



Sofa Time with Louise Bomber Summary of the online strategies during COVID-19: <https://touchbase.org.uk/youtube-channel/>



Every Wednesday since the 1st April 2020 Louise Bomber can be viewed on the sofa with some great Regulation and Relationship interventions. The weekly youtube videos are short, following the same structure of Grounding (regulation of body & mind) and Connectedness (Relationships). There are a variety of practical strategies that are useful for all age groups helping children and adults to support each other.

Louise Bomber highlights that these are extraordinary times. It may be that we are feeling some trauma and that sense of powerlessness. And so, it is not unexpected that our nervous system that directs our thinking, our feelings and our behaviours are all on **alarm** setting. This constant alert is not good for our mind and bodies and so we need to press the **'pause'** button.

The grounding of our body and mind attends to our need for regulation and being connected supports our need for relationships. The following strategies are to help with this and for you to *experiment* on your own and with families, friends, children find out what works and helps you to be calm and strong.

These activities and exercises will be using a combination of strategies to help us regulate and relate. So top down (thinking) and bottom up (sensory). When we are very deregulated it is hard to use 'thinking' strategies or hear 'words' and at these times it is better to attend to our somatosensory systems and cues. As well as smells, sounds and sensations, this can also involve patterned and rhythmic activities.

Grounding - Body Regulation

- ✚ Butterfly Technique - To regulate and calm breathing
Sitting comfortably - cross your arms across your chest, so that your hands are placed right hand to just below left shoulder and left hand to right shoulder. Tap, gently, with your hands, each shoulder area in turn - tap each shoulder in turn for 3 cycles. Then bring your hands together in front of you, one hand beneath the other as if gently holding a 'sleeping butterfly' - you have to gently waken this butterfly blowing out 3 times very gently and then watch it fly away - repeat 'waking the butterfly' breathing 3 times. Then bring your arms back across your chest and start the 'hand taping'. You now should notice that your breathing is becoming deeper and there is a calming sensation.
- ✚ Imagine you are holding a dandelion - it's very wispy and beautiful - you are going to gently and slowly blow on the dandelion, watching it move as you are breathing out - repeat this until you feel the sensation of deepening breaths.
- ✚ Think of a smell that reminds you of a pleasant and happy time or gives you a pleasing sensation. So for example the smell of coffee, a special tea, a cooking smell, perfume or perfumed oils and use this so making a coffee and focusing on breathing in the smell or using a calming oil such as lavender.



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- ✚ Eat or drink something that you enjoy and is also slow to eat or drink focusing on the sensation and taste - an apple -that's nice and crunchy or a drink that is thick and flavoursome. You could use a straw to drink through to slow everything down and enjoy it more.
- ✚ Self-squeeze Hug - Cross your arms and squeeze tightly, release tension and repeat again for 3 or 4 cycles. This is especially good when upset or anxious and helps reset the 'pause' button.
- ✚ Our posture can tell us and others a lot about what we are thinking and feeling. So when feeling anxious, uncertain or scared we try and make ourselves appear smaller with our shoulders and back becoming hunched. This type of low postural feedback can be described as 'withdrawing into ourselves' (Amy Cuddy, Social Psychologist, Harvard Business school). Whereas high postural feedback when we are standing tall shows assertion and confidence.

Cuddy's research tells us that by practising 2 minutes of High Postural feedback can change thoughts, feelings, behaviour and can also change what others think about us. So try experimenting and practising a high posture stance - such as that of Wonder Woman and Batman or just stand as tall and as wide as you can letting your body open up and expand.

Grounding - Mind Regulation

- ❖ This can be done individually or with others and helps with finding stability in these uncertain and changing times. We will first look to the outside environment and then inside our home. Look out of the window - what is still the same? The sky, the buildings, the road - what else can you see that is the same? Now think about your home or room - what is still the same? The chairs, the colours of things - what else can you see that is the same?
- ❖ Find something beautiful or interesting to look at (mindful beauty) a flower, an apple - hold it in your hand and closely examine it - focus on the texture, how it feels - rough or smooth, where does the light fall? What are the colours,
- ❖ This helps to focus you on the present and get prepared. The technique is from Melissa Moses's book 'Alex and Scary Things' (2015). It's the '5,4,3,2,1 Countdown' - look around and name 5 things you can see, then 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and finally 1 thing about you - something that you like doing or like about you.



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Connectedness – Relationships

- ☀ 'Being Seen' - when supporting others, rather than using words to say 'I need you to calm down' - hit the 'pause' button and truly notice the child or person's feeling that is being conveyed through their behaviour. Then, let them know you have 'seen' how they are feeling by naming the feeling and using your tone of voice or facial expression to 'match their affect and mood'. So, saying 'I can see you are angry, frustrated, sad etc' and demonstrating that you also understand by use of your voice and gesture. Doing this, we are naming what we can see and sense in the other person (not necessarily changing our actions) and validating and connecting with them so that they feel 'met'.
- ☀ 'Clothe yourself in love' - wear items of clothing that give you a good feeling, make you feel secure, are nice, beautiful and/or comforting. Use 'transitional objects' such as jewellery and personal items that reminds you of or helps you feel connected with someone who was important to you.
- ☀ Sit and acknowledge the difficult feelings - staying with that uncomfortable feeling for longer than feels comfortable. For example, the loss of school friends & colleagues, the feeling of fear and what's going to happen next. Then accept also that we are braver, stronger and smarter than we sometimes realise.
- ☀ Also remembering the 4S's - safety, soothed, seen and secure that particularly helps children and young people to thrive.
- ☀ Try and do things that you did before and enjoyed - so a zoom quiz or finding a holiday photo and trying to recreate this in the sitting room. Doing this as a family or with friends even at a distance can help strengthen those bonds of attachment. Remember to keep it fun!
- ☀ How we say 'hello and goodbye' - strengthens our connections - so we need to mark them more explicitly in these times - so if you are online, everyone should say 'hello', countdown to saying 'goodbye', be more dramatic - waving, use of hand gestures, more explicit facial expressions and voice tone.

