WORDS YOU CAN BORROW

Ask for less. Ask for space. Ask for support.

Try this with someone safe:

“I’m overwhelmed. I need a quieter place and one thing at a time. Can you sit with me while I figure out my next step?”

For touch or intimacy: “I want to slow down. Please ask before touching me.” You can pause or stop, even if you agreed earlier.

One sentence I can use:

Someone who respects my limits:

A place where I could take a break:

If a conversation feels unsafe, prioritize getting support and a safer place. You do not have to keep explaining.

PROGRESS IS PROGRESS

A pause can be progress.

Noticing sooner. Asking for quiet. Letting someone help. These are choices worth recognizing.

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www.progresscounselingprograms.com

US SUPPORT

Medical emergency or suspected overdose: call 911.

Emotional distress or suicidal crisis: call or text 988.

Find substance use and mental health treatment: FindTreatment.gov

General adult education. Not medical care or a substitute for individualized treatment. This guide is not an emergency service.

SOURCES / FURTHER READING

NHS inform / Grounding & sensory options

NHS / Breathing exercises for stress

NIMH / Caring for Your Mental Health

RAINN / Consent 101

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Adult edition • Review 01 • October 2026

When everything feels too much.

You can make the moment smaller. You can ask for what you need.



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01 / NOTICE YOUR SIGNALS

Catch the moment before it grows.

Too much noise. A hard text. Too many requests. Notice what changes for you when it starts to feel like too much.

YOUR SIGNS MAY LOOK DIFFERENT

A tight jaw. Losing words. Snapping. Going quiet. Wanting to get away. These are things to notice, not a diagnosis.

NAME WHAT IS ADDING UP

Noise, light, conflict, hunger, tiredness, or too many decisions? You do not have to identify every cause before asking for help.

An early sign I notice:

Something that adds to it:

MORE SUPPORT IS AN OPTION

If this keeps disrupting daily life or you are worried about using, contact a health care or recovery support. New or severe physical symptoms need medical assessment; do not assume they are stress.

02 / MAKE THE MOMENT SMALLER

Choose one thing to ease.

Try one safe, available option. Skip anything that makes it worse.

LESS COMING AT YOU

Try a quieter place, softer light, or paused notifications when safe. Ask for one question at a time.

A SIMPLE ANCHOR

Name three neutral things you see, or notice the support of a chair. Choose what fits your senses.

BREATHING IS OPTIONAL

Let your breath move gently if that helps. No forcing. If focusing on breathing is uncomfortable, try another anchor.

One option I can try:

What would make it possible?

You do not have to feel completely calm to take one useful step.

03 / MAKE A PLAN THAT FITS

Notice. Choose. Check back.

Practice when you have some room to think. Keep the plan short enough to use on a hard day.

A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

“When noise makes talking hard, I’ll ask for a quieter place or text someone safe.”

When I notice:

I can reduce or pause:

I can ask this person for help:

AFTERWARD, NOTICE

What got easier? What was uncomfortable or unavailable? What might fit next time?

What helped, even a little:

What I will change next time:

If one tool did not fit, you can try another or ask for more support. Progress is progress.