

## Troubleshooting Emotion Regulation Skills: When What You Are Doing Isn't Working

**1**

### CHECK YOUR BIOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY

- **ASK:** Am I biologically more vulnerable?  
Do I have untreated physical illness or distress?  
Am I out of balance on eating, use of drugs, sleep, exercise?  
Have I taken medications as prescribed?
- **WORK** on your PLEASE skills.
  1. Take care of physical illness and distress.
  2. Take medications as prescribed. Check if others are needed.
  3. Try again.

**2**

### CHECK YOUR SKILLS

- **REVIEW** what you have tried.  
Did you try a skill likely to be effective?  
Did you follow the skill instructions to the letter?
- **WORK** on your skills.
  1. Review and try other skills.
  2. Get coaching if you need it.
  3. Try again.

**3**

### CHECK FOR REINFORCERS

- **ASK:** Do my emotions . . .  
**COMMUNICATE** an important message or influence people to do things?  
**MOTIVATE** me to do things I think are important?  
**VALIDATE** my beliefs or my identity?  
**FEEL GOOD?**
- **IF YES:**
  1. Practice interpersonal effectiveness skills to communicate.
  2. Work to find new reinforcers to motivate yourself.
  3. Practice self-validation.
  4. Do **PROS AND CONS** for changing emotions.  
(See *Emotion Regulation Worksheet 1.*)

*(continued on next page)*

**4**

**CHECK YOUR MOOD**

- ASK: Am I putting in the time and effort that solving my problem will take?
- IF NO:
  1. Do PROS AND CONS for working hard on skills.
  2. Practice RADICAL ACCEPTANCE and WILLINGNESS skills.
  3. Practice the mindfulness skills of PARTICIPATING and EFFECTIVENESS  
(See *Mindfulness Handouts 4 and 5.*)

**5**

**CHECK FOR EMOTIONAL OVERLOAD**

- ASK: Am I too upset to use complicated skills?
- IF YES, ask: Can the problems I am worrying about be easily solved now?
  - IF YES, do PROBLEM SOLVING.  
(See *Emotion Regulation Handouts 9, 12.*)
  - IF NO, practice mindfulness of CURRENT EMOTIONS.  
(See *Emotion Regulation Handout 22.*)
- IF your emotions are too high for you to think straight:
  - Go to TIP skills.  
(See *Distress Tolerance Handout 5.*)

**6**

**CHECK FOR EMOTION MYTHS GETTING IN THE WAY**

- CHECK FOR:
  - Judgmental myths about emotions (e.g., "Some emotions are stupid," "There is a right way to feel in every situation")?
  - Beliefs that emotions and identity are the same (e.g., "My emotions are who I am")?
- IF YES:
  1. Check the facts.
  2. Challenge myths.
  3. Practice thinking nonjudgmentally.