

## Building Our Strategy Toolbox

### Regulating Emotions with RULER

#### Video 6

**Activity Summary:** In this activity, staff think about helpful short-term and long-term strategies to regulate emotions.

**Time:** 20 minutes (including time to watch the video)

#### Materials

- Paper and pen

#### Facilitator Directions

1. Ask staff to think of a situation in which they experienced an intense emotion. Prompt them to name the emotion, and write it down or make a mental note.

Say:

*"In that moment, did you want to maintain that feeling or shift? Deciding how we want to feel allows us to better regulate our emotions. We can use action strategies like mindful breathing or taking a walk, or thought strategies like positive self-talk or reframing. These types of strategies are great in the moment, or in the shorter term. Longer-term strategies have more impact over time, like healthy eating, physical activity, getting enough sleep, and having a friend or family member for support."*

2. Divide staff into two groups. Ask one group to brainstorm short-term strategies that can be used in the moment as emotions arise. Ask the other group to brainstorm longer-term strategies that can be helpful over time to regulate emotions. Give each group 5 minutes to list out as many strategies as they can. Ask each group to share out.

3. Debrief: Discuss the following questions as a whole group:

- What short-term strategies work best for you?
- What long-term strategies work best for you?
- What new strategies would you like to try?
- What strategies could you share with youth?

For more information on emotion regulation, refer to the Emotion Regulation Tip Sheet.

## Deep Breathing

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Deep breathing is a strategy that is always available to us to help us manage our emotions. Tuning in with our breath calms our body and decreases stress. It also can help us think more clearly before we respond to others, which may improve our relationships. Practicing deep breathing can help us to handle everyday emotions with greater resilience.

**Activity Summary:** In this activity, staff will practice deep breathing - an action strategy that is readily available to us to calm our bodies and help us think more clearly when we experience intense emotions.

#### Materials

- Mood Meter

**Time:** 20 minutes (including time to watch the video)

#### Facilitator Directions

1. Ask staff to check in on the Mood Meter. Remind them to think about how pleasant or unpleasant they are feeling and how much energy they have in their bodies.

Say:

*"We are checking in on the Mood Meter now so that we have a baseline to refer back to after we go through the following exercise."*

2. Say:

*"Deep breathing is a strategy that is always available to us to help us manage our emotions. Tuning in with our breath calms our body and decreases stress. It also can help us think more clearly before we respond to others, which may improve our relationships. Practicing deep breathing can help us when we feel activated as well as handle everyday emotions with greater resilience."*

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#### Facilitator Directions

3. Guide the breathing exercise using the following script:

*"Please sit comfortably with tall posture. If you feel comfortable, close your eyes or let your gaze float downward. When I begin counting, inhale deeply until I reach the number 4. Then, hold your breath for 4 seconds as I count. When I begin counting backward from 4, slowly exhale until I reach 1 again. If it helps, you can place your hands on your stomach as you inhale and exhale deeply, feeling your breath fill your body."*

*"We will repeat this practice for several breaths, five or more, noticing when you start to feel a sense of calm in your body. Slowly inhale through the nose for 1-2-3-4. Hold for 1-2-3-4. Slowly exhale for 4-3-2-1. Let's repeat two more times."*

4. Debrief:

Ask staff how they are feeling after the exercise, noting the energy and pleasantness they feel in their body. Ask them to plot themselves on the Mood Meter, again. Do they notice any difference? Prompt staff to share about the experience with a partner or the group, and discuss when they could see themselves using this deep breathing strategy with youth.