



# What's Still Sticking With Me?

A reflection guide for identifying the parts of a call  
or scene that are still showing up later.



# Sometimes Parts of a Call Stay With You

Not every call ends when you clear the scene. Sometimes a detail, a sound, an image, a decision, a face, follows you off shift. It shows up in the quiet moments. On the drive home. In the middle of the night. While you're trying to be present somewhere else.

That's not weakness. That's your nervous system doing what it's built to do: trying to make sense of something it couldn't fully process in the moment. High-stakes calls, ambiguous outcomes, and scenes involving real human suffering leave marks. They're supposed to. The question is what you do with those marks once you notice them.

- ① This worksheet is a space to look honestly at what's lingering, not to diagnose, not to report, just to see it clearly.

# What Part Keeps Returning?

Start by identifying what's actually showing up. Be specific. Vague discomfort is harder to work with than a named thing. Use the prompts below as a starting point.

## A Specific Image

Something you saw at the scene, a face, a moment, a detail that you can't stop seeing when you close your eyes.

## Something Someone Said

Words from a victim, a family member, a colleague, or even yourself that keep replaying in your head.

## A Decision You Made

A call you made under pressure that you keep second-guessing, even if the outcome wasn't in your control.

## A Feeling

Fear, helplessness, anger, guilt, something you felt in that moment that hasn't fully left your body yet.

## A "What If?"

A scenario your mind keeps constructing, a different choice, a different outcome, a different version of the same moment.

Write it down in plain language. You don't have to explain it to anyone. Just get it out of your head and onto the page.

# How Is It Showing Up?


Sometimes we don't recognize that a call is still affecting us until we look at our behavior, not our thoughts. Check what resonates below.

## In Your Body & Sleep

- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Waking up with the call already in your mind
- Tension in your chest, neck, or jaw
- Fatigue that sleep doesn't fix
- Staying physically on edge, hyperalert

## In Your Behavior & Mood

- Irritability or short fuse with people you care about
- Replaying the scene mentally on loop
- Feeling disconnected from your surroundings
- Withdrawing from conversation or routine
- Numbing out, more screen time, alcohol, or isolation

 None of these responses make you unfit. They make you human. Recognizing them is the first step toward doing something about them.

# What Does Your System Need?

Your body and mind have specific needs after a difficult call. They're not always the same as what your habits default to. Take an honest look at what might actually help, not just what's easiest.



## More Rest

Real recovery sleep, not just hours in bed. No screens, earlier wind-down, fewer stimulants before bed.



## A Mental Reset

A deliberate break from the loop, journaling, a different environment, or a structured debrief with a peer.



## Physical Movement

Your nervous system processes stress through the body. A run, a workout, or even a long walk can shift your state.



## Quiet

Low stimulation. Silence. Time away from calls, noise, and demands, even if only for 20 minutes.



## Someone to Talk To

A trusted colleague, a chaplain, a peer support contact, or a counselor. Carrying it alone is optional, not required.

# One Thing You Can Do Today

You don't need a plan. You don't need a program. You need one small, honest move in the direction of steadiness.

## The Prompt

What is one small thing that may help you feel steadier today, not fixed, not fine, just a little more grounded than right now?

## Write It Here

Name the one action. Make it specific. Make it realistic. Something you can actually do before your next shift or before you go to sleep tonight.

## Then Do It

Don't wait for the right conditions. One honest action matters more than a perfect plan that never starts.

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**"The goal is not to pretend the call did not affect you. The goal is to stop carrying it alone and unchecked."**

If something is too heavy to carry on your own, that's not a personal failure, it's information. Use it. Reach out to your peer support team, EAP, or a mental health professional who works with first responders.

