

Grounding Exercises

Use these grounding exercises to help calm your emotions after you have been triggered or you feel your emotions rising.

Grounding Exercise #1: Diaphragmatic Deep Breathing

Many of us breathe shallowly on a regular basis, and stress can worsen this tendency. Shallow breathing is one of the body's fight flight responses, and the more we do it the more our body will feel under threat. Deep breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which is our bodies' relaxation response, and is a remedy to the fight flight response activated by stress. Deep diaphragmatic breathing is the most important skill you can have in your healthy coping toolbox. By practicing the skill of deep breathing on a regular basis, you also build up a "reserve of calm" that protects against automatic stress reactions, giving you a greater sense of control of your thoughts, behaviors and choices.

Steps:

1. Sit comfortably with your eyes open or closed.
2. Make sure your feet are resting flat on the floor.
3. Breathe in through your nose for 4 counts.
4. Hold for 2-3 seconds.
5. Breathe out through your mouth for 8 counts. You can silently say "relax."
6. Repeat.

Grounding Exercise #2: 5 Senses

This exercise focuses on using our 5 senses to bring us back to the present moment by helping us take note of what is around us, what is in the present, and in our control. When you feel triggered or your emotions escalating, you can quickly do this 5-4-3-2-1 exercise to feel calm and return to the present moment.

Steps:

1. Get comfortable where you are now--sitting or standing, it doesn't matter.
2. Look around the room and notice **5** things you can **SEE**.
3. Next, notice **4** things that you can **TOUCH**. Touch them.
4. Now notice **3** things that you can **HEAR**. Focus on your breath or background noises.
5. Notice **2** things you can **SMELL**. This could be the detergent in your clothes or the smell of the room you're in.
6. Notice **1** thing you can **TASTE**. Chew a piece of gum, drink something, or just notice the taste in your mouth.
7. Finish with a nice deep breath by inhaling through the nose for 4 (1-2-3-4), holding for 2-3 seconds, and then exhaling through the mouth for 8 (1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8).