

POST-TRAUMA REGULATION TECHNIQUES



Processing trauma can bring up difficult emotions and physical sensations. Your body and mind may react in ways that feel overwhelming or unfamiliar. Below are some techniques to help you regain a sense of calm, control, and safety during and after a distressing experience.

How to Use This Worksheet:

- ✓ Pick one or two techniques to try after a session or during moments of distress.
- ✓ Keep track of what works best for your body and mind.
- ✓ Be kind to yourself—healing takes time.

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Regulated Breathing Techniques

When we feel stressed, our breathing can become shallow and rapid, making anxiety worse. Try these breathing techniques to slow down and regain control:

- **Box Breathing:** Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds. Repeat for 2–3 minutes.
- **Paced Breathing:** Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds, exhale through your mouth for 6 to 8 seconds. Extending the exhale signals your body to relax.
- **Hand-on-Heart Breathing:** Place one hand over your heart and breathe deeply, imagining warmth and calmness spreading through your body.

✓ Try This: What do you notice in your body after slowing your breath?

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

Stress can cause muscle tension without us realizing it. PMR helps release that tension:

1. Start at your feet – squeeze your toes tightly for 5 seconds, then release.
2. Move to your legs – tighten your calf muscles, hold, then release.
3. Continue up through your stomach, shoulders, and hands, tightening and releasing each area.
4. End by scrunching up your face, holding for a moment, then relaxing completely.

✓ Try This: Take a deep breath and do a full-body scan. Where do you feel tension? Can you release it?

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Safe Space Visualization

Your mind is powerful—you can create a mental escape to a safe and calming place.

1. Close your eyes and picture a place where you feel safe. It can be real or imagined.
2. Engage your senses: What colors do you see? What sounds are present? Can you feel a breeze, warmth, or soft textures around you?
3. Take deep breaths as you mentally place yourself there.

✓ Try This: Draw or describe your safe space. How does it make you feel?

Body Awareness & Mindfulness

Sometimes, bringing awareness to the parts of your body that feel stable can reduce distress.

- Gently press your feet into the floor and notice the support beneath you.
- Place your hands on your lap and feel the warmth of your palms.
- Gently sway or rock back and forth to reset your sense of balance.

✓ Try This: What part of your body feels the most stable right now?

Physical Movement

Trauma can cause stuck energy in the body. Movement can help release it.

- Stand up and shake out your hands or legs.
- Stretch your arms above your head and take a deep breath.
- Slowly walk around, noticing how your feet feel against the ground.

✓ Try This: What movement feels best for your body right now?

Soothing Voice & Body Language

Sometimes, external cues can help regulate your nervous system. If you're around someone calm and grounded, you may find it easier to match their rhythm.

- If you're alone, speak to yourself in a soft, soothing tone like you would to a friend.
- Hum or sing—the vibration helps activate relaxation.
- Slow down your gestures—move deliberately and with intention.

✓ Try This: What words of comfort can you say to yourself right now?

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Emergency Medication & Plans

If you have a medical condition like asthma, panic attacks, or a history of severe anxiety, be sure to:

- Keep your medications or inhaler nearby.
- Have an emergency plan in place and let a trusted person know what you might need in moments of distress.

✓ Try This: Do you have an emergency self-care plan? If not, what would help you feel prepared?

Checking In with Yourself

After using these techniques, take a moment to check in with your body and emotions.

- Do you feel calmer, the same, or more activated?
- What small action can you take next to continue feeling supported?
- What is one thing you appreciate about yourself today?

✓ Final Thought: Healing is a process, and it's okay to take it one step at a time. You are doing brave work, and every effort you make to regulate is a step toward healing.