Field Isolation Reset Tool

NEW YORK STATE | Office of Mental Health

New York State Trauma-Informed Network & Resource Center

ABOUT THIS TOOL

Audience
Field staff, park rangers, environmental scientists, conservation officers, inspectors

Description
This brief check-in is designed to support environmental and conservation workers during extended periods of solo fieldwork by promoting awareness, physical readiness, and mental focus.

When to Use

- During long periods of working alone in the field
- When noticing fatigue, distraction, or reduced focus
- Before starting a new task or entering a new environment
- After a break or transition between field activities
- Anytime you need to reorient attention and ensure safety

WORKPLACE STRESS

Environmental and conservation work often requires spending long periods working alone in the field. While solitude can be rewarding, extended isolation can sometimes increase fatigue, stress, or distraction.

Environmental and conservation workers frequently experience:

- Extended isolation and limited social interaction
- Fatigue from long hours in physically demanding conditions
- Exposure to weather, terrain, remote locations
- Staying a high alert while working independently
- Distraction during repetitive or solo tasks destruction

These conditions can lead to:

- Feeling mentally tired making it harder to make decisions and stay alert
- Increased safety risk
- Feeling lonely or anxious

THE PRACTICE

Step 1

Pause and Notice

Take a moment to stop what you're doing and check in with yourself.

Ask yourself: How am I feeling right now?

Examples might include:

- Calm
- Focused
- Tired
- Distracted
- Frustrated
- Uneasy

WRITE YOUR ANSWER:

_____

continue on page 2...

THE PRACTICE

Step 2

Scan Your Readiness

Take a quick mental check of your physical and environmental conditions.

Ask yourself: *Am I...*

☐ Hydrated
☐ Physically comfortable
☐ Aware of my surroundings
☐ Focused on the task at hand
☐ Confident about my next steps

If something feels off, consider making a small adjustment before continuing.

Examples:

- Drink water
- Stretch or move around
- Review your task plan
- Check equipment or safety conditions

Step 3

Reconnect With Your Environment

Isolation can sometimes cause your attention to narrow too much.

Take 30 seconds to notice your surroundings.

Look around and identify: calm

- Three things you see
- Two things you hear
- One thing you can physically feel (wind, temperature, ground under your feet)

Step 4

Recenter Your Focus

Before returning to work, ask yourself: *What is the next clear step in my task?*

Write it down or say it to yourself.

WHY THIS HELPS

Working alone in the field requires both awareness and resilience. Taking brief moments to reset your attention and energy can help you stay safe, focused, and grounded throughout the day.

WHY THIS WORKS

Your brain has a built-in stress response that can quietly build up without you noticing, especially when you're alone, tired, or doing repetitive work. Regularly checking in with yourself acts like a reset button, helping your brain stay regulated and your body stay safe.

Resources:
Find additional wellness information on the NYS Trauma Informed Network and Resource Center at traumainformedny.org

Looking to go deeper?

Explore BREATH-BODY-MIND™ (BBM) for weekly breathwork practice, expert tips, and a welcoming community.
Check out the website here for additional details.

Source:
This tool was informed by research on conservation worker mental health, occupational stress in environmental professions, and mindfulness-based attention reset practices.