

Emergency Bag or Box

When we are very distressed, it is difficult to think rationally and to decide how to help ourselves. We can therefore resort to using self-destructive behaviours which may help at that moment, but can cause other problems later and in the long-term. It can be useful to keep an 'Emergency' or 'Soothe' bag or box, in a prominent and handy place, so that when you feel overwhelmingly distressed, you can go to your bag/box and find something that will help you cope and/or feel better.



You can use any bag or box or other container, and decorate it as you wish.

Collect together items that are meaningful, or you know will be helpful. If you cannot put the item in the bag or box, then perhaps use a reminder of the item, for example, a picture of an iPod, mp3 player, computer or games machine. Include items that will help soothe all your senses:

- Vision: photo album, DVD, book or magazine, a picture of a beautiful safe place (or use safe place imagery), reminder for funny or inspiring YouTube video, walk or sit in the park or garden, guided meditation
- Hearing: soothing or inspiring music on CD or mp3 player, recordings of a friend's voice, reminder of phone numbers to ring, a talking book.
- Smell or taste: oils, fruity snack or treat, favourite perfume, a sachet of coffee or ready prepared cake mix.
- Touch: soft woolly socks or blanket, teddy bear, comforter or grounding object, hand or foot lotion, massage oil, warm bubble bath, nail varnish, make-up



When you use these items, or whatever you do, pay attention to your physical senses: see, hear, smell or taste, and touch. Look around you and notice what you see (colours, shapes, light or shadow, movement), what you hear (nature sounds, sounds in the room, near and far), what you smell or taste (including from the environment around you), and what you can touch – right now, wherever you are as well as items from your emergency bag/box.

Activities that help with an outer focus of attention or use physical energy:

- Puzzle books, game for game machine, item from hobby or interest, art or craft materials, notebook and pen, prompt for physical exercise or musical instrument

Activities which help you make sense of and cope with what you are thinking and feeling:

- Therapy worksheets, reading or contact with others on the internet (reminders about websites or internet discussion forums etc)
- A card with positive coping statements – that you can read or say to yourself to help you get through the distress

Other ideas:

- When you're feeling better and more positive, write yourself a letter to keep in the box/bag to read at those distressing times (or include a comforting or inspiring letter or email from someone else)
- Include a copy of your safety plan (if you have one), and include your "soothe/emergency" bag or box in your safety plan.