

The Conflict Resolution Blueprint

This blueprint gives you practical, science-backed techniques to quickly regulate your nervous system during moments of stress or anxiety. By following these steps, you'll respond thoughtfully rather than react emotionally. Remember: the goal isn't to never feel triggered, but to recover quickly when you do.

Step 1: Recognize Your Triggers

Before you can regulate your response, identify your personal triggers. Physical sensations: tightness in chest, racing heart, shallow breathing. Emotional cues: feeling frustrated, angry, or shut down. Thought patterns: black-and-white thinking, catastrophising, and ruminating over a situation that can't be changed.

Action step: Create a 'trigger inventory' by noting situations that consistently activate your stress response and looking for patterns.

Step 2: Pause and Breathe (30–60 seconds)

When triggered, your amygdala activates fight-or-flight. Interrupt it: inhale slowly through your nose for 4 counts, hold for 2, exhale slowly through your mouth for 6. Repeat 3–5 times. The science: this pattern activates your vagus nerve, shifting you from sympathetic (fight-or-flight) to parasympathetic (rest-and-digest) activation.

Action step: Practice the 4-2-6 pattern often so it's automatic under pressure.

Step 3: Ground Yourself (60 seconds)

Use the 5-4-3-2-1 sensory grounding technique: 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell (or like the smell of), 1 thing you can taste. The science: this activates your prefrontal cortex, helping you regain access to rational thinking.

Action step: Run one full 5-4-3-2-1 round wherever you are.

Step 4: Reframe the Situation (90 seconds)

Shift perspective with questions: What need of mine is not being met? Can I accept what I cannot change? What would my wisest self advise me to do here? The science: cognitive reframing reduces amygdala activity and allows more nuanced thinking.

Action step: Pick the one reframing question that lands hardest and memorise it.

Step 5: Respond Intentionally (Not Reactively)

With your nervous system regulated, choose your response. Name your experience: 'I notice I'm feeling upset/frustrated right now.' Tell your brain "Not helpful" when you find yourself ruminating on the past. Then get up and do something different, e.g. make a cup of tea or go for a walk in nature. Set a boundary: 'I'm not listening to these looping thoughts'. Naming emotions reduces amygdala activation; changing your location intentionally creates a change in your thoughts and feelings.

Action step: Choose your go-to response sentence for your next difficult situation.

Daily Practice for Lasting Results

Morning routine: 3–5 minutes of conscious breathing. Throughout the day: brief body scans to notice tension. Before difficult situations: practice steps 1–2 proactively. Evening reflection: review triggers and responses from the day.

Action step: Add the 3-minute morning breath practice to tomorrow's routine.

'Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response.' — Viktor Frankl