



EMOTION REGULATION

NATIONAL EDUCATION ALLIANCE FOR
BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER



WHAT ARE EMOTION REGULATION SKILLS?

Strategies that guide you to recognize, understand, and respond to intense emotions more effectively, keeping you engaged in learning.

Especially important for people with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), who often experience:

- Fast, intense emotional shifts
- High sensitivity (especially to rejection)
- Difficulty calming down
- Impulsivity during distress
- Shame, emptiness, or relationship turmoil

WHY THEY MATTER FOR BPD:

Skills in emotion regulation are vital for BPD; they help reduce impulsive behaviors, stabilize relationships, and foster emotional control, making recovery more achievable.

4 CORE EMOTION REGULATION SKILL AREAS

1. Identify & Label Emotions

Helps create clarity and control.

Skills: emotion check-ins, naming emotions, journaling.

2. Reduce Emotional Vulnerability

Build habits that keep emotions steadier.

Skills: sleep routine, regular meals, movement, avoiding substances, reducing stress, increasing positives.

3. Change Emotional Responses

Shift what you feel or how intensely you feel it.

Skills: checking the facts, problem-solving, opposite action, and reframing.

4. Increase Emotional Resilience

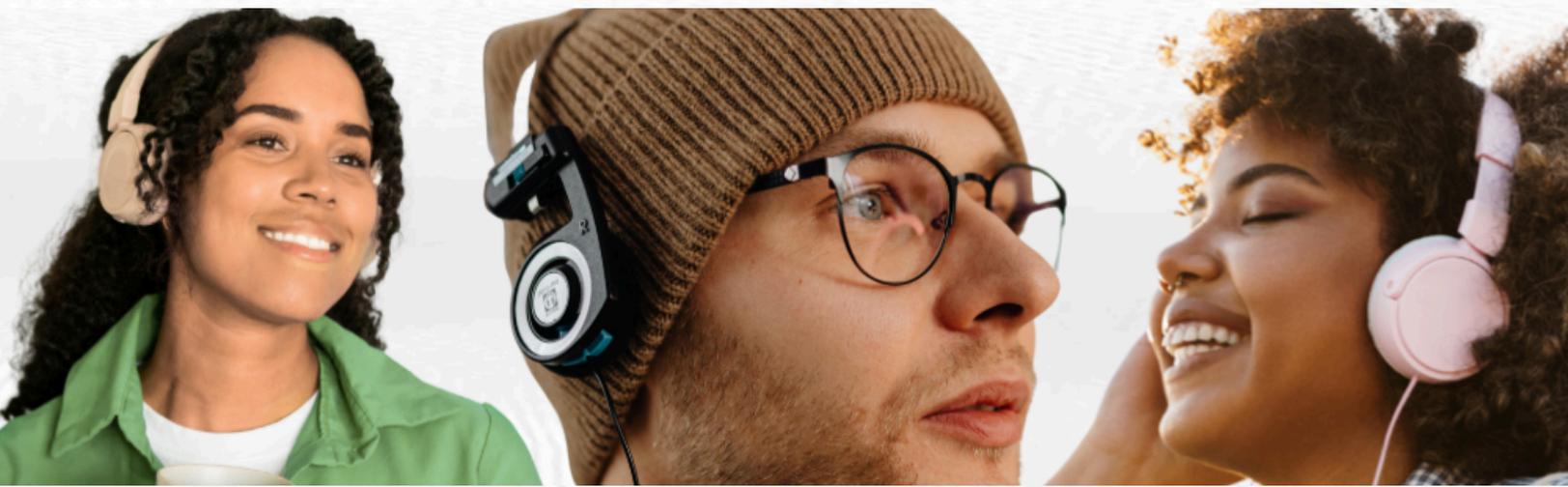
Calm your nervous system, so emotions become more manageable.

Skills: mindfulness, breathing, grounding, self-soothing.



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"HOW-TO" SKILL GUIDE

1 Emotion Check-Ins

- Pause 30–60 seconds; notice body sensations
- Name the emotion; rate intensity 0–10
- Ask what triggered it
- If intensity $\geq 5 \rightarrow$ use another skill

Naming Emotions

- Choose a specific name (angry \rightarrow hurt \rightarrow rejected)
- Use: "I feel ___ because ___."
- Adjust the name as the intensity shifts

Emotion Journaling

Brief structure:

- Situation
- Emotion + intensity
- Thoughts & urges
- What I did / will do
- Fit the facts?

Sleep Regulation

- Consistent sleep/wake times
- Reduce screens & stimulants before bed
- Use a simple nightly routine

Eating Regularly

- 3 meals + 1–3 snacks
- Eat before you're starving
- Include protein + carb + fat

Movement / Exercise

- 5–10 minutes count
- Focus on physical sensations
- Compare emotional intensity before/after

Avoiding Substances

- Notice triggers for using
- Delay drinking/using by 15–30 minutes and try another skill
- Track mood after use

Reducing Accumulated Stress

- List stressors
- Take one small step today
- Schedule 5–10 minutes of rest daily

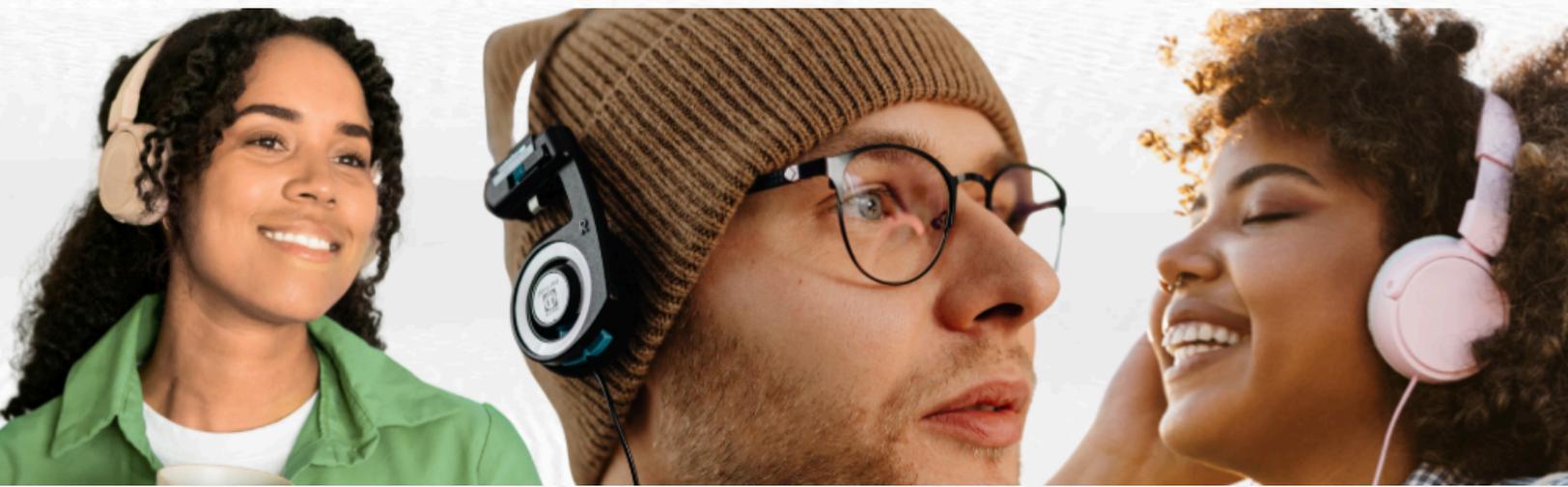
Increasing Positives

- Make a simple list of enjoyable activities
- Do 1–3/day
- Stay present while doing them



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"HOW-TO" SKILL GUIDE

Checking the Facts

- Identify emotion + trigger
- Separate facts from assumptions
- Find alternative explanations
- **If emotion fits → problem-solve**
- **If not → opposite action**

Opposite Action

- Identify emotion + urge
- If emotion doesn't fit facts or is too intense → choose the opposite behavior
- Examples:
 - Fear → approach
 - Anger → gentle communication
 - Shame → show up
 - Sadness → get active

Problem-Solving

- Define the problem
- Brainstorm options
- Pick one doable solution
- Break into tiny steps
- Do the first step within 24 hours

Reframing

- Write the thought
- Create a kinder, more balanced version
- Pair with calming action

Breathing (Paced)

- In 4 seconds, out 6 seconds
- 1-3 minutes
- Rate emotion before/after

Mindfulness: Observe & Describe

- Focus on breath/object
- Notice sensations and thoughts without judging
- Return attention each time it wanders

Grounding (5-4-3-2-1)

- Identify: 5 sights, four touches, three sounds, two smells, one taste/appreciation
- Feel feet on the ground

Self-Soothing

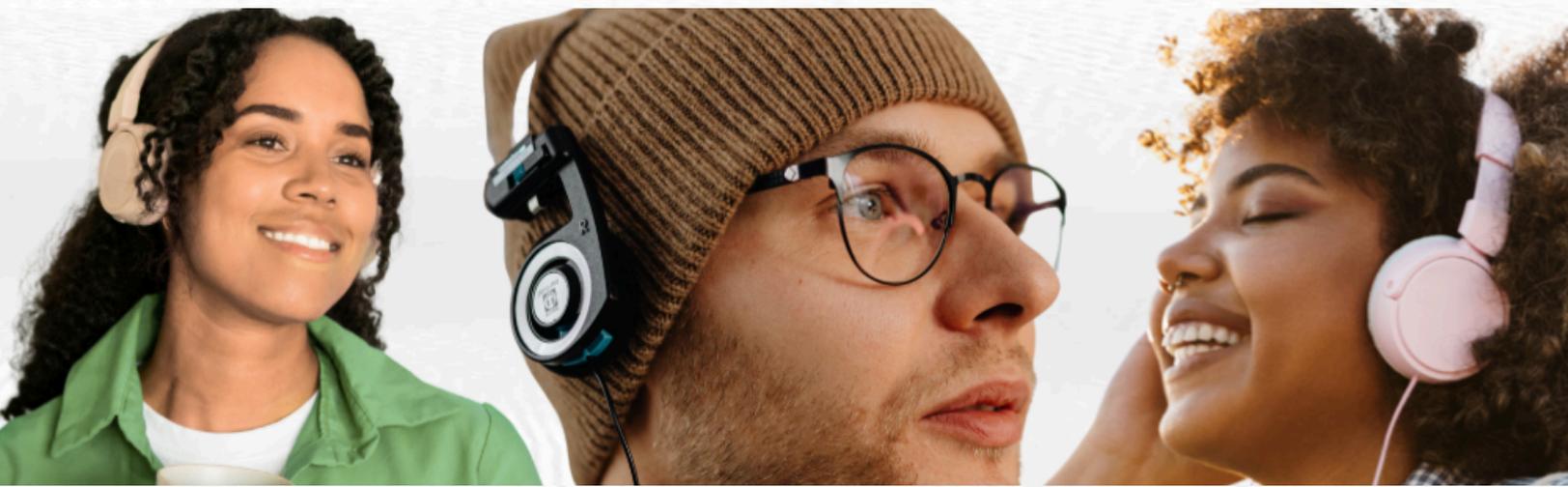
Use the senses:

- Sight (lights, nature)
- Sound (music, rain)
- Touch (blanket, warm shower)
- Taste (tea, mint)
- Smell (candle, soap)



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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH BPD:

- What emotions did I notice today, and how did they show up in my body or thoughts?
- What situations, interactions, or internal experiences seemed connected to those emotions?
- How did I take care of myself when I felt something strongly?
- What helped me feel a bit more balanced or grounded today?
- What do I want to keep in mind for myself moving forward?

FOR FAMILY MEMBERS:

- What emotions did I notice in myself during our interactions today?
- What emotions might they have been experiencing from their point of view?
- What helped our communication feel calmer or clearer?
- How did I care for my own wellbeing today?
- What intention do I want to bring to future interactions?

FOR EVERYONE:

- What emotions stood out to me today, and what might have influenced them?
- How did I respond to those emotions in my actions or communication?
- What supported my wellbeing today, even in a small way?