

EMOTIONAL SURFING

A TOOL TO INCREASE DISTRESS TOLERANCE

Emotions are like waves. While emotions are not always rational, they always provide information. Instead of struggling for dominance or control over them, our goal here is to take a more curious approach by observing and understanding. This approach is sometimes referred to as “surfing the emotions.” The idea is that trying to “control” one’s emotions is akin to standing in the ocean and attempting to stop a wave from hitting you. It’s impossible. But with enough practice, it is possible to surf the wave, that is, learning to meet the wave swell as it comes, and then letting it pass through. So next time you see an incoming emotional wave off in the distance, remember that there’s no need to run from it, control it, or be drowned by it because it is an opportunity to learn how to surf.

Adapted from an article: Emotional Surfing” by Kelli Rugless, PsyD

ACCEPT

Accept the emotion in the present moment.

Just let it be.

Remember, this is temporary. Accepting is not equivalent to “giving up” – it simply means releasing the stress that comes with wanting to be somewhere else other than where you currently are.

INVESTIGATE

Investigate with open curiosity: How intense is it? What are the physical sensations? How do you feel inside your body? Again, don’t forget that what you are feeling is impermanent.

LET IT PASS

Let it pass by releasing.

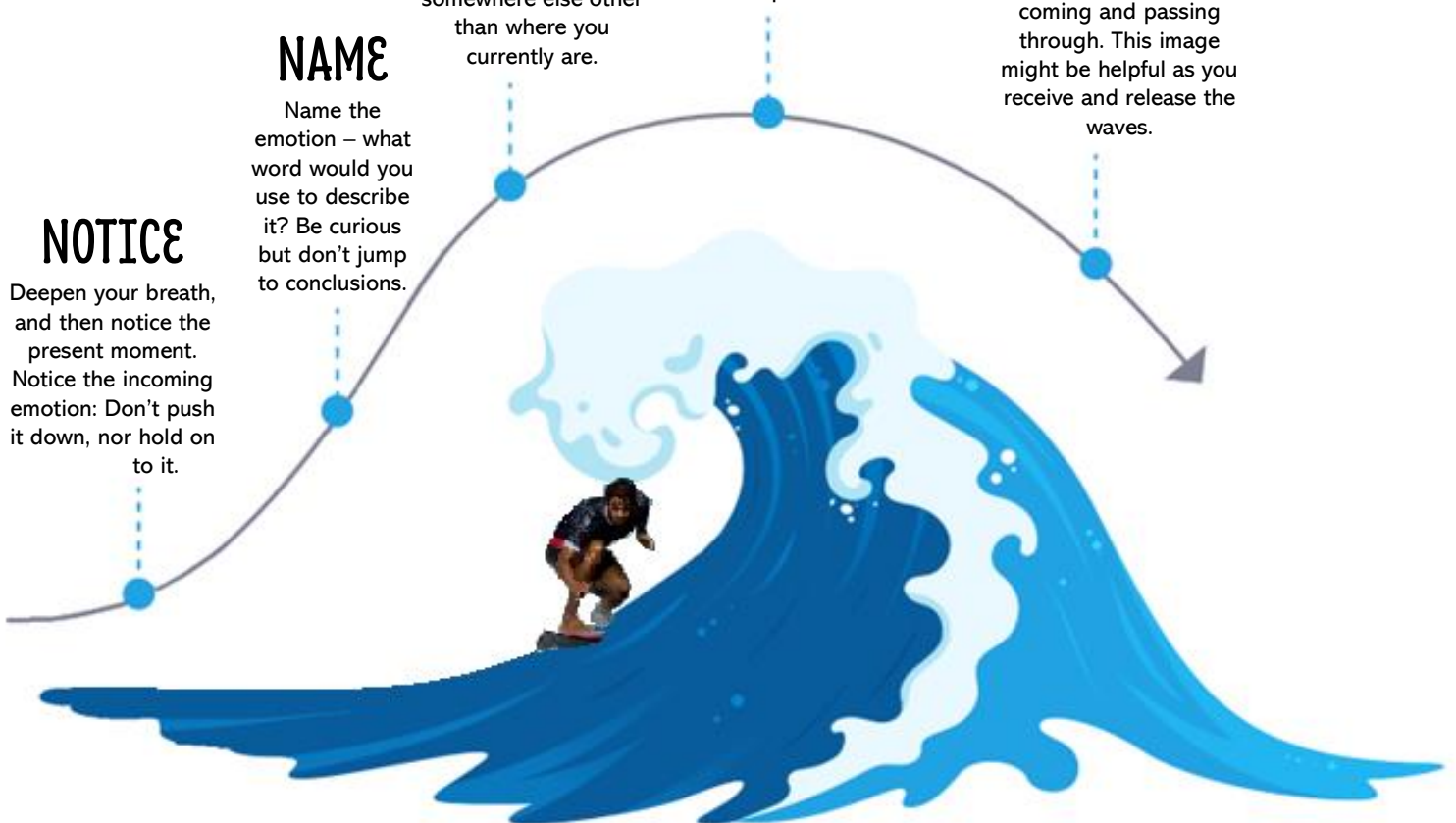
First, notice the thoughts and feelings – don’t judge them as good or bad. Then, take a deep breath & visualize yourself floating & a wave coming and passing through. This image might be helpful as you receive and release the waves.

NAME

Name the emotion – what word would you use to describe it? Be curious but don’t jump to conclusions.

NOTICE

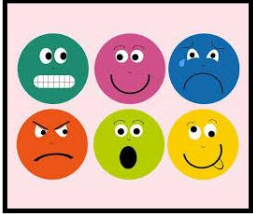
Deepen your breath, and then notice the present moment. Notice the incoming emotion: Don’t push it down, nor hold on to it.



SURFING QUESTIONS



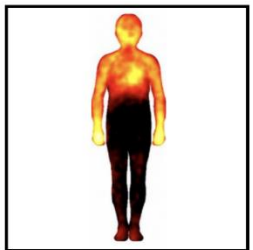
NOTICE THE INCOMING WAVE OF EMOTION.
WHAT TRIGGERED IT?



NAME: WHAT WORD CAN I USE TO DESCRIBE IT?



WHAT THOUGHTS OR JUDGMENTS COME UP WITH THIS EMOTION?



HOW DOES IT FEEL IN MY BODY?
HOW INTENSE IS THE SENSATION?



WHAT ACTIONS CAN I DO TO BE IN THE PRESENT MOMENT?
WHAT ACTIONS HELP ME BE PATIENT AS IT PASSES THROUGH?

WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS



SPEND TIME IN NATURE

SAY YOUR PRAYERS



PRACTICE YOGA



SPEND TIME WITH FRIENDS

DO YOUR EXERCISES



MANAGE TIME



PRACTICE ART

READ BOOKS



THINK POSITIVE

COPING WITH FUTURE WAVES:

1. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT WAVE TRIGGERS?
2. WHAT STRATEGIES OR COPING TOOLS CAN I USE WHEN A WAVE COMES NEXT TIME? (EXAMPLE, DEEP BREATHING, GO FOR A WALK OUTSIDE).