

ADULT COPING GUIDE



PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR EMOTIONAL STRENGTH AND RECOVERY

This guide offers clear, compassionate, and culturally grounded strategies to support individuals and families throughout every stage of a disaster. It provides simple steps that help people feel safer, more connected, and emotionally steady during moments of uncertainty.

Inside the guide, you'll find:

- Grounding and breathing techniques to calm the body
- Gentle check-in prompts for supporting children, teens, and elders
- Tools for strengthening family communication and connection
- Community-centered practices rooted in Caribbean traditions
- Reflection questions and emotional safety planning
- Guidance for managing fear, grief, guilt, and emotional overwhelm

Support that feels familiar. Support that honors who we are.

A message of Care and Solidarity

To my fellow Jamaicans –my heart is with you. These past weeks have brought deep loss, fear, and uncertainty. Please know that your feelings are valid, your pain is real, your grief matters, and you are not walking through this alone. As you work to rebuild your homes, routines, and sense of safety, may you feel supported, uplifted, and held with compassion. I am here in solidarity, sending strength, compassion and hope for gentler days ahead. Your strength, unity and courage continue to shine even through the hardest moments.

Dr. Marsha Smith, PsyD, LCSW
Founder, Bahali

Table of Contents

UNDERSTANDING STRESS RESPONSES	01
GROUNDING, CALMING, BREATHWORK	02
EMOTIONAL REGULATION SKILLS	03
COPING ON DIFFICULT DAYS	04
COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT	05
COMMUNITY HEALING PATHWAYS	06
REFLECTION & JOURNALING PAGES	07
APPENDIX A	08
APPENDIX B	21
APPENDIX C	36
APPENDIX D	41
APPENDIX E	47
APPENDIX F	58

01

UNDERSTANDING
STRESS
RESPONSES



Stress reactions after a crisis are natural protective responses. You may feel overwhelmed, numb, tense, or uncertain. These sensations come from your body's attempt to restore safety. Understanding them is the first step in regaining emotional balance.

During and after a crisis, your body and mind move into protection mode. This may look like: rapid heartbeat, worry, numbness, irritability, withdrawal, or feeling overwhelmed. These reactions are normal responses to abnormal events. Your system is trying to keep you safe, and with support, it can return to balance. Understanding these signals can help you respond rather than react, and begin rebuilding emotional stability.

Reminder: Your feelings are real and understandable. You are not alone.

02

GROUNDING,
CALMING,
BREATHWORK



Grounding techniques help anchor your attention in the present moment when emotions or sensations feel too intense.

Choose 1–2 grounding skills to practice daily for stability.

[see **Appendix A** for detailed skills]

- ☐ 5-4-3-2-1 Sensory Grounding
- ☐ Deep Belly Breathing
- ☐ Hands on Heart + Slow Exhale
- ☐ Temperature Reset (cool water or air)





03

EMOTIONAL
REGULATION
SKILLS



Emotional regulation skills help calm the nervous system and make space for clearer thinking. These can be used in moments of distress or incorporated as daily maintenance practices.

see **Appendix B** for detailed skills]

-  Cool Water on the Face
-  Submerge Hands in Cool Water
-  Use a Cold Pack or Ice Wrap
-  Step Into a Cooler Environment

04

COPING
ON DIFFICULT
DAYS



Crisis recovery is not linear. Some days will feel harder than others.

Prepare a personal coping plan:

People to contact

Steps that soothe you

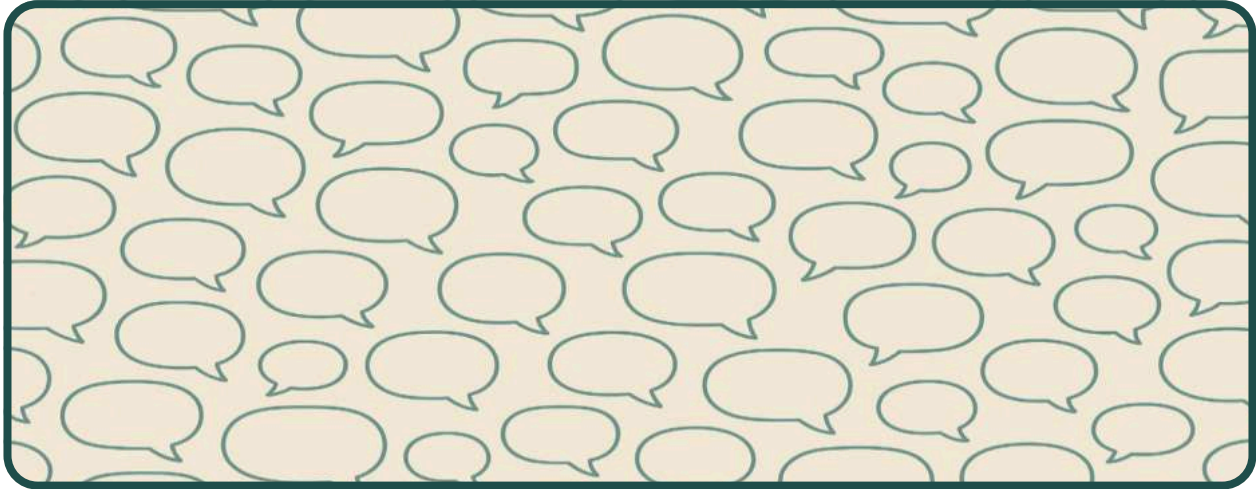
Calming activities

grounding reminders.

[SEE **APPENDIX C** FOR A COPING PLAN TEMPLATE]

05

COMMUNICATION
AND SOCIAL
SUPPORT



Strong social support is one of the biggest predictors of emotional recovery.

Reach out to trusted people, community members, or helpers—even brief connection can reduce stress significantly.

Here are some practical tools for fostering effective communication and tapping into your social support:

- “Name What You Need” Statements
- The Two-Sentence Check-In
- “Listen First” Support Conversations
- The Comforting Presence Tool
- Support Contacts List
- Ask for One Small Thing
- Connection Through Text
- The “Circle of Support” Planning Tool
- Healthy Conversation Boundaries
- “You’re Not Alone” Anchors

[see **Appendix D** for practical communication and social support tools]

06

**COMMUNITY
HEALING
PATHWAYS**



Community healing reminds us that we don't have to carry everything alone. These pathways help rebuild connection, foster belonging, and create emotional safety after stress, crisis, or loss.

- Healing expands when it happens together: community rituals, shared meals, storytelling, and collective problem-solving all provide emotional strength.
- When possible, stay connected through cultural traditions and mutual support.

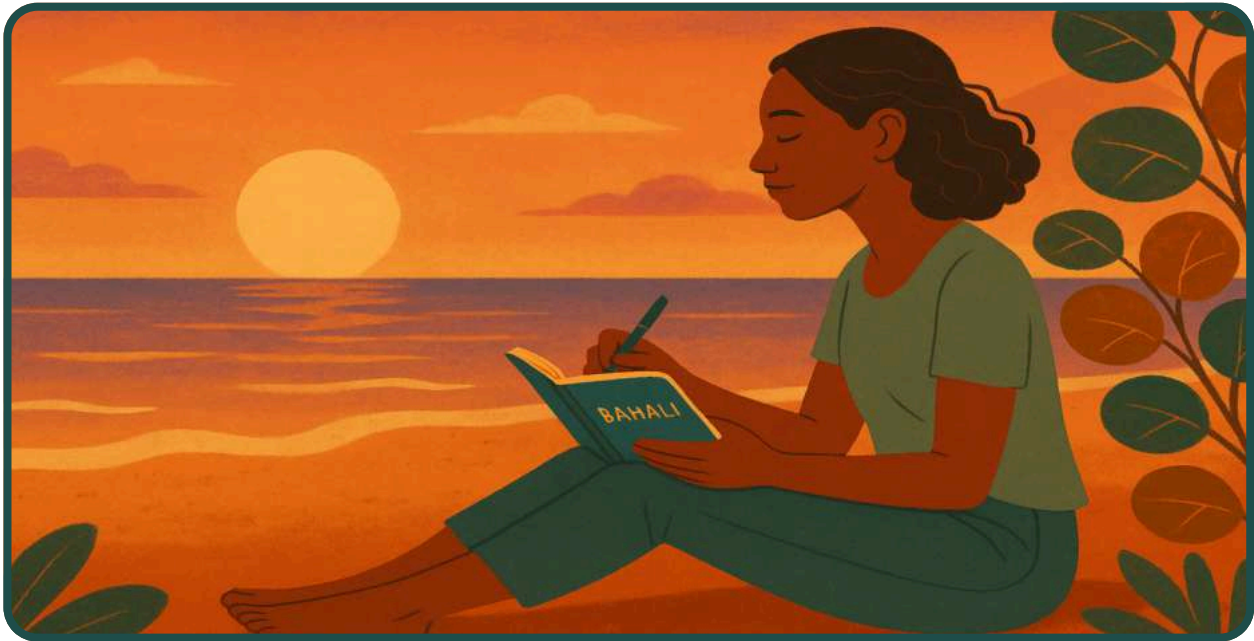
Here are some recommended community healing pathways:

- Small Support Circles
- Storytelling + Shared Experiences
- Cultural + Spiritual Practices
- Movement + Wellness Together
- Nature-Based Healing
- Creative Expression + Arts
- Digital + Distance-Based Community Support
- Collective Reflection & Celebration

[see **Appendix E** for practical community healing pathways]

07

REFLECTION &
JOURNALING
PAGES



Reflection and journaling give you a safe place to sort through emotions, track what helps, and make meaning of your experiences. Writing slows the mind, calms the body, and offers clarity during overwhelming moments.

- Even a few minutes of journaling can reduce stress and help you feel more grounded.

Some prompt to get you started:

- What emotions showed up for me today?
- What helped me feel even a little more grounded?
- Who are three people I can reach out to when I feel overwhelmed?
- What reminders help me feel safe in my body?
- One small step I can take tomorrow is...

[see **Appendix F** for an outlined journal with prompts]

APPENDIX A

5-4-3-2-1 SENSORY GROUNDING

A practical tool to steady your mind and body during stress, overwhelm, or emotional intensity.

This grounding practice helps you reconnect with the present moment by slowly engaging each of your five senses. It is quiet, discreet, and can be done anywhere—at home, at work, outdoors, or in moments of acute distress.

Use this technique whenever you feel anxious, disconnected, or unbalanced.

5 – Look for Five Things You Can See

Pause, take a breath, and let your eyes scan the space around you.

Examples:

- The shape of a window or doorway
- Light reflecting on a surface
- The colors in the room
- A plant, photo, or object nearby
- The pattern in the floor or fabric

Why it helps:

Vision gently pulls your attention away from racing thoughts and into your actual environment, reminding your body that you are *here*, not in the stressful memory or worry.

4 – Notice Four Things You Can Touch

Bring awareness to sensations you can physically feel.

Examples:

- The chair or cushion supporting you
- Your feet grounded on the floor
- The fabric of your clothing
- The cool/warm temperature of the air or a nearby object

Why it helps:

Touch brings you back into your body, softening tension and reconnecting you with physical safety.

3 – Identify Three Things You Can Hear

Gently tune in to background and natural sounds.

Examples:

- Birds, waves, wind, or rain
- Distant voices or movement
- Household sounds (fan, fridge, AC)

Why it helps:

Listening stabilizes the nervous system by shifting your focus outward and slowing the stress response

2 – Notice Two Things You Can Smell

Notice scents in your space. If nothing stands out, take a subtle breath through your shirt sleeve or a familiar item.

Examples:

- Fresh air
- Soap, lotion, or a candle
- Coffee or tea
- Scents in nature

Why it helps:

Smell is directly linked to calm and memory. It anchors the mind quickly.

1 – Identify One Thing You Can Taste

This can be very subtle.

Examples:

- A sip of water, tea, or coffee
- A mint or piece of gum
- The natural taste in your mouth

Why it helps:

Taste completes the cycle by gently bringing your focus back into your body.

What This Practice Does for You

This technique tells your body:

- ✓ “I am in the present moment.”
- ✓ “I can breathe and return to myself.”
- ✓ “I have tools that help me stay steady.”

It interrupts spiraling thoughts, reduces panic, and restores clarity.

Use it during moments of high stress, emotional flooding, grief, anxiety, or when you need calm before a hard conversation or decision.

DEEP BELLY BREATHING

A simple, steady skill that helps calm the mind and relax the body.

Deep Belly Breathing—also called **diaphragmatic breathing**—helps slow your heart rate, release tension, and bring your nervous system back into balance. It is one of the most effective ways to calm anxiety, overwhelm, or emotional intensity.

Use this skill anytime you feel tense, unsettled, or need to reset.

How to Practice Deep Belly Breathing

1. Sit or stand in a comfortable position

Relax your shoulders. Let your belly soften—no need to hold it in.

2. Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly

This helps you feel the movement of your breath.
Your belly hand should rise more than your chest hand.

3. Inhale slowly through your nose

Breathe in for **4 seconds**, letting your belly expand gently like a balloon.
Imagine the air filling your lower lungs.

4. Hold for a brief pause

A comfortable **1-second** pause helps your body settle.

5. Exhale slowly through your mouth

Breathe out for **6 seconds**, letting your belly fall.
Imagine releasing tension or heaviness with each breath.

6. Repeat for 4-7 breaths

You can continue longer if it feels soothing.

Why It Helps:

Deep Belly Breathing signals the brain that you are safe, which:

- ✓ lowers heart rate
- ✓ relaxes muscles
- ✓ reduces anxiety and overwhelm
- ✓ increases emotional clarity
- ✓ supports grounding and focus

It gently shifts the body from “fight-or-flight” into “rest-and-restore.”

When to Use This Skill

Deep Belly Breathing is helpful:

- during panic or anxiety spikes
- before difficult conversations
- when emotions feel overwhelming
- in moments of stress, frustration, or grief
- to settle your body before sleep
- when you need a quick reset during the day

Optional Add-Ons

- For deeper grounding, combine this with:
- hand on heart
- a calming phrase (“I can breathe through this.”)
- temperature shift
- 5-4-3-2-1 grounding

HANDS ON HEART + SLOW EXHALE

A stabilizing technique that brings comfort, clarity, and emotional steadiness.

This skill uses gentle touch and slow breath to calm the nervous system.

Placing a hand on your heart activates feelings of safety and connection, while a slow exhale reduces physical tension and helps the body settle.

This is one of the quickest ways to feel centered when emotions rise suddenly.

How to Practice Hands on Heart + Slow Exhale

1. Place one or both hands over your heart

Let your palms rest softly.

Feel the warmth and pressure of your own touch.

This signals the brain:

“I am here. I am safe enough.”

2. Take a slow breath in through your nose

Breathe in gently for **4 seconds**—no need to force it.

3. Exhale even more slowly

Breathe out through your mouth for **6 seconds**, like you're sighing or releasing tension.

A longer exhale tells your nervous system to relax.

4. Notice the rise and fall beneath your hands

Feel your chest expand as you breathe in and soften as you breathe out.

This helps anchor you in your body and the present moment.

5. Repeat for 4-6 breaths

You can continue longer if it feels soothing.

Why it Helps:

- ✓ Activates the parasympathetic (calming) system
- ✓ Reduces heart rate and muscle tension
- ✓ Offers emotional comfort during overwhelm
- ✓ Increases feelings of safety and self-support
- ✓ Grounds you when you feel disconnected or shaky

The gentle pressure of your hand can feel reassuring—like a supportive presence you carry within yourself.

When to Use This Skill

This grounding practice is helpful during:

- anxiety or sudden stress
- emotional overwhelm
- grief or sadness
- anger, frustration, or fear
- moments of shame or self-criticism
- when you need to steady before a conversation or task
- ending your day or settling before sleep

Optional Add-Ons

Pair this with:

- a calming phrase (“I’m safe. I’m here. I can breathe through this.”)
- Deep Belly Breathing
- A grounding temperature shift
- A supportive visualization (light, warmth, or ocean waves)



TEMPERATURE RESET (COOL WATER OR AIR)

A fast, effective way to calm intense emotions and reset the nervous system.

Temperature shifts help bring your body out of high stress, overwhelm, or panic by activating the **diving reflex**—a natural calming response that slows your heart rate and reduces physiological tension.

This technique works within seconds and can be done almost anywhere.

How to Practice a Temperature Reset

1. Cool Water Reset

Use cool—not icy—water to gently lower your body temperature.

Options:

- Splash cool water on your cheeks or forehead
- Rinse your hands or wrists under cool water
- Press a cool, damp cloth to your face or chest
- Hold a wrapped cold pack to your cheeks or over your eyes

Why It Helps:

Cool temperatures tell the brain to shift from “high alert” to “slow down,” helping you feel more grounded and steady.

2. Cool Air Reset

Let cool or moving air help calm your body.

Try:

- Standing near a fan or AC
- Opening a window
- Stepping briefly outside into a cooler breeze
- Using a small handheld fan

Why It Works:

Cool air reduces heat buildup from stress and signals the nervous system to regulate.

When to Use This Skill

A Temperature Reset is especially helpful when you feel:

- ✓ overwhelmed or overstimulated
- ✓ panic or rapid heartbeat
- ✓ anger rising quickly
- ✓ shaky, hot, or flushed
- ✓ disconnected or frozen
- ✓ emotionally flooded

This technique gently interrupts the stress response, giving you space to breathe and think more clearly.

Tips for Best Results

- Pair it with a slow exhale
- Keep ice packs wrapped in a cloth to protect your skin
- Try this skill before sleep if your body feels restless
- Use it at the first sign of a panic spike
- Combine with grounding (5-4-3-2-1) or hand-on-heart for deeper calm

Why Temperature Helps

Cool sensations activate a natural reflex that:

- slows the heart rate
- reduces stress hormones
- clears mental fog
- restores emotional balance
- helps the body feel safer and more regulated

It is one of the fastest, evidence-informed ways to bring yourself back into the present moment.

APPENDIX B

COOL WATER ON THE FACE (MOST EFFECTIVE)

1. Cool Water on the Face (Most Effective)

- Splash cool—not freezing—water onto your cheeks and around your eyes
- Or place a cool, damp cloth over your forehead and cheekbones
- Hold for **15–30 seconds**, then breathe slowly

Why It Helps:

The cool sensation activates the parasympathetic (“rest and settle”) response, lowering your heart rate and helping your body calm quickly.

2. Submerge Hands in Cool Water

- Place your hands in cool or cold water (a bowl, sink, or even a bottle of cold water)
- Hold for **20–30 seconds** while breathing slowly

Good for: grounding, anger reduction, and interrupting emotional spirals.

3. Use a Cold Pack or Ice Wrap

- Wrap an ice pack in a thin cloth
- Hold it gently at the center of your chest, palms, or cheeks
- Keep it **10–20 seconds**, then remove

Important: Always wrap ice in a cloth—never place the ice directly on skin.

4. Step Into a Cooler Environment

- Move to a shaded, air-conditioned, or breezy spot
- Open a window, stand in front of a fan, or step outside briefly

Why It Helps:

Temperature change shifts your physical state, reducing tension and allowing clearer thinking.

What About Warmth?

Warmth can also help with emotional regulation by relaxing the body.

Try:

- A warm shower
- A heating pad on shoulders or back
- Holding a warm cup of tea
- A warm towel around your neck

Warmth helps you release muscle tension and feel grounded.

When to Use Temperature Shifts:

Temperature-based skills work best when you need immediate relief, such as:

- During a panic spike
- When emotions feel “too big” too fast
- When you feel disconnected or dissociated
- After receiving overwhelming news
- When you need help calming down before a difficult conversation

Pair With Other Skills:

For best results, combine a temperature shift with:

- Slow breathing
- 5-4-3-2-1 grounding
- Relaxed posture or stretching
- A calming affirmation (“I am safe enough in this moment.”)

COOL WATER ON THE FACE

A fast, effective way to calm intense emotions and reset your body.

When emotions rise quickly—panic, overwhelm, anger, or shock—cooling your face can activate the body’s natural diving reflex, which helps slow your heart rate and steady your breathing.

This simple technique works within seconds and can bring immediate relief.

How to Practice This Skill

1. Gently splash cool water on your face

- Target the areas around:
- your cheeks
- your temples
- the space around your eyes

Use water that is cool—not icy—to avoid discomfort.

2. Let the coolness settle for a moment

Pause for **10–20 seconds** and breathe slowly.

Notice how the temperature shift softens tension inside your body.

3. Repeat as needed

You can splash your face again or use a clean, damp cloth.
Continue until your breathing steadies or your body feels calmer.

Why it Helps:

Cool water signals your nervous system to shift into “rest and regulate” mode.

It helps:

- ✓ slow a racing heartbeat
- ✓ reduce heat or flushing during stress
- ✓ interrupt panic or overwhelm
- ✓ bring your attention back to the present moment
- ✓ create a sense of internal safety

This skill works especially well when emotions feel intense and physical.

When to Use This Skill:

Cool Water on the Face is helpful during:

- sudden spikes of anxiety or panic
- emotional overwhelm
- moments of anger or agitation
- feeling shaky, overheated, or stressed
- recovering from a difficult memory or trigger

It's a quick reset that can be done almost anywhere.

Optional Add-Ons:

For deeper calming, combine with:

- a slow exhale
- deep belly breathing
- a grounding statement (“I can slow down. I am safe enough.”)
- 5-4-3-2-1 sensory grounding

SUBMERGE HANDS IN COOL WATER

A quick and effective way to calm intense emotions and reset your nervous system.

When emotions spike—anxiety, panic, anger, or overwhelm—cooling your hands can help interrupt that wave of intensity. Hands have many temperature-sensitive nerves, so cooling them sends a strong, soothing signal to the brain and body.

This resets your stress response and brings you back into balance.

How to Practice This Skill

1. Fill a small bowl or sink with cool water

The water should feel refreshing—not painfully cold.

2. Submerge both hands fully

Let the water cover your palms, fingers, and wrists.
Notice the cool sensation spreading across your skin.

3. Hold for 15-30 seconds

Breathe slowly while your hands are in the water.
Let the temperature shift gently calm your body.

4. Remove hands and rest

Shake off any excess water and notice how your body feels. You can repeat this as needed.

Why it Helps:

Cooling your hands:

- ✓ lowers your heart rate
- ✓ reduces heat or flushing from stress
- ✓ interrupts panic spikes
- ✓ helps your body settle
- ✓ brings your attention back into the present moment

This simple physical cue helps your nervous system shift out of “fight-or-flight.”

When to Use This Skill:

Try cooling your hands when you feel:

- sudden stress or panic
- anger rising quickly
- overheated or shaky
- emotionally overwhelmed
- unable to focus
- stuck in a stress loop

It's a portable, discreet skill that works quickly.

Extra Tips:

- Pair with **slow exhale breathing** for stronger effects
- Keep a cool bottle of water nearby if you're on the go
- Avoid freezing temperatures—comfortably cool works best
- Sit down if you feel light-headed

COLD PACK OR ICE WRAP

A quick, effective way to lower intense emotions by calming the body.

Using a cold pack stimulates the body's natural calming reflex.

The cool temperature sends a signal to your nervous system that helps slow your heart rate, reduce emotional intensity, and bring you back into the present moment.

This skill is especially helpful when emotions feel sharp, overwhelming, or physically activated.

How to Practice This Skill

1. Wrap a cold pack or ice in a thin cloth

Never place ice directly on your skin—it can cause irritation or burns. A small towel or T-shirt works perfectly.

2. Gently place it on your cheeks, temples, or chest

Choose the area that feels most soothing.

Many people find the upper cheeks and forehead calm the fastest.

3. Hold for 10-20 seconds

Let your body adjust to the coolness.

Take a slow breath out as you feel the temperature shift.

4. Remove and rest

Notice any changes in your heartbeat, tension, or emotions.

Repeat if needed, allowing your skin to warm between rounds.

Why It Helps:

The cool sensation activates the **parasympathetic nervous system**, helping your body shift from “fight or flight” into “rest and regulate.”

This results in:

- ✓ reduced physical tension
- ✓ calmer breathing
- ✓ decreased panic or overwhelm
- ✓ fewer racing thoughts
- ✓ a sense of emotional grounding

When to Use This Skill

Cold Pack or Ice Wrap is helpful when you feel:

- sudden anxiety or panic
- emotional intensity building fast
- heat or flushing from stress
- anger rising
- shaky, overwhelmed, or disconnected
- difficulty slowing your breathing

It works particularly well when emotions feel physical.

Extra Tips

- Keep a small gel pack in the fridge for quick access
- Use this skill before bed if your body feels overstimulated
- Pair it with deep belly breathing for stronger calming effects
- Sit down if you tend to feel light-headed during cooling techniques

STEP INTO A COOLER ENVIRONMENT

A simple way to quickly lower stress and help your body settle.

When you step into a cooler space, the temperature change helps regulate your nervous system. Heat often increases stress, tension, and emotional intensity, while cool air naturally encourages your body to slow down, breathe more steadily, and regain a sense of calm.

This is a gentle, accessible grounding skill you can use almost anywhere.

How to Practice This Skill

1. Move to a cooler or shaded space

Try stepping into:

- an air-conditioned room
- a shaded area outdoors
- a breezy spot by a window
- a cooler hallway or building entry

Even a slight temperature drop can help.

2. Pause and take one slow breath

- Feel the cool air on your skin.
- Let your shoulders drop.
- Allow your body to adjust.

3. Stay for 30-60 seconds

Give the cooler air time to reduce heat, tension, and emotional intensity.

You may feel your heartbeat begin to settle.

Why It Helps:

Stepping into a cooler environment:

- ✓ reduces physical stress signals
- ✓ lowers your heart rate
- ✓ decreases heat or flushing caused by anxiety
- ✓ gives your mind a reset point
- ✓ helps you slow down and think more clearly

Temperature changes activate your body's natural calming systems.

When to Use This Skill

This grounding technique is especially helpful when you feel:

- overwhelmed or overstimulated
- hot, flushed, or sweaty from stress
- panic rising quickly
- irritated or agitated
- emotionally flooded
- stuck in a cycle of intense thoughts

It is a quiet, quick reset that works well in public and private spaces.

Extra Tips

- Pair with **slow exhale breathing**
- Step outside briefly if indoor spaces feel too warm
- Use this skill before important conversations or tasks
- Notice how your body shifts as the temperature cools

APPENDIX C

PERSONAL COPING PLAN

A simple plan you can use during moments of stress, overwhelm, or emotional intensity.

1. People to Contact (Support List)

When I need support, I can reach out to:

Name: _____

Phone / Contact: _____

Relationship: _____

Name: _____

Phone / Contact: _____

Relationship: _____

Name: _____

Phone / Contact: _____

Relationship: _____

Backup Support Options:

- ☐ Friend or family member
- ☐ Community leader or faith support
- ☐ Mental health provider
- ☐ Crisis hotline / warmline
- ☐ Emergency services (if needed)

2. Steps That Soothe Me (My Go-To Regulations Skills)

List the strategies that calm your mind or body when emotions rise.

- ☐ Deep Belly Breathing
- ☐ Hands on Heart + Slow Exhale
- ☐ Temperature Reset (cool water / cool air)
- ☐ Grounding (5-4-3-2-1)
- ☐ Step Outside for Fresh Air
- ☐ Stretching / Slow Movement
- ☐ Listening to calming music
- ☐ Doing something with my hands (drawing, cleaning, journaling)

My Personal soothing steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

3. Calming Activities That Help Me Rebalance

Activities that help me feel steadier, connected, or supported:

- ☐ Journaling
- ☐ Taking a walk
- ☐ Drinking water or tea
- ☐ Warm shower or bath
- ☐ Calling someone I trust
- ☐ Quiet time outdoors
- ☐ Listening to ocean sounds / nature sounds
- ☐ Reading something comforting

Backup Support Options:

- _____
- _____

4. Grounding Reminders (Messages I want to Tell Myself)

Short statements that help bring you back to the present moment.

Examples:

- “I can take this one step at a time.”
- “My feelings will shift.”
- “I can breathe through this.”
- “I am not alone.”
- “This moment will pass.”
- “I am safe enough right now.”

My grounding reminders:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

5. My Safety & Comfort Notes

Things I want to remember when I am overwhelmed:

- _____
- _____
- _____

6. When to Use This Plan

I will use my coping plan when I notice:

- ☐ My heart racing
- ☐ Feeling overwhelmed or shut down
- ☐ Difficulty thinking clearly
- ☐ Panic or intense anxiety
- ☐ Feeling disconnected
- ☐ Emotional spikes (anger, grief, stress)

APPENDIX D

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT TOOLS

Social support is one of the strongest protective factors during stress. These tools help you communicate clearly, strengthen relationships, and give others a way to show up for you.

Below are Skills that help you connect with others, ask for what you need, and feel supported during difficult times.

1. “Name What You Need” Statements

Very simple, direct requests that reduce confusion and increase connection.

Examples:

- “I’m feeling overwhelmed. Can you sit with me for a moment?”
- “I don’t need advice right now. I just need someone to listen.”
- “Can you check in with me later today?”
- “I could really use help with one small task.”

Why It Helps:

People want to support you but often don’t know how. Clear requests make it easier for them to show up.

2. The Two-Sentence Check-In

A quick way to let someone know you're struggling without having to explain everything.

Format:

1. "I'm having a tough moment."
2. "Can you talk or check in for a few minutes?"

Why It Helps:

Short, simple, and doesn't require emotional energy.

3. "Listen First" Support Conversations

Use when emotions are high or when you're unsure what someone needs.

Ask:

- "Do you want me to listen, give ideas, or help problem-solve?"

Why It Helps:

It prevents misunderstandings and aligns support with what feels helpful.

4. The comforting Presence Tool

Ask for someone to simply sit with you—no talking required.

Examples:

- “Can you stay with me for a few minutes while I breathe?”
- “I just need company while I calm down.”

Why It Helps:

Human presence regulates the nervous system.

5. Support Contacts List

Identify your personal support team:

- Someone who can offer calm conversation
- Someone who feels grounding or comforting
- Someone who gives practical help
- A professional (pastor, guidance counselor, therapist, counselor, doctor)
- Community or faith supports
- Warmline or crisis line (for added safety)

Why It Helps:

During distress, it’s hard to think clearly—having this list ready saves time

6. Ask for One Small Thing

Instead of general support, name one doable task.

Examples:

- “Can you help me walk outside for a few minutes?”
- “Can you remind me to breathe with you?”
- “Can we watch something calming together?”

Why It Helps:

People often want to assist but feel unsure where to start.

7. Connection Through Text

Use simple, low-energy messages when talking feels too hard.

Examples:

- “I’m struggling. Can you check in?”
- “Can you send something encouraging?”
- “Could you stay on the line while I breathe?”

Why It Helps:

Texting can feel safer and more accessible during emotional overwhelm.

8. “Circle of Support” Planning Tool

Write down:

- Who helps emotionally
- Who helps practically
- Who helps you stay calm
- Who you feel safest sharing with

Why It Helps:

Clarifies where to turn depending on the moment.

9. Health Conversation Boundaries

Short phrases for protecting your wellbeing when conversations become stressful.

Examples:

- “I need a pause. I’ll come back in a few minutes.”
- “I care about this, but right now I need to calm my body.”
- “Let’s talk about this at a better time.”

Why It Helps:

Boundaries prevent overwhelm and protect relationships.

10. “You Are Not Alone” Anchors

Brief reminders you can tell yourself or ask others to repeat.

Examples:

- “I’m here with you.”
- “You don’t have to handle this alone.”
- “We can take this moment together.”

Why It Helps:

Supportive words soften distress and enhance emotional safety.

APPENDIX E

COMMUNITY HEALING PATHWAYS

Ways to reconnect with others, draw strength from shared experiences, and heal through community.

Community healing reminds us that we don't have to carry everything alone. These pathways help rebuild connection, foster belonging, and create emotional safety after stress, crisis, or loss.

1. Small Support Circles

Gathering with a few trusted people to talk, breathe, or simply sit together.

Can include:

- family
- close friends
- neighbors
- faith or cultural groups

Why It Helps:

Shared presence reduces isolation and strengthens resilience.

2. Storytelling + Shared Experiences

Creating space for people to tell their stories, at their own pace.

This can look like:

- community conversations
- healing circles
- reflective sharing groups
- talking with an elder or mentor

Why It Helps:

Storytelling honors lived experience, reduces shame, and builds collective understanding.

3. Cultural + Spiritual Practices

Practices that feel familiar, comforting, or ancestral.

Examples:

- prayer or meditation
- singing, humming, or drumming
- lighting a candle
- grounding rituals from your culture
- connecting with nature or the sea

Why It Helps:

Cultural practices offer continuity, identity, and emotional grounding.

4. Acts of Helping or Service

Giving support, even in small ways, can restore a sense of purpose and connection.

Examples:

- checking on a neighbor
- helping clean up a shared space
- supporting a community event
- assisting someone with errands

Why It Helps:

Helping others activates hope, agency, and community strength.

5. Movement + Wellness Together

Gentle collective activities help regulate the body and build supportive routines.

Examples:

- group walks
- stretching or yoga
- breathing exercises
- dancing or light movement circles

Why It Helps:

Moving together improves mood and strengthens connection.

6. Learning + Skill – Building Spaces

Workshops and group learning sessions that offer tools, knowledge, and support.

Examples:

- coping skills classes
- mental wellness workshops
- disaster recovery education
- emotional first aid sessions

Why It Helps:

Shared learning empowers communities and reduces fear or confusion.

7. Nature-Based Healing

Returning to outdoor spaces that bring calm and rootedness.

Examples:

- sitting near trees or water
- community gardening
- outdoor gatherings
- quiet reflection in nature

Why It Helps:

Nature softens stress and helps the body feel safer.

8. Creative Expression + Arts

Using creativity to express, release, or process emotions.

Examples:

- drawing, journaling, painting
- poetry or spoken word
- music circles
- craft making

Why It Helps:

Art provides a safe outlet for emotions that are hard to put into words.

9. Digital + Distance-Based Community Support

Community can happen in-person or online.

Examples:

- virtual support lines
- group chats
- online healing circles
- faith/community livestreams

Why It Helps:

Accessible for those who cannot gather physically and extends support across borders—especially important for diaspora communities.

10. Collective Reflection & Celebration

Moments that honor resilience and community strength.

Examples:

- gratitude circles
- small celebrations after milestones
- honoring helpers and caregivers
- remembering those who supported you

Why It Helps:

Celebration acknowledges progress, restores hope, and deepens a sense of belonging.

APPENDIX F

● REFLECTION & JOURNAL PAGES

My Bahali Journal

A simple guided journaling template with prompts & lines.

- **What emotion feels the strongest for me today?**

- **What is weighing on my heart or mind?**

[illegible]

- **What do I need most right now?**

[illegible]

- **What helped me feel calmer today?**

[illegible]

- **What helped me get through the day?**

[illegible]

- **What do I need more of?**

[illegible]

- **What do I need less of?**

[illegible]

- **What felt grounding or comforting?**

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

- **What message do you need to hear right now?**

[illegible]

- **What is one thing I want to remember from today?**

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

FEELINGS YOU MAY EXPERIENCE AFTER A NATURAL DISASTER



SHOCK & DISBELIEF

- Feeling numb difficulty
- Processing
- what happened
- Feeling disconnected from surroundings

ANGER & FRUSTRATION

- Anger about damage, loss
- Frustration with recovery process
- Irritability toward others



FEAR & ANXIETY

- Fear of another disaster
- Worry about family safety
- Anxiety about future or rebuilding

OVERWHELM

- Feeling like "it's too much"
- Struggling to make decisions
- Emotional overload



FEELINGS YOU MAY EXPERIENCE AFTER A NATURAL DISASTER

GRIEF & SADNESS



- Mourning the loss of loved ones
- Grieving destroyed homes or communities
- Sadness about disruption to routines

HELPLESSNESS & VULNERABILITY

- Feeling exposed or unsafe
- Powerless to change the situation
- Unsure how to begin rebuilding



GUILT



- Survivor's guilt about being unable to help more
- Guilt over needing support

DISORIENTATION

- Difficulty concentrating
- Trouble remembering things

