

REWIRED

Crisis-Focused Nervous System Regulation Guide

REWIRED Relief Toolkit

A crisis-focused guide to regulating your nervous system when you need it most.

What Is This Toolkit?

This is your emergency toolkit for moments of crisis, overwhelm, or intense dysregulation. When you're spiraling, when the urge to use is overwhelming, when you feel like you're losing control—these are the tools that can help you find your way back to safety.

Understanding Your Nervous System

Your nervous system has three main states:

- **Ventral Vagal (Safe & Social):** Calm, connected, grounded
- **Sympathetic (Fight or Flight):** Anxious, panicked, activated
- **Dorsal Vagal (Freeze/Shutdown):** Numb, disconnected, collapsed


When you're in crisis, you're stuck in sympathetic or dorsal vagal. The goal is to gently guide yourself back to ventral vagal—to safety.

Tool #1: The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

This technique brings you back to the present moment by engaging your senses.

How to Do It:

1. **5 things you can SEE** - Look around and name them out loud
2. **4 things you can TOUCH** - Feel the texture, temperature
3. **3 things you can HEAR** - Notice sounds near and far
4. **2 things you can SMELL** - Even subtle scents count
5. **1 thing you can TASTE** - Notice the taste in your mouth

 **TIP:** Say each one out loud if possible. The act of speaking engages your prefrontal cortex and helps regulate your nervous system.

Tool #2: Box Breathing

This simple breathing pattern activates your vagus nerve and shifts you out of fight-or-flight.

How to Do It:

1. Inhale through your nose for 4 counts
2. Hold your breath for 4 counts
3. Exhale through your mouth for 4 counts
4. Hold empty for 4 counts
5. Repeat for 5-10 cycles

Tool #3: The TIPP Skill

TIPP stands for Temperature, Intense exercise, Paced breathing, Paired muscle relaxation. These are rapid interventions for intense emotional distress.

Technique	How It Works	How to Do It
Temperature	Cold water activates the dive reflex, rapidly calming your nervous system	Splash cold water on your face, hold ice cubes, take a cold shower
Intense Exercise	Burns off adrenaline and cortisol	Do 20 jumping jacks, run in place, do push-ups until you're tired
Paced Breathing	Slows heart rate and activates parasympathetic system	Breathe in for 4, out for 6. Make exhale longer than inhale.
Paired Muscle Relaxation	Releases physical tension stored in the body	Tense each muscle group for 5 seconds, then release. Start with feet, move up.

Tool #4: The Self-Compassion Break

In moments of crisis, shame and self-judgment make everything worse. This practice interrupts that cycle.

Say These Words (Out Loud or Silently):

"This is a moment of suffering."

"Suffering is part of being human."

"May I be kind to myself in this moment."

"May I give myself the compassion I need."

Place your hand on your heart as you say these words. This simple gesture activates your caregiving system.

Tool #5: The Emergency Contact List

You don't have to do this alone. Having a pre-made list prevents you from having to think when you're in crisis.

Fill This Out Now (While You're Calm):

- ☐ Trusted friend or sponsor: _____
- ☐ Therapist or counselor: _____
- ☐ Crisis hotline (988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline): 988
- ☐ Local support group contact: _____
- ☐ Safe person who understands recovery: _____

Tool #6: The "Ride the Wave" Technique

Cravings and intense emotions come in waves. They peak and then they pass. You don't have to act on them.

How to Ride the Wave:

1. **Notice the urge** - "I'm having the urge to use/act out."
2. **Don't judge it** - "This is my nervous system trying to regulate."
3. **Observe it** - Where do you feel it in your body? What does it feel like?
4. **Breathe through it** - Use box breathing or paced breathing.
5. **Wait 10 minutes** - Set a timer. The peak will pass.



TIP: Most intense urges peak within 15-20 minutes. If you can ride it out, it will pass.

Putting It All Together: Your Crisis Action Plan

When you're in crisis, decision-making is impaired. Having a step-by-step plan removes the need to think.

Step 1: Recognize

"I'm dysregulated. My nervous system is in survival mode. This will pass."

Step 2: Ground

Use 5-4-3-2-1 grounding or box breathing.

Step 3: Intervene

Choose one TIPP technique (cold water is fastest).

Step 4: Connect

Call someone from your emergency contact list or use the self-compassion break.

Step 5: Wait

Ride the wave for 10-20 minutes. The intensity will decrease.

Remember This

You are not broken. Your nervous system is doing exactly what it was designed to do: protect you. These tools help you work *with* your nervous system, not against it.

Recovery is not about perfection. It's about having tools you can use when you need them most.

You've got this.

Need more support?

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AI Coach available 24/7 at shauncritzer.com/ai-coach