

The Digital Trauma Recovery Kit

5 pages for after the internet decided you were entertainment

The First 72 Hours

When you find out the internet has turned you into content, your nervous system floods. Your brain wants to keep scrolling, keep monitoring, keep proving – because in an attack, information feels like safety. It isn't. Monitoring isn't self-defense; it's re-injury.

The first 72 hours, you don't decide anything about your life. You decide only the next hour. Here's the plan.

The 72-Hour Survival Plan

- **HOUR 1: Close the tab. Not 'one more refresh' – close it. Your amygdala is driving now; it can't assess anything**
- **HOUR 1: Tell one safe person – out loud. Holding the secret alone is the single biggest predictor of a panic spiral. Say: 'Something bad happened online. I need you to know so I'm not alone in it'**
- **HOUR 2: Screenshot the evidence for your records – then stop looking. Evidence is for later, when you can think; today it's for your future self, not your current panic**
- **HOUR 2: Change the notification settings. Turn off mentions, DMs from strangers, and app badges for 72 hours. The algorithm is not your ally right now**
- **HOUR 3: Do the 3-sense grounding move: name 3 things you can see, 2 you can hear, 1 you can feel. Do it every time the urge to refresh spikes**
- **DAY 1 NIGHT: Put the phone in another room. The 2 a.m. spiral is not information – it's your brain trying to 'solve' a threat by replaying it**
- **DAY 2: Tell the second safe person. One is survival, two is a support team. You're allowed to need more than one human**
- **DAY 3: Make one offline plan – a meal with a friend, a walk, a task that uses your hands. Proof that the real world still works**

What hypervigilance is	What it feels like	What to tell yourself
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A normal response to a real threat	Every notification feels like an attack	This felt justified because something DID happen. My system is responding to a real event
Not paranoia – it's calibration	I keep scanning even when it's quiet	Quiet feels wrong because my brain is still on alert. Quiet is not a setup – it's the absence of noise
It will fade with safety	I can't stop checking	Checking isn't safety – it's re-injury. Real safety is the closed tab
You are not 'crazy' for this	Maybe I'm overreacting	Hypervigilance after harassment is a standard human response. You are not broken, you are reacting

5 Grounding Cards for the Spiral

Print these, put them on your phone case, or keep them in a notes app.
Two a.m. you isn't going to read a paragraph – it needs one line.

The 3-Sense Move

When: The urge to refresh spikes

Do: Name 3 things you can see, 2 you can hear, 1 you can feel

Then: Close the app. It worked. The impulse passed

The One-Hour Rule

When: 'I need to explain myself to them'

Do: Wait one hour before engaging with anything

Then: Re-decide with a calm brain. If it's still worth it, plan it – don't send it raw

The 'This Is Not a Court' Card

When: The need to defend yourself online is overwhelming

Do: Remember: the crowd is not a jury, and your worth is not on trial

Then: Go do something physical – the spiral can't run while your body is moving

The Evidence Card

When: I keep re-reading what they said

Do: Tell yourself: we already saved the evidence. We don't need to re-wound to protect the record

Then: Re-read only what your future lawyer/self needs. Close the rest

The 'I Am Not the Story' Card

When: I feel reduced to what they're saying about me

Do: Remember that the 'you' they made up is a character they wrote – it's not you

Then: Do one thing that only the real you would do – a craft, a song, a call with someone who knows you

These cards are survival tools, not cures. If the spiral is unmanageable, talk to a professional – this is not meant to replace that.

Script 1: To the Person Who Says 'Just Ignore It'

"I know it seems simple from the outside. But something real happened to me – I was targeted, mocked, and discussed without my consent. 'Just ignoring it' isn't possible yet. What I need from you right now is a 'that really happened and I'm sorry,' not a fix."

Script 2: To a Partner / Loved One

"I found something online that made me feel unsafe. I'm telling you because I need you to know why I might be distant, glued to my phone, or not sleeping for a few days. I'm not broken – I'm processing. What helps most is you being here without asking me to perform okay."

Script 3: To the Friend Who Finds It

"If you see something about me online, please don't send it to me. I already know it exists, and seeing it re-injures me. If you want to help, save it for my records and tell me in one sentence: 'I saw it, I'm on your side, I didn't engage.'"

Script 4: To Yourself, 2 a.m.

"I'm not 'letting them win' by stepping away. I'm protecting the only person I can control – me. I don't owe strangers an explanation. The real world is still real, and I'm still here."

Telling a Loved One What Happened

The hardest sentence is the first one. Here's a path through it.

You: "I need to tell you something, and I need you to just listen first."

- They say 'of course' ? +Safety

You: "I found a thread. People are discussing me – mocking me, making jokes. I'm scared and I'm exhausted and I don't know what to do with it."

- They respond with care ? +Supported

Loved one: "That's awful. I'm so sorry. You don't deserve that. I'm not going anywhere." – You told the truth and you were met. That's the whole win.

- They try to fix it immediately ? +Boundary Needed

Loved one: "Just report it and move on!"

- Ask for presence not fixes ? +Boundary Held

You: "I hear you trying to help. What I need right now isn't a solution – it's you acknowledging that this happened and that it matters. Can you do that first?" – You redirected the conversation toward what you actually need. +Boundary Held.

You don't have to explain the whole internet. You just have to tell one safe person.

The Ground Is Still There

The internet decided you were entertainment. It was wrong. You are a person, not content. The thread will end, the algorithm will move on, and the real world – where you eat, sleep, love, and matter – is still standing. You survived the finding. Now you survive the first 72 hours. One hour at a time. From The Unadulging Society · sfwagere.com