

Self-Care of Secondary Trauma for Treatment Providers and Probation Officers

**Brian L. Meyer, Ph.D.
PTSD-SUD Specialist
McGuire VA Medical Center
Richmond, VA
October 28, 2016**

ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

Self-Care

Rate the following areas in frequency

- 5 = Frequently
- 4 = ~~Occasionally~~ Sometimes
- 3 = Rarely
- 2 = Never
- 1 = It never occurred to me

PHYSICAL SELF-CARE

- Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch dinner)
- Eat healthily
- Exercise
- Get preventive medical care
- Get medical care when needed
- Take time off when sick
- Get massages
- Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, or do some other fun physical activity
- Take time to be sexual – with yourself, a partner
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes you like
- Take vacations
- Take day trips or mini-vacations
- Make time away from telephones
- Other:

PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF-CARE

- Make time for self-reflection
- Have your own personal psychotherapy
- Write in a journal
- Read literature unrelated to work
- Do something at which you are not expert
- Decrease stress in your life
- Notice your inner experience – listen to your thoughts, judgments, attitudes, feelings
- Let others know different aspects of you
- Engage your intelligence in a new area, e.g. go to an art museum, history exhibit, sports event, auction, theater performance
- Practice receiving from others
- Be curious
- Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- Other:

EMOTIONAL SELF-CARE

- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in your life
- Give yourself affirmations, praise
- Love yourself
- Revisit favorite books, movies
- Identify comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places and seek them out
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you laugh
- Express your outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests

SPIRITUAL SELF-CARE

- Make time for reflection
- Spend time with nature
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish your optimism and hope
- Be aware of non-material aspects of life
- Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- Be open to not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life
- Meditate
- Pray
- Sing
- Spend time with children
- Have experiences of awe
- Contribute to causes in which you believe
- Read inspirational literature (talks, music, etc...)
- Other:

Stressbusters

Brian L. Meyer, Ph.D.

- Drop 3 (This is a way to very rapidly reduce your tension level and begin to cope with stress). Sit squarely with feet flat on the floor, back against your chair then drop 3 – let these three areas of your body completely relax:
 1. Drop your **jaw** and let your tongue rest on the floor of your mouth. Your mouth should be open slightly for this to work.
 2. Let your **shoulders** completely relax; let them fall.
 3. Let your **abdominal muscles** relax, don't hold them in.

- Take breaks
- Spend time with caring friends and family
- Take time off work
- Exercise regularly
- Eat well
- Sleep well
- Take care of your medical needs
- Breathe
- Say “no” to commitments you can't manage
- Separate from your work at the end of the workday
- Engage in a hobby
- Read a good book
- Smile
- Sing
- Dance
- Get a massage
- Create art or music
- Write in a journal
- Focus on just this moment
- Meditate
- Do yoga
- Pray
- Let yourself be helped by others
- Volunteer

Exercise: *Mindful Breathing*

This Mindful Breathing exercise will help you learn to separate your thoughts from your emotions and physical sensations. Very often, when you're distracted by your thoughts and other stimuli, one of the easiest and most effective things you can do is to focus your attention on the rising and falling of your breath. This type of breathing also causes you to take fuller, deeper breaths, which can help you relax.

In order to breathe mindfully, you need to focus on three parts of the experience. First, you must count your breaths. This will help you focus your attention, and it will also help you calm your mind when you're distracted by thoughts. Second, you need to focus on the physical experience as you inhale and exhale. And third, you need to be aware of any distracting thoughts that arise while you're breathing. Then you need to let the thoughts go without getting stuck on them. Letting go of the distracting thoughts will allow you to refocus your attention on your breathing and help you further calm yourself.

Read the instructions before beginning the exercise to familiarize yourself with the experience. If you feel more comfortable listening to the instructions, use an audio-recording device to record the directions in a slow, even voice so that you can listen to them while practicing this technique. When you first start this technique, set a timer or an alarm clock for three to five minutes, and practice breathing until the alarm goes off. Then as you get more accustomed to using this technique to help you relax, you can set the alarm for longer periods of time, like 20 minutes or more. But don't expect to be able to sit still that long when you first start. In the beginning, three to five minutes is a long time to focus and breathe. Later, when you become more accustomed to using this style of breathing, you can also begin using it while you're doing other daily activities, like walking, doing the dishes, watching television, or having a conversation.

When using mindful breathing, many people feel as if they become "one" with their breathing, meaning that they feel a deep connection to the experience. If that happens for you, that's great. If not, that's okay, too. Just keep practicing. Also, some people feel light-headed, stop if you need to, or return your breathing to a normal rate and begin counting your breaths.

This is such a simple and powerful skill that, ideally, you should practice it every day.

Instructions

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed for as long as you've set your timer. Turn off any distracting sounds. If you feel comfortable closing your eyes, feel free to close them. If you prefer to keep them open, focus on a spot 3-6 feet in front of you.

Take a few slow, long breaths, and relax. Place one hand on your stomach. Now slowly breathe in through your nose and then slowly exhale through your mouth. Feel your stomach rise and fall as you breathe. Imagine your belly filling up with air like a balloon as you breathe in, and then feel it deflate as you breathe out. Feel the breath moving in across your nostrils, and then

feel your breath blowing out across your lips. As you breathe, notice the sensations in your body. Feel your lungs fill up with air. Notice the weight of your body resting on whatever you're sitting on. With each breath, notice how your body feels more and more relaxed.

Now, as you continue to breathe, begin counting your breaths each time you exhale. Count silently to yourself. Count each exhalation until you reach "4" and then begin counting at "1" again. To begin, breathe in slowly through your nose, and then exhale slowly through your mouth. Count "1". Again, breathe in slowly through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Count "2." Repeat, breathing in slowly through your nose, and then slowly exhaling. Count "3." Last time—breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Count "4." Now begin counting at "1" again.

This time, though, as you continue to count, occasionally shift your focus to how you're breathing. Notice the rising and falling of your chest and stomach as you inhale and exhale. Again, feel the breath moving in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. If you want to, place one hand on your stomach and feel your breath rise and fall. Continue counting as you take slow, long breaths. Feel your stomach expand like a balloon as you breathe in, and then feel it deflate as you breathe out. Continue to shift your focus back and forth between counting and the physical experience of breathing.

Now, lastly, begin to notice any thoughts or other distractions that remove your focus from your breathing. These distractions might be memories, sounds, physical sensations, or emotions. When your mind begins to wander and you catch yourself thinking of something else, return your focus to counting your breath. Or return your focus to the physical sensation of breathing. Try not to criticize yourself for getting distracted. Just keep taking slow, long breaths into your belly, in and out. Imagine filling up your belly with air like a balloon. Feel it rising with each inhalation and falling with each exhalation. Keep counting each breath, and with each exhalation, feel your body relaxing, more and more deeply.

Keep breathing until your alarm goes off. Continue counting your breaths, noticing the physical sensation of your breathing and letting go of any distracting thoughts or other stimuli. Then, when your alarm goes off, slowly open your eyes and gently return your focus to the room.

Thought Defusion Instructions

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit in a room where you won't be disturbed for as long as you've set your timer. Turn off any distracting sounds. Take a few slow, long breaths, relax, and close your eyes.

Now, in your imagination, picture yourself in the scenario that you chose, watching your thoughts come and go, whether it's by the beach, near a stream, in a field, in a room, or wherever. Do your best to imagine yourself in that scene. After you do, start to become aware of the thoughts that you're having. Start to observe the thoughts that are coming up, whatever they are. Don't try to stop your thoughts, and do your best not to criticize yourself for any of the thoughts. Just watch the thoughts arise, and then, using whatever technique you've chosen, watch the thoughts disappear. Whatever the thought is, big or small, important or unimportant, watch the thought arise in your mind and then let it float away or disappear by whichever means you've chosen.

Just continue to watch the thoughts arise and disappear. Use pictures to represent the thoughts or words, whatever works best for you. Do your best to watch the thoughts arise and disappear without getting hooked into them and without criticizing yourself.

If more than one thought comes up at the same time, see them both arise and disappear. If the thoughts come very quickly, do your best to watch them all disappear without getting hooked on any of them. Continue to breathe and watch the thoughts come and go until your timer goes off.

When you've finished, take a few more slow, long breaths, and then slowly open your eyes and gently return your focus to the room.

Ways to Feel Better Right Now

1. Stop whatever you are doing, close your eyes, and take 10 slow, deep breaths.
2. Go to a quiet room and read a good book.
3. Listen to your favorite music.
4. Pray or meditate.
5. Listen to, watch, or read something funny.
6. Go outside and take a walk in a safe area.
7. Run in place for five minutes.
8. Call a friend.
9. Talk to a parent or other adult who understands and listens.
10. Write in your journal.
11. Volunteer.
12. Sing out loud.
13. Dance.
14. Tell yourself things will get better.
15. Take a warm bath.
16. Make something with your hands – knit, sew, crochet, woodwork, paint, etc.
17. Tell yourself five good things about yourself.
18. Talk about your feelings.
19. Tell someone you love him/her.
20. Play with your pet.
21. Do something to help someone else.



Pleasant Events List

1. Working on my car
2. Planning a career
3. Getting out of (paying down) debt
4. Collecting things (baseball cards, coins, stamps, rocks, shells, etc.)
5. Going on vacation
6. Thinking how it will be when I finish school
7. Recycling old items
8. Going on a date
9. Relaxing
10. Going to or watching a movie
11. Jogging, walking
12. Thinking, "I have done a full day's work"
13. Listening to music
14. Thinking about past parties
15. Buying household gadgets
16. Lying in the sun
17. Planning a career change
18. Laughing
19. Thinking about past trips
20. Listening to other people
21. Reading magazines or newspapers
22. Engaging in hobbies (stamp collecting, model building, etc.)
23. Spending an evening with good friends
24. Planning a day's activities
25. Meeting new people
26. Remembering beautiful scenery
27. Saving money
28. Going home from work
29. Eating
30. Practicing karate, judo, yoga
31. Thinking about retirement
32. Repairing things around the house
33. Working on machinery (cars, boats, etc.)
34. Remembering the words and deeds of loving people
35. Wearing shocking clothes
36. Having quiet evenings
37. Taking care of my plants
38. Buying, selling stock
39. Going swimming
40. Doodling
41. Exercising
42. Collecting old things
43. Going to a party
44. Thinking about buying things
45. Playing golf
46. Playing soccer
47. Flying kites
48. Having discussions with friends
49. Having family get-togethers
50. Riding a bike or motorbike
51. Running track
52. Going camping
53. Singing around the house
54. Arranging flowers
55. Practicing religion (going to church, group praying, etc.)
56. Organizing tools
57. Going to the beach
58. Thinking, "I'm an OK person"
59. Having a day with nothing to do
60. Going to class reunions
61. Going skating, skateboarding, rollerblading
62. Going sailing or motorboating
63. Traveling or going on vacations
64. Painting
65. Doing something spontaneously
66. Doing needlepoint, crewel, etc.
67. Sleeping
68. Driving
69. Entertaining, giving parties
70. Going to clubs (garden clubs, Parents without Partners, etc.)
71. Thinking about getting married
72. Going hunting

(continued on next page)

Note. For adults or adolescents. Adapted from Linehan, M. M., Sharp, E., & Ivanoff, A. M. (1980, November). *The Adult Pleasant Events Schedule*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Association for Advancement of Behavior Therapy, New York. Adapted by permission of the authors.

From *DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets, Second Edition* by Marsha M. Linehan. Copyright 2015 by Marsha M. Linehan. Permission to photocopy this handout is granted to purchasers of this book for personal use only (see copyright page for details).

EMOTION REGULATION HANDOUT 16

(p. 2 of 3)

73. Singing with groups
74. Flirting
75. Playing musical instruments
76. Doing arts and crafts
77. Making a gift for someone
78. Buying/downloading music
79. Watching boxing, wrestling
80. Planning parties
81. Cooking
82. Going hiking
83. Writing (books, poems, articles)
84. Sewing
85. Buying clothes
86. Going out to dinner
87. Working
88. Discussing books; going to a book club
89. Sightseeing
90. Getting a manicure/pedicure or facial
91. Going to the beauty parlor
92. Early morning coffee and newspaper
93. Playing tennis
94. Kissing
95. Watching my children (play)
96. Thinking, "I have a lot more going for me than most people"
97. Going to plays and concerts
98. Daydreaming
99. Planning to go (back) to school
100. Thinking about sex
101. Going for a drive
102. Refinishing furniture
103. Watching TV
104. Making lists of tasks
105. Walking in the woods (or at the waterfront)
106. Buying gifts
107. Completing a task
108. Going to a spectator sport (auto racing, horse racing)
109. Teaching
110. Photography
111. Going fishing
112. Thinking about pleasant events
113. Staying on a diet
114. Playing with animals
115. Flying a plane
116. Reading fiction
117. Acting
118. Being alone
119. Writing diary entries or letters
120. Cleaning
121. Reading nonfiction
122. Taking children places
123. Dancing
124. Weightlifting
125. Going on a picnic
126. Thinking, "I did that pretty well," after doing something
127. Meditating, yoga
128. Having lunch with a friend
129. Going to the mountains
130. Playing hockey
131. Working with clay or pottery
132. Glass blowing
133. Going skiing
134. Dressing up
135. Reflecting on how I've improved
136. Buying small things for myself (perfume, golf balls, etc.)
137. Talking on the phone
138. Going to museums
139. Thinking religious thoughts
140. Lighting candles
141. White-water canoeing/rafting
142. Going bowling
143. Doing woodworking
144. Fantasizing about the future
145. Taking ballet/tap-dancing classes
146. Debating
147. Sitting in a sidewalk café
148. Having an aquarium
149. Participating in "living history" events
150. Knitting
151. Doing crossword puzzles
152. Shooting pool
153. Getting a massage
154. Saying, "I love you"
155. Playing catch, taking batting practice
156. Shooting baskets
157. Seeing and/or showing photos
158. Thinking about my good qualities
159. Solving riddles mentally
160. Having a political discussion
161. Buying books

(continued on next page)

EMOTION REGULATION HANDOUT 16

(p. 3 of 3)

- 162. Taking a sauna or a steam bath
- 163. Checking out garage sales
- 164. Thinking about having a family
- 165. Thinking about happy moments in my childhood
- 166. Splurging
- 167. Going horseback riding
- 168. Doing something new
- 169. Working on jigsaw puzzles
- 170. Playing cards
- 171. Thinking, "I'm a person who can cope"
- 172. Taking a nap
- 173. Figuring out my favorite scent
- 174. Making a card and giving it to someone I care about
- 175. Instant-messaging/texting someone
- 176. Playing a board game (e.g., Monopoly, Life, Clue, Sorry)
- 177. Putting on my favorite piece of clothing
- 178. Making a smoothie and drinking it slowly
- 179. Putting on makeup
- 180. Thinking about a friend's good qualities
- 181. Completing something I feel great about
- 182. Surprising someone with a favor
- 183. Surfing the Internet
- 184. Playing video games
- 185. E-mailing friends
- 186. Going walking or sledding in a snowfall
- 187. Getting a haircut
- 188. Installing new software
- 189. Buying a CD or music on iTunes
- 190. Watching sports on TV
- 191. Taking care of my pets
- 192. Doing volunteer service
- 193. Watching stand-up comedy on YouTube
- 194. Working in my garden
- 195. Participating in a public performance (e.g., a flash mob)
- 196. Blogging
- 197. Fighting for a cause
- 198. Conducting experiments
- 199. Expressing my love to someone
- 200. Going on field trips, nature walks, exploring (hiking away from known routes, spelunking)
- 201. Gathering natural objects (wild foods or fruit, driftwood)
- 202. Going downtown or to a shopping mall
- 203. Going to a fair, carnival, circus, zoo, or amusement park
- 204. Going to the library
- 205. Joining or forming a band
- 206. Learning to do something new
- 207. Listening to the sounds of nature
- 208. Looking at the moon or stars
- 209. Outdoor work (cutting or chopping wood, farm work)
- 210. Playing organized sports (baseball, softball, football, Frisbee, handball, paddleball, squash, soccer, tennis, volleyball, etc.)
- 211. Playing in the sand, a stream, the grass; kicking leaves, pebbles, etc.
- 212. Protesting social, political, or environmental conditions
- 213. Reading cartoons or comics
- 214. Reading sacred works
- 215. Rearranging or redecorating my room or the house
- 216. Selling or trading something
- 217. Snowmobiling or riding a dune buggy/ATV
- 218. Social networking
- 219. Soaking in the bathtub
- 220. Learning or speaking a foreign language
- 221. Talking on the phone
- 222. Composing or arranging songs or music
- 223. Thrift store shopping
- 224. Using computers
- 225. Visiting people who are sick, shut in, or in trouble

Other: _____

