

Coaching Tips & Encouragement

Practical, compassionate support for difficult moments

Dissociation • Emotional dysregulation • Panic • Intrusive thoughts •
Overthinking

Dissociation

Dissociation can feel frightening or confusing, but it is often the mind's way of creating distance when an experience feels too intense. You may feel detached, unreal, foggy or as though you are watching yourself from the outside. The first aim is not to force yourself to “snap out of it”, but to help your nervous system reconnect gently and safely.

Coaching tips to try

- Name what is happening: “I am noticing dissociation. I am here, and this feeling can pass.”
- Orient to the present. Say your name, where you are, the date and one thing you plan to do next.
- Use steady sensory cues: press both feet into the floor, hold a cool drink, smell a familiar scent or describe five things you can see.
- Choose small movements such as stretching your hands, rolling your shoulders or walking slowly around the room.
- Keep a simple pattern log. Notice what happened beforehand, what helped and what support you needed. Avoid judging yourself for the response.
- If grounding feels overwhelming, stop and use a softer anchor such as listening to a familiar voice or wrapping yourself in a blanket.

Encouragement: You are not failing or “losing yourself”. Your system may be trying to protect you. Reconnection can happen in small moments; even noticing one sound or feeling your feet is a meaningful step.

A gentle reminder: Choose one idea that feels manageable. These resources offer general support and do not replace individual medical or psychological care.

Emotional dysregulation

Emotional dysregulation means feelings can arrive quickly, strongly and sometimes take longer to settle. It is not a character flaw. Stress, tiredness, sensory overload, uncertainty, trauma and neurodivergence can all reduce the capacity available for coping. Regulation begins with recognising the state you are in, not criticising yourself for it.

Coaching tips to try

- Pause before problem-solving. Ask: “Do I need to reduce the intensity first?”
- Name the feeling and its level from 0–10. A more precise label can make the experience feel less shapeless.
- Reduce demands where possible: dim lights, step away from noise, loosen uncomfortable clothing or postpone a non-urgent conversation.
- Try a regulating action that fits your body: slow exhalations, rhythmic movement, cold water on your hands, music, pressure or quiet.
- Prepare a short “when I am overwhelmed” plan listing early warning signs, helpful phrases, safe people and actions that make things worse.
- Repair after the moment. When settled, acknowledge what happened, apologise where needed and decide on one supportive adjustment for next time.

Encouragement: A strong feeling is real, but it is not permanent and does not have to make every decision. You deserve support before you reach breaking point. Progress may look like noticing the signs five minutes earlier.

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Grounding during a panic attack

Grounding helps bring attention away from feared possibilities and back to the immediate environment. During panic, thinking can become narrow, so keep the approach simple. You do not need to complete every technique or make the panic disappear. The goal is to create small signals of present-moment safety.

Coaching tips to try

- Place both feet on a stable surface and gently notice the pressure beneath them.
- Use 5-4-3-2-1: identify five things you see, four you feel, three you hear, two you smell and one you taste.
- Describe an object in detail: its colour, shape, texture, temperature and weight.
- Try a longer out-breath without forcing deep breaths. For example, breathe in comfortably and let the exhale become slightly slower.
- Repeat a steadying phrase: “This is panic. It feels intense, but I can let the wave pass.”
- If one technique increases distress, change it. Some people regulate better through walking, humming, counting or talking to someone trusted.

Encouragement: You do not have to perform grounding perfectly. Choose one anchor and return to it. Panic rises and falls like a wave, and staying with yourself through even part of that wave is an act of courage.

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Intrusive thoughts

Intrusive thoughts are unwanted thoughts, images or impulses that can feel shocking or deeply out of character. Having a thought does not mean you agree with it, want it or will act on it. Trying to prove the thought wrong repeatedly can sometimes make it feel more important, so the helpful shift is often from solving the thought to changing how you respond to it.

Coaching tips to try

- Label it: “That is an intrusive thought,” rather than treating it as a fact, warning or instruction.
- Avoid debating every detail. Try: “Maybe, maybe not. I do not need to solve this right now.”
- Bring attention back to a chosen activity, even if the thought remains in the background.
- Notice reassurance-seeking, checking or avoidance. Reduce these gradually and compassionately rather than demanding an instant stop.
- Write down the pattern briefly if useful, but avoid long analysis that turns into another checking cycle.
- Seek professional support if thoughts are frequent, very distressing or linked with OCD, trauma, anxiety or depression. Evidence-based help is available.

Encouragement: A thought is not a confession and not a prediction. The fact that it distresses you often reflects what matters to you. You can allow the thought to pass without giving it authority.

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Overthinking and rumination

Overthinking often begins as an attempt to find certainty, prevent mistakes or make sense of pain. Rumination keeps returning to the same material without producing a useful next step. The aim is not to stop thinking altogether; it is to notice when thought has stopped helping and gently move toward action, rest or connection.

Coaching tips to try

- Ask: “Is there a practical decision I can make now?” If yes, write down the smallest next action. If not, give yourself permission to pause.
- Set a ten-minute thinking window. At the end, record any useful conclusion and deliberately change activity or location.
- Separate facts from predictions. Write one short line under each heading rather than building a long argument.
- Use an external focus: a walk, music, a simple household task, a conversation or a sensory grounding exercise.
- Practise “good enough” decisions on low-risk choices. Confidence grows through experience, not through achieving perfect certainty first.
- Protect the basics. Hunger, exhaustion, isolation and overstimulation can make repetitive thinking much harder to disengage from.

Encouragement: You are allowed to leave a question unanswered for now. Pausing is not avoidance when you have already considered what is useful. Sometimes the kindest next step is to re-enter your life rather than think about it harder.

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Panic attacks

A panic attack is a sudden surge of intense fear or discomfort. Symptoms can include a racing heart, breathlessness, dizziness, shaking, nausea, tingling, chest tightness or a sense that something terrible is happening. These sensations are real and frightening, even when panic is the cause. Understanding the pattern can reduce the fear of the fear itself.

Coaching tips to try

- Remind yourself: “My alarm system has activated. I can respond slowly.”
- Loosen your shoulders and jaw. Let breathing settle naturally; forcing very large breaths can sometimes increase light-headedness.
- Stay where you are if it is safe, or move to a quieter place. Focus on one visible object or one supportive person.
- Afterwards, give your body recovery time. Drink water, eat if you can, reduce demands and speak to yourself as you would to someone you care about.
- Keep a brief record of triggers, early sensations and what helped. This can reveal patterns without making you monitor your body constantly.
- Talk to a GP or mental-health professional if attacks recur, lead to avoidance or interfere with daily life. Treatment and support can make a real difference.

Encouragement: Panic can make you feel powerless, but every attack you move through is evidence that the sensations can pass. Recovery is not measured by never feeling anxious; it can begin with understanding what is happening and responding with less fear and more care.

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Urgent support: If you or someone else may be in immediate danger, call 999 or go to A&E. In the UK and ROI, Samaritans can be reached free on 116 123. For urgent mental-health help in England, call NHS 111 and select the mental-health option.

Until next time, give yourself space to breathe.
With love, Maggie