



5 Compassionate Steps to Ground Someone in Crisis

A trauma-informed, mindfulness-based approach to reconnecting with safety and presence

When someone is in emotional distress, overwhelmed, anxious, or dissociating; your presence can be a lifeline. You can help restore a sense of safety and connection, without pressure or urgency. Think of this not as a script, but as a guide to be a calm presence, a steady hand on the shoulder of someone who needs it.

1. Start with your own breath

Before you say anything, take a moment to regulate your own nervous system.

Breathe in slowly through your nose, and let your exhale be even longer than your inhale.

This quiet centering allows you to become a calm presence, which is often more powerful than any words. In crisis, co-regulation begins with *you*.

2. Gently orient them to the present moment

Help them reconnect to their surroundings through soft, sensory awareness. You might say:

- “Can you look around and name three things you see?”
- “What sounds can you notice right now—near or far?”
- “Is the air cool or warm on your skin?”

Simple cues like these help the nervous system come out of fight, flight, or freeze and begin to return to the present.

3. Invite safe, physical connection with the environment

Tactile grounding helps the body remember: *I’m here. I’m safe enough.*

Offer gentle suggestions like:

- “Can you press your feet into the floor?”
- “Try placing your hands on your thighs and noticing that contact.”

These small actions engage the sensory system and can interrupt the cycle of overwhelm.

4. Normalize their experience and offer steady reassurance

Validation is vital. Let them know it’s okay to feel what they’re feeling.

- “This is a lot. It makes sense that your system is reacting this way.”
- “You’re not alone. I’m right here with you.”

Let your tone, posture, and pace embody calm. There’s no need to fix—only to *be* with them in safety and care.

5. Offer one gentle next step

Avoid rushing or solving. Instead, extend a simple invitation:

- “Would it feel okay to take one breath together?”
- “Can I sit with you for a moment?”

Tiny steps, offered with warmth, give them back a sense of choice and agency. That’s where healing begins.

6. Support a gentle re-entry or transition

Once some calm has returned, help them ease back into their environment or next step with intention. You might say:

- “What might feel supportive to do next?”
- “Would a glass of water, a short walk, or a few more quiet minutes help you shift gears?”
- “Is there someone you’d like to reach out to after this?”

This isn’t about moving on quickly; it’s about honoring the process and making sure they’re not left adrift. Offer reassurance that they’ve done something important. This final step reinforces their strength and gives them permission to take care of themselves beyond the moment of crisis.

