



Grounding Techniques

These grounding techniques are for when you're feeling anxious, overwhelmed, panicked or scared. They offer a range of different ways to help you to calm your nervous system and quieten your mind.

When you're feeling anxious, it helps to have some quick, simple go-to supports at your fingertips that are easy to remember. You may well already have some of your own that you know work for you.

Think of the suggestions here as a menu. Try out different techniques. Find what works for you. It can help to choose just a small number of techniques – even two or three. You don't need to use or remember all of them.

Then write a note on your phone or on a post-it note you keep with you. It can help to have these prompts to hand when you need them.



BREATHING

Five finger breathing exercise

Use this simple breathing technique which involves tracing the outline of your hand whilst breathing in and out. This helps you regulate your body, especially if your breathing has become shallow or rapid, as well as resetting the alarm system in your brain. [Watch this YouTube video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQVZgpyVQ78) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQVZgpyVQ78>.

Make your outbreath longer

When we are anxious our breathing can often become shallow and in panic attacks we can sometimes find we are hyperventilating. If you remember nothing else, remember to exhale and ideally make your outbreath a little longer than your inbreath. It can help to think of exhaling through pursed lips as if you're blowing out candles. [This is a great short YouTube video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCEC9RUoEnw&t=0s) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCEC9RUoEnw&t=0s>

USING YOUR SENSES

5,4,3,2,1

Grounding yourself using all five senses in the present here-and-now can be effective when you're feeling very anxious, stressed, panicky or afraid. Here's a simple technique to help re-orientate yourself to what's around you: [Watch the YouTube Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjRMg6KALiw) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjRMg6KALiw>

Holding an object

It can be soothing to hold an object in your hands when you're feeling anxious. This could be something from nature such as a pebble or stone; a cushion or a soft toy or a piece of fabric; a warm mug of tea; or something you discover for yourself that you like to hold.



Holding yourself

You may find it is soothing to hold yourself in different positions. This will be personal preference so see if it feels right for you. You can try placing:

- One or both hands on the chest, feel the warmth of your hand, and the gentle pressure of the hand on the chest and the chest rising to meet the hand;
- One hand cradling the back of the neck and the other hand on the forehead, you can move the head up as you breathe in and then tuck the chin as you breathe out. Or you may prefer to hold still;
- One hand on the chest and one hand on the belly;
- A simple hold of having one hand on your own opposite shoulder, as a support;
- Or place one hand under the opposite armpit with your thumb facing out and your fingers under the armpit; then bring the other arm across and hold the upper arm – this is a containing pose;
- Or crossing arms so that your hands are on the opposite shoulder and then tapping.

Sensations of warmth

Feeling warm activates a feeling of satisfaction which can have a calming effect.

Rubbing hands together generates warmth. You could then place hands on chest or belly or forehead if this feels comfortable.

You can also notice the temperature in the room or in the air outside as a way of connecting with your sense of touch.

Sound

This can be a great anchor if you are feeling anxious or scared. Bring your attention to the sounds around you and describe them to yourself. 'I can hear the sound of the birds, I can hear the sound of traffic, I can hear my computer whirring' etc.

Or you can try making a humming sound on a relatively low note as this can be soothing.

Have a ready-made playlist of music that you can turn to which you find comforting and soothing to support you when you feel anxious.

Smell

Find a smell that you associate with feeling safer and calmer. This could be an essential oil, a familiar perfume or washing powder, the scent of flowers, a food smell, anything you like!

Posture

Elongating your spine as you sit or stand can help support your nervous system. It creates more space in the diaphragm as well which enables you to breathe more fully. Imagine a string on the top of your head pulling gently upwards so your spine straightens.



MOVING

Walking

Many people find walking can help ground them. Lots of people find walking in nature enhances this sense of soothing so if you have a green space nearby this could be a great resource. Walk at a steady measured pace. Pay attention to your feet as they touch the ground. If you find it helpful, you can connect your breath and your steps, maybe breathing in for three steps and out for three steps. This is simply about being mindful, not feeling you have to fit in a particular number of steps. If this idea of counting appeals to you, you can use this [link to watch the YouTube video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCvviYBRzk4) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCvviYBRzk4>

Yoga

Yoga is well known to support calming the nervous system. Yoga with Adriene has several videos on YouTube that are designed for support with anxious feelings and panic. [Here is one of these YouTube videos](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Lg4EzektCw) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Lg4EzektCw>

CREATING

Some people find it relaxing to draw or to use mandalas – these are intricate patterns that are downloadable from many sites or artbooks are available at online stores.

You can also create a collage of images – from magazines or photographs or from the internet – that create a sense of safety, support and soothing. Or just pick one image. It could be a picture of a view or a person or an animal or anything you like. The important thing is that when you look at the image you feel a sense of calming and connecting.

CONNECTING

If this is available to you, it can help to have a small number of people who are close to you who you can call on for support when you're feeling anxious, panicky, or scared.

If this is difficult, then it can help to bring to mind someone from your life, whether now or at earlier times in your life, or who you know and respect, maybe in public life, popular culture or from history, or a book character. When you feel anxious imagine them with you, imagine what they would say to you, how you would feel with them.



MINDFULNESS AND VISUALISATIONS

Oxford Mindfulness Centre

This renowned centre offer free online meditation every weekday at 1pm and 7pm as well as podcasts and recorded mindful practices.

Meditation apps

There are many meditation apps such as Waking Up and Insight Timer which can be helpful.

Safe place visualisation

This is a visualisation that helps guide you in your imagination towards an experience of safety and calm. Remember this can be a real or a completely imagined place. Here's a link which guides you through a script as well as a link to a wonderful video talking you through the visualisation.

[Safe Place PDF](https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/media/wwbbstpx/safeplace.pdf) <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/media/wwbbstpx/safeplace.pdf>

[Safe Place Meditation - YouTube video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49DkTGVsSA8) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49DkTGVsSA8>