

Grounding techniques or strategy

What we're doing when we use a grounding strategy is getting out of our heads (where we're having upsetting thoughts) and into our bodies, which is where we'll be experiencing the distressing feelings that are linked. It's hard to overcome distress with logic because it's happening at a very primitive level - so we need to address it through our bodies, in order to give our brains the message that things are actually manageable, even if they're pretty unpleasant! This is called a 'bottom up' process, rather than 'top down'.

Before you do a grounding strategy, it's useful to scale your distress out of 10, where 10 is as bad as you could feel and 0 is normal. Then do the same after the strategy so that you can notice the change. Are you good to go now or would it be wise to do try another strategy or do the same one again?

Touch, See, Hear

Touch three things in your environment. Notice how they feel. Describe them in your mind.

Spot three things in your environment. Notice how they look. Describe them in your mind.

Listen to three things in your environment. Notice how they sound. Describe them in your mind.

7/11 Breathing

You breathe in whilst counting to 7 and out whilst counting to 11 at your own pace. The breathing out does the opposite to your body of the fight/flight response. It engages the Parasympathetic Nervous System and instead of preparing you for action, prepares you to 'rest and digest'. Out-breaths slow your heart rate, decrease your blood pressure and dilate your pupils, lowering your emotional arousal in the process which is really helpful. If you find 7/11 breathing too obvious or too difficult, try 5/9 or even 3/7. The crucial thing is to make the out breath longer than the in breath.

Blue or Green

Spot as many different things in your environment as you can that are blue or green. Give each colour a name eg. Sea green, Leaf Green, Frog Green.

Notice how different they are.

Finger Breathing

This is a popular practice that combines mindful breathing with a soothing physical action. Here's video to explain it. Don't be put off by the title being 'for kids' - it's great for any age group.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQVZgpyVQ78>

I usually repeat the practice again with the second hand but it's up to you! A good thing about it is that you can quietly do it under the desk or behind your back so you can be quite private about it!

Box or Square Breathing

This is a technique developed by the US navy SEALs to decrease stress and increase focus.

This is what you do:

- Imagine you are drawing a square. As you draw one side, breathe in for 4 counts.
- Imagine drawing the second side whilst you hold your breath for 4 counts.
- Imagine drawing the third side whilst you breathe out for 4 counts.
- Imagine drawing the final side while you hold your breath for 4 counts.
- Keep repeating the cycle until you feel calmer.

Progressive Relaxation

- Start by screwing up your eyes and face. Hold for a count of three and then relax.
- Now hunch up your shoulders, hold for 3 and then relax.
- Now tense your arms and make fists. Hold for 3 and relax.
- Now squeeze your buttocks together. Hold for 3 and relax.
- Now tense your legs, pushing your knees back. Hold for 3 and relax.
- Now screw up your toes, hold for 3 and relax.
- Now take 3 deep breaths and with each one, allow any remaining tension to go, as you breathe out.

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