

60-Second Grounding Exercise

A quick way to bring your mind back to the present when anxiety, panic or overwhelm pulls you somewhere else.

Sit or stand however is comfortable. Go at your own pace; the times below are a guide, not a test. If one round isn't enough, simply start again.

0:00 – 0:15

STEP 1

Breathe out longer than you breathe in

Breathe in through your nose. Before you breathe out, take one more small sip of air. Then let it all go slowly through your mouth, as if sighing. Do this two or three times. *If breathing exercises make you dizzy, breathe normally and move to step 2.*

0:15 – 0:40

STEP 2

Notice 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

Name, quietly or in your head: 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel (your feet, your clothes, the chair), 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. Can't find a smell or taste? Name one you like.

0:40 – 0:50

STEP 3

Feel the ground under you

Press your feet into the floor and notice what is holding you up. Remind yourself where you are: "I'm in _____, it's _____ (day), and I'm safe enough right now."

0:50 – 1:00

STEP 4

Name what you feel

Put the feeling into one or two words: "This is anxiety," "I feel overwhelmed." You don't have to fix it. Naming a feeling is often enough to turn its volume down a little.

Make it work for you

- Practise when you feel calm, so it comes more easily when you need it.
- Your mind will wander. That's normal. Notice it and come back.
- If panic or overwhelm happens often, or gets in the way of daily life, it's worth talking to a professional.

Quick check-in

How intense is the feeling, from 0 (calm) to 10 (the most intense)? Circle a number before and after.

Before

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

After

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Need help right now? If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department. Call or text 9-8-8 (Suicide Crisis Helpline, 24/7). Under 18? Call Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868.

This is an educational self-help tool. It is not a diagnosis, and it is not a substitute for care from a regulated health professional.

Where this comes from: Exhale-focused "cyclic sighing": Balban et al. (2023), *Cell Reports Medicine*, 4(1), 100895. Naming feelings (affect labelling): Lieberman et al. (2007), *Psychological Science*, 18(5), 421-428. 5-4-3-2-1 sensory grounding is a widely used grounding technique in anxiety and trauma care.