

Grounding Exercises

Stress and anxiety are two different things. Stress is a response to something external, such as an argument with your spouse or a looming project at work. Once the situation is resolved, the stress goes away. When you're stressed, it's important to use tactics such as tackling the issue head on, exercise, getting good sleep and eating well.

Anxiety, on the other hand, is internal. It's the way you react to stress. There's usually a persistent feeling of apprehension, doom, dread or disconnection (*some people describe a "floaty" feeling of being unmoored*). Unlike stress, anxiety continues even after an issue has passed.

If you're feeling anxious, many of the same tools used for stress can help, but they're usually not enough. Adding grounding exercises can make all the difference. Grounding is a technique that focuses on keeping you in the present. It's about reorienting you to the here and now which is your true reality. In the present, you're OK.

Here are some common Grounding Exercises:

Feelings aren't Facts: Remind yourself that "Feelings aren't Facts." Make this your mantra for 60 seconds and feel yourself in the moment - let the anxiety slip away and get into the reality of right now.

Slow Down One Thing: Eat or drink something very slowly with the goal of examining it and focusing all your attention on whatever you're eating or drinking. Is it sweet, sour, bitter or salty? Is it hot or cold? What's the texture like? How does it feel in your mouth? How does it feel going down your throat?

Take Root: Set a timer for three minutes. Sit in a chair or on the side of your bed with your hands on each thigh and your feet planted firmly on the ground. Close your eyes and take one deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. As you slowly release this breath, feel your energy sinking down to your feet. Wiggle your toes and feel all the points that your feet are in contact with the floor or your shoe. Bring yourself fully to the moment as you anchor your feet to the floor. Continue to breathe normally. With each exhale, feel your feet more firmly rooted. Start to imagine roots branching out from the bottom of your feet and going deep into the ground, anchoring you. Picture those roots going deeper and deeper until the alarm goes off.

Snap Into Reality: Wear an elastic band on your wrist (not tight) and pull it gently and let it go a few times. Feel it snap back onto your wrist and feel yourself firmly rooted in the here and now and what you're feeling.

Pick a Color: Sit or stand comfortably with your feet planted firmly on the floor. Pick a color and see how many things you can identify with some shade of that color. If you're still feeling anxious, pick another color and do it again.

The 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Exercise: This technique brings you into the here and now by using all five senses. You're going to need to have something to drink or eat close by before you start. Sit comfortably with your feet planted firmly on the floor. Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths (*in through your nose and out through your mouth*). Now, open your eyes and name out loud:

- Five things you can see
- Four things you can feel (*your jeans if your hands are resting on your thighs, you can also reach out and touch things*)
- Three things you can hear
- Two things you can smell (you can bring an object closer to your nose)
- One thing you can taste (*whatever you chose to have near you before you started. Take a minute or so to savor whatever it is that you're eating or drinking and really pay attention to it.*)
- Take a final deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth

