



Dealing with Flashbacks:

Tell yourself that you are having a flashback.

Remind yourself that the worst is over. The feelings and sensations you are experiencing are memories of the past.

Get Grounded. This means stamping your feet on the ground so that the child knows you have feet and can get away now if you need to. (As a child, you could not get away..... now you can).

Breathe. When we get frightened, we stop normal breathing. Our body begins to panic because we have not got enough oxygen. Lack of oxygen causes a great deal of panic like pounding in the head, tightness, sweating, feeling faint, shakiness, dizziness. When we breathe deeply enough, a lot of the panic feeling can decrease.

Re-establish to the present. Begin to use your five senses in the present. Look around and see the colours in the room, the shapes of things, the people near, etc. Listen to the sounds in the room, your breathing, traffic, birds, people, cars etc. Feel your body and what is touching it; your clothes, your own arms and hands, the chair or floor supporting you.

Talk to the child in you and tell her she is OK. It is especially important that the child knows that the adult you are is around to take care of her. The child needs to know that it is safe to experience the feelings and let go of the past.

Find your boundaries. Sometimes when we are having a flashback, things get out of proportion we lose the sense of where we end, and the world begins as if we do not have skin. Wrap yourself in a blanket, hold a pillow or soft toy, go to bed, or sit in a cupboard... anything that you can do to make yourself feel safe.

Get help. You may need to be alone or you may want someone near you. In either case it is important that your friends and relations know about flashbacks, so they can help with the process, whether that means letting you be by yourself or being there, whatever is right for you is right.

Take time to regain control. Sometimes flashbacks are immensely powerful. Do not expect yourself to be able to do adult things immediately. Be kind and look after you, do something that you enjoy. Do not punish yourself; you and your child don't deserve it.

Be patient. It takes time to heal the past. It takes time to learn ways of taking care of you, of being an adult who has feelings and developing effective ways of coping in the here and now.