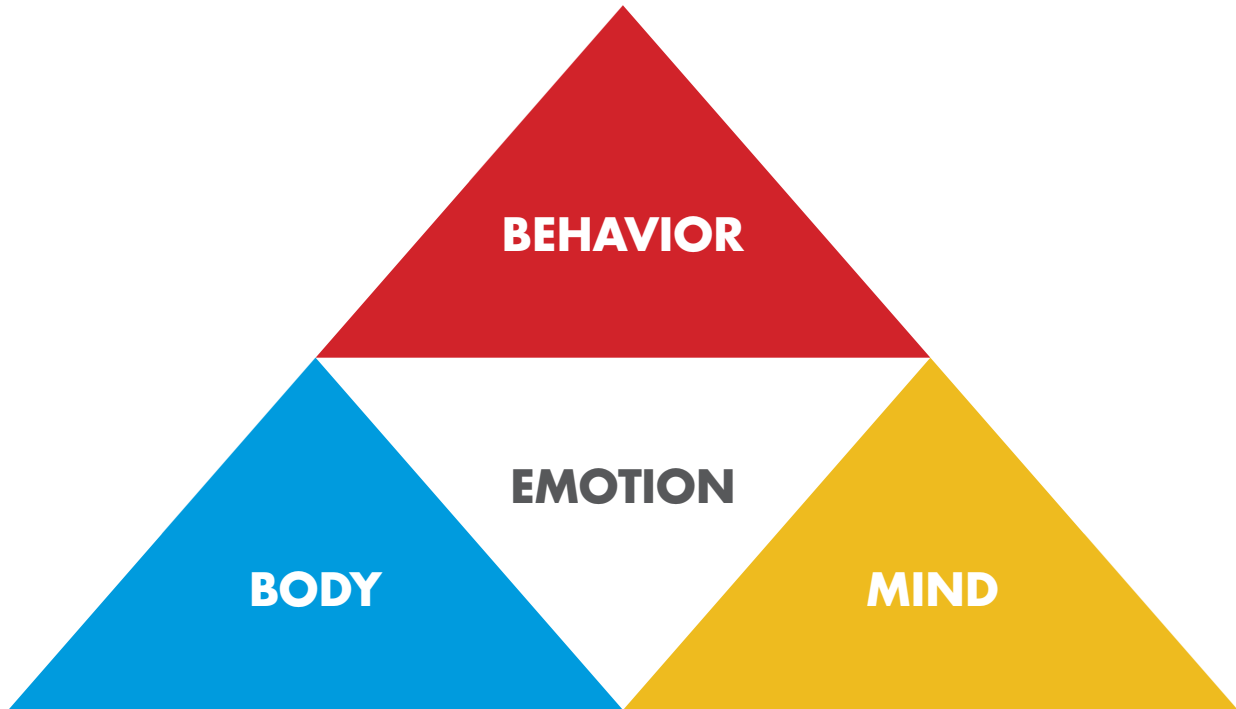
OCEAN BREATHING

Have the children sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Ask everyone to slowly breathe in through their nose, and then out through their pursed lips (as if they are blowing through a straw). Point out that the slow and steady breathing sounds like ocean waves, gently crashing on shore. Let the children continue breathing and making the ocean sound for one to two minutes.

THE POWER OF LISTENING

Ring a bell, a wind chime, or anything else that creates a long trailing sound. Ask each child to listen, and silently raise their hand when they can no longer hear the sound. After the ringing ends, ask the children to continue listening to any other sounds they can hear for the next minute. When the minute ends, go around the room asking everyone to tell you what sounds they heard.

Emotions are a big part of everyone’s life. Some emotions are easy to deal with, while others are more intense and difficult to manage. To start successfully managing our emotions in healthy ways it is helpful to understand what emotions are. Emotions serve a purpose and are designed to give us information, called **emotional messages**. These messages usually get to us in three different ways: 1) our body (physical sensations), 2) our minds (thoughts, memories, imagination) and, 3) our behavior (urges and actions). This is called the **Emotional Triangle**.

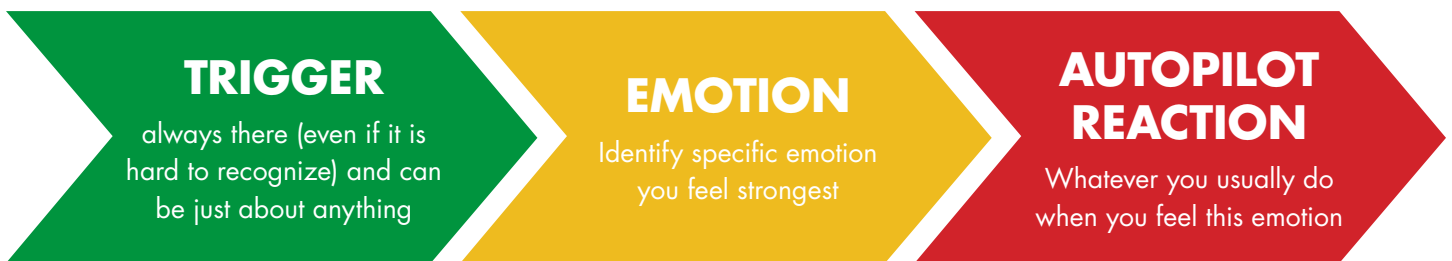


Look for clues in these three areas to identify the specific emotion you are feeling:

EMOTION	MIND	BODY	BEHAVIOR
FEAR	Thoughts race, imagine the worst, mind goes blank	Sweating, heart races, muscles tense, breathing heavy	Fight, flight or freeze
ANGER/ IRRITABILITY	Thoughts race, imagine the worst, mind goes blank	Sweating, heart races, muscles tense, breathing heavy, face gets hot	Confront, fight, yell
SADNESS	Thoughts slowed, think in circles, focused on the negative	Heavy, empty, numb, tired	Withdraw
GUILT	Critical focus on self and others’ opinion of self	Sweating, heart races, muscles tense, sick to stomach, breathing heavy, empty, numb, tired	Hide
HAPPINESS/ JOY	Thinking fast, focused on the positive	Energized, bubbly	Approach
CONTENTMENT	Focused on the moment (Mindful)	Calm and relaxed	Stay

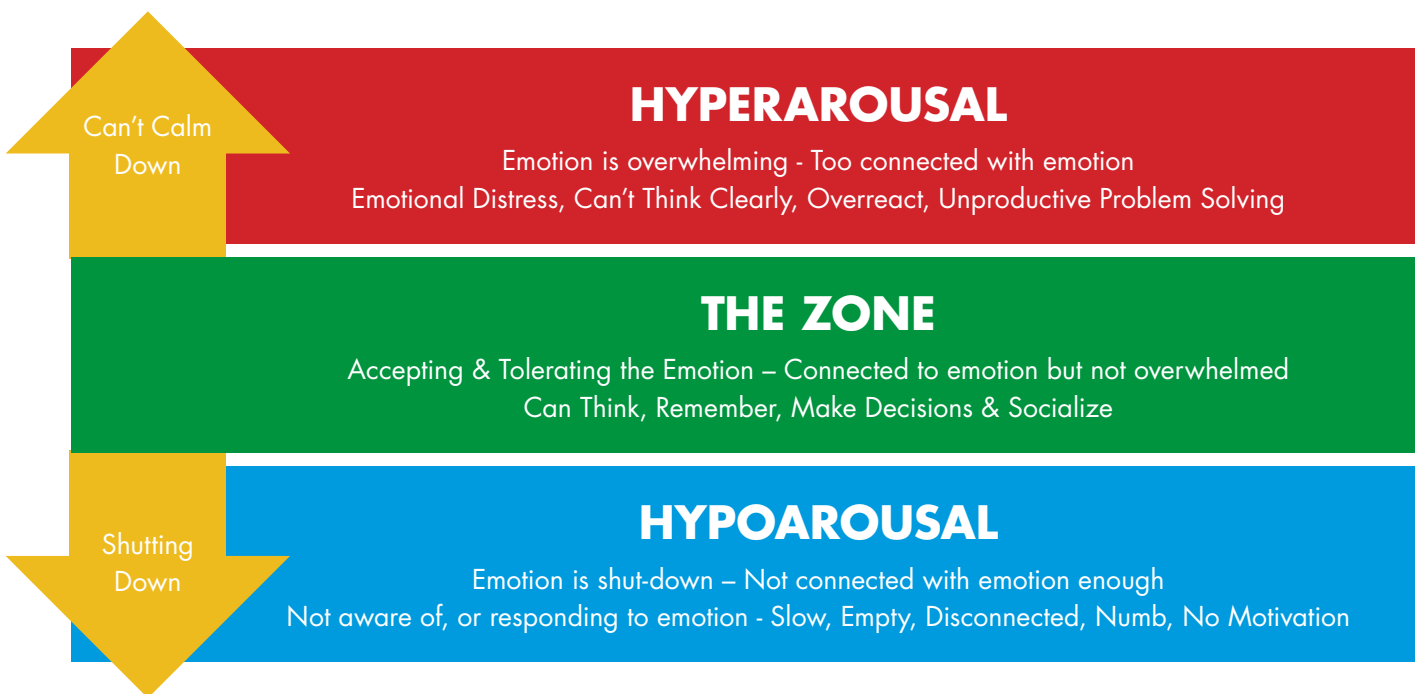
BRAIN INJURY & EMOTIONS

People with a brain injury can be left with changes in emotional reaction and behavior that they did not experience before. A brain injury can change the way people feel and express emotions, as well as increase and intensify emotional triggers. Some people may experience emotions very quickly and intensely but with very little lasting effect. For example, they may get angry easily but get over it quickly. Or they may seem to be “on an emotional roller coaster” in which they are happy one moment, sad the next and then angry. This is called **emotional lability**. Mood swings and emotional lability are often caused by damage to the part of the brain that controls emotions and behavior. In some cases, the brain injury can cause emotional reactions or outbursts that may not have any relationship to the way the person feels.



RECOGNIZING & MANAGING EMOTIONS

Learning to recognize and label triggers and emotions will help reduce unwanted emotional reactions. A Useful way to think about how we experience and manage emotions is through the **Zone of Tolerance**, which represents the comfort levels at which we can manage our emotions. When we are on the edge of our “zone” we are **emotionally vulnerable**. When we struggle to stay in our zone, managing simple things in life can also become a struggle, mainly because we get stuck in emotional reactions that have worked for us in the past.



MY EMOTIONAL REGULATION PLAN

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____

SITUATIONS/TRIGGERS: When these things happen, I am more likely to feel unsafe and upset (circle all that apply)			
Not being listened to	Feeling pressured	Being touched	People yelling
Feeling lonely	Feeling left out	Being stared at	Teasing
Not having a say	Particular class/subject	Not understanding work	Argument
Particular time of day	Contact with:	Other:	Other:

WARNING SIGNS: These are things I notice when I am put in that situation (circle all that apply)			
Sweating	Red and/or hot face	Acting & feeling hyper	Being rude
Sing/hum	Breathing heavy	Wringing hands	Swearing
Pacing	Becoming very quiet	Loud voice	Bouncing legs
Squatting	Damage things	Hurt	Isolating/avoiding others
Crying	Hygiene issues	Clenching teeth	Rocking
Hit someone	Leave the room	Throw things	Hurt others

**Plan derived from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.*

MY ACTION PLAN

POSSIBLE WAYS TO RESPOND TO THE SITUATION AND MY FEELINGS: These are things that might help me calm down and keep myself safe when I'm feeling upset (circle all that apply)			
Being around other people	Listening to/writing music	Hugging person/pillow	Sitting/talking with support person
Pacing in private	Coloring/drawing	Reading a book	Singing softly
Exercise/using the gym	A cold splash of water	Writing in a journal	Punching a pillow
Humor	Bouncing a ball	lying down	Singing softly
Time to myself	Fidgeting	Deep breathing	Telling myself to relax

When _____ happens,
 I feel _____ and that's ok!

When I feel _____
 I will use my strategies of _____

Other ideas about what to do when feeling emotional outburst or mood swings:

**Plan derived from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.*

TAKE-HOME IMPRESSIONS

You are encouraged to fill out this handout after attending each meeting of this group. Doing this is optional, but it is designed to help you retain as much of what you learned in today's session as possible. In your own words, please answer the following prompts:

1. SOMETHING I LEARNED ABOUT TBI TODAY THAT I DID NOT KNOW BEFORE IS:

2. SOMETHING I LEARNED TODAY THAT I WANT TO SHARE WITH SOMEONE IN MY LIFE IS:

I will share this with: _____

because: _____

3. I STILL HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT:

4. ONE STRATEGY I LEARNED TODAY THAT I BELIEVE WILL HELP ME IS:

5. THESE ARE THREE SITUATIONS WHERE I CAN SEE MYSELF USING THAT STRATEGY/SKILL:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____