TIPP: changing your body chemistry fast

Four body-based skills for when emotion is too high to think.

At the height of emotion, reasoning does not work. These four skills act on the body directly and can bring arousal down within minutes, far enough for you to think again.

T: Temperature	Cold water on your face. Hold your breath and put your face in a bowl of cold water, or hold a cold pack over your eyes and cheeks, for 20 to 30 seconds. This sets off a reflex that slows the heart.
I: Intense exercise	Burn off the energy. Run, do star jumps, climb the stairs fast, for a few minutes, as hard as is right for your fitness.
P: Paced breathing	Slow your breathing right down, with the out-breath longer than the in-breath. For example, in for 4 and out for 6 or more.
P: Paired muscle relaxation	As you breathe in, tense a group of muscles. As you breathe out, say "relax" in your mind and let the tension go.

Medical caution

Cold water can lower heart rate quickly. Check with your GP before using the temperature skill if you have a heart condition, take beta blockers, have an eating disorder or have any other medical concern. Choose exercise that suits your health.

Tips

- These work fast and wear off fast. Use the calmer window to take the next sensible step.
- Practise when you are not in crisis, so you know what to do.
- Keep what you need to hand: a cold pack in the freezer, runners by the door.

The one I am most likely to use, and where I will keep what I need

When I tried it: distress before and after (0 to 10), and what I noticed

TIPP is a skill from Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), developed by Marsha Linehan.

If you are at risk of hurting yourself, call 112 or 999, or Samaritans on freephone 116 123.

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