

Strong emotional reactions can take over before you have a chance to think. These eight steps are a map for those moments — a way to notice what's happening in your body and mind, and find your way back to clear thinking. You don't have to move through them *perfectly* or *in order*.

1 Notice you're flooded

Pause and notice: "I'm activated right now." Your thinking brain has less to work with when your body's alarm system takes over — naming it is the doorway into everything below.

2 Give yourself space, if you need it

If you can, step away for a few minutes. This isn't avoiding what's happening — it's giving the intensity room to come down before you try to sort anything out.

3 Ground yourself

Bring your attention back into your body and senses — slow your breath, notice five things you can see, feel your feet on the floor. This tells your nervous system it's safe enough to think clearly again.

4 Ask what this connects to

Gently ask: "Have I felt exactly this before?" Big reactions are often old reactions in a new moment — naming the connection usually takes some of the size out of what you're feeling.

5 Ask what you're protecting

Ask: "What am I afraid will happen if I don't react this way?" Every strong reaction is doing a job, usually keeping you safe from something. Naming the job gives you a choice.

6 Notice the thinking trap

Check whether you're catastrophizing, mind-reading, or thinking in all-or-nothing terms. These patterns feel true in the moment, but they're distortions, not facts.

7 Answer the inner critic with kindness

When a harsh voice shows up, don't fight it or shut it down — that tends to make it louder. Respond to it the way you'd respond to a friend who said the same thing about themselves.

8 Widen the lens

Ask: "What's another way to see this? What am I not considering?" This is where your feelings and thinking work together, so you can respond instead of react.