

After a Tough Call Reflection

A worksheet to help you slow down, name what is sticking with you, and create space after a difficult call.



After the Call Ends

Some calls stay with you longer than others. The scene clears, the radio moves on, and the paperwork gets filed - but something doesn't fully shut off. That's not weakness. That's your nervous system doing what it was built to do.

Even when the situation is over, your body and mind may still feel activated. Heart rate elevated. Thoughts looping. Muscles braced. The call ended, but the weight of it is still here with you right now.

i This worksheet isn't a debrief or a report. It's a few minutes to check in with yourself before you push through to the next thing.

What Feels Stuck Right Now?

You don't have to have the right words. Just notice what keeps pulling your attention back. Use these prompts to identify what's sitting heaviest.

What part of the call keeps replaying?

A specific moment, decision, or sequence that your mind returns to on its own, even when you'd rather move on.

What image, sound, or moment stands out most?

Something sensory that's still present, what you saw, heard, or felt at the scene that hasn't faded yet.

What feels unfinished or unresolved?

An outcome you don't know, a question without an answer, or something that didn't go the way you needed it to.

There's no right answer here. The goal is just to name it, because naming what's stuck is the first step to not letting it run in the background all day.

What Are You Carrying?

Hard calls don't always leave behind one clean emotion. Often it's layered, or it feels like nothing at all. Check what's present for you right now, without judgment.



Stress

Still wired, can't wind down, system is running hot.



Anger

Toward a person, a situation, or the outcome itself.



Guilt

Replaying what you did or didn't do, second-guessing yourself.



Sadness

A low, heavy feeling, grief for what you witnessed.



Frustration

At the system, the call, the circumstances beyond your control.



Numbness

Feeling shut down, disconnected, going through the motions.



If it's something else entirely, exhaustion, confusion, relief, or something you can't name, that counts too. You don't need a label for it to be real.

Slow the System Down

Your body has been in response mode. Before you drive home, walk into your house, or pick up your phone, give yourself 60 seconds to start bringing it back down. This is not a meditation. It's a reset.



You don't have to feel calm at the end of 60 seconds. The goal is just to shift the signal, from threat response to something your body can work with.

Why This Works

A longer exhale activates the parasympathetic nervous system, the body's natural brake. Even one intentional breath cycle shifts your physiology in a measurable way.

When to Use It

- In the cruiser before leaving scene
- In the parking lot before going inside
- Before a difficult conversation
- Any time the loop won't stop

What Do You Need Right Now?

This is a direct question. Not what you think you should do next, what do you actually need in the next hour or two? Check what's honest.



Quiet

No noise, no one talking at you, just stillness for a few minutes.



Sleep

Your body may be running on fumes. Rest is recovery, not avoidance.



Space

Distance from people, pressure, and the next demand, even briefly.



Support

Someone you trust, peer support, a partner, a chaplain, or a professional.



Food or Water

Basic needs get skipped on hard shifts. Your body is still running the call.



A Reset Before Home

A few minutes alone before you cross the threshold, so you don't bring the weight in with you.

"You do not have to carry the full weight of the call by yourself."

What you do is hard. The fact that it affects you is not a flaw in your character, it is proof that you showed up fully. Talk to someone when you're ready. Peer support, EAP, a chaplain, or a trusted colleague. The door is open.