

## Regulation Strategies

### How they work.

As we have been speaking about in the video clips during times of increased stress, we produce higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol. We can pop out of our window of tolerance more easily. As we speak to our clients, we continue to hear the feedback that many 'feel like we are living on our windowsills rather than in our windows.' There is an accumulative impact within our bodies as the pandemic goes on. It can be helpful to be intentional throughout the day to work to stay within our windows. We get the feedback 'it works when I do a strategy but doesn't last all day.' That is true, so continue to practise a range of strategies at intervals, throughout the day.

Regulation strategies work in the same way as when rhythmically stroking or patting an infant and in time they calm down. This is called co-regulation. What is happening in the babies' bodies is their heartbeat will begin to slow to match the slow and rhythmic, patting, rocking or stroking, of the nurturing care they are receiving. Typically, as a child grows, they learn to self sooth and learn to self-regulate most of the time. There may be times when any of us needs support to co-regulate, but much of the time we can use the same simple techniques for regulation. Know that if you have grown up with trauma or have had trauma in your background, then learning regulation becomes even more important.

Whether through co-regulation or self-regulation, what we are doing from a physiological perspective is slowing down our heart rate and helping it beat at its regular rhythm. This sends an important message to our amygdala, the fight or flight responder (our smoke detector) to say we are safe. Rhythmic activities which allow our heart rate to slow and regulate send a message to turn off, or at least to slow down, our brains production of stress chemicals that are keeping us in fight or flight mode. This allows us to get back into our window and feel calm and relaxed again.

- The Life Therapies Victoria website has a list of regulating practises.
- You may have some of your own favourites.
- Different things work for different people.
- In lower levels of dysregulation cognitive strategies can work well because the cortex, the thinking part of the brain is still engaged and can think things through.
- In the higher levels of dysregulation once the fight or flight has been triggered, rhythmic activities tend to work more effectively, this is because you are now operating out of your limbic brain, the emotional part of your brain, there is less blood flow and oxygen in your cortex or thinking part of your brain, so calming rhythmic practises will be more effective. Walking, a musical instrument, drumming, shooting hoops, knitting crafts that are rhythmic etc. can all be effective.