A Guide to Wellness and Comfort Activities
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Introduction

The purpose of this guide
This guide may serve as a resource for activities to promote wellness, comfort and leisure. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health is committed to providing safe, high quality therapeutic care and services in a restraint- and seclusion-free environment. This commitment means decreasing the frequency and duration of restraint use and increasing the use of alternative strategies/activities. Staff will find this guide helpful for identifying alternatives that empower and support clients dealing with frustration, fear and/or worry. By recognizing early on clients who may be at risk of restraint use, and then implementing alternative strategies/activities, clinicians may prevent the use of restraints while strengthening the therapeutic relationship.

How to use this guide
The interprofessional team can use this guide throughout a client’s hospitalization. The guide identifies a wide variety of strategies and activities, including web sites and products that programs may purchase to fit the different needs of their client populations. Clinicians can suggest options tailored to a particular client’s strengths, preferences, past experiences with different alternatives, and the current phase or stage of his or her physical and mental condition. For example, someone may find exercise to be an effective strategy, while another may benefit from sensory activities. Every section in this guide includes a list of indications and precautions for clinicians to consider, along with their assessment findings. Clinicians can then determine which activities/alternatives to propose and offer their clients in order to develop an effective, collaborative safety plan.
Create a safety plan
Taking the time to complete a safety plan with your client is extremely important and vital to the treatment/recovery process. Safety plans remind the client and clinician which activities are most effective in addressing the client’s various levels of distress. Safety plans can also empower the client to identify coping activities that can be used for self-soothing and preventing distress or a crisis. By providing clients with a copy of the plan, clinicians can help to reflect transparency and preserve the therapeutic alliance.

Figure 1: Example of a client safety plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of distress</th>
<th>Symptoms/behaviours</th>
<th>Alternative activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>Feeling sad</td>
<td>Deep breathing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>Stretching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neck tension</td>
<td>Journaling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Pacing</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding people</td>
<td>Watch TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Call a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>Heart palpitations</td>
<td>Talk to my staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Weighted blanket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings of aggression</td>
<td>Take a shower</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Safety planning does not need to be complicated as exemplified above (see Figure 1). With the client, introduce or review the activities identified in this guide and help the client build a repertoire of new coping skills and techniques. Remember that the client’s safety plan is a “living document” that needs continuous updating to meet the needs of your client throughout the treatment/recovery process. The safety plan must be summarized and entered into the safety domain of the interdisciplinary plan of client care (IPCC).

It is the hope that this guide will benefit client care by increasing options for clients in daily activities and before the development of a crisis. Awareness of alternative strategies also helps clinicians promote self-awareness, self-care and resiliency development.
Engaging your client

The first step in determining which activities can help your clients involves taking the time to talk to them about their interests. Throughout this guide you will find brief scripts you can use to introduce a particular activity to clients as well as provide some rationale about the activity. Here is an example of what you could say to your client, along with a few checklists to share with your client:

“It is helpful for us to be aware of the things that can help you feel better when you’re having a hard time. Have any of the things on this checklist ever worked for you?”

Checklist 1: Supplies/Products

Consider if your unit has any of these items, when offering comfort activities:
- A comfort room designed to have a home-like feeling and therapeutic effect
- Weighted blankets, or tactile objects (e.g., stress balls)
- Arts and crafts supplies
- Puzzles, board games or video games (e.g., Nintento Wii)
- Movies, music, books or magazines
- Essential oils or creams

Checklist 2: Wellness and comfort activities

These comforting activities could be helpful for your clients.

Note: Activities with an asterisk (*) are described in more detail later in this guide.
A Guide to Wellness and Comfort Activities

Arts and entertainment
• Draw, paint, collage or sculpt (*)
• Make a puzzle
• Watch TV or a movie

Environmental
• Spend quiet time in your room, or schedule daily naps/rest periods
• Spend time in a comfort room
• Spend time in the chapel, worship room or library

Movement
• Engage in physical activity at a level recommended by the treatment team (*)
• Go for a walk on hospital grounds (must have privileges) (*)
• Get a book from the library
• Walk in the halls
• Clean room or do chores
• Punch a pillow

Reading and writing
• Write in journal (*)
• Read a book, magazine or newspaper (*)

Relaxation, meditation and spirituality
• Engage in spiritual practices, such as prayer, meditation or religious reflection
• Practice relaxation and breathing exercises, or meditation (*)

Sensory stimulus
• Have a warm or cold shower
• Listen to relaxing music
• Use ice or a cold face cloth on body
• Use a weighted blanket
• Play with a stress ball (*)
• Massage hands with preferred essential oils or creams (*)

Supportive conversations/engagements
• Create a safety plan with your clinician (*)
• Talk to a clinician, peer support worker or spiritual care worker
• Sit with a clinician, peer support worker or spiritual care worker
• Walk with a clinician, peer support worker or spiritual care worker (*)
• Call a friend or family member for calming support
• Discuss ways to reduce smoking, such as nicotine replacement therapy

Social
• Participate in group activities or therapeutic group sessions
• Play cards, board games or video games

Checklist 3: Online resources

Supplementing the activities described in this guide, the following online resources can offer your clients additional alternative activities.

Arts and entertainment
• Colouring pages for adults: www.colorpagesformom.com
• Mandala templates: www.30minutemandalas.com
• Printable word searches: www.puzzles.ca/wordsearch
• Printable Sudoku puzzles: www.puzzles.ca/sudoku

Movement
• Easy indoor exercises: www.fitstep.com/Library/Begin/exercises
• Moving on the spot exercise routines: www.toronto.ca/health/movingonthespot/movingonthespot_poster
• Chair exercises: www.livewellagewell.info/study/2007/12-ChairExercisesUGA113006.pdf
• Low impact exercise guide: www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/ExerciseGuide

Reading and writing
• Daily news articles: www.ctv.ca/news
• Daily news articles: www.cbc.ca/news
• Online book resource: www.readprint.com
• Printable short stories: www.short-stories.co.uk
• Journaling themes/ideas: www.writing-world.com/creative/journal
Relaxation, meditation, and spirituality
- World prayers for all faiths: www.worldprayers.org
- Relaxation resources: www.elibay.com
- Visualisation scripts: www.innerhealthstudio.com/visualization-scripts
- Downloadable relaxation audio sessions (MP3s): campushealth.unc.edu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=462&Itemid=95

Sensory stimulus
- Sensory activities: sensorysmarts.com/sensory_diet_activities
- Tactile activities: www.best-alzheimers-products.com
- Weighted blanket information: www.weightedblanket.net/therapeutic

Social
- Easy activities and games for small groups: www.recreationtherapy.com/tx/txsmsoc

Checklist 4: Client handouts

Many of the activities in this guide have handouts which can be printed and given to clients. Below is a list of available client handouts. They can be found at insite.camh.net/alternatives.

Activity and safety planning
- Activity checklist and weekly planner • Readiness ruler
- My support numbers

Arts and entertainment
- Mandala colouring

Movement
- Chair exercises • Moving on the spot • Simple stretching

Reading and writing
- Journal ideas

Relaxation, meditation and spirituality
- Box breathing • Deep breathing • Progressive relaxation
- Beach, forest, meadow, starry night, and clouds visualization scripts
- Positive affirmations
Art Activities

Artistic journaling
Creative expression
Mandala colouring
Artistic journaling

Description
Artistic journaling involves using art (e.g., painting, drawing, collage or sculpture) to capture and communicate one’s thoughts or feelings. Clients can use blank paper or a journal together with colouring pencils (or markers, crayons or any other writing instruments) on a daily basis to create art that reflects their emotional state. This is a good exercise for clients who have difficulty reading or writing, or who have other cognitive impairments, as words are not essential to creating artistic and emotional designs. The client’s entries can be kept or discarded as the client desires.

Rationale
Artistic journaling is a method of expression that can help clients access the “unconscious self,” bringing forth an awareness that can help them work through difficult feelings and traumatic events, while learning about themselves (Stuckney and Nobel, 2010). Artistic journaling is also beneficial for clients who have difficulty expressing themselves through words. Basic images, scribbles or the use of colours can become a means of communicating their emotional state.

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.

Indications
- Mild to moderate anxiety
- Mild to moderate stress
- Mild to moderate irritability/anger
- Mild depressive symptoms
- Restlessness/insomnia
- Cognitive impairments

Cautions
- History of trauma
Recommended supplies/products
- Pen, pencil or coloured crayons
- Paint, modeling clay or collage materials (optional)
- Loose paper or a blank journal, diary or sketchbook

Method
Say:
“Drawing or colouring your thoughts and feelings on a piece of paper can be a helpful exercise in self-reflection. Have you ever tried keeping an artistic journal before? It’s like a regular journal that you write in, but with an artistic journal you draw, colour or paint what you are feeling. Sometimes this can be a good way to get out all your negative emotions or frustrations. All you need is some paper and pencil crayons, or anything else you would like to use. I can help you get started with some ideas. I think this could be very helpful for you.”

Rationale:
Being able to express or communicate your emotions is a necessary part of maintaining your well-being. Thus, encouraging clients to find a way of expressing themselves is an essential part of their care. Although artistic journaling is especially beneficial for clients with cognitive impairments or difficulty reading and writing, anybody can participate in this activity.

1. Explain to your client that he or she does not need to be a professional artist to complete this exercise.
2. Help your client find a comfortable place to draw, free from distractions.
3. Provide your client with the desired materials (e.g., paper, pens, pencils, paint)
4. Encourage your client to draw or create something that reflects his or her current feelings, situation in life, hopes and dreams, and related subjects. Here are a few more suggestions:
• Draw yourself with your family and friends.
• Draw your most peaceful place.
• Draw what happens in your dreams.
• Make scribbles that describe your current emotional state.
• Draw what (or who) makes you feel happy, sad, angry, afraid, hopeful or safe.
• Draw your goals in life, your personal strengths or challenges.
5. Ask if your client would like to share or explain the artwork.

**Creative expression**

**Description**
Art can help people express experiences that are too difficult to put into words (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). Drawing emotions is a form of artistic expression that allows clients to illustrate specific feelings and how those may be affecting their overall well-being.

**Rationale**
The expression of emotional distress through a positive medium (such as visual art) can help clients release and/or reveal their emotional states and potentially find comfort. This activity promotes self-discovery, helping clients develop a better understanding of how their feelings are affecting them, which can lead to improved coping activities. Evidence demonstrates that the artistic expression of emotions can reduce a client’s overall level of distress, help to improve sleep and reduce physical pain (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010).

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.
Indications
- Mild to moderate anxiety
- Mild to moderate stress
- Mild to moderate irritability
- Mild depressive symptoms
- Restlessness/insomnia
- Pain

Cautions
- Severe agitation
- History of trauma

Recommended supplies/products
- Blank sheets of paper
- Coloured pens pencils or markers
- Modeling clay or paint (optional)

Method
Say:
“Have you ever tried expressing how you feel through art? Sometimes we can get frustrated, sad or irritated when we can’t put into words how we feel, or when we don’t feel comfortable talking about it. Art could be a good way to help you express your thoughts and maybe help you learn something about yourself. The best part about artistic expression is that you don’t have to be an expert artist to try it. I can help you get started with a few suggestions.”

Rationale:
For some individuals, art and creativity can be an intimidating activity. With guidance, support and encouragement, clients may become more willing to engage in this activity. Artistic expression can also help clients to better express or communicate their needs to clinicians, which can then be incorporated into the treatment/recovery planning process.

1. Provide your client with colouring pencils and paper, or ask about your client’s preferred art supplies (if available, soft modeling clay or finger paints can be used with clients who have dexterity issues).
2. Ask your client where he or she would like to do the activity.
3. Provide your client with this list of words:
   - Anger
   - Happiness
   - Sadness
   - Peace
   - Fear
   - Healing
4. Ask your client to select one word from the list and to begin drawing what that emotion represents, how that emotion makes him or her feel, or what would cause the client to feel that emotion. The drawing can be abstract and the use of such techniques as symbols, lines, scratches and various colours are completely acceptable.
5. Your client can select another word from the list (or suggest another word or emotion) and continue drawing.
6. If your client feels comfortable doing so, ask him or her to explain or describe the drawing and what she or he has learned.

**Mandala colouring**

**Description**
An ancient art form that dates back to Tibet over 2,500 years ago, mandalas are used to reduce stress and promote relaxation. Mandalas involve “active meditation,” where a simple movement like colouring or drawing strengthens focus.

**Rationale**
Mandala colouring promotes concentration, relaxation and stress reduction and improves communication skills. Through art, unconscious feelings can be expressed and people can communicate even when language skills are impaired (Normand, 2007).

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.
Indications
- Mild to moderate anxiety
- Mild to moderate stress
- Mild to moderate irritability
- Mild depressive symptoms
- Restlessness/insomnia

Cautions
- Severe psychosis

Recommended supplies/products
- Colouring supplies (e.g., pastels, pencil crayons, watercolour crayons, markers, paint brushes, palettes, water, rag to dry brushes)
- Mandala sheets
- Blank paper, pencils and erasers
- Sheets/newspaper to lay down, and rags for clean up if using paint
- Handouts available at insite.camh.net/alternatives

Method
Say:

“Have you ever tried relaxing through art? Sometimes when people have a lot of stress and worry it can be difficult to relax and calm the mind. Mandalas are a great tool for relaxing because it gives something to focus on and quiets the mind like meditation. You can make up your own design or fill in a design with colour. Would you like to pick out a design to try?”

Rationale:
Meditation can be a powerful tool for individuals to use for relaxation. The simple repetitive movements of drawing or colouring can strengthen focus and allow attention to shift back to the moment. Emphasizing the therapeutic benefits of this activity will help it to be perceived as serious and can promote the development of skills to cope with stress.

1. Gather the necessary supplies and select a location that’s free from distraction. If possible, ask your client where he or she would like to do the activity (e.g., in the client’s room, an activity room or a table outside).
2. Set out the mandalas and supplies for the client to choose from. For clients who want to draw their own mandalas, offer blank paper, pencil and eraser. If using paint, make sure to lay down drop sheets or newspaper and pour paints onto palettes (or set out watercolour palettes) ahead of time.

3. Encourage and assist your client to use whatever colours appeal to him or her. Allow the client to engage in the task as independently as possible.

Note: You can make your own mandala by placing a plate on blank paper and tracing around it. Then add your own designs within the circle (Figure 2). You can also search on the internet for different mandala patterns (see online resources section).
Meditation and Relaxation Activities

Box breathing
Deep breathing
Progressive muscle relaxation
Guided imagery (visualization)
Box breathing

Description
Box breathing is a deep breathing exercise where clients use the image of a box to regulate breathing patterns. This exercise can be used with any client, but it may be especially beneficial for clients who have difficulty focusing or have cognitive impairments. Box breathing releases tension from the body and clears the mind, improving physical and mental wellness.

Rationale
The image of a box can help clients achieve an optimal deep breathing pattern. The client traces the image, and each line of the box indicates when the client needs to breathe in or out. Learning to take deep (rather than shallow) breaths can regulate your client’s oxygen intake, which can decrease stress on the body (Stress Relief Exercises, 2011).

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.

Indications  Cautions
• Mild anxiety  • Mania
• Mild agitation  • Severe psychosis
• Pain management
• Mild depressive symptoms
• Insomnia
• Cognitive impairments

Recommended supplies/products
• Sheet of blank paper
• A pen
• Handouts available at insite.camh.net/alternatives
Method
Say:
“Deep breathing is a great exercise that can help you find comfort when you feel anxious, stressed, sad or irritated. Having something to focus on can help you concentrate on how to breathe more effectively. Some people find tracing a box really helpful. Let me draw one for you and I can show you how it works.”

Rationale:
By becoming aware of breathing patterns through deep breathing exercises, the client can learn to breathe therapeutically. An image can help the client to develop awareness and concentrate on breathing correctly.

1. Find a comfortable place for your client to sit. Draw a large rectangle or square on a blank sheet of paper.
2. Ask your client to place a finger on the bottom left corner of the box (Figure 3 – the bottom left corner is area 1).
3. Ask your client to move his or her finger towards the top left corner of the box (Figure 3 – area 2). While doing this, your client needs to take a deep breath in through the nose.
4. Ask your client to trace the box from the top left to the top right corner (Figure 3 – area 3). While doing this, your client needs to breathe out slowly through the mouth.
5. Ask your client to trace the other sides of the box inhaling and exhaling as indicated in the diagram. Continue the activity for a long as your client desires.

Note: Your client can also trace a box in the air or in the palm of his or her hand, if the client prefers.
Deep breathing

Description
Deep breathing is a relaxation technique that can help to release tension from the body and clear the mind, improving physical and mental wellness.

Rationale
We tend to breathe shallowly or even hold our breath when we are feeling anxious. Sometimes we are not even aware of it. Shallow breathing limits your oxygen intake and adds further stress to your body, creating a vicious cycle. Breathing exercises can break this cycle (Stress Relief Exercises, 2011).

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.

Indications
- Mild anxiety
- Mild agitation
- Pain management
- Mild depressive symptoms
- Insomnia

Cautions
- Mania
- Severe psychosis
- Cognitive impairment

Recommended supplies/products
- A chair with good back support
- Calm music or nature sounds on tape/CD (optional)
- Deep breathing audio session (see online resources section)
- Handouts available at insite.camh.net/alternatives
Method
Say:
“Have you ever tried deep breathing? Sometimes we hold our breath when we are angry, tense or anxious, which puts stress on our bodies. Deep breathing can help release tension by regulating our breathing to a calming pace. It is also helpful at making sure we get the oxygen we need to relax. Many people have experienced this as helpful. Would you like to try?”

Rationale:
By becoming aware of breathing patterns through deep breathing exercises, the client can learn to breathe therapeutically. With practice, deep breathing can become a standard way of breathing.

1. Help your client find a comfortable chair and ask him or her to sit up straight.
2. Ask your client to place both hands on the stomach just above the waist and to exhale through the mouth (Figure 4).
3. Tell your client to keep his or her hands on the stomach while breathing in slowly through the nose. Your client’s hands should move outwards with the inhalation.
4. Ask your client to hold his or her breath for two to five seconds (or whatever is comfortable).
5. Tell your client to slowly and steadily breathe out through the mouth until most of the air is out. Your client’s hands should move inwards with the exhalation.

Note: Your client can do this exercise standing or lying down.
Progressive muscle relaxation

Description
Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) involves tensing and relaxing each muscle group of the body, one group at a time. Though this technique is simple it may take several sessions before it is mastered. Progressive muscle relaxation may be done sitting or lying down.

Rationale
This is a non-invasive activity that can release stress, relax muscles and lower blood pressure, heart rate and respiration rate. It can also help decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression, manage aggressive behaviour and increase feelings of self-control (Ansgar, Linda & Walton, 2008).

Indications
- Mild anxiety
- Mild agitation
- Pain management
- Mild depressive symptoms
- Insomnia

Cautions
- Mania
- Severe psychosis
- Severe cognitive impairment

Recommended supplies/products
- Floor mat or chair with good back support
- Calming music (optional)
- Progressive muscle relaxation audio session (see online resources section)
- Handouts available at insite.camh.net/alternatives

Method
Say:
“Have you ever heard of progressive muscle relaxation? Sometimes our bodies can get so tense or feel so stressed that it becomes really hard to relax. Progressive muscle relaxation works by tensing the muscles in the different parts of your body, then relaxing them. It’s easier to relax a muscle that has just been tensed. I can show you how to do it. It’s very easy.”
Rationale:
PMR is based on two observations: 1) that muscles can be actively tensed, but not actively relaxed (relaxation depends on a “letting go” process), and 2) that it is easier to relax and “let go” a muscle after it has just been tensed (Stress Relief Exercises, 2011).

1. Help your client to find a comfortable place to sit or lie down.
2. Inform your client that you will be going through different muscle groups throughout this exercise. Tell your client that for each muscle group, he or she will need to tense (but not strain) those muscles for about five to ten seconds. The client will then be asked to release the tension from his or her muscles all at once and stay relaxed for ten to twenty seconds.
3. Ask your client to tense and release the muscle groups in the sequence provided below. Inform your client to stop the exercise if there’s any discomfort.
   - Hands: Clench your fists.
   - Forearms and hands: Extend your arm, lock your elbow and bend your hand back at the wrist.
   - Upper arm: Bend your arm at the elbows and flex your biceps.
   - Forehead: Wrinkle your forehead (i.e., make a frowning expression) and/or raise your eyebrows.
   - Eyes: Close your eyes tightly.
   - Mouth: Press your lips together tightly.
   - Jaw: Open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue.
   - Buttocks: Squeeze your buttocks.
   - Abdomen: Tense your stomach muscle.
   - Chest: Take a deep breath in.
   - Back: Arch your back slightly off the ground.
   - Neck and shoulders: Pull your shoulders upwards and squeeze them into your neck.
   - Thighs: Bend you knee slightly and flex your foot.
   - Lower legs and feet: Point your toes towards your shin.
   - Feet: Alternate pointing your toes and curling them up.

Note: You can relax one side of the body first (i.e., one hand, arm, leg, foot, etc.) or do both sides at the same time.
Guided imagery (visualization)

Description
Guided imagery or visualization involves using the imagination to recreate sights and sounds that bring comfort and good feelings and reduce fear. This strategy helps draw a client’s focus away from physical or psychological discomforts by concentrating on pleasant images (Williams et al., 2009).

Rationale
Guided imagery has been found to decrease pain and analgesic use as well as psychological discomforts like anxiety and stress (Williams et al., 2009).

Always refer to the client's safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.

Indications
• Mild anxiety
• Mild agitation
• Pain management
• Mild depressive symptoms
• Insomnia

Cautions
• Psychosis
• History of trauma

Recommended supplies/products
• Guided imagery scripts for staff (see method section for example)
• A comfortable and quiet space to sit or lay down
• Nature sound tapes (optional)
• Handouts available at insite.camh.net/alternatives
Method
Say:
“Have you ever tried guided imagery? It is a relaxation technique that can help you focus on a place or image that is calming to you. For example, some people enjoy imagining the beach or the forest to feel better. Can you tell me about what kind of places or images are calming to you?”

Rationale:
It is important that the client chooses his or her peaceful place, as not all clients will find the same places relaxing. Certain tones, sounds or references may be over-stimulating or trigger negative experiences.

1. Help your client select a guided imagery script that suits the “peaceful place” described by the client. This guide includes a sample script and more are available online (see online resources section).
2. Inform your client that the exercise can be stopped at any point, especially if the client feels any discomfort or over-stimulation.
3. Help your client find a calm place to lie down or sit.
4. Encourage your client to breathe in and out slowly. Give the client the choice of keeping his or her eyes open or closed during this exercise.
5. Once your client is settled, begin reading out loud the guided imagery script (see the sample on page 27 of this guide).
6. After the activity is completed, ask if your client would like to share her or his experience and how it made him or her feel.

Note: Guided imagery can also be done as a group activity.
Example relaxation script: A peaceful place

For the next few moments, focus on calming your mind by focusing on your breathing. Allow your breathing to center and relax you. Breathe in...and out.

In...out...

In...out...

Continue to breathe slowly and peacefully as you allow the tension to start to leave your body.

Release the areas of tension, feeling your muscles relax and become more comfortable with each breath.

Continue to let your breathing relax you.

Breathe in..., 2...3...4... Hold..., 2...3... Out..., 2...3...4...5

Again. In..., 2...3...4... Hold..., 2...3... Out..., 2...3...4...5

Continue to breathe slowly, gently, comfortably.

Let the rate of your breathing become gradually slower as your body relaxes.

Now begin to create a picture in your mind of a place where you can completely relax. Imagine what this place needs to be like in order for you to feel calm and relaxed.

Start with the physical layout of the place you are imagining. Where is this peaceful place? You might envision somewhere outdoors or indoors. It may be a small place or large one. Create an image of this place.

(Pause)

Now picture some more details about your peaceful place. Who is in this place? Are you alone? Or perhaps you are with someone else? Are other people present? Animals? Birds? Imagine whether you are alone. Or, if you have company, who is with you?

(Pause)
Imagine even more details about your surroundings. Focus on the relaxing sounds around you in your peaceful place.

Now imagine any tastes and smells your place has to offer.

Imagine the sensations of touch, including the temperature, any breeze that may be present, or the surface you are on. Imagine the details of this calming place in your mind.

Focus now on the sights of your place: colours, shapes, objects, plants, water and all of the other beautiful things that make your place enjoyable.

To add further detail to this relaxing scene, imagine yourself there. What are you doing in this calming place? Perhaps you are just sitting, enjoying this place, relaxing. Maybe you imagine yourself walking around or doing another activity.

Picture yourself in this peaceful place. Imagine a feeling of calm and peace. This is a place where you have no worries, cares, or concerns, where you can simply rejuvenate, relax and enjoy just being.

(Pause)

Enjoy your peaceful place for a few moments longer. Memorize the sights, sounds and sensations around you. Know that you can return to this place in your mind whenever you need a break. Whenever you feel the need, allow yourself to take a mental vacation to relax and regroup before returning to your regular activities.

In these last few moments of relaxation, create a picture in your mind that you will return to the next time you need a quick relaxation break. Picture yourself in your peaceful place. This moment you are imagining now, you can picture again the next time you need to relax.

When you are ready to return to your day, file the imaginary place in your mind, where it waits for the next time you need it.

Turn your attention back to the present. Notice your surroundings as your body and mind return to their usual level of alertness and wakefulness.

Keep with you the feeling of calm from your peaceful place as you return to your everyday life.
Movement Activities

Chair exercises
Moving on the spot
Walking
Chair exercises

Description
Chair exercises are a great form of exercise for older adults, for those with disabilities, for people with poor balance or for anyone who has trouble standing or getting onto the floor to exercise.

Rationale
Taylor, Sallis & Needle (1985) explain: “Evidence suggests that physical activity and exercise help alleviate some symptoms associated with mild to moderate depression. The evidence also suggests that physical activity and exercise might provide a beneficial adjunct for alcoholism and substance abuse programs; improve self-image, social skills, and cognitive functioning; reduce the symptoms of anxiety; and alter an individual’s physiological response to stressors.”

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.

Indications
- Mild to moderate anxiety
- Mild to moderate stress
- Mild depressive symptoms
- Restlessness
- Balance issues

Cautions
- Anorexia
- Heart complications
- Uncontrolled asthma
- Severe pain
- Musculoskeletal issues

Recommended supplies/products
- Chair with good back support
  (feet should be able to touch the floor)
- Music (optional)
- Comfortable clothing
- Handouts available at insite.camh.net/alternatives
Methods
Say:
“Have you ever tried exercising while sitting down? It’s a good way to help relieve the stress/anxiety/tension you might be experiencing without the worry of losing your balance. The best part is you can do the exercises while watching TV or hanging out in your room. If you want we can try it together first.”

Rationale:
Modeling is an excellent way to encourage client participation and teach clients how to perform the activity.

1. Help or encourage your client to sit up straight in a chair and to keep his or her feet flat on the floor.

2. Inform your client to stop the activity if any discomfort arises.

3. Follow the directions provided below. Repeat if desired.

Neck stretches
- Let your arms hang at your sides.
- Tilt your head to the side: first one side, then the other.
- Hold for a count of five on each side.

Arm and shoulder stretches
- These stretches work your middle back as well as your arms and shoulders.
- Interlace your fingers and turn your palms out.
- Stretch your arms out in front of you at shoulder height.
- Hold for a count of five.

Quadricep contractions
- This exercise works the front of your thighs.
- Extend your legs, heels on the floor. Your knees should be straight.
- Tighten your thigh muscles and hold for a count of 10.
- Repeat 10 times.
Hamstring contractions
• This exercise works the back of your thighs.
• Extend your legs, heels on the floor.
• Don’t move your heels but pull back on them.
• You will feel tightness in your hamstrings.
• Hold for a count of 10.
• Repeat 10 times.

Hip abductor contractions
• This exercise works your inner thighs.
• Put your fists between your knees.
• Squeeze your knees together.
• Hold for a count of 10.
• Repeat 10 times.

Full back release
• This exercise stretches and relieves tensions in your entire back.
• Sit with your feet flat on the floor.
• Slowly allow your neck, upper back and lower back to curl forward.
• Move each part in turn.
• Allow your hands to touch the floor.
• Hold for 10 seconds.
• Straighten up slowly: first your lower back, then your upper back, then your neck, and then your head.
• Return to the starting position.

Note: Playing music and actively participating in this activity with your client may increase participation.
Moving on the spot

Description
This is a collection of ready-made stretch and movement sessions that require little space and no special equipment, and can be done “on the spot” in just five to seven minutes. The session includes the components of a full physical activity workout: warm-ups, stretching, cardiovascular, muscle strengthening activities and a cool-down period (Toronto Public Health, 1999).

Rationale
Taylor, Sallis & Needle (1985) explain: “Evidence suggests that physical activity and exercise help alleviate some symptoms associated with mild to moderate depression. The evidence also suggests that physical activity and exercise might provide a beneficial adjunct for alcoholism and substance abuse programs; improve self-image, social skills, and cognitive functioning; reduce the symptoms of anxiety; and alter an individual’s physiological response to stressors.”

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.

Indications
• Mild to moderate anxiety
• Mild to moderate stress
• Mild depressive symptoms
• Restlessness

Cautions
• Severe agitation
• Anorexia
• Heart complications
• Uncontrolled asthma
• Severe pain
• This exercise has not been reviewed for safety during pregnancy
Recommended supplies/products
• Loose and comfortable clothing to ease movements
• Non-slip, closed-toe footwear (sneakers or running shoes preferred)
• Toronto Public Health’s *Moving on the spot* activity instruction sheets (see Figure 5)
• Music (optional)
• Radio or CD player (optional)
• Handouts available at insite.camh.net/alternatives

Method
Say:
“Have you ever tried to do ‘on the spot’ exercises? Sometimes a little physical activity and stretching can be a good way to help you release stress, anxiety or irritability, to make you feel better and help pass the time. These exercises are great because you don’t need a lot of room to try them and they are quick and easy. I can show you an easy routine you can do in less than 10 minutes. We could try it together first.”

Rationale:
Modeling is an excellent way to encourage client participation and teach clients how to perform the activity.

1. Help your client find a comfortable environment to engage in physical activity. Your client can complete the routine in a seated position if that is preferred. Ensure that the chair provided has good back support and your client’s feet can touch the ground when seated.
2. Explain to your client that this session should take anywhere from five to seven minutes and comprises of five stages. Each stage takes about one to two minutes to complete.
3. Follow the instructions provided on the *Moving on the spot* activity sheet (see Figure 5 for a sample). Demonstrate to your client how to perform each activity safely. To ensure safety, observe your client perform each activity. Repeat activities as desired.

Note: Playing music and actively participating in the activity with your client may increase participation.
### Warm Ups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Marching on the Spot</td>
<td>Stand tall and march on the spot, pump arms back and forth for 20 - 30 counts. If you like, try raising knees to waste height. Add variety by marching in a circle, square or figure 8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Jump and Twist</td>
<td>Stand with feet slightly apart, begin jumping in one spot. Twist forearms in small circles in front of the body. Keep elbows close to body and twist arms forward and backward. Continue for 15 - 20 counts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Hop and Twist</td>
<td>Jump on the spot. Twist hips and pump arms from side to side for 15 - 20 counts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Stretches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Side Stretch</td>
<td>Stand with feet placed wide apart, arms by side. Raise right arm over the head. Slowly slide the other arm down the side of the left leg. Hold 6 - 8 counts, repeat on the left side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Neck Stretches</td>
<td>Slowly bend neck to the right side. Move right ear toward right shoulder, hold 6 - 8 counts, repeat on left. Bend neck forward, move chin toward chest, hold 6 - 8 counts. Slowly roll head across chest from shoulder to shoulder in a half circle, repeat 4 times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Swan Stretch</td>
<td>Raise arms outward from your sides to shoulder height. Slowly press arms backward and hold 6 - 8 counts. Feel a stretch across the chest and down the arms, repeat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Heart Pumpsers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 Running on the Spot</td>
<td>Run on the spot. Pump arms back and forth for 30 counts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Jumping Jacks</td>
<td>Jump on the spot. Extend arms and legs out and in from the sides of the body. Try 10 - 15 jumping jacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Popcorn</td>
<td>Move into a squat position, tuck head in and wrap arms over the head. Pretend you are kernels of popcorn and the pot is getting hotter. Begin to jump up and down on the spot when the “popcorn” begins to pop. Continue for 20 - 30 counts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Muscle Strength

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Chest Press</td>
<td>Stand with feet shoulder width apart, knees bent and pelvis tucked under. Raise arms to shoulder height. Firmly press palms of hands together in front of your face. Hold the press for 6 - 8 counts, repeat 3 times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Side Leg Raises</td>
<td>Stand straight with knees slightly bent. Using a chair or wall to keep your balance, lift outer leg sideways, raising and lowering it 8 times, repeat on other leg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Inner Thigh Strengthen</td>
<td>Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Raise arms out from the sides to shoulder height. Diagonally raise right leg in front of the body, lifting ankle inward to waist height, while lowering left hand to touch the raised ankle, repeat 8 times. Switch legs and repeat 8 times.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cool Down

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 Slow March</td>
<td>March slowly on the spot. Keep knees low and gently swing the arms for 15 counts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Slow Leak</td>
<td>Stand in one spot, circle arms over head. Pretend you are a great big balloon. Pretend there is a hole in the balloon and air is slowly leaking out. Move your body slowly downward to the floor until the balloon has no more air.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Deep Breaths and Hug</td>
<td>Slowly take a deep breath in through the nose and out through the mouth, repeat 2 times. Congratulate yourself for doing a good job by wrapping your arms around your shoulders and give yourself a big hug! Hold 6 - 8 counts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 5:**

*Moving on the Spot, Session 1: Family Fun in Five Minutes*


Printable instruction sheets are available online in English, Chinese, Tamil, and Spanish.
Walking

Description
Walking is a rhythmic, dynamic, and aerobic activity of the large skeletal muscles that offers many benefits with minimal adverse effects. Walking is convenient and may be accommodated in both indoor and outdoor environments. It is a self-regulated activity in intensity, duration, and frequency because of its low ground impact it is also inherently safe (Morris & Hardman, 1997).

Rationale
Walking is the most common weight-bearing activity. It can help enhance metabolism and increase bone strength, as well as offer several pleasurable therapeutic, psychological and social benefits (Morris & Hardman, 1997). Research has proven that walking can improve one’s sense of self-worth and mood, and reduce the symptoms of anxiety and depression. Walking is a form of relaxation that can be done in a social context. It also helps improve sleep, which can stabilize mood and/or anxiety levels over time.

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.

Indications
- Mild to moderate anxiety
- Mild to moderate stress
- Mild to moderate irritability
- Mild depressive symptoms
- Restlessness

Cautions
- Severe agitation
- Anorexia
- Uncontrolled asthma
- Severe pain
Recommended supplies/products
- Appropriate footwear for walking environment
- Use assisted devices if required (e.g., cane, walker)

Method
Say:
“I’m noticing that you seem a bit restless or anxious. Sometimes moving around can help you feel better. Do you think going for a walk (on or off the unit, depending on the privileges/staffing) could be helpful? Maybe we could go on a walk together and talk.”

Rationale:
Taking the opportunity to accompany your client on walks, both on or off the unit, can build and reinforce your therapeutic relationship. In most cases the opportunity to go outside for fresh air and a walk can be extremely comforting and calming. Do not hesitate to make arrangements with security if additional safety measures are required. Even a short walk outside can make a big difference on someone’s mood.

1. Determine whether your client has privileges to go for walks on hospital grounds alone or accompanied. Security can be called to assist clinicians to escort the client if necessary.
2. If your client has unaccompanied pass privileges, establish a return time to the unit.
3. Encourage your client to wear appropriate footwear and outerwear for the environment.

Note: Help your client create a weekly schedule that includes a walking routine as part of the daily activities. Encourage and support your client to follow-through with this walking routine.
Reading and Writing Activities

Current events discussion
Journal writing
Current events discussion

Description
Conducting a discussion on current events is a basic exercise that can engage your clients, help them pass the time productively and keep them up-to-date with local and/or national events. This exercise requires readily accessible resources such as articles from your local newspaper, the internet or a magazine. Reading the article together and having a brief discussion afterwards can help clients with cognitive development and problem-solving skills.

Rationale
In general, regular reading actively stimulates the brain, helps to improve cognitive functioning and has the potential to develop a client’s problem-solving skills (Price, Moore & Frackowiak, 1996). Discussions on current events can give clients the opportunity to express themselves and offer a chance to socialize.

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.

Indications
- Mild to moderate anxiety
- Mild to moderate stress
- Mild to moderate irritability/anger
- Mild depressive symptoms
- Restlessness/insomnia

Cautions
- Cognitive impairments
- Visual impairments
- Difficulty reading

Recommended supplies/products
- Local newspaper or magazine articles
  (see online resources section)
Method

Say:
“I enjoy reading I find it’s a good way to relax. Maybe we could read something together or with others on the unit. Is there anything that you are interested in or would like to know more about?”

Rationale:
Finding articles that interest your clients will help keep them engaged in this activity. Engaging a small group of clients to do the activity at the same time may encourage them to socialize even after the exercise is completed.

1. Select an article that is suitable for discussion, based on your client’s cognitive ability, visual acuity (i.e., consider print size) and current symptomatology (e.g., avoid articles that could evoke paranoia, delusions or cataclysmic thinking)
2. Offer your client the choice of reading the article alone or out loud, or have someone read the article to your client.
3. These questions can help to begin your discussion:
   • Can you briefly summarize the article?
   • What did you like and dislike about the article?
   • Did you learn anything?
   • How did the subject matter make you feel? Why?
   • Who wrote the article? What questions would you like to ask the author?
   • Who is the article about? What questions would you like to ask them?

Note: Offer your own insights and opinions to encourage discussion. This is also an effective activity to facilitate with a group of clients.
Journal writing

Description
Journaling is the process of putting personal thoughts and feelings onto paper. It is an exercise that clients can use to express, reflect and gain insight on their current emotional or situational states. This can be done regularly or on an as-needed basis. Loose-leaf, lined or blank paper or a bound book can be used. These entries can then be kept or discarded as each client desires.

Rationale
Expressive writing through journaling can help clients improve their control over emotional distress and pain severity. It is a method of expression that can help clients access their “unconscious selves,” bringing forth an awareness that can help clients work through difficult feelings and traumatic events, and learn new things about themselves (Stuckney & Nobel, 2010).

Indications
- Mild to moderate anxiety
- Mild to moderate stress
- Mild to moderate irritability/anger
- Mild depressive symptoms
- Restlessness/insomnia

Cautions
- Cognitive impairments
- Difficulty reading or writing

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.

Recommended supplies/products
- Pen, pencil or any preferred writing tool
- Loose-leaf, lined or blank paper or a blank bound book (i.e., diary)
- Handouts available at insite.camh.net/alternatives
Method
Say: “Writing about your thoughts and feelings can be a helpful exercise in self-reflection. Have you ever tried keeping a journal? Sometimes it can be a good way to get out all your negative emotions. I can offer some ideas of what you could write about if you get stuck. Don’t worry, you don’t need to be an expert writer to do this activity. Just write whatever comes to mind.”

Rationale:
Being able to express or communicate emotions is a necessary part of a healthy well-being. Encouraging and helping clients find a way to express themselves is an essential part of their care. Journaling is an effective activity to help clients express themselves and potentially gain insight into their thoughts and feelings.

1. Explain to your client that it is not necessary to be an excellent writer in order to journal.
2. Help your client find a comfortable place to write that is free from distractions.
3. To begin, encourage your client to write about his or her current feelings, situation in life, hopes and dreams.
4. Offer your client the following suggestions to help guide journal entries:
   • Why does ____ make me feel ____? Journal and discover the answer.
   • Pick a song and use some of its lyrics to start a new journal entry. Or choose a song you love and write your own lyrics.
   • Begin with “If I had ____ in my life, I would be happy.” In your journal, describe: “A day in my life with ____.” Then ask yourself: “How could I find or get ____?”
   • If you notice that your writing is always negative, ask yourself: “How do I keep from writing so much negative stuff?” Or ask yourself: “How do I write more positive stuff?”
Sensory Activities

Aromatic hand massage
Sensory comfort box
Weighted blankets
Aromatic hand massage

Description
Aromatic hand massage involves the use of lotions scented with essential oils to massage a client’s hands and help the client become calm and find comfort. The client can select the oils. The lotion can also remain unscented. The client can choose to have the clinician initiate the massage or engage in a self-message.

Rationale
The combination of scents and massage helps to engage all of your client’s senses in a soothing and therapeutic manner. For some clients this activity is a calming exercise that promotes relaxation.

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.

Indications
• Mild to moderate anxiety, stress
• Mild to moderate irritability/anger
• Mild depressive symptoms
• Restlessness/insomnia
• Expressed interest in hand lotion and or hand massage

Cautions
• Allergies to lotions and or oils
• Open sores or cuts on the hand
• Hypersensitivity or aversion to scents
• History of trauma (i.e., the client could be triggered by certain scents or touch)
• Hypersensitivity to touch (in this situation, clinicians could offer to guide clients in performing their own hand massages)

Recommended supplies/products
• Essential oils (e.g., lavender, peppermint, chamomile, lemon, vanilla or sweet orange)
• A container of unscented body lotion
• Medication (or other small) cup in which to place ointment
Method
Say:
“Have you heard of something called an aromatic or scented hand massage? It’s like a regular hand massage, but with aromatic scents added. Some people have found this to be comforting. Sometimes familiar scents can be relaxing. What kind of smells do you like? I have some lotions and scented oils.”

Rationale:
It is important that the client choose the scent because certain aromas (specific to the client) can risk triggering past trauma.

1. The client and clinician should wash hands before starting this activity.
2. Sit face-to-face with your client. It is best if there is a table so your client’s hands and arms can rest comfortably on it.
3. Ask your client to smell all of the essential oils (if necessary) and then choose one for this session. Unscented lotion can also be used.
4. Mix the ointment and essential oil as per the ratios based on client demographics indicated below.
   - *Standard mixture:* 5 mL of ointment to one drop of essential oil.
   - *Clients older than 60 or immuno-compromised:* 10 mL of ointment to 1 drop of essential oil.
5. Gloves should only be worn by clinicians if cuts or sores are present on their hands or if they experience a hypersensitivity to the oils, ointment or lotion.
6. Ask your client about any areas of tenderness and or pain before initiating the hand massage. Inform the client that you will massage one hand at a time.
7. Apply light circular pressure to the major muscle areas of your client’s hand. Focus on the palm and the back of the hand. Repeat this step three times on each hand.
8. Apply light pressure (i.e., light squeeze) on your client’s mid-forearm, moving towards the wrist and back again. Repeat this step three times on each arm.
9. Apply light pressure on your client’s wrist, moving towards the fingertips. Repeat this step three times on each hand.
10. Continue to use light pressure strokes from your client’s wrist to forearm. Repeat this step three times for each arm.
11. Discuss your client’s experience with the activity.

Note: Emphasize to your client that this activity can be completed independently. Clinicians can help guide clients in completing a self-massage.

Sensory comfort box

Description
Sensory stimulation relates to any object or action that stimulates one of the five senses. Examples include stress balls, soft toys, massage mats, ice packs, sour candy, “Play-Doh” and light-up toys. Placing any combination of these items in a shared or personalized box can facilitate a client’s access to these items when the client experiences the initial stages of distress (Best Alzheimer’s Products, 2008).

Rationale
Sensory stimulation helps clients feel calm and relaxed through the activation of their five senses. Tactile objects and actions can cause an inhibitory reaction of the proprioceptive or vestibular system, slowing down the reaction of the nervous system (Ayers, 1979). For clients with mental health and/or addiction issues, sensory stimulation can decrease agitation and restlessness, as well as improve sleep.

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.
Indications
- Mild to moderate anxiety
- Mild to moderate stress
- Mild to moderate irritability/anger
- Mild depressive symptoms
- Restlessness/insomnia
- Perceptual dysfunctions
- Cognitive impairments

Cautions
- Hypersensitivity to touch or specific tactile/sensory stimulation (as identified by the client)

Recommended supplies/products:
- A sensory comfort box that includes:
  - Squeeze balls
  - Hard or chewy flavoured candy
  - Coloured lights
  - Scented soaps
  - Stuffed toy (for the client’s personal box only)
  - Other sensory items identified by the client
- A small cardboard box (for the client personal items)

Method
Say:
“Have you ever tried using a stress ball to help you relax? Sometimes this can be helpful. For example, squeezing the ball might help you relieve your stress or lessen your anxiety. I have a few different objects that are fun to play with.”

Rationale:
Activating the client’s senses through various tactile and sensory objects can help the client relax and feel less anxious or agitated. It also is important that you identify with your client what kinds of stimulus may be unfavorable, since any sensitivity to touch, taste, smell, sound or sight can work against the calming effect of this activity. Offering the client a variety of objects will help the client discover which types of sensory stimulation are most effective in bringing comfort.
1. Sit with your client and provide your unit’s specific sensory comfort box.
2. Let your client try each available object. Ask the client to rate preferred objects, based on which ones bring the most comfort.
3. For future reference, indicate in your client’s safety plan which objects the client preferred to use, in order to self-soothe during times of distress.
4. Encourage your client to use these objects when any feelings of distress arise.
5. If available, help your client create a personalized sensory comfort box. Use various tactile or sensory stimulating objects that belong to the client. Determine if anyone (e.g., family) can acquire additional items from outside the hospital.

**Weighted blankets**

**Description**
Specialized weighted blankets are an effective tool for clients with sensory challenges, hyperactivity and/or emotional or psychological distress. The deep pressure applied by these professionally manufactured blankets can help clients find comfort when in distress.

**Rationale**
Weighted blankets are used with individuals who do not properly process sensory stimuli/input, in order to improve body awareness, become calm, improve attention and focus, and decrease sensory-seeking behaviours (Sensory Processing Disorder Resource Center, 2011).

Always refer to the client’s safety plan before proceeding with this activity. If required, make any necessary updates to the safety plan and provide a copy to your client.
Indications
- Mild to moderate anxiety or stress
- Mild to moderate irritability/anger
- Mild depressive symptoms
- Restlessness/insomnia/hyperactivity

Cautions
- Hypersensitivity to pressure
- Expressed discomfort with feelings of confinement
- Weighted blankets should never be used as a restraint
- Clients must be able to remove a weighted blanket independently

Recommended supplies/products
- Weighted blanket (based on your client’s weight). Current industry standards recommend that a blanket be 10% plus one pound of the client’s body weight (Jackson, 2011).

Method
Say:
“Sometimes we feel like we are starting to feel out of control, lost or anxious. In times like this, grounding yourself physically may make you feel better. Have you ever tried using a weighted blanket? Some people find that when they wrap themselves up with it, they begin to feel safe. Maybe you’d like to try using one of our weighted blankets to see if it can help?”

Rationale:
Children or adults with sensory processing disorders, particularly with tactile or proprioceptive dysfunction, have a need for the deep pressure that weighted blankets provide. Weighted blankets are a simple solution to what often appears to be complex attention, calming or sleeping difficulties (Sensory Processing Disorder Resource Center, 2011).
1. Determine the exact weight of your client in order to select an appropriately weighted blanket. Use this formula: 
   (client weight in lbs x 0.10) + (1 lbs) = blanket weight.
2. Help your client find a comfortable environment to sit.
3. Place the weighted blanket on your client’s lap or around both shoulders.
4. Make sure your client can remove the blanket independently.
5. Inform your client that he or she can use the blanket for any length of time.

**Note:** Weighted blankets need to be laundered regularly, especially if visibly dirty. Regular washing machines and laundry soap can be used to clean the blankets. Blankets must be hung to dry. It may take up to two days for these blankets to dry.
Additional Information
Assessment and evaluation

It is important to keep in mind that complex behaviours or distress in clients can be prevented or minimized using alternative strategies/activities. All behaviour has meaning, so it is important to assess and try to understand the possible underlying causes of the presenting behaviour. By doing this, you can help clients develop strategies to cope with distress. Some areas of assessment to keep in mind are health or medical problems (e.g., side effects with medication, infections, depression), problems with the physical environment (e.g., space, excessive stimulation, boredom) and/or communication problems (e.g., language barriers, cultural differences, power imbalances). **H.A.L.T.** (as cited in NASMHPD, 2008) is an acronym (see below) that can assist in assessing underlying causes of behaviour. The acronym refers to basic assessment questions that pertain to potential underlying causes that can be addressed. As well, this guide provides sample questions that may assist in developing a safety plan with the client.

**Acronym for assessing underlying causes of agitated behaviour:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H.A.L.T.</td>
<td>Hungry?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Angry?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lonely?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tired? / Thirsty?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sample questions to initiate a safety plan discussion**

1. It is helpful for us to be aware of things that can help you when you are having a hard time. What has helped or worked for you in the past? What will help you right now?
2. What are some things that make it difficult for you when you are already upset? Are there “stressors” that cause you distress?
3. What are your strengths that you can use to assist you with coping?
4. What interests or hobbies do you have that you can use to assist you with coping?
5. Are you able to approach staff when you are having a hard time? How would you like staff to help you?
Documentation

Documentation requirements
Documentation is an integral aspect to providing safe and appropriate clinical care. All clinicians are responsible and accountable for maintaining an accurate health record about their clients and the care they provide to clients. Whenever a clinician carries out an intervention, action or activity, documentation must include, but is not limited to the following.

1. The client’s current status
   a. What is the client’s current mental and/or medical status?
   b. What are the client’s current behaviours? Describe them specifically.
   c. Are the client’s current symptoms affecting his or her personal or environmental safety?

2. Rationale
   a. What intervention is being suggested?
   b. What are the client’s current coping activities?
   c. Is the intervention currently in the client’s care/safety plan?
   d. What has the client identified as being helpful to ease distress?
   e. Did the client require encouragement to participate in the intervention or did the client participate independently?
   f. Were other interventions suggested/attempted?
3. Implementation process
   a. Where did the implementation process occur (e.g., on/off the unit, in the client’s room, common areas)?
   b. Did the intervention need to be modified to suit the client’s needs?
   c. Was this an individual or group activity?
   d. How would you describe the client’s engagement?
   e. Did the client remain engaged? Why or why not?
   f. Was the client able to tolerate the activity? Why or why not?

4. Outcomes
   a. Was there a change in the client’s mental and/or medical status?
   b. What are the client’s current behaviours? Describe them specifically. How is this different from before?
   c. What did the client enjoy or dislike about intervention?
   d. Are updates needed in the client’s care/safety plan?
   e. Was another activity/strategy required to help the client further (e.g., medication or another alternative activity)?

5. Referrals, communication and education provided
   a. Did the client require or ask for educational materials?
   b. Did the client or family require teaching?
   c. Were referrals made to specific services?
   d. Did the client’s family (with consent) or substitute decision maker need to be contacted?

Further information on CAMH documentation guidelines can be located in the Policy and Procedures Manual on Insite.
## Alternative Products

Prices shown are approximate

### Relaxation Products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Brands Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massage Mat Homedics</td>
<td>$70</td>
<td>Canadian Tire <a href="http://www.canadiantire.ca">www.canadiantire.ca</a>, Sears <a href="http://www.sears.ca">www.sears.ca</a>, The Bay <a href="http://www.hbc.ca">www.hbc.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conair Professional Percussion Massager</td>
<td>$40</td>
<td>Walmart <a href="http://www.walmart.ca">www.walmart.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handheld Head Massager</td>
<td>$7</td>
<td>Walmart <a href="http://www.walmart.ca">www.walmart.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conair Sound Therapy</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>Bed Bath &amp; Beyond <a href="http://www.bedbathandbeyond.com">www.bedbathandbeyond.com</a>, Shoppers Drug Mart <a href="http://www.shoppersdrugmart.ca">www.shoppersdrugmart.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aromaforce Essential Oils</td>
<td>$7 to $16</td>
<td>Loblaws Grocery Stores, Foodsmiths <a href="http://www.foodsmiths.com">www.foodsmiths.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Weighted products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weighted blankets</td>
<td>$264</td>
<td>FlagHouse</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flaghouse.ca">www.flaghouse.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Salt of the Earth</td>
<td><a href="http://www.saltoftheearthweightedgear.com">www.saltoftheearthweightedgear.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weights for weighted blankets</td>
<td>$98</td>
<td>FlagHouse</td>
<td><a href="http://www.flaghouse.ca">www.flaghouse.ca</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Tactile and sensory products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan Toy Skwish Classic</td>
<td>$17</td>
<td>Mastermind Toys</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mastermindtoys.com">www.mastermindtoys.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Up Flashing Molecule Ball</td>
<td>$9</td>
<td>Mastermind Toys</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mastermindtoys.com">www.mastermindtoys.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atomic Stress Ball</td>
<td>$4 each</td>
<td>Mastermind Toys</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mastermindtoys.com">www.mastermindtoys.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro FM Radio</td>
<td>$8</td>
<td>Mastermind Toys</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mastermindtoys.com">www.mastermindtoys.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Egg shakers $3 each
Mastermind Toys
www.mastermindtoys.com

Chewy Festival Candy Mix
25 lbs
$107 for 25 lbs
Wonderful Wholesale Warehouse
www.bulkfoods.com

approximately 1,850 pieces

Hard Candy Deluxe Party Mix
30 lbs
$100 for 30 lbs
Wonderful Wholesale Warehouse
www.bulkfoods.com

approximately 2,520 pieces

Art and craft products

Basic art and craft supplies
- White glue
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Coloured paper
- Finger paints
- Paint brushes
- Acrylic paints
- Regular pencils
- Markers
- Crayons
- Pens
- Stencils
- Stickers
- Glitter
- Tape
- Pompoms
- Pipe cleaners
- Beads

DeSerres
www.deserres.ca
Curry’s Art Store
www.currys.com
Micheals
www.michaels.com
Woolfits
www.woolfitts.com
References


Normand, M. (2007). 30-Minute Mandalas Coloring Book: Active Meditation for the Mind and Body OR Easy Meditation through Coloring. NMS.


