

Grounding Exercises

A practical guide for returning to the present when anxiety, overwhelm, or disconnection begin to rise.

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Thoughtful, Relationship-Centered Therapy
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Why Grounding Helps

Grounding exercises help bring your attention back to the present moment. They are not meant to erase distress or force you to feel calm immediately. Their purpose is to help you become more oriented, more anchored, and better able to respond with clarity rather than panic.

When Grounding May Help

- ☐ Anxiety begins to rise.
 - ☐ Thoughts start racing.
 - ☐ You feel emotionally flooded.
 - ☐ A trauma reminder pulls you out of the present.
 - ☐ You feel disconnected, numb, or unreal.
 - ☐ You need to slow down before responding.
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Three Simple Categories

Sensory grounding — use sight, sound, touch, smell, or taste to reconnect with the room around you.

Physical grounding — use pressure, posture, or gentle movement to feel your body again.

Cognitive grounding — use orientation and simple language to remind yourself what is true now.



Grounding does not solve everything, but it can help you come back to yourself.

Practical Grounding Exercises

1. 5-4-3-2-1 Sensory Scan

Name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, and 1 you taste.

2. Press Your Feet Into the Floor

Notice the pressure beneath you and the support of the chair or ground.

3. Orient to Time and Place

Say your name, today's date, where you are, and remind yourself that this feeling will pass.

4. Use a Longer Exhale

Inhale gently for 4 and exhale for 6 for 1–2 minutes, if inward focus feels supportive.

5. Hold Something With Texture or Temperature

A cool glass, warm mug, smooth stone, or soft fabric can help bring attention back to the present.

6. Move the Body on Purpose

Roll your shoulders, stretch, stand at a wall, or take a slow walk across the room.

If One Exercise Doesn't Help

Try changing categories. If breathwork is not helping, use sensory grounding. If sitting still makes things worse, stand up and move. The goal is not perfect calm. Even a small decrease in intensity can be meaningful.



Small, steady actions often help the body remember that the present moment is safe enough to stay with.

More Ways to Ground

7. Give the Mind a Simple Task

Count backward, name the blue objects in the room, or recite the months of the year slowly.

8. Use a Grounding Statement

Try: 'I do not have to solve all of this right now.' 'I can slow this moment down.' 'I can take one steady next step.'

A Simple Sequence for High-Stress Moments

1. Open your eyes and look around.
2. Press your feet into the floor.
3. Name five things you can see.
4. Remind yourself where you are and what day it is.
5. Ask: 'What is my next steady step?'

When to Seek More Support

- ☐ Panic or severe anxiety keeps returning.
- ☐ You often feel dissociated or unreal.
- ☐ Trauma reminders or flashbacks are frequent.
- ☐ Overwhelm is interfering with daily life.
- ☐ Self-destructive coping patterns are increasing.

Remember

Grounding is not avoidance. It is a way of becoming steady enough to face reality more honestly. You do not need to master every exercise. You only need a few that reliably help you return to yourself.

If anxiety, overwhelm, or disconnection continues to surface, therapy can provide a place to explore it more thoughtfully and more fully.

