

# After-Treatment Starter Guide

*7 Days to Feel Steadier Again*

By Dr. Danielle Clay

This printable guide is designed for the weeks after treatment, when you may be medically “done” but still feel physically and emotionally in recovery. Choose one small step at a time. You are not behind. You are rebuilding.

## Important note

This guide is for education and support. It does not replace medical advice. If you have urgent symptoms, call your clinician, local emergency services, or go to the nearest emergency department.

## Page 1: What to do in the first 10 minutes when you feel overwhelmed

### Step 1: Name what is happening (30 seconds)

Say out loud: “This is survivorship stress. My body is reacting to a big experience. I can take one step.”

### Step 2: Ground your body (2 minutes)

- Put both feet on the floor and press down gently for 10 seconds.
- Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 2, exhale for 6. Repeat 5 times.
- Relax your shoulders. Unclench your jaw. Place one hand on your chest or belly.

### Step 3: Choose one small win (5 minutes)

Pick one from the list below. The goal is not to “fix” everything. The goal is to prove to your brain and body that you can move forward safely.

- Drink a full glass of water.
- Eat something gentle with protein (yogurt, eggs, peanut butter toast, soup).
- Stand outside for 2 minutes and get daylight.
- Text one safe person: “Today is a harder day. Can you check in later?”
- Write one sentence: “What I need most right now is \_\_\_\_.”
- Set a 10-minute timer and rest without guilt.

### Step 4: Reduce the pressure (2 minutes)

Use this script if you feel “behind.” “Recovery is not a race. My job is to do what supports healing today, not what proves I am strong.”

## Page 2: Five common after-treatment struggles and a first step for each

### 1) Fatigue that does not match your effort

First step: Try “pacing,” not pushing. Choose one priority task today and schedule a rest before you crash. Short bursts plus planned rest usually beat long pushes followed by setbacks.

### 2) Brain fog, concentration issues, or feeling mentally slow

First step: Reduce “cognitive load.” Write your top three tasks on paper, not in your head.

Use a single notes app or notebook. If it is not written down, it is not your job to remember it today.

### **3) Fear of recurrence and anxiety spikes**

First step: Separate “risk” from “alarm.” Ask: “Is something changing right now that needs medical attention, or is my nervous system remembering?” If you are unsure, write the symptom, date, and intensity, then call your care team for guidance.

### **4) Relationship strain or feeling misunderstood**

First step: Use a needs-based sentence instead of a debate. “I know you want me to be okay. What helps most is \_\_\_\_.” Then name one specific request (a quieter evening, help with groceries, fewer questions, a short walk together).

### **5) Identity shifts and grief for the old version of you**

First step: Replace “Who am I now?” with “What matters today?” Write three values (example: family, peace, health) and one action that matches each value this week. Identity rebuilds through repeated, small aligned choices.

## **Page 3: The 7-day steadiness plan (micro-actions)**

This is not a perfect plan. It is a starter structure. If you miss a day, you did not fail. Just restart where you are.

### **Day 1: Hydration reset**

- Drink water before caffeine. Aim for 2–3 cups by noon.
- Add electrolytes if your clinician has approved, or use a pinch of salt and a splash of juice if appropriate.
- Notice if headaches, dizziness, or irritability ease with hydration.

### **Day 2: Gentle movement**

- Do 5–10 minutes of movement that feels safe: a walk, stretching, chair yoga.
- Stop before you feel depleted. “Leave some energy in the tank.”
- If you have pain, neuropathy, or balance issues, choose seated options.

### **Day 3: Food that supports recovery**

- Add protein to one meal (eggs, yogurt, beans, fish, chicken, tofu).
- Add one color: berries, leafy greens, carrots, peppers.
- Keep it simple. Consistency matters more than perfection.

### **Day 4: Sleep support**

- Choose a consistent wind-down start time (example: 9:30 p.m.).
- Lower lights and reduce screens for 20 minutes.
- If your mind races, write worries down and label them: tomorrow list.

### **Day 5: Fear-of-recurrence coping**

- Create a 3-step plan for anxiety spikes: breathe, write what is true, choose one action.
- Write: “Right now, I am safe enough to take one step.”
- If symptoms are new or worsening, contact your care team.

### **Day 6: Connection**

- Reach out to one person. Keep it small: “Thinking of you. Can we talk for 10 minutes?”
- If talking feels heavy, ask for quiet company: “Can we sit together or watch something simple?”
- Connection counts even when you do not feel cheerful.

**Day 7: Plan the next week**

- Circle the two actions that helped most this week.
- Schedule them into your calendar like appointments.
- Choose one boundary: what you will say no to in order to protect recovery.

**Page 4: When to get extra help and how to prepare**

**Call your clinician if you notice:**

- New or worsening symptoms that concern you, especially if persistent.
- Fever, shortness of breath, chest pain, uncontrolled vomiting, confusion, or severe weakness.
- Rapidly worsening pain, swelling, redness, or signs of infection.
- Significant changes in mood, panic that feels unmanageable, or inability to function day to day.

**Bring this to your appointment (fill in the blanks)**

- Top concern today: \_\_\_\_\_
- When it started: \_\_\_\_\_
- What makes it better or worse: \_\_\_\_\_
- Intensity (0–10): \_\_\_\_\_
- What I have tried so far: \_\_\_\_\_
- What I want help deciding: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you are supporting a survivor (caregivers)**

One of the most helpful questions is: “Do you want comfort, problem-solving, or company?”  
Survivors often need different support on different days. Clarity reduces conflict and burnout.

**Closing reminder**

You do not have to be the old you to have a good life. You only have to take the next small step. Start where you are.