

Calming Skills Workshop – Facilitator Notes

You do not need to have any particular qualification to host a calming skills workshop. You just need to have an awareness of the calming skills and the confidence to describe these to workshop participants.

1. Preparation (Before the Session)

1.1 Identify your audience

- Decide who the workshop is for (staff, community groups, young people, etc.)
- Consider group size (ideally 8–20 participants)

1.2 Set your date, time and location

1.3 Promote the session

1.4 Set objectives

By the end of the workshop, participants should:

- Understand what calming skills are
- Learn and practise at least 3 techniques. Choose one technique from each section
- Feel confident using techniques in daily life

1.3 Prepare materials

- Printed copies of the *Calming Skills* handout or signposting to *Minding Your Head* (add link to MYH) to review the calming skills after
- Facilitator notes
- Comfortable seating space
- Optional: calming objects (e.g. scented items, textured items)

1.4.1 Create a supportive environment

- Optional participation
- Quiet, private room
- Seating in a circle or small groups
- A willingness to try the exercise(s)

1.4.2 Online event

Complete for this section

- Mikes on silent
- Camera on or off etc

On the day of the session

2. Introduction (10–15 minutes)

2.1 Welcome and outline

- Introduce facilitator(s)
- Explain purpose of session

Add paragraph about the purpose of the session (for facilitator notes)

2.2 Set expectations

- Encourage participants to give each exercise a go

2.3 Brief explanation of calming skills

- Explain that calming skills help manage stress and anxiety (add in a paragraph for facilitator)

4. Practising Calming Techniques (Main Session – 40–60 minutes)

Deliver this as an **interactive section**. Demonstrate and practise each.

4.1 Breathing Techniques (15–20 minutes)

Introduce:

- Deep belly breathing
- Box breathing
- Five finger breathing

Key points:

- Slow breathing
- Longer exhale than inhale

Activity:

- Guide participants through 1–2 breathing exercises

- Ask for brief feedback (optional)

4.2 Sensory Grounding (15 minutes)

Explain grounding through the senses:

- Sight, sound, smell, touch, taste

Introduce techniques like:

- 5-4-3-2-1 method
- 3-3-3 method

Activity:

- Lead a short, guided grounding exercise
- Encourage noticing surroundings

4.3 Body-Based Techniques (15 minutes)

Introduce:

- Self-hug
- Fist clench exercise
- Rhythmic movement (e.g. swaying, tapping)

Activity:

- Demonstrate one or two
- Allow participants to try them

4.4 Positive Focus Techniques (5–10 minutes)

Introduce:

- Noticing “glimmers” (small positive moments)

Activity:

- Ask participants to think of one recent positive or calming moment

5. Reflection and Discussion (10–15 minutes)

- Ask:
 - Which techniques felt helpful?
 - What might you use in daily life?
- Encourage sharing (optional)

6. Signposting and Close (5–10 minutes)

For more calming skills and information on advice and services

- Direct to *Minding Your Head* website (add link to MYH)
- Remind participants:
 - Practice improves effectiveness
 - Different techniques work for different people
- Thank participants and close session

Optional Add-ons

Organisations may also:

- Deliver as a series over several weeks choosing different calming skills each time
- Pair with wellbeing or mental health programmes

Facilitator Tips

- Model calm behaviour and pacing
- Allow silence during exercises
- Avoid overwhelming participants (stick to a few key techniques)
- Be trauma-aware (participants can opt out at any time)