

The CALM Approach

This can help you recognize and address when you activated, triggered, out of your Window of Tolerance, frustrated, angry, scared, irritated..when you are in these states that indicate that you are out of the FLOW of the River of Integration, the event(s) that follow create an arc, where things begin at a mild level, escalate, peak, and then become less intense or resolve. The CALM acronym can be used anywhere on that arc, but if you can manage to use it early in the arc, it will be the most effective at helping you stay regulated.

C stands for catch it: in yourself as well as in others. This is much easier if you have a regular interoception practice (a daily habit of meditation or doing body scans). We often feel things in our bodies before they arise as an issue with which you need to address! As you deepen your interoception practice, you will become aware of what triggers you, and where you feel it in your body earlier in the process. Both implicit and explicit memory are at play when a person becomes activated, so don't expect you (or others) to be completely rational: we are largely irrational beings. The path to integration, however, is one everyone can take. One person becoming integrated will help others integrate because we are social animals and emotional contagion is a Real thing.

A stands for Assess it: Your mind regulates the flow of information and energy flow, be aware of all aspects of what is coming into to this situation (seek first to understand) so the solution you come to will be most effective. This is where you asses your Window of Tolerance, and potentially identify what is keeping you from staying regulated. All regulation is co-regulation! If you can't regulate with the people in your immediate environment, reach for the *memory* of when you felt regulated with another being. Knowing your own triggers helps you accurately assess a situation. The brain of a person who feels under attack is an activated brain, and it doesn't take much because our systems are wired to look for threats on our survival. The right brain FLOODS the left, and then the left plays a supporting role and gives "evidence" to support the activation of the right brain. Calmly assessing what is happening (using curiosity, which also helps bring in prefrontal cortex activity) helps the right and left brains to integrate and work together.

L stands for Love: Put on your own air mask first! Extending compassion and love to yourself will help bring spaciousness to the situation. Engage in self-care, in this moment and regularly. Remember, when you are in a fight with yourself, nobody wins (phrase credited to Dan Siegel).

M stands for bring in the Manager: This is where you begin to make decisions about what to DO about the situation. Managing yourself either in the moment or promising yourself you will give attention to yourself at a later time (using delayed gratification) will ensure the best success.

Kaseja Wilder, LCSW

www.kasejawilder.com/kasejawilder@protonmail.com/541.844.5038

11/2020