

Body Awareness and Emotional Contagion

Signs of Arousal

Faster breathing
Increased heart rate
Pupils dilate
Pale Skin
Increased Sweating
Cold (clammy) skin

Simple Body Awareness – Sit in Quiet and Reflect on the Following:

- The temperature and humidity on your skin (warm/dry/cool/moist)?
- Scan your body and notice where you are tense. Difference between upper body and lower body or right side and left side?
- How is your breathing? Is it deep or shallow? Smooth or Rigid?
- How does the expression on your face feel? What is the position of your mouth, eyes, forehead?
- Can you feel your heart? Is it beating fast or slow?

Body Awareness With Others

- Begin with clients/patients who are fairly easy to work with
- Place something in your usual line of sight that will remind you to check in.
- Once every 15-20 minutes tune into your body and assess for the temperature of your body, tension, breathing pattern, facial expression and heart rate.
- If you notice an increase in arousal use a grounding exercise to keep yourself in the present and focusing on your client/patient. This allows you to be present with your client/patient while still keeping your emotions separate from them (conscious empathy).

Exercise adapted from Rothschild (2006). Helper for the Helper: Self-Care Strategies for Managing Burnout and Stress