

# Emergency Calm Button

*A fast, body-first reset for moments when you can't think your way out. This is the one to use first when a spiral is already underway.*

## When this might help:

- You're mid-panic, mid-spiral, or about to dissociate
- You can't focus enough to read, journal, or talk
- You need to interrupt something before it escalates

## The practice:

- Place one hand on your chest, the other on your belly.
- Drop your shoulders. Unclench your jaw.
- Breathe out longer than you breathe in. Five rounds.
- Say, silently or out loud: *"Not now. I'm here. I'm safe enough."*

That's it. The whole thing takes under a minute. The point isn't to feel good. The point is to send one signal, *I'm here*, to a system that has drifted.

## State Awareness Check-In

*A short pause to notice where you are before you decide what to do. This is the tool that makes every other tool work better, because most regulation failures are actually awareness failures.*

### When this might help:

- You're starting your day and want to set a baseline
- Something feels off but you can't name it yet
- You're about to react and want a moment first

### The practice:

Ask yourself four short questions. Don't try to fix anything. Just notice.

- *What's happening in my body right now?* (tight, soft, heavy, light, numb, alert)
- *What state am I in?* (activated, shut down, mixed, regulated)
- *What's the loudest thought?* (write one sentence)
- *What's one thing that would help, even slightly?*

If you can answer these in thirty seconds, you've already changed your relationship to the moment. Awareness is the doorway. You don't have to walk through it. You just have to know it's there.

## The 5-Minute Return Practice

*A short, repeatable grounding sequence for the middle of a difficult day. Longer than the Emergency Calm Button, shorter than a full reset. Designed to fit into a real life, between meetings, in the car, at the kitchen sink.*

### When this might help:

- You've been spiralling for a while and want a fuller reset
- You're transitioning between contexts (work to home, alone to with people)
- You need more than a breath but less than a retreat

### The practice:

Set a timer for five minutes. Then:

- **Minute 1. Arrive.** Notice five things you can see, four you can hear, three you can feel, two you can smell, one you can taste. (If senses are limited, just count what's available.)
- **Minute 2. Breathe.** Box breathing: in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4, hold for 4. Repeat.
- **Minute 3. Soften.** Slow scan from head to feet. Wherever you find tension, let it go by 10%. Not all the way. Just 10%.
- **Minute 4. Locate.** Ask: *Where am I? What time is it? What was I doing before this?* Reorient.
- **Minute 5. Decide.** Ask: *What's one small thing I want to do next?* Not the whole day. Just the next thing.

The five minutes are not the goal. The return is the goal. Some days you'll need only two of these. Some days you'll do the whole thing twice.

## Pattern Noticing Prompts

*A kind way of noticing what repeats. Decoding your entire past isn't the work. You might consider noticing what repeats, kindly, curiously.*

### When this might help:

- You keep reacting the same way and want to understand the pattern, not judge it
- A quiet moment after a spiral, not during one

### The practice:

#### Prompt:

- "When I feel \_\_\_\_, I usually \_\_\_\_."

Example: "When I feel unheard, I usually shut down."

#### Bonus reflection:

- "That pattern helped me survive by \_\_\_\_."

Gentle fallback: One sentence is enough. "When I feel \_\_\_\_, I usually \_\_\_\_." Stopping there counts.

# Already in Process Inventory

*Finish these sentences to acknowledge your movement.*

## **When this might help:**

- You feel like nothing's changing and want evidence of movement
- The end of a week, looking back

## **The practice:**

- "This past week, I noticed myself feeling..."
- "A moment where I paused instead of reacting was when..."

*Even if these moments felt small, they're evidence of movement.*

Gentle fallback: Finding one moment is enough.

# Loop Interruption Cues

*Use short, regulating phrases when stuck in spirals or shutdown.*

## **When this might help:**

- You're stuck in a spiral or shutdown and need one phrase, not a practice
- Reading anything longer isn't possible

## **The practice:**

- "This is familiar, not current."
- "My system is protecting me."
- "This is a memory echo, not a failure."

Gentle fallback: One phrase, repeated, is enough. You don't have to believe it yet.

# Micro-Rest Practice

*A 30-second nervous system downshift for high-functioning anxiety moments.*

## When this might help:

- High-functioning anxiety moments: busy, wired, unable to stop
- Thirty seconds between tasks is all you have

## The practice:

- Drop your shoulders
- Exhale longer than you inhale

Whisper: "I'm safe to slow down."

Gentle fallback: Just the exhale. One breath out, longer than in.

# Soft Entry Practice

*A shutdown-sensitive re-entry for freeze states or low-motivation days.*

## When this might help:

- Freeze states or low-motivation days when starting feels impossible
- You've been calling yourself lazy

## The practice:

- Hand on chest or neck
- "I'm not lazy. I'm paused."
- One gentle cue: open blinds, sip water, move fingers

Gentle fallback: Hand on chest. That's the whole practice if it needs to be.

# Pillar Check-In

*A whole-system self-scan using the B.C.A.L.M. method.*

## When this might help:

- You feel off and can't tell where to start
- You want a whole-system scan before choosing a tool

## The practice:

- Begin: Am I aware of my state?
- Cognition: What story is looping?
- Action: What's my impulse?
- Loop: What needs returning to?
- Meaningful Support: Do I need a witness?

Gentle fallback: The first question is enough on its own. Awareness of your state is the practice.

# Noticing the Repair

*Track your resilience, not just your spirals.*

## When this might help:

- You've just returned from a spiral, however roughly
- You're building evidence that your returns are changing

## The practice:

- "What helped me return this time?"
- "What felt different, even slightly?"
- "Where did I offer myself softness?"

Gentle fallback: One question, one line, is enough.

# The Spiral Flip

*A reframing tool for when a thought has hooked you and you can feel yourself dropping into it. Not positive thinking. Not denial. A small move that loosens the grip.*

## When this might help:

- A specific thought is repeating
- You can name the spiral but can't stop it
- You're catastrophising and you know you are

## The practice:

Catch the spiralling thought. Then run three steps:

- **Name it.** Say the thought out loud or write it down, exactly as it sounds in your head. *"I'm going to lose my job and never recover."*
- **Flip it gently.** Not to the opposite, that won't land. Flip it to a *kinder true thing*. *"I'm worried about my job, and worry is what my system does when it cares."*
- **Anchor.** Add a phrase that holds you while the thought passes. *"I've been here before. I came back. I will again."*

The flip is not a fix. The thought may come back. That's fine. You're not trying to delete it. You're teaching your system that you have a way to stand next to it without being inside it.

## Defusion Phrases

*A short list of phrases that create distance between you and a thought. Borrowed from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, adapted for spirals. The structure matters more than the exact words, find ones that feel natural to you.*

### When this might help:

- A thought feels true and unmovable
- You're identified with the thought ("I am anxious") rather than observing it ("I notice anxiety")
- You want to soften without arguing with yourself

### The phrases:

Take any spiralling thought and put one of these in front of it:

- *"I'm having the thought that..."*
- *"I notice my mind is telling me..."*
- *"There's a story here that says..."*
- *"My nervous system is offering me the idea that..."*

So "I'm a failure" becomes "I'm having the thought that I'm a failure." Same content. Different relationship. The thought is still there. You are not it.

Pick two phrases that feel right. Keep them where you can see them.

# Spiral Interrupt Toolkit

*A small set of physical interventions for when thinking won't get you out of a state.*

*Different states need different interrupts. This isn't one tool, it's a kit, and you choose based on what's happening.*

## **For activated/anxious states (heart racing, thoughts spinning):**

- Slow exhale through pursed lips, longer than the inhale, for ten breaths
- Cold water on the wrists or face
- Walk for two minutes, ideally outside

## **For shutdown/freeze states (heavy, foggy, far away):**

- Stand up. Stretch your arms above your head.
- Bilateral stimulation: tap alternating shoulders, slowly, for thirty seconds
- Hum a single note for as long as one breath lasts. Repeat three times.

## **For mixed states (agitated and exhausted):**

- Lie flat on the floor for two minutes
- Press your palms together hard, then release. Repeat five times.
- Drink a glass of water slowly, paying attention to swallowing

The interrupt isn't supposed to feel transformative. It's supposed to *change the channel* enough that you can choose the next thing.

# Calm Practice Inventory

*Redefine calm as an accessible practice, not a performance.*

## When this might help:

- Calm has started to feel like a performance you're failing at
- The start of a day, to lower the bar

## The practice:

- "What does calm feel like for me, today?"
- "What small moment made me feel less braced?"
- "Where can I soften 2%?"

Gentle fallback: "Where can I soften 2%?" is the whole tool.

# Speed Mapping

*Understand your overwhelm not as emotion, but as nervous system velocity.*

## When this might help:

- Overwhelm is building and you suspect pace, not feelings
- You're reviewing a day that ran away from you

## The practice:

- "When do I move too fast for my own regulation?"
- "Where in my day do I slow down, and how does it feel?"
- "What part of my routine creates overflow?"

Gentle fallback: Noticing one moment you moved too fast is the map started.

## Action Tilt Prompts

*Take micro-movements toward self-support, without pressure.*

### When this might help:

- You want to move but pressure shuts you down
- You're choosing the smallest next step

### The practice:

- "What would 2% more regulation look like right now?"
- "What would I do if I wasn't afraid, just one tiny piece of it?"
- "What's the smallest version of movement I can honour today?"

Gentle fallback: 2% counts. Smaller than feels worthwhile is the right size.

# Freeze Recovery Micro-Practice

*Gently return from freeze without force.*

## When this might help:

- You're numb, stuck, or can't initiate
- You're coming out of shutdown and don't want to force it

## The practice:

Wiggle fingers or toes.

- Shift gaze side to side
- Say: "I'm not rushing you. I'm staying with you."
- Turn on warm water. Let that be enough.

Gentle fallback: One finger wiggling counts. You can stay there as long as you need.

# Safety Signal Tracking

*Build safety through repeatable cues, not emotional control.*

## When this might help:

- A steadier day or week has happened and you'd like to repeat it
- You're building cues rather than chasing feelings

## The practice:

- "What helped me breathe easier this week?"
- "What routine made me feel steadier?"
- "What's one moment I want to repeat tomorrow?"

Gentle fallback: One answer: "What helped me breathe easier this week?"

## Calm Life Menu

*A worksheet, really a way of thinking, for designing the conditions of your life so that calm is more likely. Not a routine. Not a discipline. A menu of small choices that make your nervous system's job easier.*

### The practice:

Across one week, fill in your menu under five headings. Aim for two or three items per heading, not a complete list.

- **Anchors:** the things that, when present, make me feel steadier. (*Examples: morning walk, reading before sleep, calling Mum on Sundays.*)
- **Drains:** the things that reliably leave me dysregulated. (*Examples: doom-scrolling at night, skipping lunch, that one coworker, late-evening news.*)
- **Resets:** small actions that bring me back when I've drifted. (*Examples: bath, ten-minute walk, calling a specific friend.*)
- **Boundaries:** the protective decisions I want to keep making. (*Examples: phone in the kitchen overnight, no work email after 7 pm, no commitments on Sundays.*)
- **Spaces:** physical places that support me. (*Examples: the chair by the window, the local park, the kitchen on a Saturday morning.*)

Once you have your menu, the question is no longer *"what should I do today?"* It's *"which of these am I missing right now?"*

Update the menu every few months. What anchors you in winter may not anchor you in summer.

## Walking Back Through

*A four-step practice for any return after a gap, from a few days to a few months. Used to defuse the staircase grammar (start over, fall behind, recommit) and replace it with the Loop grammar (walk back in).*

The practice:

1. Stop the apology. The sentence forming in your head that begins with "I'm sorry I haven't," "I should have," or "I keep meaning to". Let it stop forming. The apology is to a track that doesn't exist.
2. Name what you're doing. Out loud or silently: "I'm walking back in." Or: "I'm here today." Or just: "I came back."
3. Do one small thing. Read one paragraph. Take one breath you noticed. Send one text. The act needs to be the act of being inside the room, however briefly.
4. Leave when you need to leave. The door is still going to be there. It doesn't time you.

Exit condition: This practice is finished the moment you've done step three.

Gentle fallback: If even step three feels like too much, step two is enough. Naming the return is the practice.

## The Door Script

*A short script for the moments when you've been gone a while and the door looks heavier than usual. To be read aloud or silently when returning feels like it requires explanation, atonement, or a fresh commitment.*

The script:

"I haven't been here for \_\_\_ days/weeks/months. That's the gap.

The door is still open. It always was.

I'm not behind. I'm not starting over. I'm walking back in.

I don't owe an apology. I don't need to recommit. I don't have to do everything tonight.

I just need to be inside the room for a minute.

Hand on chest. One breath I noticed. The practice resumed."

When the breath has happened, the script has done its job. There's no fourth step. The door stays open whichever way you go from here.

## Co-Regulation Cue Cards

*Pre-written scripts for the moments when you need support but can't find the words. Most people who can't ask for help can't ask because the request itself feels too exposing. These cards do the asking for you.*

### When this might help:

- You need support but the request feels impossible to phrase
- You're spiralling and a person is right there
- You want to give someone a way to help that doesn't require them to guess

### Sample cards:

*"I'm having a hard time and I don't need you to fix it. I just need you to sit with me for ten minutes."*

*"I'm spiralling. Can you tell me three small ordinary things you did today? It helps me come back."*

*"I notice I'm pulling away. I want to stay close. Can you ask me a question I can answer with my body, like 'what's your hand touching right now?'"*

*"I'm okay enough. I just need you to keep being here. You don't have to talk."*

Write three or four cards in your own voice. Keep them in a notes app or on actual cards. The point is that they exist *before* you need them, because the moment of need is the worst moment to draft language.

## Co-Regulation Reflection

*Remember when you felt supported, not conceptually, but physically.*

### When this might help:

- You've forgotten what supported feels like in the body
- Before asking for support, to know what you're asking for

### The practice:

- "What helped my body feel supported?"
- "When did I soften without trying?"
- "What kind of presence do I most long for now?"

Gentle fallback: One remembered moment of softening around someone is the data.

# Co-Regulation Language Builder

*Name your needs in body-honouring, connection-centred ways.*

## When this might help:

- You need support but don't have the words
- Before a hard conversation

## The practice:

- "Could you stay with me without fixing?"
- "I don't need advice, just a quiet presence."
- "Can I check in when I'm ready instead of now?"

Gentle fallback: You could borrow a phrase from the list word for word. Your own words can come later.

# Support Profile Reflection

*Redefine what support \*actually\* looks and feels like for you.*

## When this might help:

- Support keeps missing the mark and you want to know why
- You're working out what actually nourishes you

## The practice:

- "Support nourishes me when..."
- "I need less of \_\_\_\_\_ and more of \_\_\_\_\_."
- "Unspoken support I crave but rarely ask for is..."

Gentle fallback: One finished sentence is enough: "Support nourishes me when..."

## Micro-Visibility Practice

*Practise showing up without shrinking, in small, nervous-system-safe ways.*

### When this might help:

- You're performing calm and it's costing you
- You're with someone whose nervous system you trust, even partially

### The practice:

Pause before you perform calm.

- Say, "I'm not okay, and I'm not ashamed of it"
- Let your real tone stay in the room

Gentle fallback: Letting your real tone stay in the room is enough. No words needed.

# Calm Contract

*A short written agreement with yourself about how you want to meet the next dysregulation. Not a vow. Not a goal. A working understanding between your steady self and your spiralling self.*

## When this might help:

- You've finished this book or a part of it and want to anchor the work
- You've come through a difficult patch and want to learn from it
- You want a reference point your spiralling self can read

## The practice:

Write a letter from your regulated self to your spiralling self. Cover four things:

- **What I know about you.** What this self looks like, what triggers them, how they show up, what they fear.
- **What I won't ask of you.** What you're explicitly letting go of, perfection, instant return, never spiralling again.
- **What I'm offering.** The specific tools and supports your spiralling self can reach for. Name them.
- **The promise.** One short sentence. Something like *"I will not abandon you when you spiral. I will come back."*

Sign it. Date it. Put it somewhere you can find it when you need it. Read it when you're regulated, not just when you're spiralling.

## Future Self Letter

*A letter written \*to\* you from a version of you six months from now. The version that has kept practising. The version that has learned what this book teaches. Not perfect. Just further along.*

### When this might help:

- You've finished the book and want to project forward
- You're losing faith that the work is doing anything
- You need a voice that is yours but ahead of you

### The practice:

Sit somewhere quiet. Set aside fifteen minutes. Then write a letter from your six-months-from-now self to today's self. Cover:

- *What surprised you.* What got better that you didn't expect.
- *What you stopped doing.* The pattern, habit, or thought you let go of.
- *What you kept doing.* The small practices that, repeated, made the difference.
- *What you want today's self to know.* The reassurance that today is real, this is hard, and the work is doing something even when you can't feel it.

Save the letter. Mark a date six months out. Read it then. See what your future self knew that today's self didn't.

The point isn't accuracy. The point is that your nervous system has a forward shape, a self it's becoming, and writing to that self gives the system a destination. Calm is not a place you arrive. It's a direction you walk.

# Personal Return Cues

*Define what helps you \*come back\*, not start over.*

## When this might help:

- You want to define your way back before you need it
- Just after a return, to capture what worked

## The practice:

- A word
- A gesture
- A texture or breath
- A reminder: "I don't have to fix. I just have to stay."

Gentle fallback: One cue is enough. Even a single word.

# Spiral Awareness Tracker

*Capture the shift from reactivity to relationship.*

## When this might help:

- You're mid-recovery and this spiral feels different
- You're building a record of how your returns are changing

## The practice:

- "What's different about how I'm meeting this spiral?"
- "What do I know now that I didn't before?"
- "What's getting softer, even if it's still hard?"

Gentle fallback: One line: "What's getting softer?"

# Daily Integration Reflection

*Stay rooted in the rhythm of return, not in the myth of resolution.*

## When this might help:

- The end of the day, staying in the rhythm of return
- The work feels invisible and you want to see it

## The practice:

- “What helped me stay with myself today?”
- “Where did I return, even slightly?”
- “What part of the spiral felt different, and how did I respond?”

Gentle fallback: One question, one sentence.

# Calm Memory Reflection

*Remember the version of you who already knew how to return.*

## When this might help:

- Calm feels far away and you need proof you've been there
- You're reconnecting with the version of you who knows the way back

## The practice:

- "What helped me soften, even briefly?"
- "When did I last feel connected to calm?"
- "What would it feel like to return to that version of me today?"

Gentle fallback: One remembered moment of softening, however brief, is enough.

# Personal Calm Definition

*Redefine what calm feels like in your body, not someone else's.*

## When this might help:

- Other people's calm doesn't fit and you want your own
- You're resetting expectations after comparing yourself

## The practice:

- "Calm used to mean \_\_\_\_\_."
- "Now, it feels like \_\_\_\_\_."
- "I feel closest to calm when I \_\_\_\_\_."

Gentle fallback: One sentence is enough: "Now, calm feels like \_\_\_\_."

# Calm Loop Mapping

*Build your return rhythm, not a perfect routine.*

## When this might help:

- You're building a return rhythm rather than a perfect routine
- Just after a spiral, marking what brought you back

## The practice:

- Identify spiral cues
- Mark your soft landings
- Create circular, not linear, re-entry points

Gentle fallback: One spiral cue and one soft landing. The map can stay that small.

# Calm Ceremony Builder

*Craft a nervous-system-safe ritual that feels sacred, not performative.*

## When this might help:

- You want a small ritual that marks return without performance
- You're designing your Calm Ceremony from Chapter 8

## The practice:

- Time: When you most need to return
- Cue: One grounding anchor (sound, breath, texture)
- Phrase: What welcomes you home

Gentle fallback: One cue and one phrase. Ceremony doesn't require more.

# Spiral Feedback Reflection

*Track nervous system shifts without judgement.*

## When this might help:

- Just after a spiral, looking for the feedback instead of the failure
- You're tempted to treat a wobble as proof of being broken

## The practice:

- "How did I respond differently than I used to?"
- "What message might my system be sending me right now?"
- "What's the feedback, not the failure?"

Gentle fallback: One question: "What's the feedback, not the failure?"

# Spiral Growth Inventory

*Spot the subtle signs of capacity-building.*

## When this might help:

- Growth feels invisible and you want to spot it
- You're reviewing a hard week

## The practice:

- "What has changed, even slightly?"
- "Where do I show up sooner, or stay longer?"
- "What now feels more possible?"

Gentle fallback: One answer: "What has changed, even slightly?"

# Real-World Regulation Map

*Anchor your tools in daily life, even mid-chaos.*

## When this might help:

- Your tools work at home but vanish in the wild
- You're placing tools where your spirals actually happen

## The practice:

- Identify where and how you spiral "in the wild"

Place tools where they're most reachable.

- Create visibility, not pressure

Gentle fallback: One location and one tool is a complete start.

# Timeline Tension Reflection

*Release urgency and reclaim your own pace.*

## When this might help:

- The “too late” and “behind” stories are running
- You’re releasing a timeline that was never yours

## The practice:

- “What story says I’m behind?”
- “Whose timeline am I trying to meet?”
- “What would it feel like to trust my pace?”

Gentle fallback: One question: “Whose timeline am I trying to meet?”

# Calm Relationship Reflection

*Redefine calm not as a fix, but as a companion.*

## When this might help:

- You've been treating calm as a fix and it keeps failing
- You're re-meeting calm as a companion

## The practice:

- "What does calm sound like in my body?"
- "What kind of partner do I want to be to my calm?"
- "How do I respond to it, even when I forget it?"

Gentle fallback: One question, answered honestly.

# Nervous System Reclaim Reflection

*Reframe your past responses as patterns, not pathology.*

## When this might help:

- The old stories (“broken”, “too sensitive”) are loud
- You’re rewriting your nervous system story

## The practice:

- “What story have I outgrown?”
- “What truth do I want to live into now?”
- “What makes my system brilliant, not broken?”

Gentle fallback: One sentence: “What story have I outgrown?”