Understanding my emotions

Emotional regulation means noticing, understanding and responding to feelings in ways that support our needs and safety. It is not about suppressing emotions or being calm all the time. After trauma, protective responses may arise quickly, even when a situation is not immediately dangerous.

Notice what is happening

Emotions can appear as bodily sensations, thoughts, urges or changes in energy. You might notice tension, a racing heart, numbness, restlessness or difficulty finding words. There is no correct way to feel. Choose a recent manageable experience rather than revisiting a traumatic memory.

What happened? What was going on around me?

What emotions or sensations did I notice?

What thoughts, needs or urges accompanied those feelings?

Intensity check: circle a number that describes how strong the feeling was. This is a personal reflection, not a clinical score.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What might my emotion have been communicating?

Finding ways to regulate

When emotions become intense, it can be harder to think clearly or communicate. Different responses may help at different times. Start with what feels safe and accessible to you; stop any exercise that increases distress.

When I feel activated

Try reducing noise or demands, looking around and naming neutral objects, feeling your feet against the floor, or moving gently. If comfortable, allow your breathing to slow naturally without forcing it.

When I feel disconnected or shut down

Consider gentle movement, a familiar sound, a comfortable texture, a sip of water or contact with a trusted person. You do not need to force yourself to talk or make decisions before you are ready.

My early signs of overwhelm or shutdown are:

Three things that might help me feel more supported:

What makes regulation harder for me (sensory demands, conflict, fatigue, pressure)?

Try one manageable strategy and notice whether it helps, makes no difference or feels uncomfortable. Adjust rather than judging yourself.

My personal regulation plan

A plan can make it easier to find support when thinking or communicating becomes difficult. Build it around your actual needs, preferences and circumstances, not what other people expect you to do.

When I notice my early warning signs, my first small step will be:

Adjustments I can ask for at home, work or in relationships:

People I can contact and how I would like them to support me:

After a difficult moment, what helps me recover and reconnect?

Reflect without judgement

What helped? What did not? What could I change next time? Progress may mean noticing earlier, requesting support or recovering with greater kindness towards yourself.

If distress is persistent or affects everyday life, consider speaking with your GP or a qualified mental health professional. If you are in immediate danger, call 999. This workbook is educational and does not replace individual care.