

A few things I have found useful to work with activations when I am on my own.

Recognize when it is happening. Learn to recognize what it feels like in my body, what thoughts and/or situations tend to be related to it. The sooner I can recognize it the easier it is to work with.

Get clear on what it feels like beyond just the label (ex "fear") - what it feels like in my body, the quality of my breath, what I am aware of and what I am not, what are the boundaries of where I am holding the fear (whats caught up in it and what isn't). Take that as a snapshot that I will refer back to later.

Then do any number of the following:

Disengage from the physical circumstance if possible.

Recognize that I am not in imminent danger (different set of instructions for that smile emoticon - Tell myself "There are no tigers in the room. I am safe."

Let myself know that I can slow things way down.

Let my eyes take in my surroundings, looking at one thing at a time while taking a few breaths. Just breath the object in, taking in its textures and colors for 20 seconds or so and do that with 3 - 5 things.

Locate myself in the room/environment - see how high the ceiling is, get a sense of the size of the room, my location in it.

Twist my head and torso to the left, lock in visually on an object and take a few breaths. Then do that to the right side. Do both sides a couple of sides.

If in bed, sit up. Get out of bed if needed, use the bathroom, drink some water, engage the body to break the trance.

Engage the arms and legs - wiggle my toes, rotate ankles, flex knees, butterfly my legs. Do the corollary with my arms. Arms and legs are critical for action so its reassuring to know they are available.

See what senses I am aware of and actively engage some more (listen, feel my weight, look around, etc.)

Alternate humming a few bars and counting to five. This alternates engaging different parts of the brain which helps bring things back into balance. This is my current favorite.

Press my feet into the floor, flex my arms and legs.

If I can get away with it, hiss like a cat or growl like a dog. Flex my hands like I am baring my claws and bare my fangs.

Breath deeper into my belly.

Hold both a part of my body that is caught up in fear and a part that feels safe in awareness at the same time, or alternate. Hold my awareness on the safe side of the boundary between the two and just hang out there.

Let the scared part know that I have all the time in the world for this, nothing has to be fixed, and I am not going to leave. Everything is welcome.

Recognize that my awareness, which is effortless and indestructible, permeates every experience, even this fear. And this permeation isn't a doing. It has already happened effortlessly. Like an immaculate conception, there is something clean, and effortless that has already permeated this contraction, so no need to add effort to that. I can just relax.

If I am not alone, recognize that I am not alone.

Include more and more into awareness.

Engage the social nervous system - seeing, hearing, moving your neck, swallowing, humming. The social nervous system goes offline when we are in trauma so this can pull us back out.

Recognize that every burp is my system relaxing.

Feel the weight of my body. Recognize that I am being supported by the chair, the ground, etc. Feel the three-dimensional space I take up. I take up space. I am substantial.

Place myself in the present moment - It is Thur eve, Jan 22 2015. I am in Berkeley CA.

After a few of those, take another assessment of how I feel and compare that to my prior bookmark. Take time to really savor, really deeply feel, breath into, and appreciate ANY relaxation that has shown up. This savoring may be the most important thing we can do because this is what ingrains the change, this new possibility into the nervous system. This is where we learn.

Now go back and do a few more, reassess, repeat.

Jeff Burkhart