

# How Grounding, Mindfulness, and CBT Help Regulate the CNS

## Why Regulating the Nervous System Matters

When your central nervous system (CNS) is dysregulated-stuck in overdrive or shutdown-everyday tasks can feel overwhelming. Chronic anxiety, ADHD, trauma, and stress can keep your body in a constant state of alert. This is where grounding, mindfulness, and cognitive-behavioral tools come in. These practices help calm your system, improve self-awareness, and create new patterns in the brain.

## Grounding: Coming Back to the Present Moment

Grounding helps reconnect you to your body and the environment around you. It activates the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), which slows the heart rate, deepens breathing, and helps the body feel safe again. Grounding interrupts spiraling thoughts by giving your brain sensory input to focus on. This can include:

- Feeling your feet on the floor
- Naming 5 things you see
- Holding a warm mug or ice cube
- Noticing textures, sounds, or smells

## Mindfulness: Noticing Without Judgment

Mindfulness trains the brain to observe thoughts, sensations, and emotions without reacting. It creates space between stimulus and response-which gives the PNS a chance to activate. Research shows mindfulness can reduce amygdala reactivity (the fear center of the brain) and increase activity in areas related to emotional regulation. Over time, it helps build tolerance for distress and awareness of what your nervous system needs.

## Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Rewiring Thought Patterns

CBT helps identify unhelpful thought loops that keep the nervous system activated. For example, if you constantly think 'I'm not safe' or 'I always mess things up,' your body may stay in survival mode. CBT helps you challenge those thoughts, consider new possibilities, and replace them with more

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supportive beliefs. This doesn't just change your mindset-it actually creates new neural pathways that promote safety and regulation.

### **Why These Tools Work Together**

Grounding gives you access to the present. Mindfulness helps you stay there. CBT helps you understand and change the story you're telling yourself. Together, these practices teach your brain and body what calm feels like-so it becomes easier to return to that state in the future.

### **Gentle Reminder**

Regulation is a practice, not a performance. You don't have to get it perfect. The more you engage with these tools, the more your nervous system learns that it's safe to slow down, reflect, and respond with intention. This is slow, brave work-and it adds up.