

Grounding Yourself: Tips for Stressful Moments

UVA Department of Student Health and Wellness (SHW)

When you become stuck with **stressful thoughts or feelings**, including intense anxiety, simple activities that keep your mind and body connected (called “grounding”) can be helpful in **regaining a sense of stability and mental peace**. The following are a number of grounding exercises to choose from to help firmly anchor you in the present moment and provide you with space to choose where to **focus your energy effectively**.

Pause

- » Take a moment to pause for a few seconds or minutes.
- » Remind your self that it is okay to pause from acting on your thoughts and feelings.

Take a Step Back

- » Step back from what you are doing to look and listen.
- » Remind yourself of who and where you are now. State your name, age, and where you are right now.

Notice

- » Look around. Notice what is front of you and to each side, name large objects and then smaller ones.
- » If you wake up suddenly during the night and feel disoriented or distressed, remind yourself who you are and where you are. Look around the room and notice familiar objects and name them. Feel the bed you are lying on, the softness of the sheets or blankets, the warmth or coldness of the air, and notice any sounds you hear.
- » Remind yourself that you are safe!

Breathe

- » Take ten slow deep breaths. Focus your attention on each breath on the way in and on the way out. Say the number of the breath to yourself as you exhale.

Observe

- » Find a “grounding object” to hold, look at, listen to, and/or smell.
- » Splash water on your face or place a cool wet cloth on your face.
- » Listen to music. Pay close attention and listen for something new or different.
- » If you are sitting, feel the chair under you and the weight of your body and legs pressing down on it.
- » If you are lying down, feel the contact between your head, your body and your legs, as they touch the surface you are lying on. Starting from your head, notice how each part feels, all the way down to your feet, on the soft or hard surface.
- » If you are walking, take your time to notice each step slowly as you take one after another. Notice the touch of your feet on the ground. Notice the temperature, the smell in the air, and the sound around you.
- » Feel the clothes on your body, whether your arms and legs are covered or not, and the sensation of your clothes as you move in them.

54321: Grounding Exercise

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Name 5 things
you can see

4

Name 4 things
you can touch

3

Name 3 things
you can hear

2

Name 2 things
you can smell

1

Name 1 thing good
about yourself

You may need to try few different exercises to find one or two that work best for you.

More resources can be found on our website at studenthealth.virginia.edu/CAPS