

# 5 SENSES GROUNDING EXERCISE

A practical, interactive way to bring attention back to the present

When anxiety or panic is loud, your attention can become trapped inside thoughts, sensations or predictions. This exercise gives your mind a simple job: notice what is actually around you. There is no need to rush and no need to complete every sense.

## 5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE

Look slowly. Notice colour, shape, light, movement and small details.

## 4 THINGS YOU CAN FEEL

Notice safe physical sensations such as your clothes, chair, floor, an object or the air on your skin.

## 3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR

Listen for sounds close to you and sounds further away.

## 2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL

Only if comfortable. You can also simply notice whether the air has a scent.

## 1 THING YOU CAN TASTE

Only if comfortable. This may be a drink, food, toothpaste, or simply the taste already in your mouth.

# STEP 1 - FIVE THINGS I CAN SEE

Do not just name them. Become a detective and notice the details.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Colour/detail: \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Colour/detail: \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Colour/detail: \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_ Colour/detail: \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_ Colour/detail: \_\_\_\_\_

## MINI CHALLENGE

Choose one of the five things and look at it for 20 seconds. Find one tiny detail you had not noticed before.

**The tiny detail I found:**

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# STEP 2 - FOUR THINGS I CAN FEEL

Use safe, neutral sensations. You do not have to focus on internal body sensations.

1

What can you feel against your hands? Describe texture, pressure or temperature.

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2

What can you feel beneath your feet?

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3

What can you feel supporting your body - chair, bed, wall or floor?

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4

Choose an object to touch. What does it feel like?

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**Circle any words that fit:** smooth rough soft firm cool warm light heavy textured

# STEP 3 - THREE THINGS I CAN HEAR

Listen without deciding whether a sound is good or bad. Just locate it.

## SOUND 1 - CLOSE BY

What is it? \_\_\_\_\_

Is it steady, changing, loud, quiet or rhythmic? \_\_\_\_\_

## SOUND 2 - FURTHER AWAY

What is it? \_\_\_\_\_

Where is it coming from? \_\_\_\_\_

## SOUND 3 - THE QUIETEST SOUND

What can you hear when you listen carefully?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Now listen for the spaces between sounds.** You do not have to make your mind quiet; simply give it something real to notice.

# STEPS 4 & 5 - SMELL AND TASTE

These are optional. Skip either one if smell or taste is unpleasant, triggering or difficult.

## 2 THINGS I CAN SMELL

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

If you cannot identify a smell, write what the air seems like: fresh, warm, cool, neutral, outdoors, food nearby, or something else.

## 1 THING I CAN TASTE

What can you taste right now? \_\_\_\_\_

If you choose a drink or safe food, notice it slowly. Is it cool, warm, sweet, salty, plain, strong, mild or something else?

\_\_\_\_\_

Sensory grounding should be adapted to the person. For sensory differences, ARFID, trauma, nausea, migraine or other sensitivities, sight, sound, touch or orientation may be a better choice.

# BACK TO RIGHT NOW

Put the five senses together and orient yourself to this moment.

WHERE AM I?

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WHAT AM I DOING RIGHT NOW?

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WHAT IS ONE THING I KNOW IS TRUE IN THIS MOMENT?

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WHAT DO I NEED FOR THE NEXT FIVE MINUTES?

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**Try finishing this sentence:** I do not have to solve everything right now. My next small step is...

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# MY 5 SENSES GROUNDING CARD

Complete this when you are calmer so you have a ready-made plan for difficult moments.

**5 - SOMETHING I LIKE TO LOOK AT**

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**4 - SAFE THINGS I LIKE TO FEEL OR TOUCH**

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**3 - SOUNDS THAT HELP ME OR FEEL NEUTRAL**

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**2 - SMELLS I FIND COMFORTABLE - OR 'SKIP THIS SENSE'**

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**1 - A SAFE TASTE/DRINK - OR 'SKIP THIS SENSE'**

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**MY BACK-TO-RIGHT-NOW PHRASE**

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Keep this somewhere easy to find. Grounding is a coping tool, not a requirement to make anxiety disappear. If symptoms feel medically concerning or you need urgent help, seek appropriate professional or emergency support.