

How to Get a D.O.S.E. of Effective Reducers

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While working with kids and teenagers who have mental disorders, especially those who are depressed and anxious, I put a lot of effort into understanding the factors that contribute to stress and developing effective coping techniques. For this reason, I focus a great deal on teaching my clients how to use effective voltage reducers.

Yet, sometimes the general reducers that we offer throughout Anger Control Training are insufficient. This is the case particularly for teenagers who experience frequent panic attacks or who struggle to control strong emotions.

Looking for appropriate solutions and being inspired by the work of other specialists, I noticed that in the case of these adolescents, we must focus on looking for not only pleasant but, above all, adequate reducers. What does it mean?

When using Anger Control/Regulation Training, we typically come up with a list of tension-relieving activities with our clients. These activities are meant to be enjoyable and beneficial in lowering tension in a way that is safe, acceptable, and non-aggressive.

Looking for adequate reducers, we also try to find activities that will directly relate to specific signals from the body. Knowing that we will not win with the biology of our body, we simply try to look for such activities that will work as much as possible in the place of discomfort, often significantly shortening the time of feeling a given body cue.

Thanks to this, access to the higher cognitive functions of our prefrontal cortex is faster, and thus it can also be faster to generate helpful and supportive reminders.

Let's use an example to show what I mean: if I have a headache that won't go away because of unpleasant feelings, I have a few options. Teenagers typically choose activities like playing computer games, chatting online with friends, or sleeping. Sleep is

the most effective of these reducers for the body's signals; the others, despite meeting the criteria to be a reducer, may not only be ineffective but may even make the headache worse. Drinking water, taking a walk in the fresh air, massaging your temples, applying a cold (or warm, depending on your preference) compress to your forehead, or stretching your neck are some reducers that will be more effective for this signal from your body.

The table below lists some examples of additional bodily signals and suggests adequate reducers.

Body signals	Commonly used reducers	Adequate reducers
Body shivers	Talking to a friend, social media, pleasant thoughts, breathing	Hugging (pressing), curling up into a ball, jumping, flicking of hands, sitting on hands, putting on more clothes, drinking something warm, breathing
Stomach ache	Sleeping, watching a movie, curling up in a ball, medication	Abdominal stretching, body stretches, hot water bottle on the belly, eating/drinking, breathing, warm bath
A lump in the throat	breathing, talking to someone close, isolation	Screaming, crying, warm drink, breathing, physical activities
Body tension	watching TV, social media, calm breaths, pleasant thoughts.	Jumping and shaking hands/legs, stretching, physical activities, warm bath
Fast heartbeat	Lying down, crying, talking to someone close, breathing, counting backwards	Physical activities, breathing, dancing, screaming, walking, stretching

When looking for reducers that will be adequate to the body cues, especially when working with adolescents with mental disorders, it is also worth paying attention to activities that naturally increase the levels of our happiness hormones, i.e. the so-called D.O.S.E (dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin, and endorphins).

According to the findings of numerous research (eg. [Here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)), the following list of activities will help to naturally promote the release of these important neurotransmitters, reducing stress and enhancing one's mood:

Hormone	secretory stimulating activities
Dopamine (the "reward" hormone)	Sleep, sun, creativity, meditation, mindfulness, aerobic exercise (about 20 minutes a day), completing a task
Oxytocin (the "love" hormone)	Contact with an animal, physical activity, cold shower, physical contact with another person, socialization
Serotonin (mood stabilizer)	Physical activity, contact with nature, sun, cool showers, massage
Endorphins (pain killer)	Laughing/crying, massage, physical contact, moderate exercise, stretching, creativity

It is worth trying to combine appropriate reducers at the same time as adding a D.O.S.E. activity. For example, if a teenager feels tension all over one's body, one could use an adequate reducer: physical exertion or shaking one's arms and legs combined with a D.O.S.E. activity: done outside, or at least by a sunny window. If he chooses to stay active for a headache, let's suggest creativity. In this way, we not only help our charges quickly and effectively reduce tension here and now, but we also develop habits that can support the improvement of mood and well-being.