

Acknowledge • Connect • Engage: Worksheet Instructions

Source: Adapted from methods developed by Dr. Russ Harris, author of "The Happiness Trap" and Anna Runkle, author of "Re-Regulated"

About the ACE Method

ACE is a method used as tool to "unhook" oneself when experiencing unpleasant emotions. These feelings can cause our nervous system to dysregulate and can trigger one to engage in behaviors and thought patterns that moves a person away from their ideal self.

How It Works

When you experience a triggering thought or feeling, pause and fill out the worksheet as described below.

The Worksheet

ACKNOWLEDGE

Reference the list of 87 Emotions and Experiences and identify the terms that most closely represent your current state.

CONNECT

Connect with your physical body to re-regulate your nervous system. Choose from one of the exercises listed below or use another practice to calm your body and mind.

5-4-3-2-1 SENSE AWARENESS: Identify 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 distinct sounds, 2 scents, 1 thing you can taste.

GROUNDING THROUGH TOUCH: Press your feet firmly into the floor or press your hands into a solid surface (like a table or chair arms). Notice the pressure, stability, and connection with the ground.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION: Lay on your back and close your eyes. Systematically tense and release muscles starting from your toes and ending with the top of your head.

BOX BREATHING: Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Inhale for four seconds, pause for four seconds, exhale for four seconds, hold for four seconds. Practice for at least 10 breaths.

SHAKE: Stand with your feet hip-width apart and gently bounce your heels while keeping the balls of your feet grounded. Allow the movement to naturally travel up through your body. Let your shoulders bounce, your arms and hands shake out, and your head move gently side to side or in small circles. Keep your body relaxed and loose. Continue for 1-2 minutes.

HUMMING OR VIBRATION: Take a deep breath and hum gently as you exhale. Feel the vibration in your chest, throat, and face. Continue for 1-2 minutes.

SELF-HOLD: Cross your arms and gently rest your hands on the opposite upper arms or shoulders, as if giving yourself a hug. Hold for 30-60 seconds while breathing slowly.

(RE-)ENGAGE

After executing the connection exercise, write down what activity you choose to (re)engage with.

This can be what you were doing before experiencing the trigger, or an intentional act of self care.

Commonly understood acts of self care include going outside, physical activity, or journaling. Other acts of self care include a household chore, creating art, or starting a task you've been avoiding.

87 Emotions and Experiences

Source: "Atlas of the Heart" by Brené Brown

Things are uncertain or too much

Stress Overwhelm Anxiety	Worry Avoidance	Excitement Dread	Fear Vulnerability
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We compare

Comparison Admiration	Reverence Envy	Jealousy Resentment	Schadenfreude Freudenfreude
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Things don't go as planned

Boredom Expectations	Regret Resignation	Frustration Disappointment	Discouragement
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It's beyond us

Awe Wonder	Confusion Curiosity	Interest	Surprise
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Things aren't what they seem

Amusement Nostalgia	Irony Paradox	Sarcasm Bittersweetness	Cognitive Dissonance
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We're hurting

Anguish Hopelessness	Despair	Sadness	Grief
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With others

Compassion Pity	Empathy Sympathy	Boundaries	Comparative Suffering
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We fall short

Shame Perfectionism	Guilt Humiliation	Embarrassment	Self-Compassion
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We search for connection

Belonging Fitting In	Connection Disconnection	Insecurity Invisibility	Loneliness
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The heart is open

Love Lovelessness Heartbreak	Trust Self-Trust	Betrayal Defensiveness	Flooding Hurt
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Life is good

Joy Happiness	Calm Contentment	Gratitude Relief	Tranquility Foreboding Joy
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We feel wronged

Anger Contempt	Disgust Hate	Dehumanization	Self-Righteousness
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To self-assess

Pride	Hubris	Humility
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