

Grounding Exercises for Stabilization and Presence

These exercises help you shift out of distress, overwhelm, or dissociation by gently bringing your attention back to the present moment through your senses, breath, body, or surroundings.

Sensory Grounding

Reconnect with your environment by tuning into your five senses.

- **5-4-3-2-1 Exercise**
Name 5 things you see, 4 things you feel (touch), 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, and 1 thing you taste.
 - **Hold a Texture**
Grip an object with a strong texture (like a stone, ice cube, or fabric). Describe it aloud or silently.
 - **Temperature Change**
Splash cold water on your face or hold an ice cube. Try a warm compress or shower to feel grounded through warmth.
 - **Aromatherapy Anchor**
Carry a grounding scent (lavender, citrus, peppermint) to smell when needed. Inhale deeply and notice your reaction.
 - **Sound Focus**
Listen intently to music, nature sounds, or ambient noise. Try identifying as many distinct sounds as you can.
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Breath-Based Grounding

Use your breath to regulate your nervous system.

- **Box Breathing**
Inhale for 4 counts → hold for 4 → exhale for 4 → hold for 4. Repeat 3–5 cycles.
 - **Exhale Emphasis**
Make your exhale longer than your inhale to calm your body (e.g., inhale for 4, exhale for 6).
 - **Hand on Chest or Belly**
Place one or both hands on your chest or abdomen and feel the rise and fall of your breath.
 - **Count Your Breaths**
Inhale—“one,” exhale—“two,” and so on up to 10. Start over if you lose count.
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Movement-Based Grounding

Engage your body to help anchor your mind.

- **Feet on the Floor**
Sit and press your feet firmly into the ground. Notice the sensation and weight.
 - **Wall Push or Chair Sit**
Push your palms firmly against a wall or ground yourself into a chair, noticing muscle engagement.
 - **Stretch and Shake**
Do a full-body stretch or shake out your arms, legs, or hands.
 - **Walk and Name**
Walk slowly and name objects you see around you or describe them aloud.
 - **Clench and Release**
Squeeze your fists or toes for a few seconds, then release. Repeat a few times.
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Mental & Cognitive Grounding

Use thought and mental focus to regain orientation.

- **Name Details**
State your name, where you are, the date, and one thing you're looking forward to.
 - **ABC Categories**
Pick a category (animals, foods, places) and name something for each letter of the alphabet.
 - **Describe a Routine**
Walk through a favorite daily routine in your mind (like making coffee or your morning skincare).
 - **Math or Spelling**
Do simple math problems or spell words backward in your head.
 - **Safe Place Visualization**
Imagine a calming, safe place in detail using all your senses. Revisit it often.
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Soothing Grounding

Offer care and comfort to yourself to increase a sense of safety.

- **Self-Havening**
Rub your upper arms or face in gentle, sweeping motions while thinking soothing thoughts or doing math.

- **Affirmations or Mantras**
Repeat grounding phrases such as:
“I am safe.”
“This feeling will pass.”
“I can handle this moment.”
 - **Hand on Heart + Breath**
Place your hand over your heart while breathing slowly. Offer kind words to yourself.
 - **Soothing Touch**
Hold your own hand, hug yourself, or rub your arms with calming pressure.
 - **Connect with a Pet**
Spend time with an animal—notice the texture of their fur, their breath, or the way they move.
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Creative and Expressive Grounding

Channel your energy and attention into creation or expression.

- **Journaling**
Free write or respond to grounding prompts like: “Right now I notice...” or “What helps me feel safe is...”
 - **Color or Draw**
Use markers, pencils, or crayons to doodle or color. Focus on the movement and colors.
 - **List-Making**
Make a list of things that bring you comfort, places you love, or people who support you.
 - **Letter to Self**
Write a compassionate letter from your grounded self to your overwhelmed self.
 - **Object Anchor**
Carry or wear something meaningful (stone, jewelry, fabric) to help remind you of safety and presence.
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Bonus: Orienting to the Present

- **Look Around Slowly**
Gently move your head and eyes to look around the room, noticing what feels interesting or comforting.
- **Name What’s the Same**
Identify things that haven’t changed—like your clothes, the weather, your surroundings.
- **Notice Colors or Shapes**
Choose a color and try to spot everything around you that matches it.