

### **Four Elements for Stress Reduction**

*Rationale:* External and internal stress triggers have an accumulative effect during the day. Bringing ourselves back within our 'Window of Tolerance' for stress is ideal to maximize on our functional and connection abilities.

*Options for reminders (to help call our attention to how we're functioning in the moment):* wear a bracelet (representing the 4 elements), or place a sticker on your phone or watch. This will call your attention to complete a quick reading to monitor your current stress level and then preform the 4 brief self-calming/self-control exercises.

#### Four Calming Exercises:

**Earth:** GROUNDING and SAFETY in the PRESENT/REALTY... take a minute or two to 'land'.. to be here now.. place both feet on the ground (move them back and forth), feel the chair supporting you.. Look around and notice three new things in your environment.. what do you see.. what do you hear?

**Air:** BREATHING for CENTERING... Breathe in through your nose (full abdominal breathing) as you count four seconds then hold for two and then breathe out for four seconds. Take about twelve deeper slower breaths like this. \*as you notice fleeing thoughts, call your attention back to your breathe.

**Water:** CALM and CONTROLLED.. Switch on relaxation response. Notice--Do you have saliva in your mouth?—Make more saliva (think of moist items, your favorite sweets, salty foods, thought of taking a drink of water...) The reason why making more saliva is effective is when you are anxious or stressed your mouth will dry out because part of the stress emergency response (sympathetic nervous system) is to shut off the digestive system. So when you start making saliva you switch the digestive system on again (parasympathetic nervous system) and the relaxation response. That is why people are offered water, tea, or to chew gum after a difficult experience (historically was used to assist in pain management for individuals without excess to pain management-medication).

**Fire:** LIGHT up the path of your IMAGINATION. When you increase the power of your imagination your will power increases. Bring up the image of your CALM PLACE (your comfort spot). Notice where you feel it in your body? \*Once completed sessions of EMDR-often helpful to deepen the relaxation response through dual attention stimulation-butterfly hugs/soothing.