

Appendix 22: Quick Anxiety/Stress Management Techniques

These stress management techniques can be useful in grounding someone who is distressed.

- **Body focus:**

Take a deep breath and close your eyes for a few moments. Sense where your body is contacting the environment around you (chair, floor etc.). Sense where your weight is resting. Now take another deep breath and move your body in some way to get more comfortable and relaxed. Are there any parts of your body that feel very tense or sore? If you find one, take a deep breath and try to imagine that place loosening up. Then gently and slowly move that part of the body just a little bit to let it loosen and relax.

- **Deep breathing**

Take a slow deep breath in through the nose and out through the mouth. Make sure your tummy goes out as you inhale. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth to the following count inhale, 1-2-3-4, hold 1-2-3-4, exhale 1-2-3-4, pause before the next breath. Repeat 5-10 times.

- **Neck stretches**

Gently let your head stretch to the left, then to the right, then down to your chest. Now slowly circle around in one direction, then circle back around in the other direction. Don't stretch your head in the backwards direction as it may strain the vertebrae. Keep breathing while doing this.

- **Shoulder rolls**

With your hands in your lap, firmly but slowly circle the shoulders around as far as they will go. Do this a few times, then relax and finish by shrugging a few times. You can try one shoulder at a time and try different speeds as well, remember to keep breathing.

- **Apple picker stretch**

Imagine you are under the branches of an apple tree. Standing with both arms up in the air and gently bouncing on tip toes, reach up as high as you can and grab at the imaginary apples with one hand then the other. Then gently drop your hands and bend over towards the floor as far as you can with knees slightly bent. Then sway gently from side to side for a few moments before slowly rising up, one vertebra at a time, with the neck and head coming up very last, remember to keep breathing.

- **Body slapping**

Using the palms and fingers or lightly clenched fists start gently slapping every inch of your body. Be gentle on tender areas and firm on the rest, remember to keep breathing.

- **Arm shakes** Standing with your arms by your side start to shake your right hand and wrist. Let the movement continue up through the elbow and upper arm until your whole arm is shaking vigorously. Continue for 5-10 seconds. Then relax. Then do the same exercise with the left arm and hand, remember to keep breathing during the exercise.