

TOOL

# How to Return to Presence

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# How to Return to Presence

## **Purpose**

This tool helps you recognize when you've moved out of presence in a coaching conversation and offers simple ways to return, so you can listen deeply and respond intentionally.

## **When to Use**

Use this tool when you notice yourself feeling reactive—wanting to fix, feeling impatient, anxious, judgmental, or unsure—or when you recognize that your attention has shifted away from your client and onto your own thoughts or emotions.

## **How to Use It**

Identify what you're feeling, then use the corresponding prompts and strategies to ground yourself. You don't need to do everything—choose one or two small actions that help you return to presence. Over time, you'll internalize the strategies that work best for you and use them automatically.

# How to Return to Presence

When you feel...	Tell yourself...	Try this strategy...
Like you want to fix someone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I'm afraid that I'm not doing a good job; it's okay to feel afraid.</i></li> <li>• <i>What if all I need to do is listen? What if helping is that easy?</i></li> <li>• <i>Give the process a chance.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember how it feels when others want to fix you.</li> <li>• Remind yourself you don't need to save anyone.</li> <li>• Recall a few things your client knows how to do well.</li> <li>• Assure yourself that if your client doesn't get to any of their own solutions, you can offer one or two.</li> </ul>
Impatient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>There is enough time.</i></li> <li>• <i>Is there some sadness or fear here? Can I acknowledge it?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge any fear or sadness that's present and resist the inclination to understand it or get rid of it right away.</li> <li>• Take a few deep breaths.</li> <li>• Identify one thing you appreciate about your client.</li> </ul>
Stressed or anxious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I'm feeling anxious. I don't need to get rid of it now; I just need to notice it.</i></li> <li>• <i>There'll be time to explore my worries—I'll come back to them at 4:45 pm.</i></li> <li>• <i>Right here, right now, everything is okay.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a few deep breaths.</li> <li>• Feel the pull of gravity on your body.</li> <li>• Notice sounds, scents, or colors in your environment.</li> </ul>
Judgmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I remember what it feels like when I'm judged, and it doesn't feel good.</i></li> <li>• <i>I'm not inherently better than anyone else.</i></li> <li>• <i>I wonder why they've made the choices they've made.</i></li> <li>• <i>Is there any fear present for me?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice how your body feels and see if you can relax one or two areas, such as your shoulders or jaw.</li> <li>• Identify a couple of things you appreciate about your client.</li> <li>• Imagine your client as a five-year-old child playing.</li> </ul>
Insecurity or fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I'm safe right now.</i></li> <li>• <i>After this session ends, I'll explore these feelings.</i></li> <li>• <i>Fear is a normal human emotion, and there are ways to manage it.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a few deep breaths.</li> <li>• Feel your body in your seat and your feet on the floor.</li> <li>• Commit to exploring the roots of the fear.</li> <li>• Imagine being inside a protective bubble where nothing can hurt you.</li> </ul>

Table 4.1 © Elena Aguilar, *Arise: The Art of Transformational Coaching*. Jossey-Bass, 2024

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