

Creating an Emotional Emergency First Aid Kit

Objective

To assemble an Emotional Emergency Kit for times when you are distressed.

You Should Know

It is important to take care of your mental health every day. Just like with your physical health, you should practice a variety of good habits, including getting enough sleep, exercising, eating nutritious food, spending time with your family and friends, practicing relaxation techniques, and more. All of these activities affect the “feel good” biochemical in your brain and will help you develop a sense of calm and well-being. Sometimes, however, you may have an emotional emergency, and just like responding to a physical emergency, having the right Emotional Emergency First Aid Kit can help.

This worksheet reviews tools you can use when you are feeling especially distressed, particularly if you feel you are going to do something that will cause you harm. You can create an Emergency Kit from the list below, assembling objects in a large plastic baggie or other small case, and/or you can create a digital Emergency Kit with tools on your smart phone or tablet.

The important thing is to have these tools and techniques in easy reach when you might experience an emotional emergency. Begin by checking off the tools you think would be helpful to keep in your Emotional Emergency Kit. Then go ahead and assemble the kit and make sure that you keep it with you at times when you anticipate you will be stressed or upset. Check off the tools you think would be most useful to use when you feel overwhelmed by emotions. Add additional ideas at the bottom of this page.

____ **A “grounding” object such as a small ball or stone.** Just squeezing this object, and paying attention to your physical reaction, can help calm your emotions.

____ **A list of people you can call.** This list can include three or four people who are emotionally supportive. If you are unable to reach them, write down what you want to say, but avoid sending them an email or text. Wait until you can actually talk to the people on this list to ask for support.

____ **A journal to write down your feelings or to draw and doodle.** You can do this digitally or with a notebook and pen or pencil.

____ **Uplifting photographs.** Have a few photographs or videos easily accessible. These could be of people, pets, or special places. Looking at these pictures should stimulate positive feelings and happy memories.

____ **Bottled water.** Relaxing with a drink of water can have an immediate effect on your mood. Avoid gulping it down, but rather sip, relax, and be “mindful” of how you are feeling.

____ **Inspirational reading.** Many people find comfort in reading poems, prayers, or inspirational stories.

___ **Funny videos.** If you can't find something to make you smile or laugh on YouTube®, there are dozens of websites that are designed to lighten up your day. No matter what your mood, your favorite video can help.

___ **Chewing gum.** Many people don't realize that chewing gum has a calming effect on the brain, because repetitive motion produces serotonin.

___ **A relaxing audio.** There are hundreds of guided imagery soundtracks you can download to your smartphone or tablet, as well as meditation audios, and other forms of music designed to help you relax. Don't listen to sad songs, or songs that remind you of a difficult time in your life.

___ **A list of activities you can do to improve your mood.** What usually helps you feel better? For some people it's taking a walk, for other people it's doing a hobby or a craft. Make sure this list contains activities that get you moving, preferably in the company of others.

Other things to put in your Emotional Emergency Kit:

What did you find to be most helpful in your Emotional Emergency Kit? Explain.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
