



Complex Trauma: Coping Guide

By Stronger U

Strategies for coping when you're feeling stuck inside of trauma

If traditional grounding or mindfulness doesn't feel helpful:

That's completely okay - you're not alone. There is no one-size-fits-all way to finding more safety and rootedness inside of ourselves and our environments, and feeling forced to regulate or conform in a certain way can end up feeling escalating rather than grounding.

Some other strategies that have helped us:

- Exercise or movement in whatever ways feel accessible to you – going on a walk, stretching, dancing, riding a bike, playing a sport, etc.
- Repetitive tasks, and focusing on the soothing nature of something that is “known”
- Being creative – art, writing, telling a story, knitting or crocheting, etc.
- Finding a flow in work that you enjoy, whether that's a special interest, creating a resource that can help other people, learning something new, or anything else

Recognize that you're experiencing natural reactions to what you've survived.

Sometimes trying to make the trauma go away can instead just make it bigger (and increase shame, too). It's okay to be stuck for a while.



Engage intentionally in what empowers you.

Depending on our your trauma, perhaps giving to or supporting someone else, creating something that helps you hear your voice, leaning into what you're skilled at, giving yourself affirmations, practicing gratitude, etc.



Finding safety when you aren't used to safety

Finding safety within community when relationships have been unsafe

- Have grace with yourself - it's okay if you have to go slowly, or take planned or unplanned breaks, or get scared and leave
- Explore what boundaries you might need. It might not feel safe to engage “fully” or trust others yet - that's completely okay
- Observe before participating, if it doesn't feel safe to be present yet. Sometimes the familiarity of the space, and knowing others, can help.

You get to be angry. You get to grieve. You get to take up space. You get to love and be loved.

You get to be human.

Keep engaging! Check out our [Complex Trauma Support Seekers Guide](#) or our [Non-Carceral Support Mini-Course](#) in our shop! *Purchases from Stronger U support the free services of THRIVE Lifeline.*