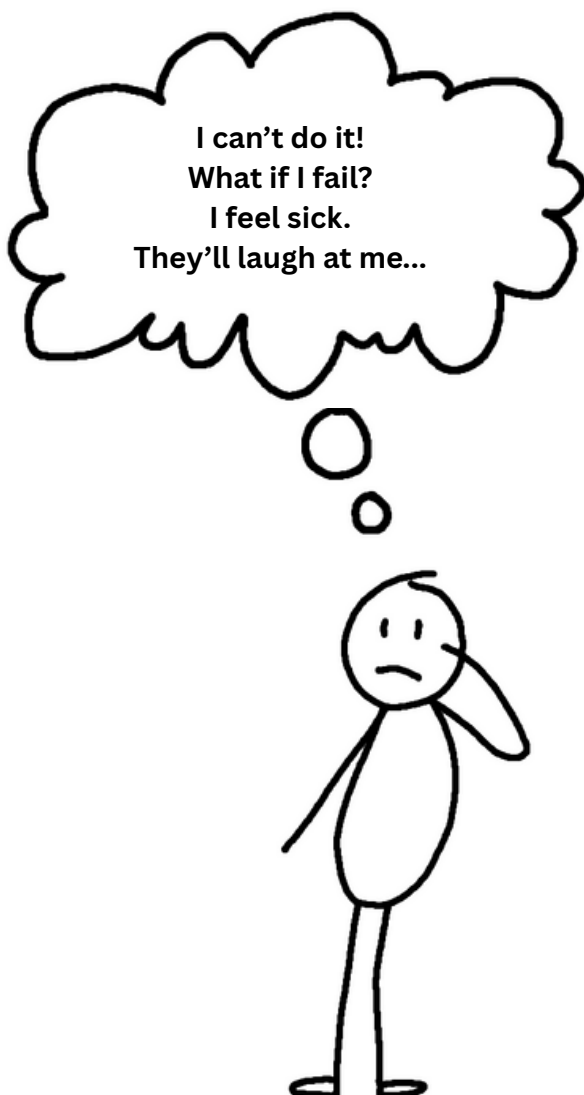


Grounding Exercises

Grounding techniques or exercises can help to turn our attention away from distressing thoughts, feelings, memories and flashbacks by helping us to refocus on the present moment. They can help to reduce distress, to promote calmness and self-regulation, and to feel more empowered in managing challenging situations.

Grounding techniques can be especially helpful for people experiencing high anxiety, overwhelm, a panic attack, or urges to self-harm. They can also be beneficial for those experiencing problems with substance misuse, dissociation, PTSD / c-PTSD symptoms and chronic pain.





Grounding Exercises

5-4-3-2-1 Technique:

This exercise guides your attention towards taking in your surroundings through each of your senses.

First, name **five things you can see**.

Try to focus on small details, so rather than “I see a table” you might notice “I see a small rectangular table made of dark wood. I notice that the legs are quite chunky, and there is a small scratch on the surface of the table.”

You could also try to notice things that you might not normally pay attention to (for example, the way the light coming through the window makes an interesting pattern on the carpet).

Next, name **four things you can feel (touch)**.

This could include noticing the sensation on your skin of something you are wearing, the feeling of the sun’s rays on your face, or you may touch or pick up various objects around you. Notice things like the texture, temperature and weight.

Now focus on **three things you can hear**.

Pay close attention to any sounds your mind usually filters out, e.g. a ticking clock, distant traffic, birds singing, leaves rustling in the wind, people talking nearby.

Then notice **two things you can smell**.

Smells might include things like room fragrance or a scented candle nearby, freshly cut grass, nearby food, perfume / aftershave, fresh flowers.

Finally, notice **something you can taste**.

You could carry around some chewing gum, a sweet or some tictacs, or some raisins for this part of the exercise, or maybe try eating a piece of fruit. You could also have a flavoured drink, such as squash, tea or coffee. Really focus your attention on the flavours, textures and temperature of the food or drink.



Grounding Exercises

Senses Walk:

Go for a walk and narrate in detail, all the things you notice, for example: “That house has a bright blue front door... there are lots of cars driving by... there’s a green one, two silver ones, and now a red one... oh wow, look at that big fluffy cat sitting on the window sill... he looks like he’s enjoying the sunshine... I can hear children playing outside as I walk past the school...”

Sense of Smell:

You can spend some time building and strengthening an association between feeling calm and a specific smell. You could use a scented hand cream, lip balm, or pulse point gel and apply this every time you do some relaxed breathing or meditation. Then, at a time when you feel your anxiety or stress rising, you can use this scent to help you recreate a sense of calm.

Lavendar is known to promote a sense of calmness, but you can choose whichever scent you like. The key is to work on strengthening that association.

Focusing on some food or drink in your mouth:

Place something to eat or drink in your mouth and focus all of your attention on the experience.

What is it like to chew, or move the food or drink around in your mouth?

What textures are there?

How would you describe the taste?

Does the taste stay the same, or does it change / evolve?

Now swallow it, paying attention to what this feels like.

Is there an after taste?

Repeat if desired.

Examples of food / drink you could use for this grounding exercise: chewing gum, a sweet or some tictacs, raisins, a piece of fruit, a small piece of chocolate, tea, coffee, squash, a fizzy drink. You can also do this exercise during your main meals, so with whatever you’re having for breakfast, lunch or dinner (mindful eating).



Grounding Exercises

Describe your surroundings in detail:

Similar to the '5-4-3-2-1 exercise' (but less structured) and to the outdoor 'senses walk', but you can do this if you're stuck indoors. Describe everything that you can see in detail.

What colour are the walls?
Are there any marks on the wall?
Can you see any plug sockets?
What is the floor made of?
Are there any patterns on the ceiling?
What furniture is in the room?
What's the temperature like?
Are there any audible noises?
Any smells?
What colours can you see?
What items / objects are in the room?
Describe them in as much detail as you can.

Designate a safe object:

Choose a pebble, coin, fidget toy or other small item to become your grounding object when you feel anxious or stressed. Keep it with or near you and place it in your hand when needed. Direct your attention to the texture and sensation of the object as you move it around in your hand. Play-doh can also work well for this.

Colour Spot:

Choose a colour and try to name as many things in your surroundings that are that colour. When you've finished, you can choose a different colour and repeat.



Grounding Exercises

Feet on the floor:

This exercise involves shifting as much weight as you can to your feet and “grounding” them into the earth. This technique – while simple – can help to remind you that you are a single entity connected to a universe much larger than yourself.

Body awareness:

The body awareness technique will bring you into the here-and-now by directing your focus to sensations in the body. Pay special attention to the physical sensations created by each step.

First, take five long, deep breaths through your nose, and exhale through puckered lips.

Next, place both feet flat on the floor and wiggle your toes. Curl and uncurl your toes several times, and spend a moment noticing the sensations in your feet. Stomp your feet on the ground several times, paying attention to the sensations in your feet and legs as you make contact with the ground.

Now clench your hands into fists, then release the tension, repeating this 10 times. Press your palms together. Press them harder and hold this pose for 15 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of tension in your hands and arms. Rub your palms together briskly. Notice the sound and the feeling of warmth.

Reach your hands over your head like you’re trying to reach the sky. Stretch like this for five seconds. Then bring your arms down and let them relax at your sides.

Finally, take five more deep breaths and notice the feeling of calm in your body.