

Supporting Yourself Afterwards

After sharing your story or unexpectedly reliving your trauma, be mindful that you may feel many different emotions. You may be exhausted and want to sleep or have an influx of energy to burn. The emotional upheaval your body just went through needs a release. Listen to your body. Consider the following options to relieve tension and validate your feelings – choose what is right for you.



- Recuperate with a nap.
- Cry - it's okay to release those feelings.
- Call your advocate or a trusted friend.
- Write your feelings and experiences down.
- Take a bubble bath or shower. Focus on the water's temperature, how it feels, its healing qualities.
- Savor a food or meal. Reaffirm that things you love matter.
- Exercise, stretch or simply take a walk. Movement is medicine!
- Meditate or sit in a peaceful place that allows your mind to regenerate. Listen to your surroundings and allow the sounds to remind you that you are in *this* moment.
- Listen to music and sing your heart out!
- Sit with a pet and practice self-kindness by allowing yourself to feel loved.

Whatever you are feeling – it is normal. It is okay to not be okay. Give yourself the time and space you need to care for your whole self. Your voice matters.
Be proud of what you've accomplished.



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800.563.6399 | www.ova.pa.gov

How to *Stay Grounded* when Life gets Shaky

Use this guide to learn about grounding techniques when reliving trauma. These tips can be used to ease emotional intensity while providing testimony, publicly speaking, or unexpectedly recalling past events.

Re-experiencing Trauma

When reliving a traumatic event, it is common for the same emotions, senses and feelings to return to your body. You may find your heart rate quicken, your pulse race, your eyes to dart quickly. You may get a headache or a stomach ache. Remember that trauma is stored in the body. Just like an emotional response, physical symptoms are to be expected when trauma resurfaces. **You are okay, even when you are not feeling okay.** It is common to experience these feelings. Take your time. Feeling angry or crying – even laughter when nervousness is overwhelming – is typical and you should allow your body to release these emotions in whatever way happens.

Traumatic memories are often linked to our senses – what we heard, felt, smelled, saw, tasted. These techniques can help ease the intensity by engaging your senses.

Preparing Your Body

Learning how to feel safe in your body again reduces the long term effects of feeling helpless, ashamed and/or isolated. Caring for your body can have a profound impact, far after giving testimony or publicly speaking. If you have the time available to prepare to share your story, you should:



Get enough sleep. This can help fight off headaches and fatigue that often occur after reliving trauma.



Always drink enough water. By hydrating, your body can better compensate for physical symptoms like muscle tension or indigestion.



Exercise and/or stretch to relieve tension. Be present - with your body - while you are caring for it and visualize any negative feelings leaving.



Speak to your advocate, a friend or trusted person. Allow yourself to feel the comfort and hear the encouragement - don't dismiss it.



Write your feelings down on a piece of paper. Consider ripping it up or throwing it away if it holds negativity.



Remind yourself that your feelings are normal responses to an abnormal event and your story matters.

Preparing Your Physical Space

Practice – even daily if you need – how to hold physical space in your body and your home for your feelings and empowerment.



Take slow, deep breaths that fill your lungs.

- Visualize breathing in the air filled with colors that calm you. Challenge yourself to think of specific colors that remind you of a time and place that you felt safe.
- Visualize breathing out air filled with the negative feelings in your head. Often, colors associated with these thoughts are brown or grey.



Have something to hold in your hand when feelings arise. This could be a tension ball to squeeze or a soft blanket that soothes you.



Light a candle or infuse a fragrance nearby that calms you and brings peace. Visualize breathing them in deeply, allowing the air to fill you.



Post physical reminders to yourself and read them out loud.
I am brave. My truth matters. I am more than my story. I can do hard things.



Be prepared by having water, tissues, a notepad and pen nearby when you may need them.