

Grounding & Coping Skills Toolbox

A menu of practical strategies for anxiety, overwhelm, trauma activation, and emotional intensity.

External grounding

- Name five things you can see and describe their colors or shapes.
- Press your feet into the floor and notice support from the chair or ground.
- Hold a textured object and describe it in detail.
- Name the date, place, and what is happening right now.

Regulation skills

- Slow the exhale or use box breathing if breath focus is comfortable.
- Walk, stretch, or use brief safe movement.
- Use cold water on the face or hold a cool object if medically appropriate.
- Reduce sensory overload: dim lights, lower noise, or step outside when safe.

Cognitive coping

- Write down the thought instead of rehearsing it mentally.
- Separate facts from predictions.
- Use a coping statement such as “I can handle the next five minutes.”
- Ask what action is useful rather than what action would eliminate all discomfort.

Connection skills

- Text or call a trusted person and make a specific request.
- Sit near others even if you do not feel ready to talk.
- Bring the pattern into therapy rather than waiting until it becomes a crisis.

Try this reflection

Circle three skills that fit you best: one body-based, one thinking-based, and one connection-based. Practice them before you urgently need them.

Using this resource: For education and skill-building only; not diagnosis, medical advice, or crisis care. If you feel overwhelmed, pause and seek appropriate professional support. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support; call 911 for an immediate emergency.