

ACKNOWLEDGE

RESET

1 Say, "My response is rooted in the past, not the present."

Flashbacks take us into a part of the psyche that feels helpless, hopeless and surrounded by danger.

2 Say, "I feel shame/fear/anger; But I am *not* in danger."

Feeling small is a sure sign of a flashback. But you are now in the safety of the present, far from the danger of the past.

CALIBRATE

3 Accept: I have a right to my boundaries

You do not have to allow anyone to mistreat you; you can leave dangerous situations and protest unfair behavior.

4 Accept: this is *not* me; this is *not* forever

Deconstruct eternity thinking. Remember the flashback will pass as it has many times before.

5 Remember: I have skills, friends, and resources now

You are an adult in the present, you don't need to suffer as you have before.

6 Resist Drasticizing or Catastrophizing

Halt exaggeration and constant planning to control the uncontrollable. Say NO to unfair self-criticism, shame, or hate. Replace negative thinking with a memorized list of your qualities and accomplishments.

11 Identify the triggers that lead to flashbacks

Learn to avoid unsafe people, places, activities and triggering mental processes. Practice preventive maintenance with these steps when triggering situations are unavoidable.

13 Be PATIENT. Recovery is a Slow, Windy Process

Be patient with a slow recovery process: it takes time in the present to become un-adrenalized, and considerable time in the future to gradually decrease the intensity, duration and frequency of flashbacks. Real recovery is a gradually progressive process [often two steps forward, one step back], not an attained salvation fantasy. Don't beat yourself up for having a flashback.

7 Talk to my Inner Self

Your past self needs to know that you love her unconditionally. She can come to you for comfort, protection, and forgiveness.

8 Ease back into my body:
a. Find a safe place to unwind;
b. Slow down
c. Breathe deeply and slowly
d. Encourage each muscle group to relax

Fear launches us into 'heady' worrying, or numbing and spacing out. Try to [a] wrap yourself in a blanket, hold a stuffed animal, lie down, or take a nap. [b] note that rushing presses the psyche's panic button, [c] as does holding your breath, [d] and having tight muscles. [e] Feel the fear in your body without reacting to it. It is just an energy. It cannot hurt you if you do not run from it or react self-destructively to it.

9 Allow myself to grieve

This is an opportunity to release old, unexpressed feelings of fear, hurt, and abandonment, and to validate – then soothe – your past experience of helplessness and hopelessness. Healthy grieving can turn our tears into self-compassion and our anger into self-protection.

10 Seek Support/
Cultivate Safe Relationships

Take time alone when you need it, but don't let shame isolate you. *Feeling* shame doesn't mean you *are* shameful. Educate your friends about flashbacks and ask them to help you talk and feel your way through them.

ASSESS

12 Figure out what you're flashing back to

Flashbacks are opportunities to discover, validate and heal our wounds from past abuse and abandonment. They also point to our still unmet needs and can provide motivation to get them met.