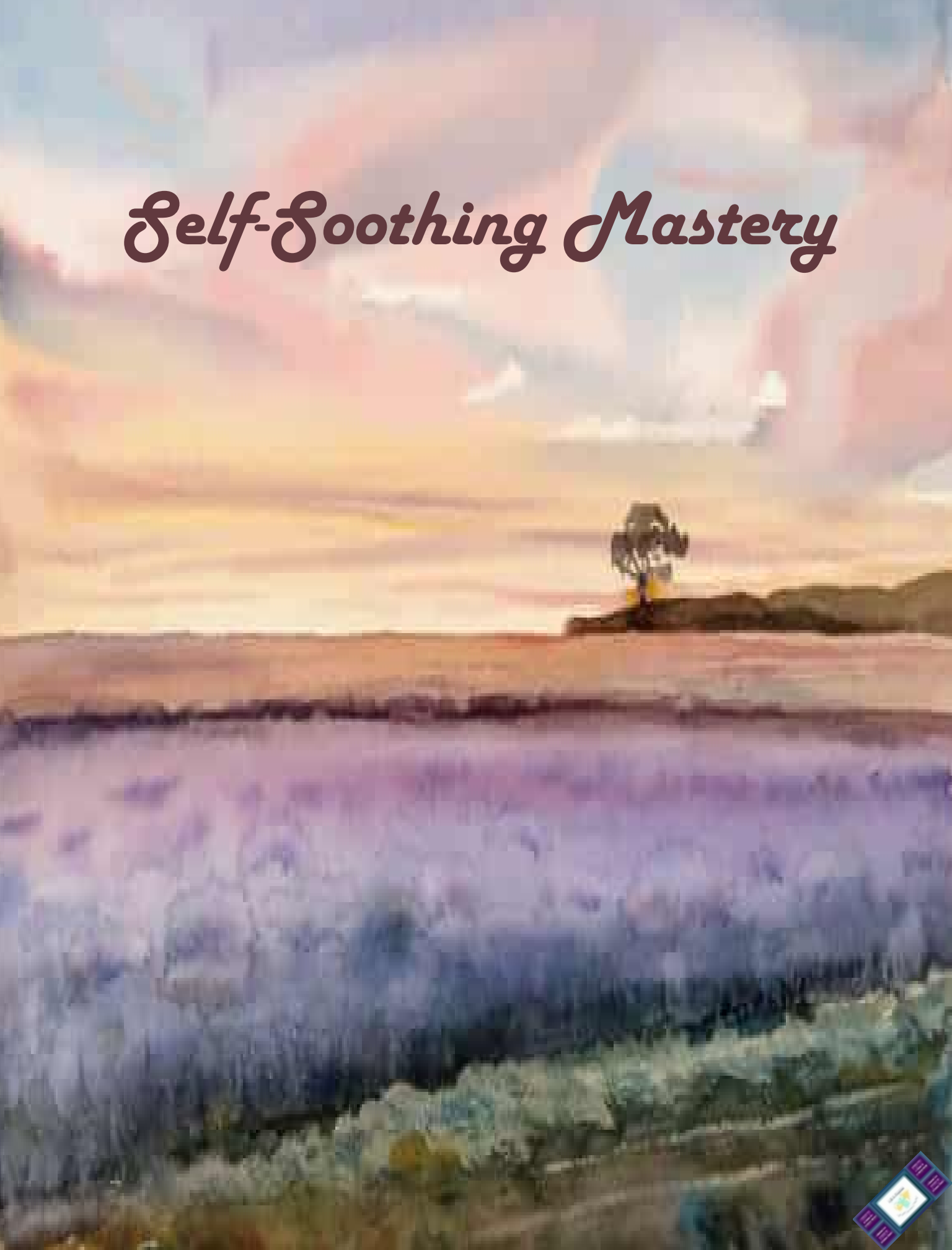
Self-Soothing Mastery



Self-Soothing

✓ **What Is Self-Soothing?**

Self-soothing is being comforting, nurturing, peacemaking, gentle, and mindfully kind to oneself.

✓ **When to Self-Soothe**

Self-soothing activities reduce vulnerability to emotion mind and to acting impulsively and they reduce the sense of deprivation that is often a precursor to feelings of vulnerability. They help people tolerate pain and distress without making things worse.

✓ **How to Self-Soothe**

1. ***Soothe the Five Senses***

   A way to remember the skills for self-soothing is to think of soothing the five senses:

   - Vision
   - Hearing
   - Smell
   - Taste
   - Touch

Discussion Point: Some individuals have difficulties with self-soothing. Some believe that they do not deserve soothing, kindness, and gentleness; they may feel guilty or ashamed when they self- soothe. others believe that they should get soothing from others; they don't self-soothe as a matter of principle, or feel angry at others when they don't

Balance Soothing the Senses with Problem Solving

It is important to balance self-soothing with focusing and working on a task. This is especially important during crises, when sudden demands feel overwhelming and keep one from doing what is required. In such a scenario, self-soothing can be an effective first step to bring down the negative emotions. However, self-soothing is not sufficient for resolving crises. It needs to be followed by working on the task and getting it done. Alternatively, you might suggest one of the TIP skills as a way to reduce feeling overwhelmed, followed by problem solving, and then followed by self-soothing as a reward.



Self-Soothing

A way to remember these skills is to think of soothing each of your **FIVE SENSES.**

With **Vision:**

- ☐ Look at the stars at night.
- ☐ Look at pictures you like in a book.
- ☐ Buy one beautiful flower.
- ☐ Make one space in a r oom pleasing to look at.
- ☐ Light a c andle and watch the flame.
- ☐ Set a p retty place at the table using your best things.
- ☐ Go people-watching or window-shopping.
- ☐ Go to a m useum or p oster shop with beautiful art.
- ☐ Sit in the lobby of a b eautiful old hotel.
- ☐ Look at nature around you.
- ☐ Walk in a p retty part of town.
- ☐ Watch a sunrise o r a s unset.
- ☐ Go to a d ance performance, or watch it on TV.
- ☐ Be m indful of e ach sight that passes in front of you.
- ☐ Take a w alk in a p ark or a s cenic hike.
- ☐ Browse through stores looking at things.
- ☐ Other: _____

With **Hearing:**

- ☐ Listen to soothing or invigorating music.
- ☐ Pay attention to sounds of n ature (waves, birds, rainfall, leaves rustling).
- ☐ Pay attention to the s ounds of the city (traffic, horns, city music).
- ☐ Sing to your favorite songs.
- ☐ Hum a s oothing tune.
- ☐ Learn to play an instrument.
- ☐ Burn a C D or make an iPod mix with music that will get you through tough times. Turn it on.
- ☐ Be m indful of any s ounds that come your way, letting them go in one ear and out the other.
- ☐ Turn on the radio.
- ☐ Other: _____

With **Smell:**

- ☐ Use your favorite s oap, shampoo, aftershave, cologne, or lotions, or try them on in the store.
- ☐ Burn incense or light a s cented candle.
- ☐ Open a p ackage of coffee and inhale the aroma.
- ☐ Put lemon oil on your furniture.
- ☐ Put potpourri or eucalyptus oil in a b owl in your room.
- ☐ Sit in a n ew car a nd breathe the aroma.
- ☐ Boil cinnamon. Make cookies, bread, or popcorn.
- ☐ Smell the roses.
- ☐ Walk in a w ooded a rea and m indfully breathe in the fresh smells of nature.
- ☐ Open the window and smell the air.
- ☐ Other: _____

With **Taste:**

- ☐ Eat some of your favorite foods.
- ☐ Drink your favorite soothing drink, such as herbal tea, hot chocolate, a latté, or a smoothie.
- ☐ Treat yourself to a dessert.
- ☐ Eat macaroni and cheese or another favorite childhood food.
- ☐ Sample flavors in an ice c ream store.
- ☐ Suck on a p iece of peppermint candy.
- ☐ Chew your favorite gum.
- ☐ Get a little bit of a special food you don't usually spend the money on, such as fresh-squeezed orange juice or your favorite candy.
- ☐ Really t aste the food you e at. E at one thing mindfully.
- ☐ Other: _____

With **Touch:**

- ☐ Take a l ong h ot bath or shower.
- ☐ Pet your dog or cat.
- ☐ Have a massage. Soak your feet.
- ☐ Put creamy lotion on your whole body.
- ☐ Put a c old compress on your forehead.
- ☐ Sink into a c omfortable chair in your home.
- ☐ Put on a b louse or shirt that has a p leasant feel.
- ☐ Take a drive with the car windows rolled down.
- ☐ Run your h and along s mooth wood or leather.
- ☐ Hug someone.
- ☐ Put clean sheets on the bed.
- ☐ Wrap u p in a blanket.
- ☐ Notice touch that is soothing.
- ☐ Other: _____



Self-Soothing

Due Date: _____ Name: _____ Week Starting: _____

Describe two crisis situations that happened to you. Then describe your use of the self-soothing skills.

CRISIS EVENT 1: Rate level of distress (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____

Prompting event for my distress (who, what, when, where): What triggered the state of crisis?

- ❑ **Vision**
- ❑ **Hearing**
- ❑ **Smell**
- ❑ **Taste**
- ❑ **Touch**

At left, check the skills you used, and describe here:

Describe the outcome of using skills:

Circle a number to indicate how effective the skills were in helping you tolerate the distress and cope with the situation (keeping you from doing something to make the situation worse). Use the following scale:

I still couldn't stand the situation, even for one more minute.		*I was able to cope somewhat, at least for a little while. It helped somewhat.*		*I could use skills, tolerated distress, and resisted problem urges.*
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

CRISIS EVENT 2: Rate level of distress (0–100) Before: _____ After: _____

Prompting event for my distress (who, what, when, where): What triggered the state of crisis?

- ❑ **Vision**
- ❑ **Hearing**
- ❑ **Smell**
- ❑ **Taste**
- ❑ **Touch**

At left, check the skills you used, and describe here:

Describe the outcome of using skills:

Circle effectiveness of skills:

I still couldn't stand the situation, even for one more minute.		*I was able to cope somewhat, at least for a little while. It helped somewhat.*		*I could use skills, tolerated distress, and resisted problem urges.*
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Self-Soothing with a Body Scan Meditation

Another option for self-soothing is a more focused attention to body sensations, the body scan . This is a practice commonly used in meditation. “The idea here is to settle the mind by letting go of thoughts about the past or about the future, and instead focus the mind on the present and on your present experiences of your breath and of your body. It is a way of approaching the sensations of your body with the curiosity of a child. Through this process, you will discover a lot about how your body feels, its sensations, and your mental reactions to paying attention to various parts of your body.” Practice with a CD or web-based recording. Body scan meditation, like paired muscle relaxation, can be very soothing when it is done while listening to a soothing voice’s step-by-step instructions. You can make a recording for your use. The steps for teaching body scan meditation are as follows:

1. “Focusing your mind on your breath and on specific body sensations can be a very soothing experience if it is done slowly, with curiosity and with gentleness. It does not require a lot of effort or use of imagination. Bringing your mind back to the present and focus- ing on your body sensations can anchor the mind, calming emotions that feel out of control.”

2. Rate your level of distress (0–100) before starting the practice; you can awrite it down in case you forget. Get in a comfortable position with eyes partially open. Listen to the recording and focus on one part of the body pausing for a minute or so between each part. For example, you can

think something like this, go slowly and giving yourself time to focus on each part of the body:

"Focus your awareness, as if it were a spotlight, on:

- *Where your body is touching the chair, (or the floor, or the bed).*
- *Down the left leg, into the left foot all the way to the toes.*
- *On each toe in turn.*
- *Expand attention into the rest of the foot, to:*
  - *The ankle.*
  - *The top of the foot.*
  - *The bones and joints.*
  - *The lower left leg.*
  - *The calf, shin, knee, and so forth in turn.*
  - *The left thigh."*

"Move your focus to:

- *The right toes, and on to*
  - *Foot and ankle.*
  - *The right lower leg.*
  - *The right knee.*
  - *The right thigh.*
- *Up to the pelvic area.*
  - *Groin, genitals, buttocks, and hips.*
- *The lower back and the abdomen.*
- *The upper back and the chest and shoulders.*
- *Then move to the hands.*
  - *The sensations in the fingers and thumbs.*
  - *The palms and the backs of both hands.*
  - *The wrists, the lower arms, and the elbows.*
  - *The upper arms, the shoulders, and the armpits.*
- *The neck, the face (jaw, mouth, lips, nose, cheeks, ears, eyes, forehead).*
- *And then the entirety of the head."*

3. Following the end of the exercise rate your level of distress, again on the 0–100 scale.
4. In a crisis or when you have very, very little time, you can do a brief body scan. Focus your attention completely on just one section of your body, moving to a second and then a third.



Self-Soothing

Due Date: _____ Name: _____ Week Starting: _____

For each self-soothing skill, write down what you did during the week, and write down a number to indicate how effective the skill was in helping you tolerate the distress and cope with the situation (keeping you from doing something to make the situation worse). Use the following scale:

I still couldn't stand the situation, even for one more minute. **1** **2** *I was able to cope somewhat, at least for a little while. It helped somewhat.* **3** **4** *I could use skills, tolerated distress, and resisted problem urges.* **5**

Day: **VISION**

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

Day: **HEARING**

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

Day: **SMELL**

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

Day: **TASTE**

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

Day: **TOUCH**

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

_____ /_____ Effectiveness: _____

Self-Soothing

Due Date: _____ Name: _____ Week Starting: _____

Practice each self-soothing skill twice, and describe your experience as follows:

When did you practice this skill, and what did you do to practice?	What was going on that was painful or stressful (if anything)?	How much time passed in doing this skill?	Rate before/after skill use			Conclusions or questions about this skills practice
			Distress tolerance (0 = I can't stand it; 5 = I can definitely survive)	Emotion		
				Negative emotion intensity (0–100)	Positive emotion intensity (0–100)	
Vision:			/	/	/	
			/	/	/	
Hearing:			/	/	/	
			/	/	/	
Smell:			/	/	/	
			/	/	/	
Taste:			/	/	/	
			/	/	/	
Touch:			/	/	/	
			/	/	/	

