Soothing Intense Emotions

Intense emotions can lead people to do desperate things to relieve them. Examples including self-destructive behaviors like cutting, and self-medicating with drugs or alcohol. Actually both of these are a form of self-medicating. Cutting the skin releases natural opiates in the brain (called endorphins) which have a soothing effect. The only problem with these solutions is that they cause damage and can be addictive.

Avoid Making it Worse

So what is one to do during intense emotions? To start with, avoid things that bring quick relief but cause longer-term harm. Examples include:

- Self injury
- Drugs and alcohol
- Dangerous behavior, such as promiscuity or reckless driving
- Destructive arguments

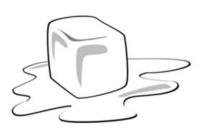
Safe Relief

Next, try physical things that can raise your endorphins without causing damage. Try one from this list. If it doesn't work, just move on to the next one:

- Squeeze an ice cube. This is especially effective if you burn yourself often, as putting ice on a spot you want to burn gives you a strong painful sensation and leaves a red mark afterwards.
- Bite into a hot pepper. Chew on frozen fruit, ginger, or lemon peels.
- Take a cold shower.
- Go out for a run or exercise.
- Bite into wasabi or wasabi peas.
- Pour school glue on your skin, allow it to dry, and peel it off.
- Fill a bucket or sink with ice water and put your head in it.
- Put on sun screen and lay in the sun.
- Hold a hot water bottle to your neck.
- Pull weeds in the garden (this is particularly good as a replacement for hair-pulling).
- Use aromatherapy (lavender helps anxiety; citrus and mint help depression).
- Listen to soothing music. Or loud music.
- Call a friend and just talk.
- Take a hot shower.
- Paint. Use body paint instead of self-cutting.
- Slap your wrist in a way that doesn't leave damage (or with a rubber band around your wrist).
- Flatten aluminum cans for recycling.
- Hit a punching bag or a mattress/pillow.
- Break sticks.

There is also a blood pressure medicine called clonidine which can be taken as needed to reduce impulses to self-harm. Ask your provider if it may be appropriate for you.

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