

A.W. A. R. E. – use this with intense emotions

Intense negative emotions can feel overwhelming and often feel out of control. The results might lead to increased anxiety, self-destructive behaviors/thinking, or lashing out toward others. At times it may feel like you cannot take one more minute of feeling this way. Here is an approach to “sitting with” those emotions, so they eventually feel less consuming.

Acknowledge that it is happening and Accept that it is happening

- *do not struggle or tell yourself to stop thinking about it. Invite the intense emotions to join you for a minute. If it helps to give your emotions a name or face, to personalize them even more, do that. Invite them to sit with you for a minute. Honor your emotions and understand they are valid. No judgement.*

Wait and watch

- *you do not have to do something to get rid of the emotion(s). Intense emotions can rob you of thinking clearly. So just wait, sit with it and buy some time until it passes. Note how long it lasts and what your symptoms are – not with the intention to change them. Just notice.*

Act

- *breathe from your belly, talk to yourself (“it’s ok. I’m okay. I will make it through this. It will be over soon”), pay attention to the present by checking in with your senses (what do I see, smell, hear, etc.).*

Repeat

- *if the feelings do not subside, or they intensify again, simply repeat the first 3 steps. No need to worry that it may be happening again. It will be over soon.*

End

- *intense emotions always end. Regardless of how you respond, they end. Your only job is to make yourself as comfortable as possible while waiting for it to end. Remind yourself when it is over, that it did indeed, end. Take a minute to focus on where you are at now that the intensity has diminished.*