



Surviving Sexual Assault Workbook

2025

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
INTRODUCTION	4
LIST OF SOUTH AFRICAN SUPPORT RESOURCES	5
UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA AND THE BODY’S REACTIONS	6
WHAT TRAUMA IS.....	6
HOW THE BODY REACTS: FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE, AND FAWN	6
ACKNOWLEDGING TRAUMA IS PART OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT	7
UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA REACTIONS	7
EXERCISE: MY REACTIONS.....	9
ACTIVITY: MY REACTIONS.....	10
REFLECTIVE EXERCISE: MY TRAUMA PROCESSING PLAN.....	13
SECTION FOR SPECIFIC AUDIENCES (MALE, FEMALE AND NON-BINARY).....	13
EXERCISE 1: MY BODY’S REACTION DURING DANGER	15
EXERCISE 2: WHEN I START TO BLAME MYSELF	16
TRAUMA ACROSS CULTURES: STRENGTH, NOT WEAKNESS	17
HUMANS ARE DESIGNED TO REACT TO TRAUMA	17
CULTURAL PRACTICES FOR PROCESSING TRAUMA.....	17
KEY POINTS	18
ACTIVITY: CULTURAL REFLECTION	18
AFRICAN CLEANSING RITUALS: HEALING AFTER TRAUMA.....	19
NATIVE AMERICAN VISION QUESTS: A WAY TO PROCESS TRAUMA	20
WHY SURVIVORS MIGHT FEEL “CRAZY,” DIRTY, ANGRY, OR NUMB	22
IT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT	23
UNDERSTANDING INVOLUNTARY SEXUAL RESPONSES	23
THE REALITY OF OVERCOMING TRAUMA.....	24
IMMEDIATE COPING (THE FIRST HOURS AND DAYS)	27
GROUNDING AND SAFETY SKILLS	27
GROUNDING TECHNIQUES	27
ACTIVITY: MY GROUNDING PLAN	29
MANAGING PANIC ATTACKS AND FLASHBACKS.....	30
ACTIVITY: MY CALM DOWN PLAN	32
THE “I CANNOT GET CLEAN” FEELING	33
ACTIVITY: MY CLEANSING RITUAL	34
COPING IN THE WEEKS AND MONTHS AFTER	36
ACTIVITY: MY CONTROL PLAN.....	37
ANGER AND RAGE.....	38
ACTIVITY: MY ANGER PLAN.....	39
TRIGGERS AND AVOIDANCE.....	40
ACTIVITY: MY TRIGGER MAP	41
RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST	43
ACTIVITY: MY SAFE RELATIONSHIP PLAN	44
MEDIUM TO LONG TERM HEALING	45

© 2025 NICRO Surviving Sexual Assault Workbook

SELF-COMPASSION AND IDENTITY 45
ACTIVITY: WHO I AM BEYOND THE ASSAULT 46
MANAGING NIGHTMARES AND SLEEP..... 47
MOVING FORWARD48
ACTIVITY: MY HEALING TRACKER 48
BUILDING ROUTINE, GOALS, AND DAILY COPING..... 49
ACTIVITY: MY DAILY COPING PLAN 50
DAILY SKILLS CHECKLIST / QUICK REFERENCE 51
SELF-CARE ROUTINE CHECKLIST..... 53
CHECKLIST: ASSESSING HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY HABITS..... 54
SELF-CARE CHECKLIST TEMPLATE..... 56
WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP.....57
TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND TREATMENTS 58
TYPES OF TREATMENTS 59
USING MEDICATION TO MANAGE MENTAL WELLBEING..... 60

Introduction

This document has been developed by NICRO at the request of our beneficiaries. It is being made available to the general public as part of our crime and violence prevention service. Individuals and organisations may make use of this document for non-profit and educational purposes.

Many of NICRO's clients have reported being victims of sexual assault in the past, either as children or as an adult. Some of these incidents took place while being detained or in prison.

This workbook is not intended as a substitute for therapy. However, we recognise that many people do not have the means to seek out structured professional help. This workbook aims to provide education, knowledge and skills to help you become more resilient and experience fewer traumatic reactions.

The workbook topics cover the following.



This workbook can also be used in conjunction with the following workbooks and workbooks, available from NICRO Resources page on our website.

- Anger Management Workbook
- Carrying the Weight Workbook
- Co Parenting Workbook
- Developing Resilience Workbook
- Emotional Intelligence Workbook
- Financial Literacy Workbook
- Healthy Attachments Workbook
- Healthy Boundaries Reader
- Managing Difficult People Guide
- Mental Wellbeing Workbook
- Positive Masculinities Workbook
- Positive Parenting Workbook
- Post Partum Anxiety Workbook
- Stress Management Workbook
- Substance Abuse Workbook
- Toxic Relationships Reader
- Tracing the Pattern Workbook
- Workseekers Guide

List of South African support resources

Thuthuzela Care Centre (TCC) is a one-stop facility in South Africa that provides integrated medical, psychosocial, and legal services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Led by the National Prosecuting Authority's Sexual Offences and Community Affairs Unit (NPA SOCA), Services include emergency medical care, counselling, forensic evidence collection, legal assistance, and court preparation, all provided by a multidisciplinary team.

https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_speech/THUTHUZELA%20Care%20Centres.pdf

Adcock Ingram Depression & Anxiety Helpline	0800 70 80 90
Akeso Psychiatric Response Unit 24 Hour	0861 435 787
Cape Mental Health Society	(021) 447 9040
Cipla Mental Health Helpline	0800 456 789
Dr Reddy's Mental Health Helpline	0800 21 22 23
Healthcare Workers Care Network Helpline	0800 21 21 21
LifeLine	0861 322 322
South Africa Suicide Crisis Helpline	0800 12 13 14
South African Depression & Anxiety Group	011 234 4837
Suicide Crisis Helpline	0800 567 567
Rape Crisis	021 447 9762

Understanding Trauma and the Body's Reactions

WHAT TRAUMA IS

- Trauma happens when something deeply upsetting or frightening happens, and your body and mind cannot handle it all at once.
- Sexual assault is a form of trauma.
- During or after it, your body tries to protect you by reacting automatically without you even thinking about it.
- These reactions are part of your body's safety system.
- Trauma is not a sign of weakness.
- It is a normal reaction to something abnormal.
- What happened was too much, too sudden, and too personal for any person to face easily.

HOW THE BODY REACTS: FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE, AND FAWN

- When your brain senses danger, it switches into survival mode.
- This is automatic.
- You cannot control it.
- It comes from a deep part of the brain that is focused on keeping you alive.

Fight

- The body prepares to fight back. Muscles tighten, heart beats faster, breathing becomes hard or quick.

Flight

- The body prepares to run away.
- You might feel restless, panicked, or want to escape.

Freeze

- The body shuts down and becomes very still.
- You may not move, speak, or even feel pain. Many survivors freeze and cannot fight back.
- This is common and not a choice.

Fawn

- The body tries to please or calm the person causing harm, hoping to survive.
- This can look like going along with what is happening, being quiet, or trying to avoid angering the other person.

- All of these are **normal survival responses**.
- They are not signs of weakness or consent.
- They are the body's way of trying to stay alive.
- It is also very important to note that even if your body experienced a pleasurable physical sensation during the assault, this is simple biology. It does not mean you consented. We will explore this issue in more detail later on in this workbook.

ACKNOWLEDGING TRAUMA IS PART OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

- Processing trauma is part of **psychosocial growth** learning to feel, think, and act safely after danger.
- Trying to “tough it out” is **unnatural**; our biology and history show that we survive best when trauma is **acknowledged, expressed, and integrated**.
- Coping skills, routines, and supportive relationships are **modern versions** of these ancient practices, designed to help us **regain control and resilience**.

Key Takeaways

1. Trauma cannot be “toughed out”.
2. Ignoring it keeps your body and mind in survival mode.
3. Suppression leads to stronger stress reactions and prevents healing.
4. Humans are biologically designed to process trauma safely, not endure it silently.
5. Across cultures and history, humans have always developed **rituals, social support, and reflection** to deal with trauma.
6. Healing today continues this tradition.
7. Acknowledging, coping, and building resilience is **strength, not weakness**.

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA REACTIONS

Common Reactions After Sexual Assault

- After a sexual assault, many people notice changes in how they feel, think, and act.
- These reactions are the body’s way of trying to make sense of something very painful.
- They can happen right away or much later.
- You are not weak or broken.
- You are reacting to trauma.

Physical Reactions

- Your body may still feel like it is in danger even when you are safe. You may notice:
 - Trouble sleeping or nightmares.
 - Jumping or startling easily at noises
 - Feeling tired all the time
 - Body pain, stomach problems, or headaches
 - A tight chest or fast heartbeat
- These are signs that your body’s alarm system is still switched on. It takes time for it to calm down.

Emotional Reactions

- Your emotions may change from one moment to the next. You might feel:
 - **Anger** at yourself, at others, or at the world
 - **Guilt** believing you should have done something differently.
 - **Fear** of being hurt again, of not being believed, or of losing control
 - **Sadness**: feeling grief for what was taken from you

- **Shame:** feeling dirty or worthless even though you did nothing wrong
- These feelings are painful, but they are also normal responses to violation and loss of control.

Cognitive (Thinking) Reactions

- Trauma can affect how you think and remember things. You may experience:
 - **Flashbacks:** sudden memories or images that feel real, as if the assault is happening again
 - **Intrusive thoughts:** unwanted thoughts or pictures that come into your mind without warning.
 - **Memory gaps:** parts of the event that you cannot remember clearly.
 - **Difficulty concentrating** struggling to focus or finish tasks.
- Your brain is trying to process what happened. These reactions are part of healing, not signs of madness.

Behavioural Reactions

- You may start doing things differently as a way to cope or to avoid reminders. This can include:
 - Wanting to be alone and avoiding people
 - Feeling easily irritated or angry
 - Using alcohol or drugs to block feelings
 - Losing interest in work, hobbies, or relationships
- Avoidance can bring short term relief, but it can also keep pain locked inside.
- Healing starts when you begin to face these reactions safely and slowly.

Remember

- Everyone reacts differently.
- Some people cry, others go quiet.
- Some feel strong, others fall apart.
- There is no right or wrong way to respond.
- You survived something terrible.
- Your body and mind are doing their best to recover.

EXERCISE: MY REACTIONS

Think about what you have noticed in yourself since the assault.

Tick or write down any reactions that sound familiar.

Type	My reactions	What helps or might help
Physical	<input type="checkbox"/> Trouble sleeping <input type="checkbox"/> Pain <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling tense <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
Emotional	<input type="checkbox"/> Anger <input type="checkbox"/> Fear <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt <input type="checkbox"/> Shame <input type="checkbox"/> Sadness <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
Thinking	<input type="checkbox"/> Flashbacks <input type="checkbox"/> Racing thoughts <input type="checkbox"/> Forgetting things <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding people <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking or using <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	

One thing I will try this week to help myself feel safer:

ACTIVITY: MY REACTIONS

- Sometimes something small a sound, smell, word, or place can suddenly make your body feel like the danger is happening again.
- This is called a **trigger**.
- It is your body's way of warning you, even when you are actually safe.
- Learning what happens to you when you get triggered helps you take back control.
- Triggers are not signs of weakness.
- They are messages from your body.
- When you learn to listen to them calmly, they lose their power over you.

Step 1: Notice What Happens to Your Body

When you are triggered, your body might react before your mind understands why. Tick or write what you notice in your body.

My body reactions	Tick or describe
My heart beats fast	<input type="checkbox"/>
My breathing changes (too fast or too slow)	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel shaky, weak, or tense	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get hot, cold, or start sweating	<input type="checkbox"/>
My stomach hurts or feels tight	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel frozen or numb	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Step 2: Notice What Happens in Your Thoughts

Your thoughts might race, or your mind might go blank.
Tick or write what happens in your mind.

My thoughts	Tick or describe
I think I am in danger again	<input type="checkbox"/>
I see pictures or memories in my head	<input type="checkbox"/>
I cannot think clearly	<input type="checkbox"/>
I blame myself	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to run or hide	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Step 3: Notice What Happens in Your Feelings

When you are triggered, strong emotions can come suddenly.
Tick or write what you feel.

My feelings	Tick or describe
Fear or panic	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anger or rage	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shame or disgust	<input type="checkbox"/>

My feelings	Tick or describe
Sadness or grief	<input type="checkbox"/>
Numb or empty	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Step 4: What Helps Me Come Back to the Present

Write or draw a few things that help you feel calmer when you notice these reactions.

Examples:

- Breathing slowly
- Saying to yourself, "I am safe now."
- Touching something solid
- Drinking cold water
- Looking around and naming what you see

My list:

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE: MY TRAUMA PROCESSING PLAN

Question	My Answer
When I feel pressure to “tough it out,” what could I do instead?	
What safe ways can I acknowledge or express my trauma today?	
Which rituals, routines, or support people could help me process my experiences?	
How will I remind myself that acknowledging trauma is strength, not weakness?	

SECTION FOR SPECIFIC AUDIENCES (MALE, FEMALE AND NON-BINARY)

- Sexual assault affects people differently depending on personal experience, gender, and social expectations.

Male Survivors

Common Issues

- Feelings of **shame, weakness, or emasculation** due to social norms around masculinity.
- Reluctance to report assault or seek help.
- Difficulty expressing emotions (anger, fear, vulnerability).
- Concerns about being believed or ridiculed.

Coping Advice

- **Normalise your feelings:** Shame, guilt, and anger are trauma responses, not weaknesses.
- **Use physical release safely:** Sports, exercise, or physical routines can help manage anger and anxiety.

- **Talk to trusted allies:** Choose a male or gender-neutral counsellor if that feels safer.
- **Grounding and body awareness:** Men may experience strong tension or startle responses; mindful stretching or body scans help reconnect with the body.
- **Nightmares and sleep:** Use pre sleep routines and writing exercises to reduce intrusive dreams.

Female Survivors

Common Issues

- Feelings of self-blame, fear, and hypervigilance for personal safety.
- Social pressures or victim blaming from peers or family.
- Concerns about physical safety and bodily autonomy.
- Possible reproductive or sexual health impacts.

Coping Advice

- **Gentle self-care rituals:** Use symbolic cleansing, warm baths, or comforting clothing to manage feelings of contamination.
- **Empower through boundaries:** Practice saying no and asserting choices in safe spaces.
- **Safe emotional expression:** Journaling, talking with support workers, or art can help process shame and guilt.
- **Physical grounding:** Yoga, stretching, or mindful walking can help manage panic and flashbacks.
- **Support networks:** Seek women's support groups or trusted female mentors for guidance and validation.

Non-Binary Survivors

Common Issues

- Experiences of assault may intersect with **gender dysphoria or societal stigma**.
- Higher risk of **misunderstanding, disbelief, or lack of tailored support**.
- Feeling **invisible** or pressured to fit male/female expectations.
- Additional vulnerability in healthcare or institutional settings.

Coping Advice

- **Affirm identity:** Remind yourself that gender identity does not determine your worth or the validity of your experience.
- **Find affirming support:** Seek counsellors, peers, or groups experienced in LGBTQ+ trauma informed care.
- **Use grounding and body awareness exercises** carefully, respecting comfort with your body.
- **Develop safety strategies:** Create personal boundaries and routines in environments where you feel supported.
- **Reflective exercises:** Journaling or creative expression can help disentangle trauma responses from gendered societal expectations.

Universal Tips Across All Genders

- **Safety first:** Always ensure physical safety before processing trauma.
- **Use coping tools daily:** Grounding, breathing, mindful movement, and journaling reduce flashbacks and panic.
- **Track progress:** Even small steps are signs of rebuilding control and resilience.
- **Validate your experience:** No one else’s reaction defines your reality; your feelings are legitimate.
- **Seek professional or peer support:** Trauma informed services can help you navigate long term healing.

EXERCISE 1: MY BODY’S REACTION DURING DANGER

- Sometimes our bodies react before our minds can think.
- This page helps you notice what your body did to survive.
- Freezing, shaking, crying, running, or going blank are all normal.
- Your body was trying to keep you alive.

Instructions:

Think about a time when you felt unsafe or very afraid.

You do not need to write about what happened, only what your body did.

What I noticed	What it means	What I can do when it happens again
<i>My heartbeat fast</i>	<i>My body was getting ready to protect me</i>	<i>I can breathe slowly and remind myself I am safe now</i>

EXERCISE 2: WHEN I START TO BLAME MYSELF

Many survivors blame themselves even when they know it was not their fault. This exercise helps you practise saying something kinder to yourself.

Step 1: Write down what the blaming voice says.

Example: "I should have fought harder."

Step 2: Write what you would say to a friend who said that to you.

Example: "You froze because you were scared. That is what bodies do in danger."

Step 3: Write a sentence you can repeat when the blaming thoughts come.

Example: "My body did what it had to do to survive."

My sentence: _____

Trauma Across Cultures: Strength, Not Weakness

- Across history and around the world, humans have always recognised trauma and created ways to cope with it.
- Across cultures, trauma awareness has always been a part of **human survival and social cohesion**.
- Men and women historically faced trauma every day: wars, raids, accidents, loss, or assault.
- Rituals and communal support helped **process these experiences safely**, not by ignoring them.
- **Being able to recognise your reactions and cope effectively** is a sign of maturity and strength, not weakness.

HUMANS ARE DESIGNED TO REACT TO TRAUMA

- Trauma reactions (fear, anger, dissociation, panic, hypervigilance) are **normal survival responses**, not failures of character.
- Our brains evolved for **short bursts of danger**, not constant threat.
- Prolonged trauma overwhelms our natural systems.
- Recognising and processing trauma is **biologically necessary**.
- Ignoring it can make the body and mind less safe over time.

CULTURAL PRACTICES FOR PROCESSING TRAUMA

- Different societies have long standing ways to **acknowledge and integrate trauma**.

Africa

- Healing circles, cleansing rituals, and storytelling were used to process violence, loss, and abuse.
- These rituals **helped individuals reconnect with the community** and restore emotional balance.

Native American Communities

- Practices like **sweat lodges** and **vision quests** addressed fear, grief, and spiritual trauma.
- These ceremonies were not about being “tough;” they were structured ways to **face and integrate trauma safely**.

Aboriginal Australia

- **Corroboree dances** and songlines helped people work through grief, loss, and collective trauma.
- Movement, music, and storytelling were used to **express emotion and strengthen resilience**.

Japan

- **Naikan reflection** encourages people to examine past hardships and relationships, helping them **process feelings safely**.

- Reflection is valued as a disciplined practice of inner strength, not a sign of weakness.

Europe (Historical Tribal Societies):

- Storytelling, rites of passage, and community ceremonies helped members **release fear and grief**, preparing them for adult responsibilities.

KEY POINTS

- Trauma responses are **biological and universal**, not a failure of character or a sign of weakness.
- Every culture has historically found ways to **express, ritualise, or integrate trauma**.
- Ignoring trauma or “toughing it out” is **unnatural** and increases long term harm.
- Healing skills, grounding, and coping routines are modern extensions of **ancient human practices**.
- Talking about trauma is **strength, preparation, and resilience**, not softness.

ACTIVITY: CULTURAL REFLECTION

Think about how your culture, family, or community deals with hardship or trauma.

Culture / Tradition	How trauma or loss is expressed or processed	What can I learn or use from this?

Reflection

Recognising and processing trauma is part of being human. How can I honour my experience while building resilience?

AFRICAN CLEANSING RITUALS: HEALING AFTER TRAUMA

- Across many African cultures, **cleansing rituals** are traditional ways to help people recover from trauma, illness, or emotional distress.
- These rituals are not about punishment or an indication that you are dirty or tainted.
- They are **practical and symbolic ways to restore balance, connection, and wellbeing**.
- Even if you do not follow a specific cultural tradition, the **principles of cleansing rituals mindfulness, release, sensory grounding, and intention setting are practical ways to cope with trauma**.

Purpose of Cleansing Rituals

- Remove or release negative energy, fear, or trauma stored in the body and mind.
- Reconnect the person to the community and social support.
- Restore a sense of safety, dignity, and personal power.
- Provide structured reflection and action after difficult experiences.

Cleansing rituals help survivors **acknowledge what happened**, express feelings safely, and symbolically reclaim control over their body and life.

Common Elements of African Cleansing Rituals

While practices vary by region, many cleansing rituals share these features:

1. Water or Bathing

- Water is often used as a symbol of purification.
- Rituals may involve washing hands, face, or whole body, sometimes with scented herbs, leaves, or soap.
- The act is deliberate and mindful – slow washing while reflecting on what you want to release.

2. Herbs, Smoke, and Aromas

- Certain herbs, leaves, or incense may be burned or added to water.
- These substances are symbolic and also **stimulate the senses**, grounding the person in the present.
- Common examples: sage, rosemary, or local cleansing plants (varies by community).

3. Community or Witnesses

- In many cultures, a trusted elder, healer, or family member supports the person.
- Witnessing provides **validation**, ensures the process is safe, and restores a sense of social connection.

4. Movement or Sound

- Singing, chanting, clapping, drumming, or dancing may accompany the ritual.
- Movement allows the body to **release stored tension or trauma energy**, which is especially important when the body holds physical memories of trauma.

5. Reflection or Intention Setting

- The survivor may speak words of release or affirmation, such as “I let go of fear” or “I reclaim my safety.”
- Reflection helps the person **symbolically separate themselves from the trauma**, restoring control and agency.

Example: A Simple Cleansing Ritual

1. **Prepare your space:** Quiet area, clean water, soap or scented herbs, and a towel.
2. **Begin with grounding:** Take slow breaths, noticing your body in the present.
3. **Cleansing bath or wash:** Slowly wash hands, face, and body, imagining each part **releasing tension, fear, or shame**.
4. **Use scent or herbs:** Add to water, burn, or sprinkle, focusing on the smell and sensation to anchor yourself.
5. **Optional movement or sound:** Hum, sing, or clap while washing to release trapped energy.
6. **Set intention:** Say aloud or silently:
 - “I release what I cannot control.”
 - “I reclaim safety in my body and mind.”
7. **End gently:** Dry off mindfully, wear clean clothes, and sit or lie down to breathe and observe how your body feels.

Benefits for Trauma Survivors

- Provides **a sense of safety and personal control**.
- Helps **reduce feelings of contamination, shame, or fear**.
- Reconnects body and mind through **mindful, sensory experience**.
- Can be repeated regularly as part of **self-care or trauma coping routine**.

NATIVE AMERICAN VISION QUESTS: A WAY TO PROCESS TRAUMA

- Across many Native American cultures, a **vision quest** is a traditional rite of passage used to face challenges, connect with oneself, and gain guidance.
- While it is spiritual in origin, its core elements are practical tools for **reflection, coping, and building resilience**.
- A modern, trauma focused vision quest does not require spiritual participation.

- The **core idea is safe, intentional reflection, combined with grounding and coping strategies.**

Purpose of a Vision Quest

- Provides a **structured time to reflect** on life, challenges, and trauma.
- Helps people **confront fear, loss, or difficult experiences** in a controlled, supported way.
- Encourages **self-awareness and decision making** about one's future.
- Strengthens connection to personal values, community, and purpose.

For trauma survivors, a vision quest can be adapted as a **safe, intentional period of reflection** and coping, even without leaving home or engaging in spiritual rituals.

Key Elements of a Vision Quest

1. **Isolation or Quiet Time**
 - Traditionally, a person would spend time alone in nature.
 - Purpose: Reduce distractions and allow deep reflection.
 - Trauma adaptation: Find a quiet, safe space to sit, walk, or reflect without interruptions.
2. **Preparation**
 - Physical and mental preparation, often including fasting, meditation, or guided reflection.
 - Trauma adaptation: Prepare by doing **grounding exercises, journaling, or mindful breathing.**
3. **Reflection and Facing Fear**
 - During the quest, participants reflect on their life, challenges, and goals.
 - They confront fears or unresolved difficulties in a **safe, structured way.**
 - Trauma adaptation: Focus on feelings and memories safely, perhaps guided by a trusted support worker or journal prompts.
4. **Symbols and Rituals**
 - In traditional quests, objects, songs, or ceremonies mark insights or intentions.
 - Trauma adaptation: Use **symbols meaningful to you** a stone, drawing, or note representing safety, strength, or release.
5. **Integration and Return**
 - After the quest, insights are shared with elders or community, and the person reintegrates into daily life.
 - Trauma adaptation: Reflect on what you learned, write it down, and plan practical steps to use coping tools or change routines.

Example of a Trauma Focused Vision Quest

1. **Choose a safe space:** Quiet room, garden, or park where you can be alone.
2. **Ground your body:** Sit, breathe slowly, and notice your senses.
3. **Set an intention:** Decide what you want to focus on healing, coping with flashbacks, building resilience.

4. **Reflect or journal:** Think about the trauma, your responses, and what you **can control**. Write or draw your insights.
5. **Use symbolic objects:** Hold a stone, feather, or meaningful item while reflecting.
6. **Move mindfully:** Walk, stretch, or sway while thinking about your strength and resilience.
7. **Plan reintegration:** Note practical steps to manage triggers, use coping skills, and strengthen support networks.

Benefits for Trauma Survivors

- Provides **time to process difficult experiences** in a structured, safe way.
- Encourages **personal agency and empowerment**.
- Reduces feelings of isolation and helplessness.
- Strengthens awareness of **body, mind, and coping resources**.
- Can be repeated as needed, gradually increasing comfort with trauma processing.

Why Survivors Might Feel “Crazy,” Dirty, Angry, or Numb

- After trauma, the brain and body do not always return to normal quickly.
- You may feel like something inside you has changed- and it has, as trauma changes how we view the world and the basic trust we have in others
- You may also feel emotions that do not make sense or come at strange times.

1. Feeling “crazy”:

- a. Flashbacks, sudden fear, or strong emotions can make you feel out of control.
- b. This is the brain replaying danger even when you are safe.
- c. You are not crazy. This is your brain’s way of trying to make sense of what happened to it
- d. All the experiences you have had in your life has been stored by your brain so that you can do things like walking, talking and driving (and other activities) easily, as your brain knows what it must do.
- e. When a trauma occurs, your brain has nothing to measure it against. Therefore, it must find a new way of understanding.

2. Feeling dirty:

- a. Many people feel contaminated after sexual assault.
- b. This feeling is emotional, not physical.
- c. It comes from shame and the wish to undo what happened.

3. Feeling angry:

- a. Anger come from having felt powerless, afraid, sometimes even embarrassed and deeply sad.
- b. This is normal.
- c. Learning to release it safely is part of healing.

4. Feeling numb:

- a. Sometimes your mind protects you by “switching off.”
- b. You may feel nothing, even when you want to cry.

- c. Numbness is also a trauma response.

All of these are common. You are not going mad. Your body is reacting to injury, just like it would after a physical wound.

IT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT

- Nothing you did, said, wore, or felt caused the assault.
- The blame belongs to the person who chose to harm you.
- Your body reacted to survive.
- That does not mean you agreed or allowed it.
- Healing starts when you accept that **you are not to blame** and that your body did the best it could to keep you alive.

Understanding Involuntary Sexual Responses

- Some survivors of sexual assault notice that their body may have had physical reactions during the assault, including an erection, lubrication, or even orgasm.
- This is common and normal, and it does not mean you consented, enjoyed it, or wanted it to happen.
- Any physical response during sexual assault is an involuntary and biological response and does not indicate consent or enjoyment.
- The assault is always the responsibility of the perpetrator, not the survivor.

Why It Happens

- The body has automatic physical responses to touch and stimulation.
- Sexual assault triggers the body's nervous system, which can cause involuntary reactions.
- Trauma affects the body and mind in complex ways.
- Your body can respond while your mind is saying "no" or feeling fear."
- These responses are not under your conscious control.

Think of it like sneezing.

- Imagine someone holds a strong-smelling pepper or perfume under your nose.
- Even if you do not want to sneeze, your body might react automatically.
- The sneeze is your body's reflex, not a signal that you like the smell or wanted it to happen.
- In the same way, sexual responses can happen automatically, even during assault:
 - They are physical reflexes, controlled by the nervous system, not by your conscious desire.
 - Your body reacting does not mean you consented, enjoyed it, or asked for it.
 - Just as no one would blame you for sneezing, you are not responsible for your body's involuntary sexual responses.

Important Points

- Involuntary responses do not equal consent.
- Consent is always a clear, willing, and freely given “yes.”
- You are not to blame.
- Your body’s response is a reflex, not a choice.
- Feeling shame or guilt is normal, but it is based on misunderstanding your body, not reality.
- You are not alone.
- Many survivors have experienced this.
- It does not lessen the severity of the assault or your rights to justice or support.

THE REALITY OF OVERCOMING TRAUMA

- Experiencing sexual assault or other serious trauma changes your life.
- Many people want to “get over it” completely to erase it or pretend it never happened.
- This is a common desire, but it is **not how trauma works**.
- Understanding the reality of trauma can help you cope safely and build resilience for the future.

Myth 1: You Can Get Completely Over Trauma

- Some people believe that if you go to therapy, talk about it enough, or “work on yourself,” trauma will disappear, and life will return to exactly how it was before.

Reality: Trauma is like breaking a leg.

- After it heals, the leg works again, but it is not the same as an unbroken leg.
- There may always be some sensitivity, stiffness, or reminders of the break.
- Healing does not mean the trauma is erased.
- It means you learn to live with it safely and effectively.

Myth 2: Therapy or Talking Is the Only Way to Heal

- Many believe that talking to a professional is the only way to cope.

Reality: Talking can help, but it is not the only tool. Healing comes from many practices:

- Learning to use coping tools like grounding, breathing, and movement
- Building daily routines and personal safety strategies
- Using reflection, journaling, art, or physical release
- Developing supportive relationships
- Therapy is one tool among many, not a magic eraser.

Myth: You Can Tough Your Way Out of Trauma

- Some people believe that the strongest way to deal with trauma is to ignore it, stay silent, or “be tough.”
- This is sometimes called the “stiff upper lip” approach.

Reality: This does not work. Ignoring trauma or pretending it does not exist can make the body and mind more sensitive to stress, cause physical or mental health problems, and prevent recovery.

Why the Stiff Upper Lip is Dangerous

- Trauma is stored in the body and mind.
- Suppressing it does not erase it.
- People who avoid processing trauma often experience flashbacks, panic, anger, and emotional numbness.
- Long term suppression increases stress hormones, which harm physical health and brain function.
- Trying to “tough it out” can prevent building resilience and coping skills, leaving you vulnerable to future stress or trauma.

Humans Are Not Designed for Constant Trauma

- Our species evolved to survive short bursts of danger, not long term, repeated trauma.
- Ancient humans needed fight, flight, or freeze responses to survive attacks, predators, or natural disasters.
- Stress systems evolved to activate for moments of threat and then return to rest.
- Living under prolonged trauma or stress overwhelms these systems, causing the reactions we see in survivors today.

Coping Is the Goal, Not Forgetting

- Healing is about coping skills and resilience, not returning to a pre trauma state.
- Just like a healed leg, trauma leaves marks, but you can learn to walk, run, and live fully with these marks.
- Avoiding or trying not to think about trauma can give temporary relief, but it does not make the reactions disappear.
- Your body and mind may react later in flashbacks, anger, panic, or nightmares.
- Facing trauma in small, safe ways, using grounding, reflective exercises, or trusted support, helps you reduce its power over daily life.

Preventing Trauma from Stacking

- If trauma is not addressed, each new traumatic experience can add on top of old trauma, making reactions stronger or more confusing.
- Practising coping skills consistently builds resilience.
- Using grounding, mindfulness, and routines prepares your body and mind for future stress.
- Setting boundaries and maintaining safe relationships prevents new trauma from having the same overwhelming impact.
- Think of coping skills as a protective armour: they do not erase past trauma, but they shield you from future trauma compounding old wounds.

The “I Don’t Want to Think About It” Feeling

© 2025 NICRO Surviving Sexual Assault Workbook

- It is natural to want to avoid painful memories.
- Avoidance can feel safe at first, but it does not make the trauma go away.
- Avoiding triggers entirely can make the body and mind more sensitive when reminders appear.
- Gradual, controlled exposure combined with grounding and safety tools helps you face memories without being overwhelmed.
- You decide when and how to face trauma.
- You are in control.
- Small, safe steps are more effective than ignoring the trauma completely.

Immediate Coping (The First Hours and Days)

GROUNDING AND SAFETY SKILLS

- After trauma, the body sometimes reacts as if the danger is still happening.
- You might suddenly feel afraid, dizzy, frozen, or far away, even when you are actually safe.
- This is called being triggered.
- When that happens, grounding can help.

What Grounding Means

- Grounding means bringing your mind and body back to the present moment.
- It helps when you feel panic, flashbacks, or when your thoughts and body feel disconnected.
- Grounding reminds you: **That was then. This is now. I am safe in this moment.**
- It is like pressing the “pause” button on your body’s alarm system.

GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

- It is vitally important that you practice grounding techniques in times of calm that they can become familiar to your brain.
- When you are in a panicked state- trying these for the first time, they will not work.
- Your brain will reach for what is known and safe.
- Therefore, practice is key to success.

The 5-4-3-2-1 Method

This method uses your senses to help you come back to the present.

Look around you and name:

- **5** things you can see.
- **4** things you can touch.
- **3** things you can hear.
- **2** things you can smell.
- **1** thing you can taste.

Example:

- I can see the window, my shoes, a tree, a wall, and a chair.
- I can touch my shirt, my hands, the table, and the floor.
- I can hear people talking, a car outside, and a bird.
- I can smell my soap and the air.
- I can taste water in my mouth.
- Say these things slowly, out loud if you can.
- Keep breathing as you do it.
- Repeat until your body starts to calm down.

Breathing for Panic or Fear

- When you panic, your body takes short, fast breaths this keeps your alarm system switched on.
- Slow breathing tells your body that it is safe again.
- Try this simple method:
 - Breathe in through your nose while you count to 4.
 - Hold the breath for 2 counts.
 - Breathe out slowly through your mouth while you count to 6.
 - Repeat 5–10 times.
- You can also place your hand on your chest or stomach and feel it rise and fall.
- Focus on the air moving in and out.
- It helps your body calm itself.

Using Temperature and Texture

- Physical sensations can bring you back when you feel far away or numb.
- Try:
 - Holding something cold, like a metal spoon, ice cube, or cold water on your hands.
 - Touching something with a strong texture, like a rough wall, a smooth stone, or fabric.
 - Washing your face or wrists with cool water and noticing how it feels.
 - Wrapping yourself in a blanket or shawl to feel warm and contained.
 - Notice the temperature and texture. Say to yourself, “This is now. I am here.”

ACTIVITY: MY GROUNDING PLAN

- This is your personal list of what helps you come back when you start to feel unsafe or disconnected.
- Grounding is not about forgetting what happened.
- It is about **staying safe in the present** so that the past does not take over your mind or body.

When I feel triggered, I can...	Helps me because...
Name 5 things I can see	<i>It reminds me where I am</i>

MANAGING PANIC ATTACKS AND FLASHBACKS

- Sometimes, after a sexual assault, your body can suddenly feel the same fear and panic that you felt during the attack, even though you are not in danger now.
- This can happen anywhere: in your room, in a taxi, or even while you are resting.
- These moments are called panic attacks or flashbacks.
- They can be very frightening, but they are not dangerous.
- They are your brain's way of remembering the past too strongly.
- These reactions do not mean you are weak.
- They mean your body is still trying to protect you.
- With practice, these calming steps will become easier and faster.
- Each time you use them, you train your brain to understand that the danger is over.

The Difference Between Memory and Danger

- Your brain has two alarm systems:
 - One tells you when something is happening right now.
 - The other stores memories of past danger.
- After trauma, these two systems can mix up signals.
- When a memory or reminder appears, the body reacts as if it is happening again your heart races, you cannot breathe, your muscles tense, or you freeze.
- But a memory is not danger.
- You are remembering, not reliving.
- The feelings are strong because your brain has not yet learned that you are safe.

Simple Ways to Calm a Panic or Flashback

These tools help you tell your body that the danger is over. They are short, practical, and can be done anywhere.

Name Three Things in the Room

- Look around you.
- Say out loud three things you can see.
- Example: "I see a chair. I see a door. I see a window."
- This helps your brain notice that you are in the present, not in the past.

Stamp Your Feet and Say "I Am Safe Now"

- When you feel frozen or trapped in your mind, move your body.
- Stamp your feet, clap your hands, or stretch your fingers.
- Say clearly: "I am safe now."
- This connects your mind and body again and reminds you that you have control.

Hold Something Solid

- Touch something firm and real a wall, a cup, a stone, or your chair.
- Feel its weight, shape, and temperature.
- Focus on it.
- Say to yourself: "This is real. I am here."

- Solid objects help your body know that you are in the present moment.

Use Strong Scents to Interrupt Flashbacks

- Smells can quickly pull your mind back to now.
- Keep something with a clear, strong scent near you: menthol rub, eucalyptus oil, or even a piece of citrus peel.
- When you feel a flashback coming, smell it slowly and focus on that scent.
- This gives your brain a new signal: the danger is over.

ACTIVITY: MY CALM DOWN PLAN

Write down or draw the steps that help you when a panic or flashback starts. You can keep this list in your pocket or on your phone.

What happens	What I can do	What I can say to myself
<i>My heart races</i>	<i>Breathe in for 4, out for 6</i>	<i>"This is a memory, not danger."</i>
<i>I feel frozen</i>	<i>Stamp my feet or move my hands</i>	<i>"I can move. I am safe now."</i>
<i>I start to shake</i>	<i>Hold onto a wall or a stone</i>	<i>"My body is calming down."</i>
<i>I see images of the assault</i>	<i>Name 3 things I can see</i>	<i>"I am here in this room."</i>

THE “I CANNOT GET CLEAN” FEELING

- After a sexual assault, many survivors say they feel dirty, polluted, or contaminated.
- Even when they have already washed many times.
- No matter how much they scrub, the feeling does not go away.
- This is a common trauma reaction.
- It does not mean you are really dirty.
- It means your mind and body are still carrying the shock of what happened.

Why This Feeling Happens

- Trauma is not only in your memories.
- It is also stored in the body: in your muscles, your senses, and your skin.
- Your brain remembers the event as danger, and your body keeps that memory through feelings, smells, or sensations.
- The “I cannot get clean” feeling is your mind’s attempt to remove the memory of violation from your body.
- It is an emotional reaction, not a physical one.
- Washing again and again does not take away the memory, because it is **inside**, not outside.
- The goal is not to erase the past, but to remind your body that it belongs to you now.
- Every gentle act of care teaches your body that it is safe again.

Healthy Ways to Cope

You can find ways to feel clean and safe again without hurting yourself or your skin. These methods focus on **healing, not punishment**.

1. Symbolic Cleansing

- Try washing your hands or face slowly while breathing deeply.
- As you wash, say to yourself:
 - “I am washing away fear.”
 - “I am calm. I am safe now.”
 - “This water helps me start again.”
- You can do this once a day or whenever the feeling returns.
- The goal is to soothe yourself not to scrub the memory away.

2. Clean Clothes and Fresh Spaces

- Freshness can be a small but powerful sign of recovery.
- Change into clean clothes when you feel overwhelmed.
- Change your bedding, open a window, or spray a scent you like.
- Try using a new soap, lotion, or perfume that you choose yourself.
- These small acts help your body link clean with comfort instead of shame.

3. Be Kind to Your Skin

- Scrubbing hard, using harsh chemicals, or washing many times can injure your skin.
- When you hurt your body, it can make the feeling of dirtiness worse.
- Instead, treat your skin gently.
- Use warm water, soft cloths, and a calm touch.
- Focus on feeling **restored**, not punished.
- Say to yourself: "I am caring for my body. My body deserves gentleness."

ACTIVITY: MY CLEANSING RITUAL

This page helps you plan a safe, calming way to feel clean and renewed when the feeling returns.

What helps me feel clean and calm	How it helps	When I can do it
Washing my hands slowly	Helps me feel calm and steady	Before bed or after a hard day
Changing my clothes	Reminds me that the moment has passed	When I start to feel dirty
Using a scented soap I like	Gives me a feeling of freshness	In the morning
Taking slow breaths as I wash	Calms my heart and thoughts	Anytime I feel tense

What helps me feel clean and calm	How it helps	When I can do it

My statement to remember:

I am clean and worthy. What happened to me does not make me unclean or unworthy.

Coping In the Weeks and Months After

Rebuilding Control

- Sexual assault takes away your choice and control.
- After the event, it can feel like your body, your feelings, and your life are no longer your own.
- Healing is about taking back control, step by step, and showing yourself that you can make decisions again.

Why Control Matters

- When trauma happens, your body and mind go into survival mode.
- This is necessary to stay alive, but it often leaves you feeling powerless afterward.
- Rebuilding control is about practising safe decisions, starting small and gradually increasing.
- Even small choices remind your mind and body that you belong to yourself.

Start Small

- Focus on everyday, low risk decisions first.
- These small choices help you regain confidence and trust in your own judgment.
- Examples:
 - What to eat today
 - What to wear
 - When to shower or rest
 - How to spend your free time
- Celebrate each small choice. Every decision you make safely is a step toward reclaiming your life.

Move to Bigger Decisions

- As small choices become easier, practice making larger life decisions.
- Examples:
 - How to manage your time each week
 - Who to spend time with
 - When and where to go outside or travel
 - Planning personal goals, like learning a skill or joining a programme
- Remember: you do not need to rush. Healing takes time, and control is rebuilt gradually.

ACTIVITY: MY CONTROL PLAN

This worksheet helps you practise noticing choices and taking back control in safe ways.

Small choices I can make today	How I feel after choosing	Next bigger choice I want to try
<i>What I eat for breakfast</i>		
<i>What to wear today</i>		
<i>How to spend my free hour</i>		

ANGER AND RAGE

- After a sexual assault, many survivors feel anger or rage.
- This is a normal response.
- Anger is the body's frustration, fear and feelings of powerlessness.
- Feeling angry does not mean you are bad.
- It means your body is trying to process what happened.
- Anger is a normal human emotion like happiness
- It is how we express anger that is important

1. Physical Activity

- Use your body to release tension:
 - Run or walk fast.
 - Punch a pillow or mattress.
 - Push ups, squats, or stretching.
 - Dance to loud music
 - Go to a rage room
- These activities help your muscles release the trapped energy from anger.

2. Writing or Drawing

- Express your feelings on paper instead of keeping them inside:
- Write down what you are feeling it does not need to make sense.
- Draw shapes, colours, or symbols to represent your anger.
- Tear up the paper or throw it away safely when done.
- This lets your mind and body release the energy safely.

3. Talking to Someone You Trust

- Speak to someone who will listen without judging:
 - A counsellor
 - A friend or family member you trust.
 - Support group members.
- Talking helps your mind process feelings and reminds you that you are not alone.

Dangers of Uncontrolled Anger

- **Turning anger inward:** Hurting yourself, skipping meals, or avoiding sleep
- **Turning anger outward:** Hurting others, breaking things, or shouting aggressively
- Safe expression protects you and others and helps you regain control.

ACTIVITY: MY ANGER PLAN

- This worksheet helps you notice anger and choose safe ways to release it.
- You cannot stop anger from coming, but you **can choose what to do with it safely.**
- Using these tools helps you feel stronger and more in control.

What makes me feel angry	How my body feels	Safe way to release it

TRIGGERS AND AVOIDANCE

- After a sexual assault, certain people, places, sounds, smells, or situations can suddenly make your body feel **afraid or unsafe**, even if nothing dangerous is happening now.
- These are called **triggers**.

Why the Brain Uses Avoidance

- Your brain remembers the trauma and wants to protect you.
- It may tell you to avoid things that remind you of what happened:
 - Avoid certain places.
 - Avoid talking about the assault.
 - Avoid people who remind you of the attacker.
 - Avoidance is natural. It is your body's way of trying to keep you safe.
- However, avoiding everything can also make fear stronger over time.
- Your brain learns that these triggers are too dangerous to face, even when they are safe now.

Gradual Exposure: Reducing the Power of Triggers

- Facing triggers slowly, in safe ways, helps your brain learn the danger is over. This is called gradual exposure.
- Steps:
 - **Identify your triggers:** Make a list of what sets off fear or flashbacks.
 - **Start small:** Pick a trigger that is mild and safe to face.
 - **Face it safely:** Do it in a controlled way, with calming tools ready (grounding, breathing, trusted support).
 - **Increase slowly:** Once the mild trigger feels manageable, try the next one.
 - **Celebrate progress:** Every step shows your brain and body that you are safe.

Example:

Mild trigger: seeing a tree outside a window that reminds you of the assault.

- Step 1: Look at a picture of a tree.
- Step 2: Stand near a tree outside for 1–2 minutes.
- Step 3: Sit under a tree for 5 minutes.
- Step 4: Go for a short walk near trees.

ACTIVITY: MY TRIGGER MAP

This page helps you notice your triggers and plan safe steps to face them.

Trigger	How it makes me feel	Mild step I can try	Safe coping tool to use

Trigger	How it makes me feel	Mild step I can try	Safe coping tool to use

RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST

- After a sexual assault, it is normal to find it hard to trust other people.
- Trauma and especially sexual assault fracture the basic trust we have in others
- You may want to be alone or feel unsafe sharing your feelings.
- These reactions are common after trauma.
- Your brain is trying to protect you from being hurt again.

Why Trust Can Be Hard

- You may worry that people will not believe you or will blame you.
- You may worry that people will change how they treat you, that they will look at you with pity and not empathy and understanding.
- You may feel unsafe around friends, family, or partners.
- You may notice that you avoid social situations, or that you feel tense when someone gets close.
- Remember: Wanting distance or caution is a normal protective response.

Simple Tools for Communication and Boundaries

- Boundaries help you feel safe in relationships.
- They are ways to protect your space, feelings, and body.
- Say “no” clearly when you do not want to do something.
- Ask for what you need: “I need some time alone right now.”
- Use “I” statements: “I feel upset when...” rather than blaming the other person.
- **Check your comfort level:** You do not need to share details of your assault if you are not ready.

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Relationships

- **Healthy ways to cope with feelings with others:**
 - Talking to a friend or counsellor.
 - Spending time with people who listen and respect your feelings.
 - Sharing feelings safely through art, writing, or guided discussion
- **Unhealthy ways to cope with feelings in relationships:**
 - Using sex, drugs, alcohol, or violence to manage anger or sadness
 - Relying on someone who pressures you to do things you do not want.
 - Isolating completely without any support
- Safe relationships help you feel supported and understood.
- Avoid relationships that increase fear, shame, or danger.

ACTIVITY: MY SAFE RELATIONSHIP PLAN

This worksheet helps you notice who is safe and how to protect yourself in relationships.

Person	How I feel around them	What I can safely say or do	Healthy coping support? (Yes/No)
			Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
			Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
			Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
			Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
			Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

It is okay to **take small steps** in trusting people.
 Notice who respects your feelings and boundaries.
 Those are safe relationships.

Medium To Long Term Healing

SELF-COMPASSION AND IDENTITY

- Healing from sexual assault is not only about coping with the immediate aftermath.
- It is also about **seeing yourself as more than the assault.**
- The assault may feel like it defines you, but it does **not change your value, dignity, or rights.**

Self-Blame and Internalised Shame

- Many survivors blame themselves or feel shame:
 - “It is my fault.”
 - “I should have done something differently.”
 - “I am dirty or broken.”
- These thoughts are **normal trauma reactions**, but they are **not true.**
- The responsibility for the assault belongs entirely to the person who caused it.
- Your feelings of shame or guilt are part of your body and mind trying to process the trauma.
- You can notice them without letting them control how you see yourself.

Affirming Dignity and Worth

- You are a person with rights, needs, and feelings that matter.
You are entitled to:
 - Safety
 - Respect
 - Time to heal at your own pace.
 - Support from trusted people
- These are facts, not compliments.
- You do not need to “earn” your worth or “forgive” yourself to be worthy.

ACTIVITY: WHO I AM BEYOND THE ASSAULT

- This worksheet helps you focus on your identity and strengths separate from the assault.
- You can return to this activity whenever you feel shame or self-blame.
- It reminds your mind and body that **you are a whole person**, and the assault does not define your worth.

My role or identity	Something I do well	How it shows my strength or value

Reflection question:

“If someone only knew me by what happened to me, what would they miss about who I really am?”

Write a short answer or draw something that represents your life, skills, or interests beyond the assault:

MANAGING NIGHTMARES AND SLEEP

- After sexual assault, many survivors have **trouble sleeping** or experience **nightmares**.
- Nightmares are **your brain's way of trying to process trauma**.
- They are not a sign that you are weak or "crazy."
- Your body and mind are working to make sense of what happened, even while you sleep.

Tools for Better Sleep

- **Pre Sleep Rituals**
 - Prepare your mind and body for rest:
 - Take a warm shower or bath.
 - Change into comfortable clothing.
 - Dim the lights.
 - Avoid phones or loud noises.
 - Routines tell your brain that it is **time to rest and feel safe**.
- **Writing and Rewriting Nightmares**
 - If a nightmare repeats:
 - Write down what happened in the dream.
 - Change the ending to something safe and positive.
 - Example: instead of being trapped, you escape or get help
 - Read it back to yourself before bed.
 - This helps your brain feel **less threatened** by the memory.
- **Calming Routines**
 - Use simple tools to relax before sleep:
 - Listening to quiet music or nature sounds
 - Using a comforting scent, like lavender or soap
 - Wrapping in a warm blanket or putting a pillow under your arms
 - Deep breathing or slow stretches
 - These signals help your body understand: **I am safe now. I can rest.**

Moving Forward

Realistic Expectations and Persistence

- Healing from sexual assault is **not a straight line**.
- Some days will feel easier, calmer, or safer.
- Other days may feel harder, with stronger emotions, flashbacks, or panic.
- This is **normal**. Healing is a process, not a race or test.
- Progress is about **consistency**, not perfection.
- Even when you feel setbacks, using your skills keeps your mind and body learning safety and control.

What Helps

- **Accept ups and downs:** Difficult days do not mean failure. They are part of progress.
- **Focus on persistence, not perfection:** Small, consistent steps matter more than doing everything perfectly.
- **Celebrate small wins:** Every time you use a coping skill, notice it.
- **Be patient with yourself:** Your mind and body are learning to feel safe again.

ACTIVITY: MY HEALING TRACKER

This worksheet helps you notice progress and be realistic about your healing journey.

Date	How I felt today	Skill or tool I used	One small win I achieved

Reflection question:

"What coping skill did I use today that shows I am making progress?"

BUILDING ROUTINE, GOALS, AND DAILY COPING

- Healing is helped by **structure and practice**.
- Daily routines and personal goals give your mind and body a sense of **safety and control**.

1. Setting Personal Goals

Start with small, realistic goals that you can achieve.

- What time to wake up or go to bed
- Exercise or walking a few minutes each day.
- Practising grounding, breathing, or writing skills
- Spending time with a trusted person

Gradually, add larger goals:

- Learning a new skill
- Finding work, volunteering, or joining a programme
- Building supportive relationships

Goals do not have to be big. Small steps matter more for building confidence and control.

2. Building Routine and Stability

Routines help your body know what to expect, which reduces fear and panic.

- Wake up and go to bed at roughly the same time.
- Eat regular meals.
- Schedule daily coping activities (grounding, exercise, journaling)
- Plan small pleasurable activities, like listening to music or reading.

Even simple routines give your body and mind **predictability and safety**.

3. Recognising Triggers Early

The earlier you notice a trigger, the easier it is to use coping tools.

- Keep a **trigger log** (write what caused distress and what helped)
- Practice grounding, breathing, or other tools **before strong emotions take over**.
- Review coping skills daily to strengthen their use.

ACTIVITY: MY DAILY COPING PLAN

- This worksheet helps you plan and track daily goals, routines, and coping strategies.
- Use this plan every day.
- Over time, your body and mind will **learn safety and control**, making coping tools easier to use automatically.

Time / Part of Day	Goal or Routine	Possible Trigger	Coping Tool I Will Use	How I Felt
Morning				
Midday				
Afternoon				
Evening				
Any time				

DAILY SKILLS CHECKLIST / QUICK REFERENCE

- Use this sheet every day to practise coping skills, notice triggers, and track progress.
- Check off what you do and note how it helps you feel.
- You do not need to do everything perfectly.
- Choose 1–3 skills each day to focus on.
- Check off what you did.
- Reflect on how your body and mind feel afterward.

1. Grounding and Safety

- 5–4–3–2–1 method (name 5 things you see, 4 things you touch, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, 1 thing you taste)
- Slow, counted breathing (inhale 4, hold 2, exhale 6)
- Hold something solid or use temperature (cold water, stone, wall)

2. Managing Panic and Flashbacks

- Name 3 things in the room
- Stamp feet or move body and say: “I am safe now.”
- Use strong scent to interrupt flashback (menthol, eucalyptus)
- Grounding or breathing tools.

3. “I Cannot Get Clean” Feeling

- Wash hands or face slowly while breathing.
- Use clean clothes, bedding, or preferred soap scent.
- Gentle touch focus on restoration, not punishment

4. Rebuilding Control

- Make one small choice (what to eat, wear, or do)
- Plan a bigger choice for later.
- Celebrate each safe decision.

5. Anger and Rage

- Physical activity (run, push ups, punch pillow)
- Write or draw what anger feels like
- Talk to a trusted person or support worker.
- Avoid hurting yourself or others.

6. Triggers and Avoidance

- Identify triggers (write or think about them)
- Use gradual exposure safely with coping tools.
- Practice grounding or breathing when triggers appear.

7. Relationships and Trust

- Set boundaries: say “no” or “I need space.”
- Use “I” statements to communicate feelings.

- Choose safe, supportive people.
- Avoid harmful coping relationships (substances, violence, unsafe sex)

8. Reconnecting with Your Body

- Mindful walking, stretching, yoga, or dancing.
- Body scan: notice tension safely
- Breathe slowly and notice sensations.

9. Nightmares and Sleep

- Pre sleep ritual (warm shower, clean clothes, dim lights)
- Write and rewrite nightmare endings.
- Use calming tools (music, scent, warmth)

10. Self Compassion and Identity

- Notice strengths and skills beyond the assault.
- Challenge self-blame or shame.
- Remind yourself: "I am whole. The assault does not define me."

11. Daily Goals and Routine

- Wake up and go to bed at planned times.
- Eat regular meals and drink water.
- Practise coping skills daily.
- Connect with supportive people.
- Track one small win each day.

SELF-CARE ROUTINE CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to create a self-care routine that promotes your wellbeing and allows you to prioritize self-care in your daily life. Customize it to fit your preferences and needs.

Physical Self Care	
Get sufficient sleep (7-9 hours) every night	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engage in regular exercise or physical activity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eat a balanced and nutritious diet	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stay hydrated by drinking enough water throughout the day	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice good personal hygiene habits	<input type="checkbox"/>
Take breaks and stretch regularly, especially if you have a sedentary lifestyle	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule regular health check-ups and appointments	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotional and Mental Self Care	
Engage in activities that bring you joy and relaxation (e.g., hobbies, reading, listening to music)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice mindfulness or meditation to calm your mind and reduce stress	<input type="checkbox"/>
Express your emotions through journaling or talking with a trusted friend or therapist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set healthy boundaries in your relationships and prioritize your emotional wellbeing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engage in positive self-talk and practice self-compassion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limit exposure to negative news or triggers that impact your mental wellbeing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engage in activities that stimulate your creativity and imagination	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Self Care	
Nurture relationships with friends, family, and loved ones	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan and engage in social activities that bring you joy and connection	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seek support and reach out to others when you need it	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice active listening and meaningful communication with others	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surround yourself with positive and supportive people	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engage in acts of kindness and contribute to your community	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spiritual Self Care	
Engage in activities that align with your values and beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spend time in nature and appreciate its beauty	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice meditation, prayer, or reflection to connect with your inner self	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seek inspiration from books, podcasts, or spiritual teachings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engage in activities that promote gratitude and a sense of purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explore your spirituality and engage in rituals or practices that bring you peace	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pampering and Relaxation	
Take warm baths or showers with soothing products	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indulge in a spa day or pamper yourself with selfcare treatments	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set aside time for relaxation activities such as reading, taking walks, or listening to calming music	<input type="checkbox"/>
Treat yourself to a massage or other therapeutic bodywork	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engage in hobbies or activities that help you unwind and recharge	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create a cozy and inviting space at home where you can relax	<input type="checkbox"/>

CHECKLIST: ASSESSING HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY HABITS

For each habit listed below, mark whether it is a healthy or unhealthy habit for you personally. Be honest with yourself and consider the impact of each habit on your overall wellbeing.

Physical Health:	I Do This	I Don't Do This
Regular exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficient sleep (7-9 hours per night)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Balanced and nutritious diet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drinking enough water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoiding excessive alcohol consumption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoiding smoking or tobacco use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular medical check ups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental and Emotional Health:	I Do This	I Don't Do This
Engaging in stress reducing activities (e.g., mindfulness, meditation, hobbies)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seeking support from friends, family, or professionals when needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Setting and prioritizing realistic goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintaining a positive mindset	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practicing self-care and self-compassion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing time effectively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practicing relaxation techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Health:	I Do This	I Don't Do This
Maintaining supportive and positive relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engaging in social activities and connecting with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating effectively and assertively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respecting personal boundaries and the boundaries of others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Balancing time spent alone, and time spent with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participating in community or volunteer activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Productivity and Time Management:	I Do This	I Don't Do This
Prioritizing tasks and setting clear goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoiding procrastination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing and minimizing distractions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Setting healthy work life boundaries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking breaks and practicing self-care during work/study sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seeking help or delegating tasks when necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Screen Time and Digital Habits:	I Do This	I Don't Do This
Limiting excessive screen time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practicing healthy online boundaries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoiding excessive social media usage or comparing oneself to others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Balancing screen time with offline activities and face to face interactions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using technology for productive purposes and personal growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Personal Hygiene:	I Do This	I Don't Do This
Maintaining regular personal hygiene practices (e.g., showering, brushing teeth)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Washing hands regularly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking care of hair, nails, and skin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wearing clean and appropriate clothing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial Habits:	I Do This	I Don't Do This
Budgeting and managing finances effectively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Saving money regularly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoiding excessive and impulsive spending	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paying bills on time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning and setting financial goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

After assessing each habit, reflect on your checklist and identify areas where you can improve your habits for better overall health and wellbeing. Use this self-assessment as a starting point to make positive changes in your lifestyle and create healthy habits that support your wellbeing.

SELF-CARE CHECKLIST TEMPLATE

PHYSICAL		M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MENTAL		M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EMOTIONAL		M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SPIRITUAL		M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

When to seek professional help

Seeking professional help from a therapist, counsellor, psychiatrist, or other mental health professional can provide you with the support, guidance, and treatment you need to address your mental health concerns and improve your overall wellbeing. Remember that reaching out for help is a sign of strength, and there are resources and support available to assist you on your journey to mental wellness.

If you are experiencing challenges with your mental wellbeing, it is important to seek professional help when:

- A. **PERSISTENT SYMPTOMS:** If you are experiencing persistent symptoms such as prolonged sadness, anxiety, mood swings, or difficulty coping with daily life.
- B. **IMPACT ON FUNCTIONING:** If your mental health symptoms significantly impact your ability to function at work, school, or in your personal relationships.
- C. **RISK OF HARM:** If you have thoughts of self-harm or suicide, or if you are engaging in risky behaviours that jeopardize your safety or wellbeing.
- D. **DIFFICULTY COPING:** If you are having difficulty coping with stress, managing emotions, or finding effective ways to address your mental health concerns.
- E. **INTERFERENCE WITH DAILY LIFE:** If your mental health symptoms interfere with your ability to perform daily tasks, engage in enjoyable activities, or maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- F. **RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS:** If your mental health symptoms are causing strain on your relationships with family, friends, or coworkers.
- G. **PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS:** If you are experiencing physical symptoms such as fatigue, changes in appetite or sleep patterns, headaches, or digestive problems that may be related to your mental health.
- H. **PAST TRAUMA:** If you have a history of trauma or abuse and are experiencing symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, or hypervigilance.
- I. **SUBSTANCE USE:** If you are using alcohol, drugs, or other substances to cope with your mental health symptoms.
- J. **LACK OF IMPROVEMENT:** If you have tried self-help strategies or lifestyle changes but have not seen improvement in your mental health symptoms.

TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND TREATMENTS

There are various types of mental health professionals who provide different types of treatments and support for mental health conditions.

The choice of mental health professional and treatment approach depends on individual needs, preferences, and the nature of the mental health condition. Seeking help from a qualified professional is an important step toward improving mental health and wellbeing, and there are many resources and treatment options available to support individuals on their journey to recovery.

Here are some common types of mental health professionals and treatments they may offer:

1. PSYCHIATRIST:

- a. Psychiatrists are medical doctors who specialize in diagnosing and treating mental health disorders.
- b. They can prescribe medication, provide psychotherapy, and offer other forms of treatment depending in what they have specialised in.

2. PSYCHOLOGIST:

- a. Psychologists have postgraduate degrees in psychology and are trained in assessing, diagnosing, and treating mental health disorders.
- b. They provide psychotherapy, conduct psychological assessments, and may specialize in specific areas such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), or family therapy.

3. CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER:

- a. Clinical social workers have master's degrees in social work (MSW) and are licensed to provide therapy and counselling services.
- b. They help individuals and families navigate social and emotional challenges, provide support, and connect clients with resources and community services.

4. COUNSELLOR OR THERAPIST:

- a. Counsellors or therapists may have honours or master's degrees in counselling, psychology, or related fields and are trained to provide mental health counselling and therapy.
- b. They offer individual, couples, or group therapy sessions to address a wide range of mental health concerns.

5. PSYCHIATRIC NURSE PRACTITIONER:

- a. Psychiatric nurse practitioners (PMHNPs) are registered nurses with advanced training in psychiatric care.
- b. They can assess, diagnose, and treat mental health disorders, prescribe medication, and provide therapy and counselling services.

6. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST (MFT):

- a. Marriage and family therapists specialize in working with couples and families to address relationship issues, communication problems, and family dynamics.

- b. They provide therapy and counselling services to improve interpersonal relationships and resolve conflicts.

7. PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST:

- a. Peer support specialists are individuals with lived experience of mental health challenges who provide support, encouragement, and guidance to others facing similar struggles.
- b. They offer peer support services, share their personal experiences, and help clients navigate the mental health system.

TYPES OF TREATMENTS

1. **MEDICATION MANAGEMENT:** Psychiatrists and psychiatric nurse practitioners may prescribe medications to manage symptoms of mental health disorders, such as antidepressants, anti-anxiety medications, mood stabilizers, or antipsychotic medications.
2. **PSYCHOTHERAPY:** Various forms of psychotherapy, including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), interpersonal therapy (IPT), and psychodynamic therapy, are used to help individuals understand their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, develop coping skills, and make positive changes in their lives.
3. **ALTERNATIVE AND COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES:** Some individuals may benefit from alternative or complementary therapies such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), yoga, acupuncture, art therapy, or music therapy, which can promote relaxation, reduce stress, and enhance wellbeing.
4. **HOSPITALIZATION AND INTENSIVE TREATMENT PROGRAMS:** In severe cases where individuals are at risk of harm to themselves or others, hospitalization, or participation in intensive treatment programs such as partial hospitalization programs (PHPs) or intensive outpatient programs (IOPs) may be necessary to stabilize symptoms and provide intensive therapeutic support.

USING MEDICATION TO MANAGE MENTAL WELLBEING

Using medication to manage mental wellbeing is a common and effective treatment approach for many individuals with mental health conditions. Here is an overview of how medication can be used to support mental wellbeing:

PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATIONS:

Psychiatric medications are prescribed to help alleviate symptoms of mental health disorders and improve overall mental wellbeing. These medications work by affecting neurotransmitters in the brain, which play a role in mood, emotions, and behaviour.

TYPES OF MEDICATIONS:

1. **ANTIDEPRESSANTS:** Used to treat depression, anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mood disorders.
2. **ANTIANSIETY MEDICATIONS:** Help reduce symptoms of anxiety and panic disorders by calming the central nervous system.
3. **Mood Stabilizers:** Used to manage mood swings and stabilize mood in conditions such as bipolar disorder.
4. **ANTIPSYCHOTIC MEDICATIONS:** Prescribed to treat psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions, and disorganized thinking in conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.
5. **STIMULANTS:** Used to treat attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) by increasing focus and attention.

EFFECTIVENESS:

Medication can be highly effective in reducing symptoms and improving quality of life for many individuals with mental health conditions.

It is important to work closely with a healthcare provider to find the right medication and dosage that works best for everyone, as responses to medication can vary.

COMPLEMENTARY TREATMENT:

Medication is often used in combination with other treatment approaches, such as therapy, lifestyle changes, and self-care practices, to achieve optimal results. Therapy can help individuals learn coping skills, address underlying issues, and make positive changes in their lives, complementing the effects of medication.

SAFETY AND MONITORING:

It is essential to take psychiatric medications as prescribed and to follow up with a healthcare provider regularly to monitor their effectiveness and any potential side effects. Some medications may require periodic blood tests or other monitoring to ensure safety and effectiveness.

SIDE EFFECTS:

Like any medication, psychiatric medications can have side effects, which vary depending on the type of medication and individual factors. Common side effects may

include drowsiness, dizziness, weight changes, gastrointestinal issues, and sexual dysfunction. It is important to discuss potential side effects with a healthcare provider and to report any concerns promptly.

RISK BENEFIT ANALYSIS:

When considering medication for mental wellbeing, it is essential to weigh the potential benefits against the risks and to make an informed decision based on individual needs and preferences. In some cases, the benefits of medication may outweigh the risks, especially when symptoms are severe and significantly impact daily functioning.

CONCLUSION:

Medication can be a valuable tool in managing mental wellbeing, particularly when used as part of a comprehensive treatment plan that includes therapy, lifestyle changes, and self-care practices.

It is important to work closely with a healthcare provider to find the right medication and dosage, to monitor for effectiveness and side effects, and to make informed decisions about treatment options.

With proper care and support, medication can play a vital role in helping individuals achieve and maintain mental wellness.



4 Buitensingel St, Schotsche Kloof
Cape Town, South Africa
8001
www.nicro.org.za