


## ANXIETY

# Learning to Self-Sooth



There are many things that can upset you to the point that you feel emotionally overwhelmed and even out of control. When you feel this way, the emotional part of your brain (called the limbic system) takes over and the rational or thinking part of your brain takes a back seat.

Calming your emotions—also called self-soothing—is an important life-long skill everyone should learn. When you perform any of the activities on this list your brain will be producing serotonin, a biochemical that gives you a sense of calm.

**Familiarity:** Activities that are associated with pleasant memories from the past will be particularly helpful in soothing your feelings. For example one woman said that sipping hot chocolate with a marshmallow on top from a large blue mug made her think of happy afternoons from her childhood.

**Multi-Sensory:** Our emotional brain responds best when activities are multi-sensory and involve sound, sight, taste, touch, and smell. Typically pleasant activities that involve two or more senses are most soothing. An example of a multi-sensory activity might include walking in the woods, smelling the flowers, feeling the breeze, and hearing the wind rustling the trees.

**Repetitive Motion:** Studies suggest that repetitive motion, such as chewing gum, knitting, or rocking in a chair, can produce serotonin in the brain. Our bodies are naturally inclined towards repetitive motion, like pacing, when we are agitated.

### Some ideas you can do immediately when feeling emotionally overwhelmed

- Take five deep breaths, focus on the sensations in your body
- Self-massage
- Chewing gum (repetitive)
- Sip a soothing warm drink (not one with caffeine)
- Use an essential oil diffuser
- Suck on hard candy
- Stretch