

Coping with Amygdala Hijacking

Though very effective in preventing amygdala hijacks, it can take time to learn and incorporate mindfulness and stress management into your daily routine. If despite your best efforts at prevention, you find yourself in the middle of a hijack, there are a number of things you can do to quickly get your unwanted emotions under control:

- **Name it.** Notice when you've been triggered and identify what's triggering you. Notice changes in your tone, tightness in your chest or stomach, clenching in your jaw or hands, etc. In these moments, say to yourself, "I'm feeling triggered right now."
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- **Remember the 6-second rule.** It takes the chemicals that are released during the amygdala hijacking about 6 seconds to dissipate. Using this time to focus on something pleasant will prevent your amygdala from taking control and causing an emotional reaction
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- **Breathe.** Become aware of your breath and slow it down. When you slow down your breathing and make it rhythmic, you activate the parasympathetic nervous system which is your rest response. This type of deep breathing calms down your nervous system and allows you to make thoughtful decisions in stressful times.
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- **Draw on mindfulness.** Look around you and notice things in the environment. This will help you to move out of your head and back into the present.
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- **Take a timeout.** If you are truly feeling out of control, excuse yourself from the situation you are in to get a hold of your emotions.