

TOOLS



A Guide to Emotional Mastery Tools

By Angela Legh
Author of the Bella Santini Chronicles

Specific tools and techniques that can help your child manage their emotional balance are included in this document. Many of these tools have proven to be invaluable for me in overcoming adversity. Any of these practices can be of value for you and your child. While I offer these in the hopes that they help your child, I advise that you work with a mental health professional and use these tools under their advisement.

This guide is broken down into Physical, Mental, Emotional, and Energetic tools. It helps to choose from all the categories, as we are whole people, not just a physical body or an emotional being. A holistic approach may help your child overcome their adversity more quickly.

Physical Tools

Our physical body is an amazing and intricate machine that has not been able to be reproduced by science. Taking care of your body will help you stay well and healthy. Much has been said about proper sleep, moderate exercise and eating right. There are other aspects of physical health that aren't discussed as often. This guide will walk you through several tools for a better physical health.

Breathing

Deep breathing stimulates the vagus nerve which reduces the 'fight or flight' response. Regular breathing exercises can improve focus and concentration. Basic deep breathing: Teach your child to place their hands on their belly, take a big breath through their nose, watching their hands rise as they breathe into their belly. Slowly exhale through their mouth, and watch their hands return as their belly deflates. Repeat until the child feels calmed.

There are several breathing exercises that are well known to calm. The first one is **6-7-8 breath**. For younger kids, you can teach them 4-5-6 breath, eventually expanding as they age to the full 6-7-8 breathing pattern.

Lay or sit down, close your eyes. Breathe in deeply through your nose for the count of 6 seconds, counting in your head at an even pace. Hold your breath for 7 seconds; then exhale through your mouth for 8 seconds. You can make a woosh sound as you exhale, or not. Repeat four to six times for best results.

For young children, inhale for the count of four, hold for the count of five, and exhale for the count of six.

Another breathing pattern is **box breathing**. Lay or sit down, close your eyes. Breathe in deeply through your nose for the count of four, hold for the count of four, exhale through your mouth for the count of four and hold for the count of four. Repeat for 30 to 60 seconds.

A walk in nature

Nature has many healing properties; a walk through nature carries many benefits beyond exercise and fresh air. Ask your child to listen and identify the sounds of nature around them. First, they might notice the birds, or the wind, but as they open their ears and listen, they might notice quieter noises; a rustling that indicates the motion of a rodent, the sound of small insects scampering about. Ask your child to see deeply, can they see into the dense brush to find birds or animals?

As with grounding, walking in nature offers us the opportunity to feel the energy, the beauty of the Earth. If there is a big rock, sit on it and feel the energy surrounding you. If there is a tree that is accessible, try hugging it. Trees and rocks are filled with the life force energy of the Earth, and both can be grounding and refreshing.

At the end of the walk, take a moment to catalogue what you are grateful for. The beauty of nature, the breath of fresh air, the sun shining through the clouds. Family time on a beautiful walk. The sounds of nature surrounding you. What else can you be grateful for?

Hugging a tree

Matthew Silverstone's book *Blinded by Science* states there is evidence that trees provide health benefits for mental illnesses such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder and depression. Hugging a tree releases oxytocin into your circulation, which increases your calmness. Further, hugging a tree stimulates the release of the hormones serotonin and dopamine, which can increase your feelings of happiness.

Hugging a tree in the forest provides additional health benefits. Essential wood oils called phytoncides are emitted by trees. These oils permeate the air in a forest. According to a Japanese study, these oils stimulate killer cell production, which helps our bodies fight illness and disease.

Exercise

The many benefits of exercise for the body are clearly outlined and available online. Less is known about the mental benefits, though a recent report lists many benefits of moderate exercise (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1470658/>). According to this article published by the National Institute of Health, Exercise improves mental health by reducing anxiety, depression, and negative mood and by improving self-esteem and cognitive function. Thirty minutes of exercise of moderate intensity, such as brisk walking for 3 days a week, is sufficient for these health benefits. Moreover, these 30 minutes need not to be continuous; three 10-minute walks are believed to be as equally useful as one 30-minute walk.

Mental and Emotional Tools

Many societies have promoted the repression of emotions, such as Great Britain with their viewpoint of “Keep Calm and Carry On”. Originally the phrase appeared on a motivational poster produced by the British government in 1939 in preparation for World War II. The poster was intended to raise the morale of the British public, threatened with widely predicted mass air attacks on major cities. This call for persistence in the face of adversity was much needed **at the time**. However, the psyche of British citizenry was negatively impacted as generations were encouraged to repress their emotions.

Emotions are energy, they give us information about our circumstances. Emotions are important; to deny an emotion is to reject a part of who you are. Many people reject painful emotions because they were not equipped to deal with the pain. Unfortunately, this avoidance of a painful emotion can lead to highly destructive behavior patterns.

Feeling from a space of neutrality

Emotions are fleeting, unless our minds have either grasped onto the concept, or created resistance to the feeling. In both cases, the feeling is prolonged because of our mind’s entanglement in the idea of the feeling. It is when we can witness our feelings from a space of neutrality that we gain freedom from the reactionary processes of our minds.

Science has measured the chemical process of emotions, if our minds don’t engage emotions last about 90 seconds. Getting our minds out of our emotional processing is a skill that benefits everyone. It provides you with the choice of engaging or witnessing an emotion.

To experience an emotion from the space of neutrality is a three-step process. **Feel** the feeling, notice where it shows up in your space, notice the qualities of the feeling. **Name** the feeling, acknowledging it’s presence. **Allow** the feeling, understanding that it is perfectly ok for you to feel that way. If you approach your feelings with this technique, you will find that you are no longer a prisoner of your emotions.

It is important for you to teach your children that their emotions are acceptable and natural. This opens them up to the ability to express what is true for them. This simple teaching has the power to change the path of humanity; for the fear of feeling painful feelings has engendered much pain in this world.

Perspective shifts

One of my favorite sayings is from the Talmud; “We don’t see the world as it is, we see it as we are.” This may be a hard pill to swallow for some, but when we have the understanding that this statement is true for everyone in our life, it sometimes makes it easier to embrace. I find this tool for shifting perspective to be very valuable when we are considering the critical statements we absorb from others.

I will illustrate a process that I have found to have a profound impact on my life. When I was young, I was told by my alcoholic father that I wasn’t worth the dirt under my feet. At the time, I absorbed that criticism and made it a truth about me. But now, I can look back on it and see a drunk father, looming over his four-year-old daughter, spouting vitriol and criticism. From this perspective, it is very clear that the words he used, and his actions, said much more about who he was than they ever said about me.

Often, when we let go of our narrow perspective and look from above, we can see that the people criticizing us were looking through their own limitations and their own perspectives. What they said may be true for them, but we do not have to make it true for us.

When feeling boxed in it helps to seek an additional perspective. Each issue has at least two sides, from two different people, each carrying their own perspectives. When we can open our hearts and shift to see the issue from the perspective of the other person, we are able to see the issue in its wholeness.

Presence and mindfulness

As with grounding, the practice of being present is one that if cultivated, brings many benefits. There are many practices associated with being present, including several Buddhist “meditations”.

For those that want it simple, just breathe. Notice the air enter your nose. Notice the temperature of the air. Notice how your body feels in the space it is in. Notice the air touching your skin. Breathe.

Pay attention to what is happening in the space you are in, right in this moment. Often, when we focus on fears and anxieties, we are focused on the uncertainty of the future, not on what is right in front of us. When we focus on our hurts, our attention is placed in the past. When we are in the present moment, nothing from the future or the past has any effect on us. We are only experiencing what is right in front of us.

Practicing presence is a gift you give yourself; a gift of freedom from worry and anxiety; a gift of appreciation for what is happening right now. Because right now, nothing is threatening you. Right now, you can appreciate the moment in your life. Right now, this now moment, is the only moment that matters.

For those who would like help with being present, please download the presence guided meditation available on my website. You may download it [here](#).

Calming the inner critic

We are our own worst enemy. All it takes is for us to look in the mirror, and we begin to catalogue all that is wrong with us. According to Allure Magazine, women self-criticize themselves eight times per day. We can blame society, for stuffing us full of false ideas of what is beautiful. However, we must take responsibility for our own thoughts.

If we make a mistake, we are quick to issue self-recrimination. For this we can blame schools, for their failure to teach us that mistakes are a source of information; a step on the way to achieving what we want. If we didn't see our mistakes as a failure; then we wouldn't be so quick to blame ourselves. In fact, we might celebrate our mistakes, because each one gets us closer to our prize.

Five steps adapted from an article by Robert Leahy, Ph.D, can teach to your child to calm their inner critic include:

1. Realize that you are human; and as a human you are in a training ground where you experience things to learn and grow. Even the horrific experiences in my life have taught me what I needed to know to do the work I now do.
2. Talk to yourself as you would a total stranger. We were taught to be polite to strangers, and we were not taught to be polite to ourselves. Treat yourself as you would a best friend, or, if you and your best friend joke and criticize each other, treat yourself as you would treat a stranger.
3. Make a list of your positives every time you consider a negative. Also be open to the possibility that your negatives could turn out to be a positive.
4. Replace self-criticism with self-correction. Use curiosity to look at the situation and ask, "How can I learn from this?" Use this situation as an opportunity for introspection; an opportunity for shifting your perspective.
5. Focus on your goals and take control away from the inner critic. When your inner critic rears it's head, you can tell it, "I know criticizing is your job, but I must go on with life." Then you move forward even if the voice is cutting you down. With practice, you will find the voice of the inner critic become irrelevant.

Energetic Tools

Energy tools are not considered to be a mainstream approach to health management, unless you live in a society that has a history of energy medicine. Yet there are valuable tools available if we simply open our minds to the possibilities.

Imagine that you can look into the palm of your hand and see the matrix of cells that create your body. First you see the skin, and imagine you shrink down so you are looking into one skin cell. Once you are inside the cell, you can shrink down to see the molecules. Once you are inside the molecule, you can imagine the sub-atomic energy clouds of neutrons, protons, and electrons that make up the molecule. Your body is an elegant, complex machine, the molecules and cells knitted together through electronic attraction. Tools for managing your energy can create a sense of balance and well-being.

Grounding and Clearing

Grounding ourselves to the Earth can be a tool for shedding energy, thoughts, and emotions that no longer serve us. Earthing is a type of grounding that can be achieved by taking off your shoes and standing in dirt/grass/sand and allowing the energy of the Earth to restore your energy. This does not happen on concrete or asphalt, so find a small patch of real Earth and try Earthing.

Another form of grounding that can be very helpful for shedding thoughts and emotions is to imagine a grounding cord extending from the base of your spine down to the center of the Earth. This cord is for shedding thoughts; when a thought that doesn't serve you pops into your head, you can send it down the grounding cord. Imagine another cord spiraling around the outside of your grounding cord. This coil is to shed emotions; when an emotion is sticking and you cannot seem to let it go, you can send it down the grounding coil.

The grounding cord should be replaced daily. Just imagine the cord disconnecting from you and dissolving into the Earth, then imagine a new one emerging from your spine.

When you are feeling low energy, you can imagine that the cord is bringing up white light from the center of the Earth. Feel the white light as it rises through your core and exits from the top of your head. The energy of the Earth can refresh your energy.

For those who would benefit, there is a free, guided meditation for grounding and clearing on my website. You may download it [here](#).

A bubble surrounding you

This tool came to me when I was being berated by my ex-husband. His energy was so big and overbearing when he was upset, I felt I was swamped by a tidal wave. One day I imagined a bubble around me; keeping me separate from his anger. His words could not penetrate the bubble, so I was not reactive to his words. My body did not feel the deep cuts that I normally felt while being berated by him. This protective bubble served me well on that day. I can also say that it served my ex-husband, because instead of being reactive, which always prolonged the situation to the detriment of both of us; I was able to witness the situation in a safe place.

When you are in the middle of a conflict where people are throwing their energy around, you can imagine a bubble surrounding you, keeping you separate from the environment around you. Imagine the words slung at you simply bounce off the bubble and fall to the floor.

The Rose Tool

Imagine a single rose of any color place arm's length in front of you; then add one on each side of you, one behind you, and one above and below you. Like the bubble, the roses delineate your space and allow you to experience the situations in your life as a witness who has a choice to engage or not.

Setting the roses in place can become a morning activity that gets you ready to face the day.

The Rose Tool v2

The rose is a flower of high vibration; it is measured at 320MHz. The rose is a sacred flower associated with angels and the vibration of love. In energy medicine, the rose can be used to eliminate negative energy.

If you were recently in a conflict and you are still feeling the energy of the situation, imagine a rose in front of you. Ask the rose to vacuum up any residual energy of the people you conflicted with. Let the rose vacuum until you feel a sense of calm. Place the rose arm's length away from you and let it explode, sending the residual energy back to the person it came from.

THE BELLA SANTINI CHRONICLES



The Bella Santini Chronicles series is written to help kids value themselves

Book one, Bella Santini in the Land of Everlasting Change, is available [here](#).