

Coping with Re-Emerging PTSD

Stressful situations, such as the pandemic, armed conflict or refugee crises, and other reminders of upsetting memories can all contribute to PTSD symptoms re-emerging. These can be difficult to experience, but there are things you can do to cope.

Are you...



Having more **flashbacks** or **nightmares** or even **periods of dissociation** compared to before?
Feeling more **anxious, on edge and jumpy** than usual?
Having **strong emotions** like fear, sadness and anger that might feel difficult to manage at times?
Feeling drawn to **unhelpful coping strategies**, like alcohol, drugs, isolation, or risky behaviour?
Trying to **avoid** reminders of trauma and threat, which may not always be possible?

'Back then' vs 'now'.

Think of differences between 'back then' and what is happening 'now', i.e. what is the same and what is different when you are feeling out of control, abandoned, trapped, or helpless?



Use "grounding" statement.

"I am in a safe space now."
"I am doing the best I can."
"I am now an adult, not a child."
"I have important skills and strengths."
"I am surrounded by loved ones who care for me and make me feel safe."
Is there anything else you can tell yourself?



Find "grounding" objects.

Are there other things that might be soothing for you? Like looking at a picture of your loved ones or holding a grounding object (key chain, pebbles, stones) that you can keep on you?



Practice relaxation & "grounding" strategies.

Can you practice progressive muscle relaxation, breathing or safe place meditations? Do you have grounding techniques you can use for flashbacks or dissociation whilst at home or at work, e.g. eating sour sweets/lemon, smelling aromatherapy oils or strong perfume/soap, or listening to nature sounds.



Manage your nightmares.

If you are experiencing nightmares, it may help to write a statement that reminds you where you are now so you can read it when you wake from a nightmare. Grounding strategies can also help.



Improve your sleep.

If you are having sleep problems, can you make small changes to your routine (e.g. light exercise) or arrange your sleeping environment to make it a soothing and relaxing place?

