A GUIDE TO Emotional Safety Planning

BY WOMEN'S ADVOCATES
WWW.WADVOCATES.ORG

EMOTIONAL
SAFETY
PLANNING

SIGN:
THAT THIS PLAN
COULD BE
HELPFUL

STOP:
WHAT YOU ARE
DOING

SELF-CARE:
FOR AFTER EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

STRATEGIES:
TO GROUND YOU

Content Source: Credit

Women's Advocates
Breaking the cycle of domestic violence
Signs that you may need some emotional support

You stop breathing or are breathing shallowly.

You are feeling small, helpless, young, terrified, enraged, or out of control.
You want to hide.

You are feeling immobilized, frozen, stuck, hopeless, depressed, or intensely sad.

You notice yourself thinking in “always/never”, “Black/White”. “either/or”, “now or never”.

You are feeling intensely urgent and want something to be decided right now.

You are feeling self-destructive, or like you want to hurt someone, being mean to yourself.

You are having a flashback, nightmare, panic attack, intrusive thoughts, feel regressed.

You feel like you can’t decide what to do or can’t figure out how to cope.
If you are engaging in an activity, try to take a break from it. If you can, move into a different room or change your surroundings in some way. If possible, change the music (soothing or calming), lighting (brighten or dim), your physical position (sit up, lay down, child's pose), the taste in your mouth (something sweet or comforting).
**Strategies**

**TO GROUND YOU IN THE PRESENT MOMENT**

- **Breathe**
  - Breathe slowly, deeply, with a straight back, try placing your hand on your belly.

- **Focus**
  - Concentrate on the specifics of your breathing: rising of the chest with inhale & falling on exhale, try counting breaths.

- **Engage in something other than what is causing distress:** TV, move, book, video game, puzzle, cards.

- **Move:**
  - Explore the full range of movement in your joints, dance, run, exercise.

- **Release:**
  - Allow yourself to tremble, run, kick, scream into a pillow, cry, rock, say no, shake it out.

- **Take control in small ways:** (when feeling helpless)
  - Reorganize your shelves, clean, make lists, put away laundry.

- **Create boundaries:**
  - Lock doors, wrap yourself in blankets, make "keep out" sign.

- **Do something with your hands:** (esp. with anxiety)
  - Knit, quilt, fidget, build something, pet animals.

- **Distract yourself:**
  - Focus on work, school, a home project. Try to find something that is detail oriented.

---

*Listen to or sing music that can make you feel better or change your mood.*

*Focus on 5 senses, wiggle toes, focus on feel of feet on ground, orient to present.*

*Take control in small ways: (when feeling helpless)*

*Create boundaries: lock doors, wrap yourself in blankets, make "keep out" sign.*

*Do something with your hands: (esp. with anxiety) knit, quilt, fidget, build something, pet animals.*

*I'm interactive! Click on me for helpful links!*
Wake up your skin: Take a shower, wash your face, concentrate on textures

Nurture: long bath, manicure, lotion, nap, whatever feels good to your body

Meditate: focus your thoughts, concentrate on a mantra, visualize a safe image

Express: create art, write, journal, talk about it, let out how you are feeling

Connect with something healing: nature, animals, children, friends, counselor, hotline

Nourish your body: get sunshine, eat fresh fruits and veggies, drink water

Rewrite the story: imagine yourself doing it different, perhaps with whoever might help/protect you there helping

Give yourself a gift: eat your favorite food, do something special for yourself, do a favorite activity, buy yourself a small present, allow yourself a small luxury

Meet the need: If you are feeling out of control, do something that makes you feel in control. If you need to feel loved, do something that shows love for yourself. If you need to be cared for, do something caring for yourself. If you need to feel safe, do something that feels safe to you.

Women's Advocates
Breaking the cycle of domestic violence

I'm interactive! Click on me for helpful links!