

GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

Grounding is a simple but effective therapeutic technique that can help you when strong anxiety hits. You can use grounding when you feel like the anxiety is taking over, when you feel numb, like you are in a dream, lost in past events, or having an out-of-body or out-of-reality experience.

Grounding helps to bring a person back to the here and now, to realise that they are safe and in control of their reality and emotions. It helps a person to refocus and find calmness and strength in the present moment when they are highly anxious and emotional.

1 The 54321 technique.

Name 5 things you can see in the room with you (e.g. chair, painting)
Name 4 things you can feel (e.g. my feet on the floor, cool air on my skin)
Name 3 things you can hear right now (e.g. people talking outside)
Name 2 things you can smell right now (e.g. toast, perfume)
Name 1 good thing about yourself (e.g. I am strong)

2 Touch and describe an object

Find an object around you e.g. cushion, handbag, water bottle.
Try to describe it as if you are explaining it to someone who has never seen it before. e.g. "This is a cushion, it is a square shape with a red and purple pattern of stripes...it feels soft with some hard ridges around the corners"

Repeat until you feel calm.

3 Memory game

When you are feeling anxious, you need to try to reorient yourself to the present moment, and using declarative memory can help with this. e.g.

Name as many types of dog breeds you can.
How many cities have you visited around the world.
Repeat the alphabet backwards.

4 Mantra

When you are not in an anxious state, it can be helpful to develop a list of personal mantras or affirmations that help you when you become panicked or disoriented. Write them down somewhere and keep them in your handbag. e.g.

I am safe, I am here in the present moment
This feeling will pass, nothing bad is happening right now
I can handle these emotions, I am strong

5 Square Breathing

Getting your breathing under control can be hugely effective in reducing anxiety, but most people either breathe too fast or hold their breath when they are trying to calm down. Square breathing is a simple way to refocus your attention to your breath and the present moment.

With your index finger, slowly trace the shape of a square in front of you, keeping your eyes on that finger.

With one side, breathe in for 3 seconds...
With the next side, hold your breathe for 1 second...
With the third side, breathe out for 3 seconds...
With the final side, hold for 1 second...