

Eating Disorder Toolbox - For You

Gentle tools for difficult moments

This is a space for the moments when your eating disorder feels loud, food feels difficult, your body feels uncomfortable, or you simply do not know what you need. You do not have to use every tool. Choose what fits the moment and leave what does not.

The aim is not to force positive thinking or pretend recovery is easy. It is to help you notice what is happening, reduce some of the pressure and make it easier to reach the support you need.

Check in before trying to fix anything

Right now I notice...

My thoughts are: _____

My body feels: _____

My strongest emotion is: _____

The eating-disorder voice is saying: _____

What I actually need might be: _____

How intense is this moment?

1	2	3	4	5
Manageable	Building	Hard	Very hard	I need help

If you are at 4 or 5, the goal may not be to solve the whole problem. It may simply be to get through the next few minutes safely and involve another person.

Triggers are information, not blame

A trigger can be a comment, a change of plan, a body sensation, clothing, a photograph, eating with other people, being alone, stress, conflict, sensory discomfort or something you cannot immediately identify. Noticing patterns can help you prepare; it does not mean you caused the reaction.

Your Difficult-Moment Toolbox

Before a meal or food situation

I could try...

- Ask what the plan is so there are fewer surprises
- Tell someone my anxiety is already high
- Reduce unnecessary noise or sensory pressure where possible
- Choose an agreed grounding object or activity
- Remind myself I only need to take the next step
- Arrange who I can contact afterwards

During

Bring your attention back to the immediate moment rather than the whole day or the whole recovery journey. Put your feet on the floor. Notice the chair supporting you. Look for three things you can see. Let another person know if the pressure is rising.

Words I can borrow

"I am struggling and I do not need advice right now."
"Can you stay with me without talking about food?"
"Please slow down."
"I need help following the plan."
"My eating-disorder thoughts are very loud."
"I cannot explain it properly, but I need support."

After

The period after eating can be difficult too. If your treatment plan includes post-meal support, use it. Otherwise consider an activity that occupies attention without becoming punishment or compensation: a familiar programme, puzzle, drawing, game, conversation, gentle sensory activity or being with someone safe.

Grounding is not about making the feeling disappear. It is about helping you stay present while the feeling changes.

When the eating-disorder voice gets loud

A thought is not an instruction

"You have ruined everything." → "One moment does not define my recovery."
"You have to fix this." → "I do not have to act on every thought."
"Nobody understands." → "I can tell someone what I need."
"You cannot cope." → "I can use support while this passes."

My Bad-Day Plan

Prepare this when things are a little calmer

When distress is high, remembering options can become much harder. A written plan means you do not have to create one from scratch in the middle of a difficult moment.

My plan

My early warning signs: _____
Things that usually make it worse: _____
Three things that sometimes help: _____
Person I can contact: _____
Professional/service contact: _____
A place where I feel safer: _____
Something I want someone to remind me: _____

What kind of support do I want?

Sometimes I want...	I can say...
Listening	"Please listen without trying to solve it."
Company	"Can you stay with me for a while?"
Practical help	"Can you help me follow the plan?"
Space	"I need some quiet, but please check back."
Professional help	"This feels bigger than my usual coping tools."

Recovery reminders that do not demand perfection

Keep the ones that feel useful

A difficult day is not the same as going backwards.
I can be frightened and still accept support.
I do not have to earn food, rest or care.
A thought is not an instruction.
I can tell the truth about how hard this feels.
Small steps still count.

Safety, Support & Staying Connected to You

When coping tools are not enough

Sometimes the right tool is another person. If your eating, physical health or emotional safety is deteriorating, contact your GP, eating-disorder service or another appropriate professional. Eating disorders can become medically serious at any body size.

Seek urgent medical help for symptoms such as collapse or fainting, chest pain, severe breathing difficulty, confusion, seizures, vomiting blood, severe dehydration or other signs of acute medical instability. In the UK, use 999 or A&E; for an immediate emergency; NHS 111 can advise when urgent help is needed but it is not an immediate emergency.

If you feel at immediate risk of acting on suicidal or self-harm thoughts, seek urgent help and involve another person rather than staying alone with the crisis.

My personal safety contacts

Write these somewhere easy to find

Someone I trust: _____
GP / clinical team: _____
Out-of-hours support: _____
Where I can go if I do not feel safe: _____
What I want another person to do: _____

You are more than recovery

Eating disorders can make life feel measured by meals, symptoms, appointments and whether a day was 'good' or 'bad'. Keep a small space for the rest of you too: what makes you laugh, what interests you, who matters to you, what you want to learn, where you like being and what you hope life can contain beyond the eating disorder.

A little piece of me

Something I enjoy: _____
Someone or something I care about: _____
Something I want more of in my life: _____
Something about me that has nothing to do with food or my body: _____

A message from me

You do not have to perform recovery perfectly. You do not have to pretend a difficult moment is easy, and you do not have to find the right words before you are allowed support. Some days the tool might be grounding. Some days it might be distraction. Some days it might simply be telling another person, "I am not coping very well today." Keep building a toolbox that belongs to you, not one that expects you to fit somebody else's idea of recovery.

This resource is educational and is not a substitute for individual medical, nutritional or mental-health assessment.

Space to Breathe Therapy