

Match the Need to the Moment

How to use this table:

1. **Notice** the signs.
2. **Identify** what is needed.
3. **Choose** an intervention that matches the need.

	In crisis/ overwhelmed	Feeling emotions and needing support	Stuck in rumination/ looping	Looking for problem solving	Needing containment
Signs	Panic, racing thoughts, can't think clearly, crying uncontrollably, shutting down, feeling trapped, suicidal thoughts, "I can't do this."	Grief, sadness, shame, fear, loneliness, disappointment, hurt, needing someone to listen	Repeating the same story, replaying conversations, asking the same questions, overthinking, seeking certainty, going in circles	Looking for answers, making decisions, practical obstacles, needing information, asking "What should I do?"	Trauma memories, emotionally flooded, too much happening at once, wanting to tell the whole story but becoming more overwhelmed, running out of time
Ask Yourself	What will help the nervous system settle enough to access choices?	Does this need to be fixed, or does it need to be witnessed?	Is more thinking helping, or keeping us stuck?	Is there a problem that can actually be solved right now?	Does this need to be processed right now, or safely held for now?
Goal of intervention	Regulation and safety	Validation and connection	Flexibility and shifting attention	Action and structure	Pacing and stability
Intervention	Grounding, orienting, breathing (if tolerated), sensory strategies, slowing down, safety planning	Validation, reflective listening, naming emotions, mindfulness, self-compassion, journaling, talking with a trusted person	Distress tolerance, grounding, movement, mindfulness, changing environments, choosing one next step	Brainstorming, making a plan, pros/cons, breaking tasks into steps, gathering information, asking for help	Containment exercise, grounding, taking a pause, focusing on the present, scheduling follow-up support

If more than one column fits, start with the most immediate need.