OPENNESS WITH THERAPY

Free Sample Guide

A preview of practical mental-health and regulation tools from the Member Resource Library

✦ Inside this sample

Eight simple activities for anxiety, depression, connection, trauma regulation, neurodiversity, parenting, grief, and relationships. Each practice is designed to be approachable and easy to try at home.

Tools for adults. Tools for children. Tools for families.

Use these activities as educational wellness tools. They are not a substitute for individualized mental-health or medical care.

How to Use This Guide

The Member Resource Library is designed to give you practical tools you can return to between therapy sessions, during stressful moments, or when you simply want more ways to support yourself or your family.

1 Choose one tool at a time

You do not need to use every strategy. Notice what feels realistic, what helps your body settle, and what fits your family or environment.

2 Practice before the hardest moment

Regulation skills are easier to access when they have already been practiced. Try them during calmer moments first.

3 Adapt the activity

Shorten it, simplify it, add movement, reduce sensory demands, or make it playful. A useful strategy should work with your nervous system, not against it.

This sample offers a small look at the kind of practical, everyday support available in the Member Resource Library.

ANXIETY

Mindfulness Bubble Activity

Best for: Children and adults

✓ Why try it?

Bubble blowing gives the mind one simple, sensory-focused task. Watching, listening, and noticing the bubbles can pull attention away from racing thoughts and back into the present moment.

How to practice

1. Clear a little space and take out a bottle of bubbles.
2. Take one slow breath, then blow a few bubbles.
3. Choose one bubble to follow with your eyes.
4. Notice its shape, color, movement, and sound. If one lands nearby, notice what it looks or feels like as it pops.
5. When your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to the next bubble.

→ Try this reflection

What did you notice when you focused on only one thing at a time? Did your thoughts feel quieter, slower, or simply less demanding?

Gentle note: If bubble solution is irritating or unsafe for a child, use a bubble machine or simply watch bubbles rather than touching them.

DEPRESSION

Humor Interrupt / Thought-Shifting Activity

Best for: Adults

✓ Why try it?

When the mind gets stuck in repetitive negative thinking, a deliberately absurd or funny mental image can briefly interrupt the loop and create space for a different thought or action.

How to practice

1. Notice that you are caught in a repetitive negative thought.

2. Say to yourself: “Pause. I am going to shift the channel for a moment.”

3. Picture the funniest, most ridiculous scene you can imagine - for example, two baby seals riding a unicycle.

4. Make the image more detailed: What are they wearing? Where are they going? What sound is the unicycle making?

5. After the mental shift, choose one small next action: stand up, drink water, open the blinds, text someone, or return to what you were doing.

→ Try this reflection

Did the funny image erase the difficult thought? Probably not - and it does not have to. The goal is to interrupt the loop long enough to regain a little choice.

Gentle note: This strategy is for mild-to-moderate repetitive negative thinking. Persistent or severe depression, especially thoughts of self-harm or suicide, deserves professional support.

CONNECTION

The Warm Hug Activity

Best for: Children and adults

✓ Why try it?

Safe, wanted affectionate touch can support feelings of closeness, safety, and connection. Longer hugs may help some people feel calmer and more grounded through soothing social contact and oxytocin-related bonding processes.

How to practice

1. Ask first: “Would you like a hug?”

2. If the answer is yes, offer a comfortable hug for about 30 seconds - longer only if both people genuinely want it.

3. Keep your body relaxed and breathe slowly.

4. For children, you can add a simple phrase such as: “I love you. You are safe with me.”

5. If hugs are uncomfortable, try hand-holding, sitting close, a weighted blanket, or another form of consent-based connection.

→ Try this reflection

What kind of safe connection helps you or your child feel most settled: hugs, hand pressure, sitting nearby, words of reassurance, or something else?

Gentle note: Touch should always be consensual. Not everyone finds hugging regulating, particularly people with sensory sensitivities or trauma histories.

TRAUMA REGULATION

Physiological Sigh

Best for: Children and adults

✓ **Why try it?**

A physiological sigh uses two inhales followed by a longer exhale. This breathing pattern can help reduce acute physiological arousal and gives the body a simple cue to slow down.

How to practice

1. Inhale gently through your nose.
2. Take a second, smaller inhale on top of the first.
3. Exhale slowly and fully through your mouth.
4. Repeat 1-3 times, then return to normal breathing.
5. For children, model it playfully: “Smell the flower, take one tiny extra sniff, then slowly blow out the candle.”

→ **Try this reflection**

What changes first when you slow the exhale - your shoulders, heart rate, jaw, thoughts, or urge to move?

Gentle note: If breath-focused exercises increase anxiety, dizziness, or trauma symptoms, stop and choose an external grounding activity instead.

NEURODIVERSITY

Leaves on a Stream + Sitting Like a Frog

Best for: Adults + children

✓ Why try it?

Leaves on a Stream helps adults practice noticing thoughts without chasing or fighting them. Sitting Like a Frog gives children a playful way to practice stillness, body awareness, waiting, and impulse control.

How to practice

1. Adults - Leaves on a Stream: Close your eyes or soften your gaze. Picture a stream. Each time a thought appears, place it on a leaf and let the leaf float past. You do not have to argue with the thought or make it disappear.

2. Children - Sitting Like a Frog:
a. Sit criss-cross applesauce on the floor.
b. Start with "smell the flowers, blow out the candles": breathe in slowly through your nose as if smelling flowers, then breathe out slowly through your mouth as if blowing out candles.
c. Close your eyes if comfortable and picture yourself as a frog on a lily pad.
d. Imagine jumping from lily pad to lily pad for 3 jumps. Pause on a lily pad for 3 slow breaths.
e. Repeat the 3 jumps + 3 breaths sequence 2-3 times.

→ Try this reflection

Which is easier for your nervous system: letting thoughts float away, or giving your body a simple stillness challenge?

PARENTING

Natural Consequences - Safely

Best for: Parents and caregivers

> ✓ **Why try it?**
>
> Natural consequences allow children to experience the direct outcome of a choice when that outcome is safe, reasonable, and not humiliating. The goal is learning, not punishment.

How to practice

1. Pause before automatically rescuing or fixing the situation.

2. Ask yourself: “Is the natural outcome safe enough for my child to experience?”

3. If yes, allow the outcome and stay calm. Example: a child leaves a nonessential toy outside after being reminded; if it gets wet, they help dry it and learn why bringing it in matters.

4. If the natural consequence could involve cold exposure, injury, hunger, unsafe environments, or other meaningful harm, do not use it. Use a safe logical consequence instead.

5. Afterward, keep the conversation brief: “What did you learn? What might you do differently next time?”

> → **Try this reflection**
>
> Where could you step back safely this week so your child can practice responsibility without shame or unnecessary risk?

Gentle note: For shoes: rather than sending a child barefoot into unsafe or cold conditions, use a safe logical limit such as, “We can leave when your shoes are on.”

GRIEF

Memory Box

Best for: Children and adults

✓ Why try it?

A memory box creates a physical place to honor someone who has died. It can hold reminders of the relationship and give grief a concrete, gentle way to be expressed over time.

How to practice

1. Choose a box, container, or decorated keepsake bin.

2. Add meaningful items: photographs, letters, a favorite recipe, a small object, drawings, ticket stubs, fabric, or copies of meaningful documents.

3. Write down stories or memories you do not want to forget.

4. For children, invite them to draw a favorite memory or add something that reminds them of the person.

5. Return to the box whenever you want connection, remembrance, or a place to hold something new.

→ Try this reflection

What is one memory, phrase, object, or story that feels important to preserve?

Gentle note: There is no correct timeline for grief. If an activity feels too intense, it is okay to stop and return to it another day.

RELATIONSHIPS

The GIVE Skill

Best for: Adults and teens

✓ Why try it?

GIVE is a DBT interpersonal effectiveness skill used to protect and strengthen relationships. It supports respect, validation, and connection - especially during disagreement, boundary-setting, or difficult conversations.

How to practice

G - Be Gentle
Use a respectful tone. Avoid attacks, threats, insults, or judgmental language.

I - Act Interested
Listen, make space for the other person, and stay present rather than planning your rebuttal or interrupting.

V - Validate
Acknowledge the other person’s feelings, perspective, or difficulty - even when you do not agree with every part of it.

E - Use an Easy Manner
Bring warmth when appropriate. A softer tone, relaxed body language, or gentle humor can help reduce tension.

→ Why it matters

- Helps difficult conversations stay connected instead of becoming unnecessary battles.
- Supports trust, emotional safety, and mutual respect.
- Lets you care for the relationship while still expressing needs and boundaries.
- Can help when explaining sensory needs or asking others to respect your limits.

Try this reflection

Which part of GIVE is easiest for you? Which part might help most when you are asking for emotional support, setting a boundary, or explaining a sensory need?

Gentle note: GIVE is about relationship effectiveness. It does not mean tolerating disrespect, coercion, abuse, or unsafe behavior. Safety and boundaries come first.

Want More Tools Like These?

This guide is only a small sample of the practical activities, psychoeducation, reflections, and regulation ideas available through the Openness With Therapy Member Resource Library.

- **For adults**

Practical regulation strategies, mindfulness activities, emotional wellness education, trauma-informed reflections, coping tools, and resources you can use between sessions or independently.

- **For parents and families**

Child-friendly regulation ideas, connection activities, parenting tools, sensory-informed strategies, and resources designed to make emotional wellness more usable at home.

- **Sensory support**

If you want a more individualized understanding of your sensory patterns, Openness With Therapy also offers Sensory Profile Clinical Assessments for eligible Maryland clients.

Member Resource Library: practical support you can come back to when you need it.

Visit opennesswiththerapy.com to learn more.

Educational disclaimer: These materials are for general educational and wellness purposes and are not individualized medical, psychological, or emergency advice. Seek appropriate professional care for significant or worsening symptoms.