

How to Re-establish Safety When You Have been Jolted into a Stress Response

There are catastrophic events that are disturbing for everyone and require our attention. Sometimes, however, we are also distressed by milder experiences that overwhelm our ability to cope in the moment. You might be in a grocery store and the person in front of you is mean to the cashier. Or someone might tell a racist joke in your presence. Or you might be visiting someone who is ill and you are distressed by what you see. These experiences also deserve self-care. Here are some simple steps you can take to feel better.

1. Notice your cues: What sensations are you having in your body? What feelings are you having?
2. Take a few deep breaths.
3. Ask yourself these questions:
 - Is there anything happening right at this minute that is dangerous for me?
 - If yes, can you ask for help or leave?
 - If no, take more deep breaths
4. Acknowledge how hard moments like this are for you and appreciate yourself for recognizing that you are in distress.
5. Recall something that is soothing or consoling to you. A memory of a hike with a wonderful view; a cup of tea you had with a good friend; your favorite comfort food.
6. Excuse yourself and get a drink of water, splash water on your face, jump up and down for a minute. Listen to your favorite piece of music for a few minutes, touch something soft.
7. You are you and others are others. Don't compare yourself with anyone else. Don't judge yourself harshly.
8. Make a plan for eating well today and getting enough sleep tonight.
9. If it is comforting, reach out to someone you trust and tell them what happened.
10. Commend yourself for getting through the hard moments!

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