

Flashbacks & Trauma Reminders

Grounding in the present when the nervous system reacts as though the past is happening now.

What a flashback can be

A flashback may involve vivid images, body sensations, emotion, sounds, or a strong sense that the past is present. Some are visual and obvious; others are primarily emotional or physical.

Orient to now

- Name the current date, age, location, and what is different from the past event.
- Look around and describe neutral objects in detail.
- Press feet into the floor or touch a stable surface.
- Use a steady voice: “This is a trauma memory. I am in the present.”
- Move to a safer, quieter environment if needed.

Afterward

Reduce self-criticism. Note the trigger if useful, restore basic needs, and discuss recurrent flashbacks with a trauma-informed clinician.

Try this reflection

What present-day detail most clearly tells your nervous system, “That was then; this is now”?

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.