

Grounding Exercises

Grounding exercises are things you can do to bring yourself into contact with the present moment – the here and now. They can be quick strategies or longer, more formal exercises.

Quick and easy things to do -to ground yourself to this moment

- Put your hands in water
- Pick up or touch items near you
- Breathe deeply
- Savor a food or drink
- Take a short walk
- Hold a piece of ice
- Savor a scent
- Blow bubbles
- Move your body
- Remind yourself of who you are now
- Repeat a comforting mantra or positive affirmation like “this feeling will pass”, “I got this”, “one step at a time”
- Get a comfort item: colorful or smooth stone, a photo of a person/thing/scenery that you love, a small vial of a fragrance, a special piece of jewelry, a trinket, a stuffed animal, a blanket, a gift from someone you care about
- Stamp your feet
- Take ten slow breaths
- Sing or Dance
- Splash some water on your face
- Sip a cool drink of water.
- Hold a cold can or bottle
- Turn on some music
- Use a stressball
- Stamp your feet

5,4,3,2,1 – Grounding Exercise

This technique takes you through your 5 senses to help you to the present. Some can be difficult but can be very effective to get you grounded. Name, label or write down the following:

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you hear
- 2 things you smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Mindful Breathing Exercise

You want to focus all your attention on how you’re breathing. When or if your mind starts to wander, or you notice different sensations in your body, redirect your attention back to your breathing.

- Start out by ensuring you found a comfortable place to sit. Keep both feet planted on the floor in front of you and sit up nice and tall. Close your eyes and relax all the muscles in your body.
- Place your hands on your stomach with fingertips touching in the center.
- Take a deep breath on through your nose, and slowly exhale out through your mouth. Continue to repeat these slow deep breaths until you find yourself feeling calmer and more relaxed.
- If and when you notice your mind start to wander, acknowledge that it has wandered and redirect our attention back to breathing really focusing on our inhales and exhales.
- When you find yourself to be ready, you can open your eyes again.

List positive things

Write or mentally list four or five things in your life that bring you joy, visualizing each of them briefly.

List favorite things

List three favorite things in several different categories, such as foods, trees, songs, movies, books, places, and so on.

Imagine someone you love

If you feel upset or distressed, visualize someone positive in your life. Imagine their face or think of what their voice sounds like. Imagine them telling you that the moment is tough, but that you'll get through it.

Tense and Release

Choose a place where you won't be interrupted for at least 10 minutes. This exercise works best if you do it while you're lying down so it might be something you want to do right before bed. Sitting in a comfortable chair with your legs stretched out will also work for this exercise.

Start by laying down with your arms by your sides and your legs stretched out in front of you. Close your eyes. Start by squeezing your eyes tight and scrunching your nose as if you've smelled garbage. Next, force your mouth into a wide smile kinda like what would happen with g-forces in a fast car, and at the same time bite down to tense your mouth and jaw. Hold this position for about 5 seconds, or the count of 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Then slowly open your eyes, and let go of the tight position in your nose, mouth, and jaw. Let these parts of your face feel nice and relaxed for another 10 seconds. Notice how your face feels, how your cheeks feel, and how your tongue feels loose in your mouth. This can help you learn the difference between tension and relaxation, allowing your muscles to relax when you notice you're tense.

Now we will work on your neck and shoulders. Tuck your neck into your shoulders like a scared turtle. The muscles will feel tight but should not be sore. Hold this position for the count of 5 seconds, noticing the pull in your neck muscles and how uncomfortable it feels. Now slowly let your shoulders drop down and relax your head. You can roll your head in slow circles in both directions to help alleviate the stiffness. Stay in this relaxing state for the count of 10 seconds.

Next, your hands and arms. Make fists with your hands and cross your arms at the wrists. Hold your arms up in front of you and push them together as if you are arm wrestling with yourself. Hold your arms and fists in this position for 5 seconds. Slowly release your fists and drop your arms back to your sides. Stay in this position for 10 seconds.

For the lower half of your body I want you to start by pulling your arms behind your back and trying to make your elbows touch. You will need to sit down for this step. Hold for 5 seconds and then release and relax for 10 seconds.

For your tummy and back I want you to suck in your stomach as if there is a powerful magnet pulling your stomach in. stay in this position for 5 seconds and relax for 10 seconds.

The last group of muscles is your legs and feet. Stick your legs out in front raised slightly off the bed or floor and point your toes to your nose as if there is a laser beam shooting at your nose. Stay like this for 5 seconds and relax for 10 seconds.

You can repeat these steps through as many times as you wish for further relaxation.

Leave the Pain Behind

Picture yourself:

- gathering the emotions and feelings, balling them up, and putting them into a box
- walking, swimming, biking, or jogging away from painful feelings
- imagining your thoughts as a song or TV show you dislike
- changing the channel or turning down the volume — they're still there, but you don't have to listen to them

Use math & numbers

Even if you aren't a math person, numbers can help center you. Try:

- running through a times table in your head.
- counting backward from 100
- choosing a number and thinking of five ways you could make the number ($6 + 11 = 17$, $20 - 3 = 17$, $8 \times 2 + 1 = 17$, etc.)

Mindful Walking

For this one, it's best you do it outside. But if you're at home right now and you want to experience quick results, you can do it there as well.

- Get up and walk around. Every time you take a step, count it.
- Concentrate on your steps.
- Notice how it feels to put your foot on the ground and then lift it again.
- Notice the surface you're walking on, the sensations you feel in your feet, and the weight of your body.
- Once you're done, sit back and relax.

Body Scan *(memorize or have someone read aloud)*

- Close your eyes. Let your shoulders drop down and away from your ears.
- Focus on your breathing. Take a nice slow deep breath in...and then release... keep focusing on your breathing.
- The purpose of this exercise is to help you notice different things happening throughout your body. Try not focus on whether things in your body feel good, bad, uncomfortable, painful etc.
- Just pay attention to what you're feeling – example, do you notice tingling, warmth, tightness, or something else.
- Continue to breathe in...and out... Notice your lungs filling up with air when you breathe in and slowly go back down as you breathe out. Imagine a balloon when you blow it up and then slowly let the air out.
- Now, focus on the parts of your body touching the floor, couch or bed. Every time you breathe out, let your body sink a little deeper into the surface below you.
- Focus on your left foot and notice what you feel. You don't need to do anything about those sensations, just acknowledge them. Now focus on the bottom of your left leg or calf. Notice any sensations.
- Don't need to do anything about them, just let them be there.
- Now, focus on the upper part, or thigh, of your left leg. Whatever sensations you feel, just let them be there. If you don't feel anything at the moment, that's okay too.
- Now, focus on your right foot and leg. Simply notice all the feelings and sensations. Just notice. You don't need to do anything about them.
- Our minds often wander and we start thinking about other things. When you notice your mind has wandered just bring it back to your breath. Just focus on your breathing.
- Now focus on your stomach. Feel it rising as you breathe in. Sinking as you breathe out. Nice and slow. Keep breathing in... and out... Continue to notice any feelings or sensations in your stomach.
- Now focus on your left hand and arm. Notice what you feel. Again, if you don't feel anything at the moment, that's okay.
- Now focus on your right hand and arm. And just notice what you feel.
- Now focus on your chest, neck, and face. Feel the sensations in your jaw, and your throat. Notice how the back and the top of your head feels.
- Now, take a moment to notice your whole body and how every part is connected. Notice what you feel – tingling, warmth, coolness, heaviness... Notice what you feel without thinking about it as being good or bad, or that you have to do anything about it. Just notice.
- Now focus again on your breathing. Notice your lungs fill up and come down as you breathe in and out. Keep focusing on your breathing and when you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

Mental Vacation

Close your eyes. Take a slow, smooth breath in through your nose...and breathe out slowly through your mouth.

Take another slow, smooth breathe in through your nose for 1, 2, 3, 4, and hold...and out through your mouth for 1, 2, 3, 4...and hold. And again, in for 1, 2, 3, 4, and hold...out for 1, 2, 3, 4, and hold. Keep taking nice slow breathes in...and out.

Now, imagine yourself in a peaceful place. A place where you feel calm and safe. Maybe it's a special place that you've been before, or maybe it's somewhere you would like to go. Such as a calming beach, in a forest, beside a little stream, or sitting by a warm crackling fire. Something scenic or maybe just some sounds you find soothing.

Really focus on picturing yourself in this place.

Now, look around you...

Notice what you see...

Notice what you hear...

Notice what you smell...

Notice what you feel...under your feet...on your skin.

Really relax in this place.

Keep imaging yourself in this place while focusing on your breathing. Take a slow, smooth breath in through your nose...and breathe slowly out through your mouth.

Now, keep taking slow, long breaths.

S.T.O.P Method

The concept being this tool is to identify and reduce unwanted stress and anxious arousal. It can also aid in becoming more mindful helping you to focus on the thing you value and feel passionate about.

The **STOP** plan involves the following 4 steps:

S= Stop! Just like the initials spell out, *stop* what you are doing and notice the presence of your stress or anxiety.

T= Take a slow, deep breath, or pause for a moment, to help lower the intensity of anxiety or stress. Take a slow, deep breath of air in through your nose as you count silently 1, 2, 3, and then pause and hold it for the count of 1, 2, 3. Then slowly breathe out making your lips into a circle as if you are blowing out candles on the count of 1, 2, 3. Pause for 1, 2, 3, and then repeat the process 5 to 10 times.

O= Observe how your body feels *inside*, and what is going on in the world around you *outside*. Notice how your body does not feel good with these anxious sensations, and that you do not have to live in this hectic world. You can always take a step back.

P= Plan and proceed mindfully as you step back or pause from this anxious moment. Pick an activity that fills your life with meaning or passion and focus all your energy and attention on that. For example, talking with a friend you can trust and confide in, spending time with your family, taking your dog for a walk, listening to music, and mor

Steam of consciousness writing

Do some emotional writing.

Write down, in longhand on a piece of paper whatever you are thinking, stream-of-consciousness style: "I don't know where to begin...I'm so angry because...I am so overwhelmed because..." Don't worry about wording or punctuation. Just get out it.

Do this for 5-10 minutes.

Additional Tips

Grounding yourself isn't always easy. It may take some time before the techniques work well for you, but don't give up on them. Here are some additional tips to help you get the most out of these techniques:

Practice. It can help to practice grounding even when you aren't dissociating or experiencing distress. If you get used to an exercise before you need to use it, it may take less effort when you want to use it to cope in the moment.

Start early. Try doing a grounding exercise when you first start to feel bad. Don't wait for distress to reach a level that's harder to handle. If the technique doesn't work at first, try to stick with it for a bit before moving on to another.

Avoid assigning values. For example, if you're grounding yourself by describing your environment, concentrate on the basics of your surroundings, rather than how you feel about them.

Check in with yourself. Before and after a grounding exercise, rate your distress as a number between 1 and 10. What level is your distress when you begin? How much did it decrease after the exercise? This can help you get a better idea of whether a particular technique is working for you.

Grounding techniques can be powerful tools to help you cope with distressing thoughts in the moment. But the relief they provide is generally temporary.

All of these resources can be downloaded from our website under "FREE Downloadable Materials". Please let us know your thoughts, if these work for you or which are your favorites

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or if you would like to practice Grounding techniques in a counselling session

The Edify Team

