

TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT WELL-BEING DURING FEDERAL DEPLOYMENT



#PROTECTCVI

Protecting What Works. Equipping who leads.

This toolkit of tips and resources was created for people living and working on the frontline of the destabilizing presence of heavily armed federal operations in our communities and working to keep people safe. It is for the organizers, parents, students, workers, caregivers, faith leaders, mutual aid responders, and neighbors who are being asked to function under conditions that can feel like federal deployment: constant uncertainty, surveillance, and the threat of sudden disruption.

In moments like these, fear is not weakness, it is information. It is the body's natural response to threat or danger. When a threat (real or perceived) is ongoing, the nervous system can stay "on" for too long: hyper-alert, exhausted, numb, reactive, or shut down. That stress is not a personal failure. It is a predictable human response to systems that rely on intimidation, isolation, and chaos to break people apart.

Similarly, in these moments feelings of joy, love, and hope are not mutually exclusive. **Hope, healing, and collective resilience is not only possible but necessary.** This toolkit exists to support a different outcome: **staying connected, staying resourced, and returning to emotional and psychological safety –again and again.**

WHAT THIS TOOLKIT IS

- A **harm-reduction** toolkit for the nervous system
- A set of **grounding tools, emotional regulation practices, and collective care strategies**
- Language and practices to help you **stabilize during** crisis, and **recover after**
- Support for people who must remain functional even while afraid
- A reminder that **your body deserves safety**, even when policies refuse to offer it

WHAT THIS TOOLKIT IS NOT

- Not legal advice
- Not a replacement for therapy, medical care, or community-based crisis services
- **Not a demand that you "stay calm" or "be positive" while real harm is happening**
- Not a tool for compliance—this is a tool for **protection, dignity, and survival**
- Not exhaustive. There are additional tools, tips, and resources available to individuals and communities

WHY EMOTIONAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY MATTERS RIGHT NOW

When enforcement escalates, communities don't just experience frustration —they experience disorientation. Routine breaks down. Trust gets strained. People stop sleeping. Kids become watchful. Workers become distracted. Leaders become overextended. Rumors spread. Bodies carry stress like an alarm that never shuts off.

Recent ICE-related violence and conflict in Minneapolis has increased community instability, illustrating how quickly enforcement surges can produce chaos, trauma, and heightened risk for everyone nearby.

This toolkit is grounded in the belief that in times of collective threat:

- **Emotion regulation is resistance**
- **Connection is protection**
- **Care is strategy**
- **Stability is survival**

YOU CAN TAKE SMALL, PROACTIVE STEPS TO PRACTICE SAFETY

Safety is not only a feeling—it is also a practice.

You may not be able to control what's happening around you; however, you can still build moments of safety inside the body and between people by practicing:

- Steadier breath
- Less isolated mind
- Grounded response instead of panic
- Plan instead of paralysis
- Check-in instead of disappearing
- Return to yourself after initial shock

This toolkit will help you **stay present enough to choose**, even under pressure.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Use this toolkit in three ways:

1 **Before** enforcement activity
(preparing your body + creating a plan)

2 **During** a raid / federal deployment -like
moment (staying regulated + responsive)

3 **After**
(recovering, releasing fear, restoring connection)

You can use it alone, or as a group. You can pick one tool at a time. You don't need to "do it perfectly." The goal is not perfection—the goal is **staying alive and staying whole**.



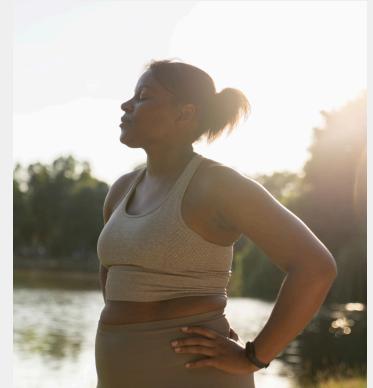
1. IMMEDIATE NERVOUS SYSTEM STABILIZATION (WHEN RAIDS OR THREATS ARE ACTIVE)

These help when your body is in fight/flight/freeze.

Grounding for Acute Stress

5-4-3-2-1 with resistance

- Name 5 things you see
- 4 things you feel **pressing into you** (chair, feet, wall)
- 3 things you hear
- 2 things you smell
- 1 thing you taste
 - Add gentle muscle tension (press feet into floor) to signal safety.



Orienting to Safety (Healing-Centered)

Say quietly or internally:

“Right now, at this moment, I am safe enough.”

“I can see where the exits are.”

“I am not alone.”

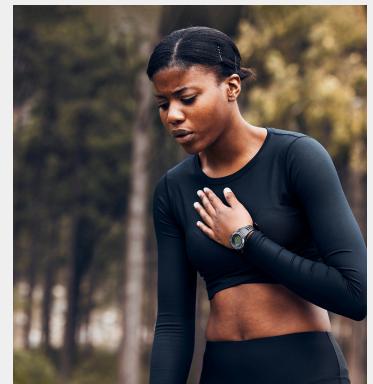


This helps the brain exit survival mode without denying reality.

Regulated Breathing

- Inhale 4 seconds
- Hold 2
- Exhale 6

Longer exhales calm the vagus nerve



2. TOOLS FOR ONGOING STRESS AND HYPERVIGILANCE



Limit Harmful Information Intake

- Choose **specific times** to check news or alerts (e.g., twice a day).
- Avoid doom-scrolling before sleep.
- Use **community alert systems**, not sensational media.
- Increase intake of music and media that promote love, joy, peace, and wellness

This is **harm reduction**, not avoidance.



Body-Based Release

Trauma lives in the body but can be released from the body.

- Walking, shaking arms/legs
- Stretching hips and jaw
- Humming or low vocal tones
- These help discharge stored stress without re-traumatization.



Sleep Protection

- Create a “night safety ritual” (lock check, phone charged, clothes ready).
- Repeat the same steps nightly to reassure the nervous system.

Predictability reduces trauma impact.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL PROTECTION FROM DEHUMANIZATION

Federal deployment works by **eroding dignity**. Mental health support must restore it.

Language Reclamation

- ✗ “We are being hunted”
- ✅ “We are targeted because of systems, not worth.”
- ✗ “I’m powerless”
- ✅ “I am surviving within constraint.”

Values Anchoring

- *What matters to me even now?*
- *What small action aligns with that value today?*





4. COLLECTIVE & COMMUNITY-CENTERED TOOLS (VERY IMPORTANT)

Isolation worsens trauma. Healing is **relational**.

Trusted Circles

- Identify **2-3 people** for emotional check-ins (not logistics).
- Use simple scripts:
 - “Are you safe today?”
 - “Do you want to vent or ground?”

Mutual Aid as Mental Health

- Cooking together
- Childcare sharing
- Court accompaniment

These **directly reduce trauma**, not just stress.

Community Grief Practices

- Altars, vigils, prayer circles, or storytelling spaces
- Naming losses publicly counters invisibility.

5. FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

- Maintain routines **as much as possible**
- Answer questions honestly but simply
- Reassure: “Adults are working to keep you safe”
- Limit exposure to raids/news imagery
- Watch for regression, sleep changes, stomachaches (common trauma signs)



6. SEEK PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Look for:

- **Healing-Centered**
- **Immigration-aware**
- **Anti-carceral / culturally responsive** clinicians



Therapy is most helpful when it:

- Acknowledges cultural nuances
- Does **not** frame fear as irrational
- Recognizes political trauma
- Supports empowerment, not compliance

You Deserve:



- To be protected
- To be believed
- To breathe freely
- To be seen, heard, valued, and loved
- To rest and replenish without guilt

Even in unjust conditions, we can build practices that bring us back to ourselves, and back to each other.

PROTECTING WHAT WORKS. EQUIPPING WHO LEADS. FOCUSING ON COLLECTIVE HEALING

Collective healing is both possible and necessary. We must seize this moment to foster safety, health, hope, and healing for ourselves, our people, and communities. Although these times may feel unprecedented, it is important to remind yourself that you are well-prepared. There is currently a heaviness, accompanied by fear and uncertainty, due to the ongoing federal deployment of our communities and the destabilization of the field.

The daily disruption and heightened anxiety demonstrate the ongoing need for those working on the front lines and at all levels of peacemaking. You are not only responding to immediate needs but also protecting relationships, reinforcing dignity, and helping communities navigate recurring trauma.

In the midst of it all, remember that being well-prepared also means caring for yourselves while caring for others. It is easy to get caught up in the demands of daily life, especially when you are focused on helping those around you. However, neglecting your own well-being leads to burnout, ultimately making you less effective at supporting others.

Here is a one-pager with the aforementioned tips, along with therapy directories, and crisis lines to find grounding and support amid the chaos.



LOOKING FOR SUPPORT
OR CONSULTATION
info@citiesunited.org

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES
<https://citiesunited.org/resources>

TIPS

Limit Harmful Information Intake

- Choose specific times to check news or alerts (e.g., twice a day).
- Avoid doom-scrolling on social media.
- Turn off notifications, schedule focused time, and take regular breaks to disconnect.
- Use community alert systems, not sensational media.

Ration Your Cares

- You can't care about everything, and it's okay to choose what and who gets your attention and energy.
- Overexerting yourself can lead to burnout and adverse health outcomes.

Protect Your Sleep and Respect Your Body

- Practice good sleep hygiene; maintain a routine, sleep when you are sleepy, and limit screen time.
- Repeat the same steps nightly to reassure the nervous system of safety. Predictability reduces trauma impact.
- Listen to your body! Rest, eat, drink water, sit down, and create time to do nothing. Choosing to do nothing for one hour does not erase all the work you have done so far.

Anchor In Your Values

- Use your core beliefs and principles to find stability and guidance. This counters trauma's attempt to shrink your world.
- **Ask daily:**
 - *What matters to me even now?*
 - *What small action aligns with that value today?*

RESOURCES

- [NAMI Minnesota](#)
- [Clinicians of Color](#)
- [Therapy for Latinx](#)
- [Melanin and Mental Health](#)
- [Therapy for Black Girls](#)
- [Boris L Henderson Foundation](#)
- [HIR Wellness Institute](#)
- [Psychology Today](#)

CRISIS LINES

- [Crisis Text Line](#)
 - Text HOME to 741741
- [National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#)
 - Call 988

Take what serves you from these tips and resources, return to them when you need grounding, and give yourself permission to seek support. May you remain in this struggle with compassion for not only the people and communities you serve but also for yourself.





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