5-4-3-2-1
Grounding Guide

When your mind feels overwhelmed, anxious or stuck,
come back to the present moment with your senses.

It's simple. It's quick. It works.

5



Things you can see

Look around and notice 5 things in your environment.

For example: a plant, a window, a book, a colour, a person.

4



Things you can touch

Notice 4 things you can feel with your hands or body.

For example: your clothes, the chair, your hair, the surface of a table.

3



Things you can hear

Listen for 3 sounds around you.

For example: birds, traffic, people talking, your breath, a clock.

2



Things you can smell

Notice 2 scents, even if they are subtle.

For example: fresh air, coffee, soap, a flower, your own scent.

1



Take 1 deep breath

Slowly inhale... and exhale.
Feel your body soften, even just a little.

Then, gently bring your attention back to the present moment.

You are here. And that's enough.

Why It Works



Reduces stress and anxiety

Brings your attention away from worry and back to the here and now.



Calms your nervous system

Helps slow your heart rate, relax your body and reset your mind.



Improves focus and clarity

Re-centres your attention and helps you think more clearly.



Boosts emotional balance

Helps you manage intense emotions and feel more in control.



Builds resilience

Gives you a simple tool you can use anytime, anywhere.

Small steps. Big difference.



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The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Guide

A simple mindfulness practice for adults · Free self-care resource

When you feel overwhelmed, anxious, stressed, or caught up in your thoughts, pause and gently bring your attention to what is happening around you.

You don't need to do it perfectly. Simply slow down, notice, and return to the present moment.

5
Things you can ***see***

Look around and name five things you can see.
For example: a plant, a window, a book, the colour of a wall, or a person's face.

4
Things you can ***touch***

Notice four things you can feel with your hands or body.
For example: your clothes, your feet on the floor, the chair beneath you, or the surface of a table.

3
Things you can ***hear***

Pause and listen for three sounds around you.
For example: birds singing, traffic, people talking, a clock ticking, or the sound of your own breathing.

2
Things you can ***smell***

Notice two scents around you, even if they are subtle.
For example: fresh air, coffee, soap, a flower, or your own scent. If you cannot smell anything, simply notice that.

1
Take one deep, comfortable ***breath***

Slowly breathe in, then gently breathe out. Allow your shoulders to soften if comfortable.
There is no need to force a deep breath. A natural, comfortable breath is enough.

Come back to the present moment

Take a moment to notice where you are, how your body feels, and what is happening right now.

You might gently remind yourself:
“I am here, in this moment. I can take things one step at a time.”

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What are the benefits?

1. Help manage stress and anxiety
    a. Shifts some attention away from racing thoughts and towards immediate sensory experiences.

2. Encourage present-moment awareness
    a. Helps you notice your surroundings rather than becoming completely absorbed in worries about the past or future.

3. Support focus and clarity
    a. Gives your attention a simple, manageable task when your mind feels busy or scattered.

4. Create a pause before reacting
    a. Offers a moment to notice your experience before deciding how to respond to a stressful situation.

5. Build a practical self-care habit
    a. It is simple, requires no equipment, and can be practised at home, at work, or in other everyday settings.

When can you use it?

- Before a difficult conversation or presentation.
- When you notice yourself overthinking.
- During a stressful day at work.
- When you feel emotionally overwhelmed.
- Before bed, when your mind feels busy.
- As a brief pause between daily activities.

A gentle reminder: You do not need to feel completely calm for this exercise to be worthwhile.

The goal is not to eliminate every difficult thought or feeling, but to give yourself an opportunity to reconnect with the present. If focusing on your senses or breathing feels uncomfortable, you can stop, keep your eyes open, and simply notice an object in the room.

This exercise may help with momentary stress, but it is not a substitute for professional support when distress is persistent or significantly affecting daily life.

Small steps. One breath. One moment at a time.

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