

BODHI LIFE BALANCE

Mental Health Workbooks

GROUND YOURSELF

The 5-4-3-2-1 Method Workbook

A simple grounding tool for anxiety, panic, overwhelm, anger, and emotional flooding.

Use this workbook when:

Your thoughts feel too loud, your body feels activated, you are stuck in worry, you are angry, or you need a quiet way to come back to the present moment.

Safety note:

This workbook teaches a coping skill. It does not replace professional care. If you might hurt yourself or someone else, call 911, go to the nearest emergency room, or call or text 988 in the United States.

Name: _____ Date: _____

PART ONE

What Is the 5-4-3-2-1 Method?

A simple explanation you can use right away.

The 5-4-3-2-1 Method is a grounding skill. Grounding means bringing your attention back to the present moment by using your five senses. When anxiety, panic, anger, shame, grief, or overwhelm pulls your mind into a spiral, this method gives your brain something simple and real to focus on.

The goal is not to force yourself to feel perfect. The goal is to lower the intensity enough that you can breathe, think, choose your next step, and stay connected to what is happening right now.

Why it works:

Your senses are always happening in the present moment. When you name what you see, feel, hear, smell, and taste, you gently interrupt the mental loop and give your nervous system a signal that you are here now.

The basic steps

5	things you can see
4	things you can feel
3	things you can hear
2	things you can smell
1	thing you can taste
Then	take one slow breath and name what changed

You can do the method silently in your head, write it down, whisper it, or say it out loud. You can use it in a classroom, at work, in a car, in a waiting room, or before a difficult conversation.

Important reminder:

This is not a test. You do not need perfect answers. If you cannot smell anything, name two things you wish you could smell. If you cannot taste anything, take a sip of water, notice your mouth, or name a familiar taste.

PART ONE

How to Use It When You Are Activated

Keep it slow, simple, and honest.

Pause: Stop for a moment and notice that your body is activated.

Breathe: Take one slow breath before you begin. You do not have to breathe perfectly.

Look around: Let your eyes move slowly. Name details instead of general things.

Use your body: Notice contact points, pressure, temperature, texture, or movement.

Let the room help: Sounds, smells, and taste can remind your brain that you are here, not trapped in the thought spiral.

Re-check: After the method, rate your distress again and decide your next safest step.

Helpful language:

Try saying, "I am noticing..." instead of "I have to calm down." Noticing is gentler than forcing. It gives your mind a job without turning the moment into another fight.

Example

5 see	the clock, blue pen, door handle, shadow on the wall, my shoes
4 feel	feet in shoes, shirt on arms, chair under legs, cool air on face
3 hear	air conditioner, distant voices, my breathing
2 smell	coffee, hand sanitizer
1 taste	mint gum
Then	My distress went from 8 to 5. I can ask for help instead of walking out.

PART TWO

Fillable Worksheet Section

Use these pages to walk yourself through the method.

Before you begin:

There is no wrong way to do this. Write short answers. Use ordinary words. The purpose is to reconnect with the present moment, not to produce perfect writing.

My distress level before I start is:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

0 = calm or manageable. 10 = highest distress.

What is happening right now?

Write one or two sentences. Example: I feel overwhelmed because my thoughts are racing.

Where do I feel this in my body?

Examples: chest, stomach, throat, jaw, shoulders, hands, legs.

☐ Anxious

☐ Sad

☐ Panicky

☐ Overstimulated

☐ Confused

☐ Angry

☐ Numb

☐ Embarrassed

☐ Unsafe

☐ Other: _____

STEP 5

Name Five Things You Can See

Let your eyes move slowly. Look for details.

Try this:

Instead of writing "chair," write "gray chair with metal legs." Details help your brain slow down.

Five things I can see:

Prompt	Your answer
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

One visual detail I did not notice at first:**What changed in my body when I slowed down and looked around?**

STEP 4

Name Four Things You Can Feel

Use touch, pressure, temperature, and body contact.

Examples:

Feet on the floor, chair under your legs, fabric on your skin, hands touching, cool air, warm cup, tight jaw, relaxed shoulders.

Four things I can feel:

Prompt	Your answer
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

The strongest body sensation I notice is:**One way I can soften or steady my body right now is:**

Examples: unclench my jaw, lower my shoulders, press my feet into the floor, relax my hands.

STEP 3

Name Three Things You Can Hear

Listen without judging the sounds.

Try this:

Let sounds come to you. You do not have to chase them. If the room is quiet, listen for your breathing, clothing movement, a fan, traffic, or distant voices.

Three things I can hear:

Prompt	Your answer
1.	
2.	
3.	

The sound that feels most grounding is:**One sound I can let be there without fighting it is:**

STEP 2

Name Two Things You Can Smell

Use what is actually present, or use memory if needed.

If you cannot smell anything:

That is okay. Name two familiar smells, take a slow breath through your nose, smell your sleeve, smell lotion, smell coffee, or write "nothing noticeable" and keep going.

Two things I can smell:

Prompt	Your answer
1.	
2.	

A smell that usually helps me feel grounded is:

STEP 1

Name One Thing You Can Taste

If you cannot taste anything:

Notice the inside of your mouth, take a sip of water, use gum or a mint if available, or name a taste you remember.

One thing I can taste:

Prompt	Your answer
1.	

One word that describes my body right now:

FINISH

Breathe, Re-Check, and Choose the Next Step*Notice what changed. Then decide what helps next.*

Take one slow breath. If you can, breathe in through your nose and exhale longer than you inhale. Then answer the questions below.

My distress level after the 5-4-3-2-1 Method is:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

0 = calm or manageable. 10 = highest distress.

What changed after I completed the method?

It can be small. Examples: I feel a little calmer. I can think better. My shoulders dropped. I am still upset, but less flooded.

What do I need next?

Examples: water, quiet, movement, a trusted person, a break, a coping skill, professional support, crisis support.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Drink water | ☐ Take a short walk |
| ☐ Tell someone I need support | ☐ Use another coping skill |
| ☐ Return to class or work slowly | ☐ Call 988 or emergency support if I cannot stay safe |

QUICK PRACTICE

One-Page 5-4-3-2-1 Worksheet

Use this when you need the short version.

Quick Grounding Round

Prompt	Your answer
5 things I see	
4 things I feel	
3 things I hear	
2 things I smell	
1 thing I taste	
One slow breath. What changed?	

Distress after this quick round:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

0 = calm or manageable. 10 = highest distress.

My next safest step is:

PRACTICE LOG

Build the Skill Before You Need It

Practicing when you are calm makes it easier to use when you are overwhelmed.

Date	Situation	Before 0-10	After 0-10

Patterns I notice after practicing:

My personal grounding reminders:

Examples: Look for color. Feel my feet. Listen for the farthest sound. Do one thing at a time.

CUTOUT CARD

The 5-4-3-2-1 Method

Keep this page near your desk, in a notebook, or on your phone.

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Card

5 things I can see

4 things I can feel

3 things I can hear

2 things I can smell

1 thing I can taste

Then take one slow breath and choose the next safe step.

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Card

5 things I can see

4 things I can feel

3 things I can hear

2 things I can smell

1 thing I can taste

Then take one slow breath and choose the next safe step.

Final reminder:

Calm is not always instant. Skill is built through repetition. Every time you practice, you are teaching your brain and body how to come back.