Present-moment card

Prepare this while relatively settled. Choose neutral cues that help you; leave out anything uncomfortable.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

MY QUICK ORIENTATION CARD

Where and when I am now

e.g. At home, Monday morning, in the present.

Two or three details around me

e.g. The table, daylight and my current calendar.

Next action / person I can contact

e.g. Contact my agreed support person or return to a small everyday task.

Cues to avoid / changes that help

e.g. Keep eyes open; avoid a cue that feels uncomfortable.

What helped / what to change

e.g. Naming present details helped; discuss any difficulties in therapy.

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Using this resource

Present-moment card

What this helps with

A reminder can make it difficult to stay connected with the room, people or date around you. Present orientation uses ordinary information from your current surroundings to help you re-establish that connection. It is not a demand to feel calm or make memories disappear. A short, personally useful plan can be easier to use than a long checklist. Practise when relatively settled and discuss repeated disorientation with your therapist.

How to use it

1. Choose two or three neutral present-day cues, such as the room, a familiar object or today's date.
2. Decide a brief phrase that states where you are without denying how you feel.
3. Identify an ordinary action, such as looking around or contacting a trusted person.
4. Try the plan gently when settled; skip sensations or cues that feel unhelpful.
5. Record what helped and agree adaptations if it increases distress.

A fictional worked example

After hearing a loud bang outside, Aisha felt briefly pulled away from a conversation. Her therapist had helped her prepare a short orientation plan. She looked towards the window, named the office she was in and noticed her colleague's blue mug. She reminded herself that she was at work on Tuesday, then asked her colleague to repeat the last sentence. The fear did not disappear immediately, but she felt more connected to the room. She did not close her eyes or focus on her breathing because those approaches had felt unhelpful. They later reviewed the episode together without requiring a detailed account of the trauma.

Keep in mind

Use neutral cues and stop if the exercise increases disorientation or distress. If there is current danger, take practical protective action and seek help. Repeated loss of awareness, severe disconnection from yourself or your surroundings or difficulty staying safe needs professional assessment; this sheet is not sufficient support.

Sources and attribution

NICE. (2018). Post-traumatic stress disorder (NG116).

Oxford Centre for Anxiety Disorders and Trauma. PTSD therapy materials: clinical guidance on trigger discrimination and rebuilding life.

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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