

Step 1. **Signs:** notice signs that you need to use the plan

- You stop breathing or are breathing shallowly
- You are having a flashback, nightmare, panic attack, intrusive thoughts, feel regressed
- You are feeling self-destructive, or like you want to hurt someone, being mean to yourself
- You are feeling small, helpless, young, terrified, enraged, or out of control. You want to hide.
- You notice yourself thinking in “always/never”, “Black/White”. “either/or”, “now or never”
- You are feeling immobilized, frozen, stuck, hopeless, depressed, or intensely sad
- You are feeling intensely urgent and want something to be decided right now
- You feel like you can’t decide what to do or can’t figure out how to cope

Step 2. **Stop:** stop what you are doing.

- Whatever activity you are engaging in, stop.
- If possible, change the music, lighting, your physical position and taste in your mouth.
- If you can, move into a different room.
- Try to get somewhere safe where you can focus on taking care of yourself

Step 3. **Select:** select a strategy for coping in the moment

- Choose a strategy from the list below that you can employ immediately, without leaving where you are.
- If possible, start with a strategy you can employ alone, that feels like it might help the particular crisis.

Step 4. **Strategy:** Employ the strategy

- Breathe:* (esp. with panic, dissociation) try to breathe slowly. Straighten your back, it opens your chest cavity.
- Concentrate on an aspect of breathing:* spine lengthening with inhale, releases with exhale; sternum rising with inhale, falling with exhale, ribcage expanding with inhale, releasing with exhale. Count breaths.
- Escape:* TV, movie, book, video game, puzzle, cards. Choose something unlikely to trigger you.
- Change the music:* listen to or sing music that changes your mood
- Ground:* focus on 5 senses, wiggle toes, focus on feel of feet on ground, orient to present, practice trauma informed grounding
- Release:* allow yourself to tremble, run, kick, scream into a pillow, cry, rock, say no, shake it out
- Move:* explore the full range of movement in your joints, dance, run, exercise
- 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
- Take care of the child:* (esp. if regressed) hug a stuffed animal, read a children’s book, watch a children’s movie, comfort/protect/defend the child, put the child to bed, make believe, play, let the child get their needs met
- Your creation:
- Old standards*—past strategies that work but you would rather not use:

Step 5. **Start Again:** start again from the beginning until the crisis has subsided

Step 6. **Self Care:** practice self care after a crisis

- 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
- 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.
- Take a break:* make time for yourself. Let yourself do something frivolous, just because you want to.
- 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