

SOFTEN-SOOTHE-ALLOW

You can practice this exercise whenever you feel stress in daily life. First discover where the stress or a difficult emotion manifests in your body. Then try the following:

- Begin *softening* into that location in your body. Letting the muscles be soft without a requirement that they become soft, like simply applying heat to sore muscles. Softening...softening...softening... Remember that we are not trying to make the sensation go away—you are just holding it in a tender embrace.
- If you wish, letting yourself just soften around the edges, like around the edges of a pancake. No need to go all the way in.
- If you experience too much discomfort with an emotion, just staying with your breath until you feel better.
- Now, starting to *soothe* yourself because you struggle in this way. Perhaps putting your hand over your heart again and feeling your body breathe. Perhaps bringing kind or encouraging words to mind, such as, “Oh, it’s so hard to feel this. May I be kind to myself.” “May I hold myself in loving awareness.”
- If you wish, directing kindness to an uncomfortable part of your body by placing your hand over that place. Maybe even thinking of your body as if it were the body of a beloved child, and gently soothing...soothing...soothing.
- Finally, *allowing* the discomfort to be there. Letting go of the wish for discomfort to disappear. Allowing the discomfort to come and go as it pleases, like a guest in your own home. Allowing...allowing...allowing
- Softening...soothing...allowing. Softening...soothing...allowing. Repeating these words like a mantra, if you wish, reminding yourself to incline with tenderness toward your suffering.
- As you do this exercise you may find that the emotion moves in your body, or even changes into another emotion. Try staying with your experience, continuing to use the technique of soften-soothe-allow.
- Slowly open your eyes when you’re ready.