

PTSD & Trauma Toolkit



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Self Check-In

1. Take a moment to breathe
2. How am I feeling today?
3. Where am I feeling it in my body?
4. What are my thoughts?
5. What do I need right now?



5 4 3 2 1

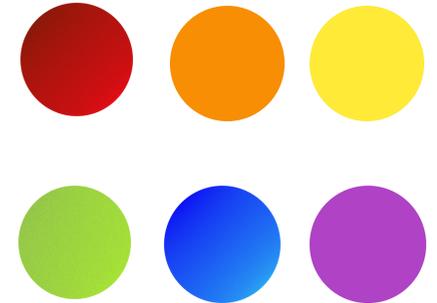
Ground yourself by Naming:

- 5 Things you can SEE
- 4 Things you can TOUCH
- 3 Things you can HEAR
- 2 Things you can SMELL
- 1 Thing you can TASTE



RAINBOW GROUNDING

Look around your environment and identify all of these colours.



GROUNDING



Feel your feet firmly on the ground and Breathe in slowly & steadily through your nose using one of the breathing techniques



Find smells to ground you: Essential Oils - lavender, Eucalyptus, Mint, Sandalwood or perfume soaked on cotton, or spices from the kitchen such as Cinnamon, Lemon etc.



Hold a stone or object in your hand. Notice: the texture, shape, weight. How does it feel in your hand, on your skin? What temperature is it?

A Self Check-In

Thoughts

What thoughts am I having right now? How are they impacting me? How accurate is the thought? is this thought useful?

Feelings

What am I feeling: overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, sad, drained, alone etc? Do I need to take a step back, reach out for support or be more loving to myself?

Physical

Where do I feel it in my body? What messages is my body sending me? am I tired, hungry or in pain?

Box Breathing

Trace each side of the box for a count of 4 as you breathe

Breathe In 4

Hold
4



Hold
4

Breathe Out 4

If you have trouble finding your breath, put your hands on your ribs, stomach or chest to feel.

4 - 7 - 8

Count as you Breathe

Inhale **4** Seconds

Hold **7** Seconds

Exhale **8** Seconds

Comfort Zone

Calm, cool, collected, connected

Emotionally regulated.
Ability to Self Soothe.
Ability to Regulate Emotional State.

Cause to go out of Window of Tolerance:

Fear of: Unconscious thought & bodily feeling: Control, unsafe, I do not exist, abandonment, rejection

Trauma Related Core beliefs about Self are Triggered:
Emotional & Physiological Dysregulation Occurs

(Source: Various)

To Stay in Window of Tolerance:

Mindfulness - Being Present, in Here-N- Now.
Grounding Exercises.
Techniques for Self-Soothing, Calming the body & Emotional Regulation.
Deep, Slow Breathing.
Recognising Limiting Beliefs, Counter with Positive statements about Self, New Choices, Boundaries.

(Source: Various)

HYPER-AROUSSED

Fight/flight response

Anxiety, Overwhelmed, feeling chaotic, Outbursts (emotional or aggressive), Anger/Aggression/Rage

Rigidity
Obsessive-Compulsive Behaviour or Thoughts.
Over- Eating/Restricting Addictions/impulsivity.

(Source: Various)

Tools when HYPER-AROUSSED

Goal: Calming, Centering

Deep breathing, Aromatherapy: (Lavender, vanilla). Meditation - use of meditation apps & guided imagery.
Progressive Muscle relaxation, Heavy Blankets
Listen to relaxing music & or Nature Sounds. Slow walk/run, Self Massage, Cuddle pets, Drink Herbal Tea/Warm Lemon water

(Source: Various)

HYPO-AROUSSED

Freeze response

Dissociation, not present. Unavailable/Shut Down.
Memory Loss
Disconnected

Autopilot
Trouble Accessing Emotions

Feeling Flat
Separation from Self & Emotions

(Source: Various)

Tools when

HYPO-AROUSSED

Goal: Connecting, Energising

Drink cold water, Aromatherapy (Cinnamon, peppermint, citrus blends) jumping jacks, pushups, listen to faster upbeat music, dance, fast walk, run. splash cold water on face. Hold ice cube in hand, stand up and move around, stand on tip toes.
Balance on one foot, cool air on face & body, chew gum, mints or cinnamon sweets.

(Source: Various)

Reset Vagus Nerve

The Basic Exercise

- Lie on back
- interweave fingers on both hands & place behind head.
- without turning your head, look to the right.
- Remain here until you spontaneously yawn or swallow.
- Return to the Neutral State with head and eyes straight.
- Repeat on the other side.

(Source: Various)

Reset Vagus Nerve

Full Salamander Exercise

- Get on all fours, head is facing down.
- look left without turning head.
- tilt head to the left.
- Let your spine twist with the head tilt to the left.
- Hold for 30-60 seconds.
- Bring head and spine to the centre to straighten out.
- Repeat on right side.

(Source: Various)

Reset Vagus Nerve

Diving Reflex with Cold Water

To stimulate the diving reflex, you need cold exposure.

You can splash cold water on your face or put cold water or ice cubes in a zip lock bag against your face.

The diving reflex slows your heart rate, increases blood flow to your brain, reduces anger and relaxes the body

(Source: Various)

Reset Vagus Nerve

Humming, Singing or Gargling

Did you know that humming, singing or gargling can make you feel better.

Try humming or singing along to a song and see how you feel, or gargle some water.

Doing this activates your vagus nerve



(Source: Various)

STOP

S

Stop what you are doing, press pause and take a step back from whatever you are doing.

T

Take a deep breath to centre yourself. You can count if you need to,

O

Observe what is going on in your body and any thoughts right now. Give yourself permission for them.

P

Proceed, choose how you want to move forward and focus on activities or thoughts that make you feel good.

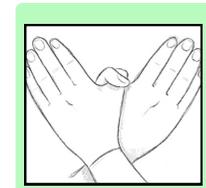
(Source: DBT Various)

Butterfly Technique

Cross your hands and join thumbs (like image). Place on top of chest so fingers on each collarbone.

Close your eyes & gently tap one hand at a time

After a little while, pause and take a deep breath. Continue tapping until you feel relaxed.



Flashbacks

Say the following:

- I am feeling..... (Name emotion)
- And I am sensing in my body (describe as many sensations as possible)
- Because I am remembering (name the trauma, no details).

Look around you and say:

- I am safe
- I am here in... (today's date)
- I can hear, I can smell
- My trauma happened in the past, the memories are upsetting,, but they cannot hurt me

(Source: NHSforthvalley.com)

Water Grounding

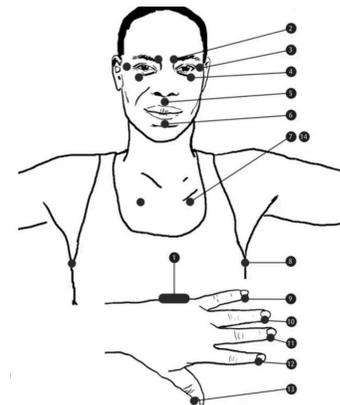
- Immerse your hands under a gentle flow of **WARM** water & feel the sensations of the water on your hands
- **How does it feel on your fingertips, palms, and back of your hands?**
- Now change the temperature to **COLD** and again notice the differences.



(Source: Traumaresearchuk.org)

TTT Tapping

Think lightly about whatever is bothering you, and tap firmly and quickly, approx 15 times on each point shown below using 2 fingers. Take 2 deep breathes with a longer exhale when done and repeat



(Source: Play-it-through.co.uk)

TIPP

Temperature

Change your body temperature. Splash your face with cold water, Blow a Fan in your face, Hold an ice cube or put your hands under cold water.

Intense Exercise

Do intense exercise to match the intense emotion. Sprinting, jumping jacks, dancing, skipping etc

Paced Breathing

Try some of the breathing techniques in this pack such as box breathing, 4-7-8, alongside the safety hold.

Paired Muscle relaxation

Focus on your muscles one at a time, start with your toes. Tighten as much as possible for count of 5 and release. do this up your body focusing on one muscle at a time.

Medical Notice:

I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It is a mental health condition caused by experiencing a traumatic event. Some smells, experiences or sensations may trigger me.

This can make me seem **distant, overwhelmed, upset, agitated, or frightened.**

It may cause me to have a flashback to a traumatic event, and so I may be 're-experiencing' it which can be frightening for me.

Please see next Flashcard for How You Can HELP.

(Source: ptsduk.org)

How you can Help

Please do NOT touch or startle me and give me space.

Identify yourself and Reassure me that:

- I am safe
- Remind me of today's date
- Remind me where I am
- Help me to use some of the tools in this pack **Safety Hold, 4-7-8 Breathing, Box Breathing** etc

I may have difficulty communicating my needs right now, your kindness and understanding is appreciated.

In an Emergency, with my consent please Call:

.....

(Source: ptsduk.org)

Safety Hold

Place your hands firmly on your heart and stomach like the image below:

Do box breathing or 4-7-8 and notice the sensations in your hands as your chest and stomach rise and fall. Do this two to 3 times or until you feel Calm.



(Source: Various)

Sighing Technique

1. Find a quiet space where you won't be disturbed.
2. Sit or lie down (whatever feels comfortable).
3. Close your eyes, take some deep breath.
4. As you exhale let out a long slow **sigh**.
5. Notice how your body feels as you **sigh**.
6. Repeat step **4 & 5**, 5-6 times
7. When finished take a few more deep breaths and open your eyes.



(Source: Traumaresearchuk.org)

Additional Sighing Technique

- Focus on how the air feels as it leaves your body
- Let go of the tension in your body as you sigh.
- Think about the issue that is disturbing you.
- As you sigh tell your brain you are okay with it, this can't harm me.
- Try sighing out a specific word or phrase



(Source: Traumaresearchuk.org)

Nightmares

If you've been startled awake by a nightmare, take a moment to centre yourself.

Notice your surroundings, the feeling of the sheets, the sounds you can hear. This can bring you back to reality and help separate the images of your nightmare from the safety of your bedroom. Do the **safety hold** and repeat to yourself: "I am here. I am safe."

Keep a notebook and pen beside your bed and if a nightmare wakes you up, write it down. The process of writing can help drain away the power the bad dream has over your emotions.

Affirmations

- I am worthy.
- I am allowed to struggle.
- I am not alone.
- What happened does not define me.
- What happened was not my fault.
- I deserve to take up space.
- It is ok if all I did today was breathe.
- I do not need permission for how I choose to live my life.
- I am safe.
- I don't need permission to exist.
- It's ok to have a bad day, week or month.
- I am in control



Affirmations

- Breathe!
- This too shall pass.
- Be kind with yourself
- You deserve to heal and feel better.
- It's ok to not know what you need.
- You are allowed to ask for help.
- You own your story.
- You deserve to be loved and treated well.
- Your life and choices are right for you.
- You are allowed to say NO!
- It can be safe to let others close.





My name is Michelle at Creative Healing NI. I am a Social Worker and Trauma Therapist specialising in sexual trauma. These coping cards were born from my own journey of managing and living with CPTSD, gathered from various well-known resources online, combined with my professional experience and knowledge of what truly helps different clients in times of distress. I hope these cards offer you the support and comfort you need, whenever you need it most. Please feel free to share ❤️

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These flashcards have been created using a Canva template. While I have compiled and designed these cards, it is important to acknowledge that the content within them includes well-known resources and information widely recognised in the field. There may be other similar resources available.

Whenever possible, sources have been referenced and cited appropriately. However, in some instances, it has not been feasible to identify all sources due to the multiplicity and varied origins of the information.

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THANK
YOU



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