

Coping After Trauma: Practical Tools

After trauma, you may experience strong emotions or feel overwhelmed. These are normal responses to what has happened.

There are some simple strategies that can help you feel more grounded, safe, and in control. Different approaches will work for different people. You can test some of the options and find the ones that work best for you.

When you might need coping strategies

- Feeling overwhelmed or anxious
- Experiencing distressing memories or thoughts
- Feeling disconnected or “zoning out”
- Having strong emotional or physical reactions

Coping Strategies

Grounding Techniques

Grounding techniques help you return to the present moment. You can use them when you are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, triggered, or disconnected.

Examples of grounding techniques:

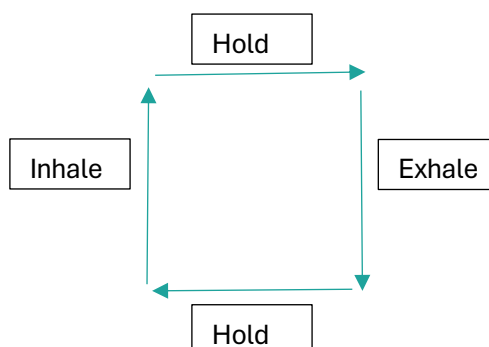
- Look around and name things you can see, hear or feel
- Hold or touch something and focus on the sensation (e.g. a warm mug, fluffy object, fidget toy, pet)
- Take off your shoes and feel the ground under your feet
- Move your body – do some jumping jacks or stretches
- Notice your surroundings and describe them to yourself
- Remind yourself where you are and that you are safe
- Drink something cold such as iced water
- Pick a category (e.g. movies, animals) and list as many as you can alphabetically
- Recite the words to a song that you love

Breathing Techniques

Slow and controlled breathing can help reduce feelings of panic or anxiety.

An example of a breathing technique is Box Breathing.

Breathe in for 4 seconds. Hold for 4 seconds. Exhale for 4 seconds. Hold for 4 seconds. Repeat for one to two minutes.



[Continue to the next page](#)

Managing distress in the moment

- Remind yourself: “This feeling will pass”
- Use statements such as “I am safe right now”
- Take a break from overwhelming situations when you can
- Focus on doing one manageable task at a time
- Use some of the strategies above to stay connected to the present moment

Looking after yourself over time

- Be kind to yourself – your reactions are understandable and recovery is not linear
- Take things at your own pace
- Do things that help you to feel safe
- Stay connected with supportive people
- Access counselling or formal supports

SECASA has a resource for [Understanding and Managing Flashbacks](#) which provides additional practical strategies.

Help is available:

- If you or someone you know are in immediate danger – **call 000**
- During business hours, contact your local Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA)
 - Find your nearest service at: <https://peak.sasvic.org.au/servicemap> and enter your postcode or suburb
- On after hours, weekends and public holidays, call the Sexual Assault Crisis Line (SACL) on 1800 577 011
- For 24/7 family violence counselling support, call 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)
- For family violence support including safety planning and support to exit a relationship, call The Orange Door – visit <https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/support-near-you> and enter your postcode
- You can call **8769 2200 – opt 1** to speak to a SECASA intake counsellor advocate during business hours

All services listed here are free, confidential and voluntary.