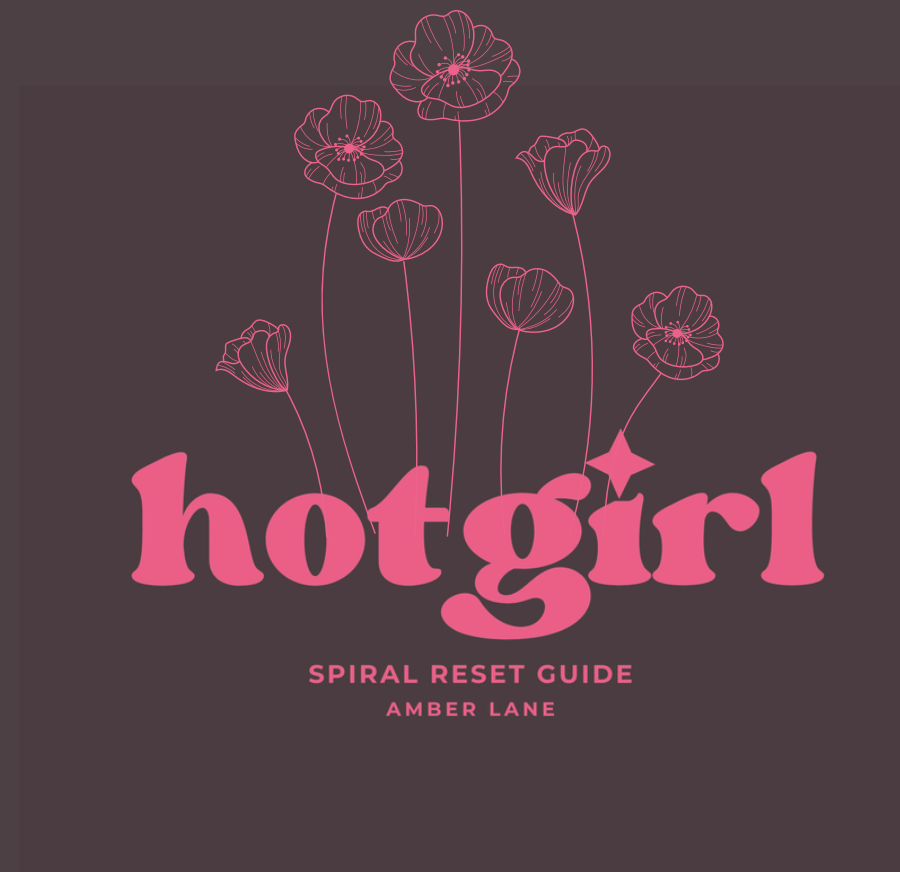


Stop the Spiral

BEFORE IT TAKES OVER THE WHOLE ROOM



Before we get into the actual reset tools, I want to say this clearly:

This is not a list of things I think you “should” do.

This is a list of things I have personally used when my brain started spiraling, when my body felt like the enemy, when one piece of clothing or one bad mirror moment or one unexpected photo had the power to ruin an entire day.

I remember being around thirty, sitting on my bedroom floor, at least forty pounds smaller than I am now, having a full-blown meltdown because the pants I wanted to wear would not fit.

Not a cute little “ugh, nothing fits” moment.

A real tantrum. A body-on-the-floor, cannot-regulate-myself, why-is-this-happening-to-me kind of moment.

I had just gotten married. My husband was there. I was acting in a way I almost never act, over a piece of clothing, because my body did not fit into it the way it used to.

And the thing is, I had been thin most of my life.

People who only know me now, plus sized and often barely dressed on the internet, are sometimes surprised by that. But in high school I was a size 2 or smaller. I was barely a size 6 well into my twenties. For a long time, my body stayed small without me having to think much about it.

So when I started growing out of that body and into my adult body, it hit hard.

I did not have a baby, which was the body-change story I saw most often around me. My life just got softer. I was in a stable relationship. I could afford to eat more regularly than I could in my early twenties. I was safer. I was loved. And slowly, the constant preoccupation with how I was being perceived started to loosen its grip.

But before it loosened, it fought.

Hey, love.

There were years when those spirals could take over everything. An anniversary trip someone planned for me. A birthday dinner with friends. A quick trip to the store where I might run into someone I did not want to see. Anything could become a stage where I felt like I had to be perfect, pretty, thin, desirable, impressive, and completely in control.

And when I did not feel that way, I could barely focus on anything else.

That is the part I wish I could go back and hold.

The version of me who thought a pair of pants not fitting meant she had failed. The version of me who thought being seen on a bad body day was something to survive. The version of me who missed out on joy because she was busy trying to mentally crawl out of her own skin.

So in a lot of ways, I'm writing this for her.

For younger me. For floor-crying me. For closet-meltdown me. For the girl who could not yet tell the difference between "I am uncomfortable" and "I am unworthy."

These tools did not magically fix my body image overnight. They did not make me immune to hard days. But they helped me interrupt the spiral long enough to come back to myself.

And sometimes that is the whole first step.

Not loving yourself perfectly.

Not becoming unbothered.

Not never spiraling again.

Just catching yourself in the middle of it and saying:

Wait. I do not have to let this ruin everything.

These are small resets I have used in real moments when my thoughts were getting too loud. Take what helps. Leave what does not. Try them before you need them, if you can.

You are not doing this wrong because you spiral.

You are just learning how to come back.

Shock your senses

When your brain is spinning, give it one very specific physical sensation to pay attention to. Sour candy, cold ice water, a mint, peppermint oil, holding an ice cube, or splashing your face with cold water can all help pull your attention out of the spiral and back into your body.



Cross-body tapping

Cross your arms over your chest and tap your right shoulder with your left hand, then your left shoulder with your right hand. Keep alternating slowly. You can close your eyes if that feels good, or keep them open and look around the room. Let the rhythm remind your body: I am here. This is now.



Count it out

Close your eyes and count slowly to ten, but picture each number in your mind as you go. Make the numbers big. Give them a color. Watch them appear one at a time. This gives your brain a simple job that is not “solve my entire life immediately.”

5-4-3-2-1 grounding

Name five things you can see, four things you can feel, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. It's simple, but it works because it forces your attention into the actual room you're in instead of the imaginary courtroom in your head.



Feet on the floor

Put both feet flat on the ground. Press your toes down. Press your heels down. Notice the floor holding you up. Say, “I am supported. I am not floating away. I am here.” This one is good when the spiral feels floaty, panicky, or dissociative.



The exhale reset

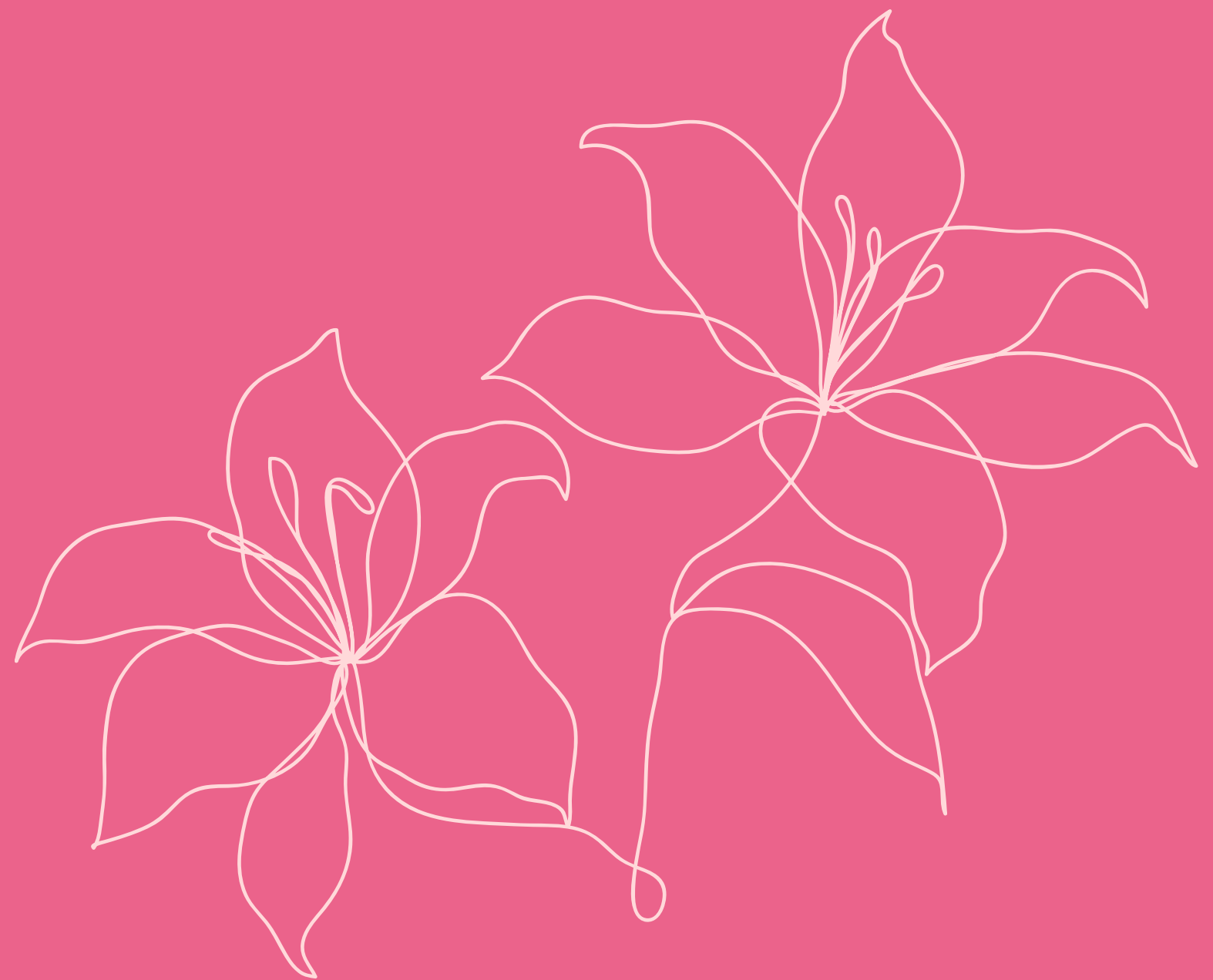
Take a normal breath in, then make the exhale longer than the inhale. You don't have to do fancy breathwork. Just inhale for a few seconds, then exhale like you're fogging up a mirror or sighing through a straw. Repeat three times. The point is not to breathe "perfectly," it's to give your nervous system a softer signal.

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Name the spiral

Say, “This is a spiral.” Not “this is the truth,” not “this is a sign,” not “I have to figure this out right now.” Just: “This is a spiral.” Naming it creates a tiny bit of space between you and the thought.



Unclench something

Pick one body part and soften it. Unclench your jaw. Drop your shoulders. Open your hands. Relax your tongue from the roof of your mouth. Spiraling often makes the body brace, and sometimes the fastest way back in is to release one small place.



Push against something

Press your palms into a wall, countertop, or the sides of your chair for ten seconds. Feel your muscles turn on. Then release. This gives anxious energy somewhere physical to go instead of letting it keep bouncing around inside your head.

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The “what is actually true” list

Write three sentences only:

“What I know for sure is...”

“What I do not know yet is...”

“The next kind thing I can do is...”

This keeps you from building a whole horror movie
out of missing information



Change the temperature, change the channel

Step outside, take a hot shower, put a cold cloth on your chest, sit in front of a fan, or wrap yourself in a blanket. A temperature shift can interrupt the loop without needing you to think your way out of it.



Make the room real again

Describe the room like you're narrating it to someone who can't see it. "There is a green cup on the desk. The light is coming from the window. My blanket is on my lap. The floor is cold." Boring is the point. Boring means your brain is coming back to now.

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Progressive release

Tense one part of your body for five seconds, then release it. Hands, shoulders, legs, feet, whatever feels easiest. This is a tiny version of progressive muscle relaxation, which has evidence behind it for increasing relaxation and reducing tension.



You do not have to solve the spiral.
You only have to interrupt it long enough
to come back to yourself.

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