

# Put It Away for Now

A practical tool for setting down a call, image, or moment that keeps replaying in your head.



# When Something Keeps Replaying

Your brain is doing exactly what it was built to do. When a moment feels intense, unfinished, or emotionally charged, the mind holds onto it - running it back, scanning it for meaning, looking for a resolution that may not have come yet.

This is not weakness. It is not a sign something is wrong with you. It is a normal response to abnormal events. The loop happens because your nervous system is still trying to process what it took in on the call.

- ① This worksheet gives you a structured way to set that moment down - not permanently, not in denial - but long enough to rest, recover, and return to your life right now.

## Name What Keeps Showing Up

Before you can set something down, it helps to look at it directly - briefly and on your own terms. Answer these three prompts as honestly as you can. Short answers are fine.

### What moment keeps replaying?

A specific image, sound, smell, or scene from the call. You don't need to describe every detail - just enough to name it clearly to yourself.

### What about it feels strongest?

Is it the image itself? A decision you made? Something you saw that you couldn't change? What part keeps pulling your attention back?

### What emotion comes with it?

Anger, helplessness, guilt, grief, numbness, adrenaline that won't quit - name it without judgment. Naming it reduces its grip.

- ☐ You don't have to solve anything here. The goal is simply to acknowledge what's present - and make it concrete enough to set down.

# Separate Right Now From Then

Your body may still feel like it's on that call. Grounding pulls your nervous system back into the present moment - where the call is actually over. Work through each prompt slowly.

Where are you right now?

Name the room, the building, the address if it helps. Be specific. You are here - not there.

What can you physically see around you?

Look up. Name five things in your immediate environment. A chair, a window, a coffee cup. Real, present, ordinary things.

What tells your body the call is over?

You changed clothes. You drove home. You hear the quiet of your house. Find the signal - physical or situational - that marks the end.

Grounding doesn't erase what happened. It reminds your nervous system that the danger is not happening right now - and that right now, you are safe.

## Set It Down Temporarily

This is the core of the exercise. Take a slow breath, and complete the statement below - out loud if possible, or in writing if that feels easier.

For tonight, I am putting down...

Write or say what it is. The call. The image. The question that has no answer yet. The feeling you've been carrying since you cleared the scene.

✔ **I can return to this later if needed.**

This is not avoidance. Setting something down temporarily is a deliberate act of self-regulation. You are choosing when to carry it - not letting it choose for you. It will be there if you decide to come back to it - with a counselor, a trusted colleague, or on your own terms when you're ready.

# Transition Back Into the Present

Use these simple actions to help your body follow where your mind is trying to go. Move through them in order, without rushing. Each one is a small signal to your nervous system that you are here, you are okay, and this moment is yours.



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## Slow your breathing

Inhale for four counts. Hold for two. Exhale for six. Repeat three times. Let your exhale be longer than your inhale.



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## Relax your shoulders and jaw

Most officers carry tension in both without realizing it after a call. Drop your shoulders. Unclench your teeth. Let your face go slack.



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## Drink water

Stress is dehydrating. A slow glass of water is a physical reset - and a reason to pause for sixty seconds with no other task.



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## Look around the room

Slowly scan your environment. Let your eyes land on neutral, familiar things. This is a cue to your amygdala that no threat is present.



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## Focus on one thing directly in front of you

Pick a single object. Look at it for ten seconds. Notice its color, shape, texture. Let that be the only thing for just a moment.

# Closing Reminder

## Setting something down for now is not ignoring it.

It is creating space to recover.

### What this worksheet is

- A short-term regulation tool
- A way to reclaim the present moment
- A practice you can return to anytime
- One part of a larger approach to care

### When to seek more support

- The replay continues for days or weeks
- Sleep, appetite, or focus are affected
- You're using substances to wind down
- You find yourself pulling away from others

**i** You responded to something hard. You showed up. Now give yourself permission to put it down - even just for tonight. That is not weakness. That is how you stay in this for the long run.

