

Trauma Response Toolkit

Understanding Trauma Responses

Trauma can leave lasting effects on the brain and body. Even though there is no danger, the brain can get stuck in survival mode. Certain sounds, smells, or situations may trigger intense feelings of fear, panic, or disconnection.

Grounding Techniques

These simple, powerful tools help reset your nervous system, returning your focus to the present moment so you can begin to feel safe and in control again.



5-4-3-2-1 Method

Name: 5 things you see, 4 feel, 3 hear, 2 smell, 1 taste.



Box Breathing

Inhale 4 seconds → Hold 4 → Exhale 4 → Hold 4. Repeat.



Cold Water or Ice

Splash your face or hold an ice cube to feel grounded.



Touch Texture

Run fingers over something soft, bumpy, or rough.



Orient to the Present

Say aloud: where you are, today's date, and that you're safe.



Move Your Body

Stretch, walk, stomp, sway—movement breaks the freeze.



Repeat a Phrase

"I am safe right now."
"This will pass."



Grounding Object

Hold a small familiar item (like a stone or charm).



Smell Something Familiar

Use essential oils, citrus peel, or a scented lotion.



Sing or Hum

Sound and vibration help calm your nervous system.

You don't have to use every tool. Practice a few regularly and notice what helps most.