

GROUND YOURSELF

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

A simple way back to the present



SEE



FEEL



HEAR



SMELL



TASTE

A flexible grounding exercise for anxiety, panic, anger, and overwhelm. Use one page, one sense, or the whole method.

You do not need to complete every page. You can pause, skip a step, or ask for help.

Your Well-Being Comes First

Read this page before using the exercises.

This workbook offers education, reflection, and coping practice. It does not replace professional mental health assessment, therapy, medical treatment, or emergency care.

If an activity increases your distress, stop. You may skip any sense or complete the exercise with clinic staff.

If you are experiencing overwhelming emotional distress, thoughts of suicide, or a mental health crisis, call or text 988 in the United States.

If someone is in immediate danger or there is a life-threatening emergency, call 911. If you are at a clinic, tell a staff member immediately.

Your safety matters more than finishing a worksheet. Grounding can support you while you seek help; it does not replace crisis care.

How to use this workbook

Try the sensory steps at your own pace. Write only what you wish to share. A change in distress is not required for the exercise to be worthwhile.

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

A simple sensory check-in for moments when thoughts feel loud.

Grounding directs attention to things you can notice in the present. It can sometimes help people feel steadier or create enough space to choose their next step. It does not guarantee that distress will disappear.

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

If a sense is inaccessible, uncomfortable, or unavailable, use another sense, notice a familiar object, or skip that step.

Try noticing what is actually there, without forcing calm or judging your answers.

Before You Begin

Notice where you are, what you feel, and what support might help.

Distress right now (0 = manageable; 10 = most intense):

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

What is happening right now?

What do you notice in your body?

☐ Anxious

☐ Sad

☐ Panicky

☐ Confused

☐ Angry

☐ Numb

☐ Overstimulated

☐ Other feeling

You may answer in words, check a box, point to the page, or ask someone to read it with you.

5 | SEE

Let your eyes rest on objects, colors, shapes, or edges.

1. What do I notice?

2. What do I notice?

3. What do I notice?

4. What do I notice?

5. What do I notice?

What new detail did I notice?

4 | FEEL

Notice external touch: feet on the floor, fabric, a chair, or air. Skip body sensations if they are uncomfortable.

1. What do I notice?

2. What do I notice?

3. What do I notice?

4. What do I notice?

Which physical contact felt most steady?

One comfortable adjustment I can make is:

3 | HEAR

Listen for nearby or distant sounds. Quiet is also something you can notice.

1. What do I notice?

2. What do I notice?

3. What do I notice?

Which sound stood out most?

One sound I can allow to be present is:

2 | SMELL

Notice a smell if available. It is fine to write “nothing noticeable” or think of a familiar scent.

1. What do I notice?

2. What do I notice?

A familiar smell that I like is:

If smell is not useful, another sense I can try is:

1 | TASTE

Notice a present taste, sip water if appropriate, or remember a familiar taste. You do not need to eat or drink.

1. What do I notice?

My body feels right now:

One safe next step I might take is:

Adapt the Grounding Exercise

You may change the order, skip a sense, or use fewer examples.

Grounding should not become another demand. Different people and different moments call for different sensory options.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Name colors or shapes | ☐ Feel a chair or the floor |
| ☐ Listen to ambient sound | ☐ Hold a familiar safe object |
| ☐ Notice a neutral smell | ☐ Look at an object in detail |
| ☐ Ask staff for guidance | ☐ Pause or stop the exercise |

The senses or options that feel most comfortable to me:

A grounding choice I prefer to avoid:

What I can tell a support person if I need help:

Notice What Changed

A small shift, no change, or a different feeling are all useful information.

Distress after the exercise (0-10):

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

What is different, if anything?

What did I learn about what helps me?

What do I need next?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Water or food if needed | ☐ A quiet break |
| ☐ Another coping skill | ☐ Someone to talk to |
| ☐ Help from clinic staff | ☐ Crisis or emergency support |

One-Page Grounding Round

Use just this page when there is little time or energy.

5 things I see

4 things I feel

3 things I hear

2 things I smell

1 thing I taste

One next safe step I can take:

My Grounding Practice Log

Complete one row after each practice. Blank rows are fine.

DATE	SITUATION / WHERE	BEFORE 0-10	AFTER 0-10

What pattern do I notice?

My Grounding Plan

Make a plan that is easy to use when you are overwhelmed.

My early signs that I need grounding:

My easiest sense to use:

An object, place, or sound that helps me:

A person or clinic service I can contact:

Words I can use to ask for support:

When Grounding Is Not Enough

Get real-time support rather than trying to manage danger by yourself.

If you may hurt yourself or someone else, cannot remain safe, or feel you are in immediate danger, tell staff now, call or text 988 for crisis support, or call 911 for a life-threatening emergency.

Signs I need support right away:

A trusted person or clinic contact:

Where I can seek in-person help:

What I can say when asking for help:

Two Grounding Reminder Cards

Cut out or photograph a card for quick reference.

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

5 things I see

4 things I feel

3 things I hear

2 things I smell

1 thing I taste

Skip any step. Choose one safe next action.

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

5 things I see

4 things I feel

3 things I hear

2 things I smell

1 thing I taste

Skip any step. Choose one safe next action.

Publication Information

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Additional mental health workbooks

<https://bodhilifebalance.com/mental-health-workbooks>

This publication provides psychoeducation and optional coping practice for clinical and personal use. It does not provide an individualized diagnosis or treatment plan.