

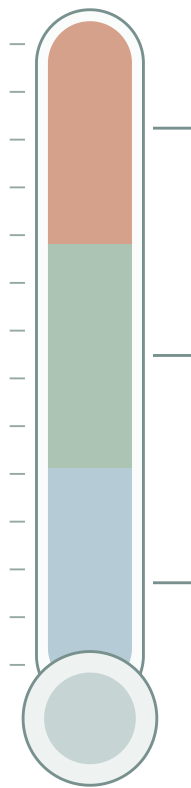


EMOTIONAL REGULATION · CLIENT HANDOUT

# My emotional thermometer

Notice your signals and choose a resource that fits what you need.

This thermometer shows **your level of activation**, not an actual temperature. Mark where you recognize yourself today. The zones are guides: feeling little does not always mean feeling calm, and feeling a lot does not mean you are doing something wrong.



## HIGH ACTIVATION

### I feel overwhelmed

I may notice tension, restlessness, racing thoughts, or an urge to react right away.

**What may help:** reducing stimulation, noticing my surroundings, or asking for a break.

## MANAGEABLE ACTIVATION

### I can be present

I can feel emotions while also listening, thinking, and choosing what to do.

**What may help:** noticing my needs and continuing what supports me.

## LOW ACTIVATION OR DISCONNECTION

### It is hard to connect

I may notice heaviness, low energy, feeling far away, or difficulty identifying my feelings.

**What may help:** gentle movement, looking around, or being with someone safe.

*You may notice mixed signals, move between zones, or not fit any of them. This is a tool for noticing, not a diagnosis.*

## My clearest signal today is...

*A body sensation, an emotion, or an action I notice.*

The goal is to feel present and able to choose, not always to lower activation. If you feel disconnected, you may need to reconnect gently.

## TOOLS FOR THIS MOMENT

## Choose one technique, not all of them

Try one brief practice and notice whether it helps. You do not need to keep doing something that increases your distress.

01

**Orient to the present**

Look around and name three things you see. Then notice one sound and where you are. You can keep your eyes open.

*Helpful when thoughts pull me away or I feel distant.*

02

**Notice physical support**

If comfortable, notice your feet on the floor or your back against a chair. Feel the contact without needing to change how you feel.

*If focusing inward feels uncomfortable, return to your surroundings.*

03

**Breathe without forcing**

Let your breathing stay comfortable. If helpful, breathe out a little more slowly, without holding your breath or taking deep gasps.

*If dizziness or discomfort increases, stop and breathe naturally.*

04

**Move gently**

Stretch your hands, slowly roll your shoulders, or walk a little if you can. Choose a movement that is accessible to you.

*May help me reconnect when I feel heavy or low on energy.*

05

**Make room for a feeling**

Try saying, "I notice anger," "There is sadness," or "I don't know what I feel yet." Soften one tense area if you can.

*Naming a feeling does not mean I have to explain everything or act.*

06

**Ask for support or a break**

Reach out to someone you feel safe with. Ask for company, space, or listening. Physical contact is optional and requires consent.

*"I need a few minutes. I want to come back to this at..."*

## AFTER TRYING A RESOURCE

Am I a little more present? Can I think or communicate a little more clearly? If not, I can try another resource or seek support. This is not a test I have to pass.

## EVERYDAY CARE

## Small actions that support me

These habits can support well-being over time. They do not replace a tool for a difficult moment or professional care when you need it.

### Care for the basics

- ☐ Eat regularly, according to my needs.
- ☐ Drink water throughout the day.
- ☐ Find a rest routine that supports me.
- ☐ Spend a little time outdoors, if safe.
- ☐ Move in a way that feels comfortable.
- ☐ Do one small personal-care task.

### Make room for what nourishes me

- ☐ Listen to music or read something I enjoy.
- ☐ Draw, color, or do something creative.
- ☐ Spend time with someone I feel safe with.
- ☐ Take a break from social media or news.
- ☐ Tidy one small space, without demanding more.
- ☐ Write or practice mindfulness, if it helps.

Adapt each idea to your health, energy, resources, and circumstances. An activity does not have to look productive to help. Sometimes rest is the right next step.

### Two resources that feel possible for me

*Choose something small and realistic for this week.*

### Something I already know helps

*A person, a place, an activity, or a way to care for myself.*

A list is a menu, not an obligation. You can try, adapt, and leave out what does not work for you.

Understanding and Communicating

# From my signal to what I need

Notice your state before and after trying a resource. Then, if the relationship is safe, share your experience without speaking for the other person.

| Before: what zone and signal do I notice? | What resource did I try? | After: what changed or stayed the same? |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
|                                           |                          |                                         |
|                                           |                          |                                         |
|                                           |                          |                                         |

One way to say it

“Right now, I notice \_\_\_\_ in myself. It is hard to \_\_\_\_\_. I need \_\_\_\_\_. It would help to \_\_\_\_\_.”

To listen: “Would company, a break, or simply being heard help?”

## What I would like the other person to understand

Describe your experience without turning it into an accusation.

## My practical next step

If I ask for a break, how and when can I return to the conversation?

Understanding each other starts with recognizing that we can experience the same moment differently. Regulation does not require us to stop feeling. It creates room to respond with more care.

If there are threats, coercion, or violence, prioritize safety and seek specialized support. You do not need to try a joint conversation. If distress persists or disrupts your life, seek professional guidance. In an emergency, call 911. In the United States, call or text 988 if you are in crisis.

Further reading: National Center for PTSD (VA), “Coping with Traumatic Stress Reactions”.  
[www.ptsd.va.gov/gethelp/coping\\_stress\\_reactions.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/gethelp/coping_stress_reactions.asp) · Educational material, not a diagnosis or individualized treatment.