

## Responding to Momentary Emotional Discomfort

P – Pause. Take a break from pushing through the discomfort, choose to pause, and then notice the emotions in mindfully – meaning: Be present-moment minded – minimize distractions from emotions

O – Observe and describe your current B-E-A-T-S (Body sensations, emotions, actions/urges, thoughts, and current situational triggers for these experiences). Try to do without judgment or critique. Attempt to observe and label each part of experience (using phrases like “I notice that...” or “I am having the thought that...”). It may be helpful to engage in the O-step for several minutes along with paced breathing.

S – Show understanding: It is important to begin with an accepting/welcoming response towards these uncomfortable emotions. Often, we start by trying to avoid or fix the emotions, but emotional acceptance helps us to begin the process of learning to tolerate uncomfortable emotions.

Understanding can look like the following:

- Expressing self-validation: “It makes sense that I feel this way” or “Others might feel the same if in my position”
- Resisting dismissive or invalidating statements like “You should be over this,” “You shouldn’t feel this way,” or “You are just being weak”

T – Thank your emotions: This step is all about noticing that your emotions have a purpose – they are not simply annoying distractions that interfere with your enjoyment or goal attainment. Emotions are intended to alert us to the ways our environments are affecting us. Consider the following questions:

- Anxious – Is my anxiety alerting me to feeling **unsafe, threatened, or concerned** about a possible outcome?
- Sadness – Is my sadness alerting me to feeling a **lack of connection, belonging, purpose, hope,** and that I am struggling to cope with a **loss**?
- Anger – Is my anger alerting me to feeling **not respected, heard, seen, or supported**?

S- Staying on Path: After acknowledging the existence, purpose, and validity of your emotions, it’s important to identify a path for moving forward in the moment and beyond. To do so, try the following:

- Be mindful of momentary urges in response to the identified emotions
  - Anxious → Avoidance, Re-assurance seeking, procrastination
  - Sadness → Withdrawal or Isolation
  - Anger → Attacking (verbally or physically)
- Clarify or Remind self of Values / Goals
- Identify actions that best align with your values and goals