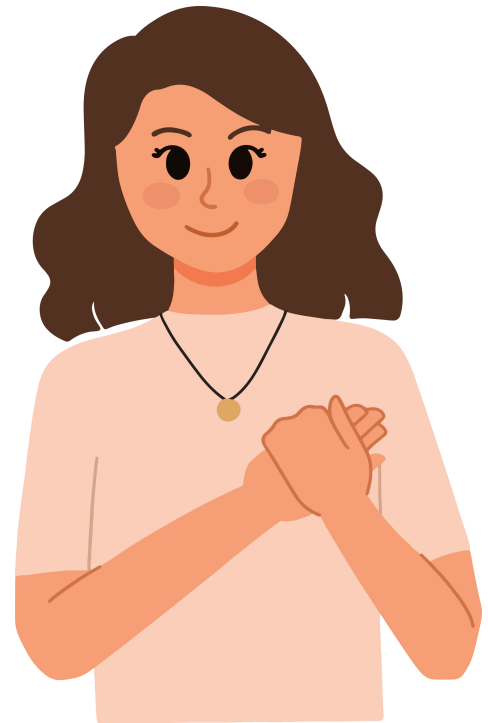


Regulating With Self-compassion

Our body keeps us safe

When we are stressed or reminded of past traumatic experiences **our body activates responses to keep us safe**. These natural reactions have evolved over thousands of years to keep us alive!

Unfortunately, **many of us learn to numb or hide our emotions so we aren't judged**. We are told to use 'strategies' when we are upset so we can 'function' or go back to 'normal' quickly. Our natural forms of regulation like crying, feeling scared, stimming, displaying anger, and more can be socially taboo.



Regulation looks different every time!

Society often tells us how we should regulate our emotions, but those expectations don't always align with how our bodies actually work! **There's no 'one-size-fits-all approach', and the idea that we can simply 'get on with it' ignores the reality of how our nervous system works.** Real regulation means working with our bodies—not against them.

Anna Clarke AuDHD Psychologist

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Regulating With Self-compassion

When the body feels unsafe or stressed

The way we respond to stress depends on so many things; how we're feeling, what triggered us, how much energy we have, and more. That's why **we need a range of regulation tools, not just one.**

The next pages will help you understand signs of stress, and ideas to help bring you back to a sense of safety and regulation.



Emotion Regulation Flowchart

This activity is about **understanding your unique stress responses** and discovering what helps you feel safe and supported. Start by reflecting on your emotional reactions:

- **What tends to trigger strong emotions for you?**
- **Why might this feel especially hard sometimes? e.g.,**
 - If you're Autistic/ADHD you may experience emotions, sensory input, or sudden change more intensely. If you've experienced trauma, your brain may be on high alert for signs of danger.

Next, **explore how your body communicates what it's feeling.** What are the signs that you're shut down, in fight or flight, or feeling regulated? Then, **identify what actually helps in each of those states.** Everyone's nervous system is different—there's no “right” answer here.

Anna Clarke AuDHD Psychologist

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LISTENING TO YOUR BODY

Regulation State

What might help

SHUT DOWN

When your body feels overwhelmed or unsafe, you might feel quiet, numb, flat, or disconnected. You may feel frozen, like you can't move or think clearly.



SHUT DOWN

Gentle sensory input like warmth, soft textures, or calming music. Try slow movements, deep pressure, or quiet time in a safe space. Start small and simple!



FIGHT/FLIGHT

This state can show up as panic, racing thoughts, irritation, restlessness, or a strong urge to escape or fix things fast! Your body feels tense or "on edge."



FIGHT/FLIGHT

Use movement to release energy—walking, stretching, shaking. Try grounding techniques, breathwork, or something repetitive like fidgeting or tapping.



REGULATED

You feel present, connected, and safe enough. You can think clearly, express how you feel, and respond flexibly to what's happening around you.



REGULATED

Check in with yourself, do something meaningful, or connect with someone you trust. Reflect, play, rest, or take action—whatever keeps your cup filled.



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Regulation Flowchart

Things that trigger my stress response:



Why this is hard for me:



Signs I'm shut down

Signs of fight/flight

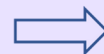
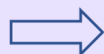
Signs I'm regulated



Ways to feel safe
& connect to body

Ways to calm
fight/flight

Things that help
me stay well



When ready,
move to here

When ready,
move to here