

Worksheet: Unlocking Self-Regulation: A Body-Oriented Approach for ADHD Women

Introduction

This worksheet is designed to help you, as an ADHD woman, learn how to manage stress and emotions by paying attention to your body. These exercises will guide you in understanding your physical sensations, which can help you feel more in control and calm in everyday situations.

Understanding ADHD in Women

ADHD is often misunderstood, especially in women. Many ADHD women struggle with managing emotional regulation, masking, rejection sensitivity, dealing with unreasonable societal expectations, and coping with feelings of inadequacy. Women may experience their symptoms more internally—through anxiety, overwhelm, and emotional sensitivity.

Why Self-Regulation Is Key

Self-regulation is your ability to manage your emotions, behaviors, and body's responses in a way that aligns with your goals. For ADHD women, self-regulation can be particularly challenging due to years of masking, trauma, and a build-up of chronic stress that has caused an almost constant flight or flight state. However, by learning how to tune into your body and understand its signals, you can develop regulation and health.

A Body-Oriented Approach

This worksheet is designed to help you take a body-oriented approach to self-regulation. This means paying attention to your body's physical sensations—like tightness, warmth, or tension—and using that awareness to manage your emotions. By connecting with your body, you can better understand what you need at the moment, reduce stress, and build resilience.

Why It Works

Research shows that trauma and stress are often stored in the body. By focusing on bodily sensations, you can release tension, process emotions, and develop healthier coping strategies. This approach is not about eliminating discomfort but learning to navigate it so that you can thrive.

How to Use This Worksheet

This worksheet is both a fact sheet and a practical guide. Each section includes exercises designed to help you:

- **Identify and understand your bodily sensations** when you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed.
- **Practice techniques** that help you shift from discomfort to comfort, making it easier to manage difficult situations.
- **Break down overwhelming tasks** into manageable steps, reducing the likelihood of feeling stuck or paralyzed by stress.

- **Reflect on your progress** and build a toolkit of strategies that support your journey toward self-regulation.

By regularly engaging with these exercises, you'll build the skills needed to manage your ADHD more effectively, feel more in control, and improve your overall well-being.

Section 1: Understanding Your Bodily Sensations

Exercise 1: Identifying Sensations

- **What It Is:** This exercise helps you notice what your body feels like when you're stressed or upset.
- **Why It Helps:** By recognizing these feelings, you can take steps to feel better instead of getting overwhelmed.

Instructions:

1. Think about a time when you felt stressed or upset recently.
2. Close your eyes and pay attention to what's happening in your body. Do you feel tightness, warmth, or something else?
3. Write down what you notice.

Situation	Sensations Experienced	Possible Emotions Linked to These Sensations
Example: Arguing with a friend	Tight chest, clenched fists	Anger, frustration

Record Your Experience:

- Take a moment to reflect on this exercise.
- How did it feel to notice these sensations?

- Did recognizing them help you understand your emotions better?

- Write down any thoughts or feelings that came up during this process.

Section 2: Pendulation Exercise

Exercise 2: The Dreaded Task

- **What It Is:** This exercise helps you move between feeling uncomfortable and finding comfort.
- **Why It Helps:** It teaches you how to calm down when something feels too hard or overwhelming.

Instructions:

1. Think of a task you've been avoiding.
2. Notice how your body feels when you think about this task. Maybe your shoulders tense up or your stomach feels uneasy.
3. Look around you and find an object that makes you feel calm or happy (like a favorite book or a cozy blanket). Focus on it and notice if your body feels different.
4. Write down your experience.

Task	Initial Sensations	Object Observed	Sensations After Focusing on Object
Example: Cleaning the kitchen	Heavy shoulders, knot in stomach	Soft pillow	Shoulders relaxed, breathing slowed down

Record Your Experience:

- Reflect on how this exercise worked for you. Did focusing on a comforting object help reduce your discomfort?
- How did your body feel before and after? Note any changes or insights you experienced.

Section 3: Titration Technique

Exercise 3: Breaking It Down

- **What It Is:** This exercise is about tackling a tough situation by breaking it into smaller, easier steps.
- **Why It Helps:** Doing one small thing at a time feels less overwhelming and helps you make progress without feeling stuck.

Instructions:

1. Think of something that feels overwhelming, like a big project or a difficult conversation. What happens in your body ?
1. Break it into smaller steps that you can handle one at a time.
2. After completing each step, take a moment to see how your body feels. Write down your experience.

Situation	Step 1	Sensations Experienced	Step 2	Sensations Experienced
Example: Preparing for a presentation	Write an outline	Nervous, but manageable	Create slides	Felt calmer and more focused

Record Your Experience:

How did it feel to break down the task into smaller steps?

Did it make the situation less overwhelming?

I'd like you to reflect on the process and note any changes in how you felt as you worked through each step.

Section 4: Jaw Relaxation

Exercise 4

- **What It Is:** This exercise focuses on relaxing your jaw to help reduce overall stress in your body.
- **Why It Helps:** Your jaw often tightens when you're stressed, so relaxing it can help calm you down.

Instructions:

1. **Prepare:**
 - Sit comfortably and take a few deep breaths to center yourself.
 - Gently close your lips and assess the initial condition of your jaw. Feel for any tightness, sensations, or differences in temperature.
2. **Initial Observation:**
 - Pay attention to the current state of your jaw. Notice if it feels tight, loose, or if there are any other noticeable sensations such as pressure or warmth.
3. **Gradual Opening:**
 - Slowly begin to separate your lips and gradually lower your jaw. Use the smallest and most controlled movements possible.
 - As you slowly open your jaw, be vigilant for any unevenness or jerks in the movement. Pause immediately if you detect any irregularity.
4. **Pause and Reflect:**
 - When you encounter a hitch, stop and keep your jaw in that position. Observe the sensations around your jaw at this moment. Note any other bodily sensations, emotions, or even visualizations like colors or images that might appear.
5. **Closing Observation:**
 - Continue to gently close your jaw back to the starting position.
 - Reflect on any changes you feel from the beginning of the exercise. What shifts do you notice in your body or mood?
6. **Repeat if Desired:**

- You may repeat this process to gradually increase awareness and control over your jaw's movement, which can help in reducing tension and promoting relaxation.
7. **Goal:** By the end of this activity, aim to have a deeper understanding of the subtle physical cues of your jaw and overall facial tension. This mindfulness practice can contribute to better stress management and physical relaxation.
 8. Slowly close your jaw again and see if you feel any different.

Initial State of Jaw	Sensations Noted	Emotions Noted	State of Jaw After Exercise
Tight, clenched	Tension in jaw, pressure	Anxiety, stress	Jaw relaxed, less pressure

Record Your Experience:

- After completing this exercise, how did your jaw and body feel? Did relaxing your jaw help reduce stress?
- Write down any changes or thoughts you noticed.

Section 5: Building Your Toolkit

Exercise 5: Finding More Tools

- **What It Is:** This section helps you explore more resources that can support your journey.
- **Why It Helps:** Learning new strategies gives you more ways to manage your ADHD effectively.

Instructions:

1. Pick a book or practice from the list below to explore further.
2. After exploring, take a moment to reflect on what you learned. Think about how you can apply these insights to your daily life.

Recommended Resources:

- "Healing Trauma" by Peter Levine
- "The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment" by Babette Rothschild
- "Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body" by Roxane Gay
- Somatic Experiencing practices

Record Your Experience:

- As you explore these resources, take notes on what stands out to you. How do the ideas or techniques resonate with your own experiences?
- Reflect on how you can apply these new tools to better manage your ADHD and enhance your well-being.

Conclusion

By consistently practicing these exercises, you can develop greater self-awareness, resilience, and control over your ADHD symptoms. Remember, small steps make a big difference. Keep practicing, and celebrate every bit of progress you make on your journey to self-regulation and well-being.