

THE RECOVERY REALITY CHECK TOOLKIT

7 Essential Grounding Exercises
for When Recovery Feels Impossible

By Beyond Eating Recovery

IMPORTANT: This toolkit provides support and coping strategies. It is NOT a substitute for professional treatment. If you're in crisis, please call NEDA: 1-800-931-2237 or 988.

What's Inside

1. Welcome to Your Toolkit
2. Tool #1: The 5-Minute Pre-Meal Body Scan
3. Tool #2: The 'Good Enough' Permission Slip
4. Tool #3: Body Image Crisis Kit
5. Tool #4: Support Text Templates
6. Tool #5: The Emotion Wheel Check-In
7. Tool #6: The 'Urge Surfing' Script
8. Tool #7: The Comparison Detox Plan
9. Additional Resources

Welcome to Your Toolkit

Recovery isn't linear. Some days you'll feel strong, confident, and capable. Other days, the thought of eating breakfast will feel impossible.

This toolkit is for those other days.

Inside, you'll find 7 evidence-based grounding exercises designed specifically for eating disorder recovery. These aren't generic mindfulness tips—they're practical tools created for the moments when:

- You're panicking before a meal
- Body image thoughts are spiraling
- You need to ask for help but don't know what to say
- Recovery feels too hard to continue
- You're comparing yourself to everyone around you

How to Use This Toolkit

- **Print it out** and keep it somewhere accessible (bathroom, bedroom, kitchen)
- **Save it to your phone** so you always have it with you
- **Dog-ear the pages** of exercises that resonate most
- **Share it** with your support team so they understand what helps

■ **PRO TIP:** These tools work best when practiced regularly—not just in crisis moments. Try one exercise per day this week, even when you're feeling okay. Building the muscle memory now makes them easier to access when you really need them.

TOOL #1

The 5-Minute Pre-Meal Body Scan

What It Is

A brief grounding exercise to help you connect with your body *before* eating, reducing meal anxiety and helping you stay present.

Why It Works

Eating disorder thoughts often disconnect you from your physical sensations. This exercise brings you back into your body without judgment, making it easier to nourish yourself.

When to Use It

- Right before meals or snacks
- When anticipatory anxiety is building
- After scrolling social media or seeing triggering content
- Anytime you feel disconnected from physical hunger/fullness

THE EXERCISE (5 minutes)

Step 1: Find Your Ground (1 minute)

- Sit comfortably with feet flat on the floor
- Place one hand on your heart, one on your belly
- Take 3 deep breaths: in for 4, hold for 4, out for 6

Step 2: Body Scan—Feet to Head (3 minutes)

Without judgment, simply notice:

Feet & Legs: Feel your feet on the floor. Wiggle your toes. Notice any tension. Just observe.

Belly & Chest: Feel your breath moving. Notice your heartbeat. Is your stomach tight? Making noise? Just notice.

Arms & Hands: Clenched or relaxed? Let your shoulders drop. Release tension.

Head & Face: Is your jaw clenched? Let it soften. Notice thoughts without attaching to them.

Step 3: Return to Intention (1 minute)

'I am here. I am safe. This food is nourishment, not a threat. I can do hard things.'

PRACTICE LOG

Track your experiences to see patterns:

Date	Before Meal	Emotions (1-10)	What I Noticed	After (1-10)

TOOL #2

The 'Good Enough' Permission Slip

What It Is

A written permission statement you can reference when perfectionism is making recovery feel impossible.

Why It Works

Eating disorders thrive on all-or-nothing thinking. This tool actively challenges the belief that you must be perfect to be worthy of recovery.

When to Use It

- When you've 'broken' a recovery goal
- After eating something you labeled as 'bad'
- When comparing your progress to others
- When feeling like you're failing at recovery

OFFICIAL PERMISSION SLIP

To: Me

From: My Wiser Self

Re: Permission to Be Imperfect

I, _____ [your name], hereby give myself permission to:

- ✓ Have hard days without it meaning I've failed
- ✓ Eat 'imperfectly' and still be worthy of nourishment
- ✓ Feel anxious and still move forward
- ✓ Ask for help without shame
- ✓ Rest when I'm tired
- ✓ Change my mind about what I can handle
- ✓ Be 'good enough' instead of perfect

Recovery is not about doing everything right.
Recovery is about showing up, even when it's messy.

I am good enough, exactly as I am, right now.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

YOUR PERSONAL PERMISSION ADDITIONS

What else do you need permission to do or feel? Write your own additions:

1. I give myself permission to:	
2. I give myself permission to:	
3. I give myself permission to:	

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TOOL #3

Body Image Crisis Kit

What It Is

A 7-step protocol for when body image thoughts feel unbearable.

THE 7-STEP PROTOCOL

STEP 1: NAME IT

Say out loud: "I'm having body image thoughts right now. This is a thought, not a fact."

STEP 2: PAUSE THE SCALE

Step away from scales. Your weight is not your worth.

STEP 3: IDENTIFY THE REAL FEELING

Body image thoughts often mask other emotions. What's really going on?

STEP 4: GROUND IN YOUR BODY

Do 3 minutes of breathing deeply and notice what you feel inside.

STEP 5: CHALLENGE THE THOUGHT

Write 3 things your body has done for you today—not how it looks.

STEP 6: USE A COUNTER-STATEMENT

"My worth is not determined by my appearance." Choose what resonates.

STEP 7: DISTRACT WITH PURPOSE

Do something unrelated to appearance for 20 minutes. Call a friend, read, create.

Body Image Thought Log

Track patterns to identify triggers:

When did it happen? _____

What triggered it? _____

Intensity (1-10): _____

What helped? _____

How long did it last? _____

TOOL #4

Support Text Templates

What It Is

Pre-written text messages you can copy-paste when you need help but don't have the energy to explain.

Why It Works

Eating disorders create shame around asking for help. Having templates removes the barrier of 'What do I even say?'

Pre-Meal Support:

"Hey, I'm about to eat [meal] and I'm really anxious. Can you text with me for the next 20 minutes? Just knowing you're there helps."

Crisis Moment:

"I'm struggling with [urge] right now. Can you help me stay accountable for the next hour?"

Body Image Spiral:

"Having a really hard body image day. I don't need you to fix it—I just need to know I'm not alone."

General Check-In:

"Recovery is really hard today. I'm not in crisis, just struggling. Could use some encouragement if you have time."

Boundary Setting:

"Please don't comment on my appearance or food choices right now. It's triggering. This would help me feel safer."

Asking for Accountability:

"Can you text me in [time] to make sure I ate [meal]? I'm more likely to follow through if someone's checking in."

MY SUPPORT TEAM

Name	Phone	Best For

TOOL #5

The Emotion Wheel Check-In

What It Is

A visual tool to help you identify and name specific emotions—crucial because eating disorders often numb emotional awareness.

Why It Works

'I feel bad' is too vague to address. Naming the specific emotion (lonely, ashamed, fear, sadness, hurt, angry) helps you respond appropriately instead of turning to ED behaviors.

CORE EMOTIONS & SPECIFIC FEELINGS or THOUGHTS

ANGER Furious, irritated, frustrated • Critical (judgmental, skeptical) • Threatened (insecure, jealous)

SAD: Disappointed, desire to cry • Empty, hopeless, worthless

LONELY Isolated, thinking you are abandoned

SCARED: Worried, overwhelmed, panicked • Insecure (inadequate, inferior) • Rejected (excluded, judged)

HAPPY: Excited (energized, hopeful, proud) • Content (peaceful, satisfied, grateful) • Playful (silly, joyful, free)

HURT: Disappointment, pain

ASHAMED: Deep sense of unworthiness

EMOTION CHECK-IN PRACTICE

Right now, I feel: _____

Where do I feel it in my body?

■ Tight chest ■ Clenched jaw ■ Stomach discomfort ■ Tension in shoulders

What triggered this feeling? _____

What does this emotion need?

■ Rest ■ Connection ■ Boundaries ■ To be heard ■ To cry ■ To move

One thing I can do right now: _____

TOOL #6

The 'Urge Surfing' Script

What It Is

A guided self-talk script for riding out urges to engage in ED behaviors without acting on them.

Why It Works

Based on Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), urge surfing teaches you that urges peak and pass—usually within 20-30 minutes. You don't have to act on every urge.

THE SCRIPT

(Read this out loud or in your head when the urge hits)

I'm having an urge to [specific ED behavior] right now.

This is an urge. It's not a command.

Urges feel urgent, but they are temporary. They rise, peak, and fall—like a wave.

I don't have to act on this urge to make it go away. I can watch it, like I'm watching a wave from the shore.

Here's what I know:

- This urge will pass, whether I act on it or not
- Acting on it brings temporary relief, then shame
- NOT acting on it builds my recovery muscle
- I've survived 100% of my urges so far

Right now, the urge is at: _____ (1-10)

I'm setting a timer for 10 minutes. I'll do something else while I wait:

■ Shower ■ Call someone ■ Walk ■ Puzzle ■ Music ■ Journal

After 10 minutes, the urge is at: _____ (1-10)

I can do hard things. This urge does not control me.

URGE TRACKING SHEET

Date/Time	Urge Type	Intensity (1-10)	What I Did Instead	After 20 Min (1-10)

TOOL #7

The Comparison Detox Plan

What It Is

A structured 7-day challenge to reduce comparison and cultivate self-focus.

Why It Works

Comparison is the thief of joy—and recovery. Social media, diet culture, and even well-meaning people can trigger comparison spirals. This plan helps you reclaim your attention.

THE 7-DAY PLAN

DAY 1: The Audit

Unfollow/mute anyone who posts diet content, focuses on appearance, or makes you feel 'less than.'
Count: _____

DAY 2: The Replacement

Follow accounts promoting body diversity, ED recovery, anti-diet culture, and your hobbies.

DAY 3: The Scale Fast

Avoid the scale or any measurement tool for 24 hours. What did you notice? _____

DAY 4: The Gratitude Shift

Every time you compare, list 3 things you're grateful for about yourself (not your body).

DAY 5: The Compliment Flip

Give 3 compliments to others that have NOTHING to do with appearance.

DAY 6: The Social Media Break

Full 24-hour break from all social media. How did it feel? _____

DAY 7: The Reflection

What changed? What boundaries are you setting going forward? _____

ONGOING COMPARISON SCRIPTS

- Don't think: 'She looks so much better than me.'
- Do think: 'Her body is her business. My body is mine. We're both worthy.'

- Don't think: 'Everyone else is recovering faster.'
- Do think: 'Recovery is not a race. My timeline is right for me.'

- Don't think: 'I'll never look like [person].'
- Do think: 'I don't need to look like anyone else. My goal is peace in MY body.'

Your Next Steps

You've now completed the **Recovery Reality Check Toolkit**.

Here's what to do now:

- **1. Choose ONE tool to practice this week**

Which resonated most? Practice it daily, even on good days.

- **2. Set a reminder**

Building muscle memory makes these tools more accessible in crisis.

- **3. Share this toolkit**

Know someone who could benefit? Recovery is less lonely when we share.

- **4. Keep learning**

Visit the Beyond Eating Recovery website for more resources at beyondeatingrecovery.com

Additional Resources

Crisis Support:

- NEDA Hotline: 1-800-931-2237 (call/text)
- Crisis Text Line: Text 'NEDA' to 741741
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988

Treatment Finder:

- NEDA Treatment Finder: www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/treatment
- ANAD Support: www.anad.org

Recommended Reading:

- 'Life Without Ed' by Jenni Schaefer
- 'Body Respect' by Linda Bacon & Lucy Aphramor
- '8 Keys to Recovery from an Eating Disorder' by Carolyn Costin
- 'Intuitive Eating' by Evelyn Tribole & Elyse Resch
- 'If Your Hunger Could Talk' by Anne Cuthbert

***You are not alone.
Recovery is possible.
You deserve peace.***

About Beyond Eating Recovery

Beyond Eating Recovery is a weekly newsletter dedicated to the honest, messy reality of eating disorder recovery. We believe recovery isn't linear, you don't have to love your body (just stop hating it), and you deserve support without shame.

Learn more at: beyondeatingrecovery.com

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