

# REGULATING EMOTIONS

## SESSION 9 OVERVIEW:

For us to regulate emotions, we must be able to identify them. We can use mindfulness strategies such as meditation, breathe awareness, and living mindfully, which aid in recognizing what we are feeling, and how each emotion feels in our body. These strategies give rise to the direct experience that 'pain is not me', which can help diminish pain. Additionally, it is important to develop acceptance of our feelings and emotions, even if they are unpleasant. Accepting feelings requires us to express and mindfully engage with them. You must be vulnerable, allowing space for fear, anxiety, or uncertainty. Finally, sharing feelings is helpful for us to regulate them. Empathizing with someone who is feeling pain, or hearing that others are feeling or have felt what you feel, triggers brain changes associated with relaxation. Sharing feelings must be done with someone you trust.

## AT HOME PRACTICE:

### Session 9 Assigned Exercises:

- Normal Emotional Reactions to Chronic Pain (Stress Management)
- Recognizing Feelings in the Body Exercise (page 2)
- Reflection Questions For Enjoyable Activities (page 2)



Complete the Normal Emotional Reactions to Chronic Pain exercise daily, using the Overcoming Pain App and non-noise cancelling earbuds. Please also complete the two exercises on the following pages of this handout about recognizing feelings in the body and reflecting on enjoyable activities. Once you have recognized your feelings, you may also practice accepting your feelings and sharing them with others to take further steps toward emotional regulation.

### Recognizing Feelings in the Body Exercise:

Recognizing feelings is an exercise where you consciously direct attention into your body and identify what is going on. Labelling feelings successfully comes with recognizing them by how they are felt in the body (not just the feeling itself). This requires being present and ‘tuning in’ to your body.

Exercise: Start by just noticing how you are feeling. Complete this reflective exercise multiple times daily to increase your awareness of your feelings. Progress to articulating what they mean or how they can be identified. For example, anger is tightness in the chest, or fear is butterflies in the stomach. Between now and your next session, write down at least three feelings you have recognized and how they feel in your body.

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### Reflection Questions For Enjoyable Activities:

Flow activities are activities where you are ‘in the zone’, a joyful, focused, unselfconscious state, where you are present solely on the activity you are doing. These activities are challenging enough to keep you engaged, but not so much that you feel shame or inadequacy. Flow activities are different for everyone. It is based on what *you* like to do, and *your* physical capabilities. The importance is that you feel useful and the activity takes your mind off of your own limitations. Use the following questions as an opportunity to brainstorm flow activities for which you can do on a regular basis as a method for pain management.

1. What can you still do physically and/or mentally?

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2. What sorts of activities do you enjoy doing?

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3. What would you need to do or what would need to happen for you to start that activity?

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