

# Emotional Flashbacks: What are they & how do you cope with them?

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## Quick Guide

An emotional flashback is a feeling from the past felt in the present moment. You feel how you felt during your trauma, now.

The emotional flashback happens when that feeling is triggered in the present.

Someone may have said or done something similar to those who hurt you. This triggers the implicit memory of your trauma.

# You may not have a clear memory of the trauma

Feeling flashbacks can occur when you don't have a clear memory of the trauma or the trauma was relational trauma (happened within important relationships).

The flashback is an implicit memory stored in your body. Your bodymind feels as though the trauma is happening right now, not in the past.

# Common Triggers

Some common triggers of emotional flashbacks:

- Constant criticism
- Rejection
- Conflict within relationships
- Being gaslit
- Feeling powerless

# Signs you're in an emotional flashback

Some common signs you might be in an emotional flashback:

- You have a strong emotional reaction to something that seems out of place.
- You don't feel like yourself or you feel disconnected to the feeling.
- You feel panic or anxiety for no apparent reason.

# How to Ground Yourself

It's important to find ways to ground yourself that feel right for you. Not everyone can tolerate meditation or mindfulness. Trauma survivors can sometimes be triggered by relaxing the body or clearing the mind. This can feel unsafe if your body is used to being in hypervigilance or if you do not trust your body.

Finding grounding techniques that bypass verbal communication can help regulate the nervous system.

Here are some ways to ground yourself that don't include cognitive processing:

- Use a stim item, soft blanket or a plushy to anchor yourself in the present moment.
- Co-regulate with an animal, nature or a friend.
- Take a cold shower or bath.
- Dance or sing to music that soothes your soul.
- Use your favourite stim item.
- Do some expressive art.