



CBT Toolbox for Anxiety

Practical strategies to calm the mind, steady the body and take back control.

Anxiety can feel overwhelming, like a constant alert going off in your mind and body. But even in the middle of anxious moments, you can find ways to steady yourself.

This toolbox is filled with practical, proven techniques from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help you manage anxiety when it shows up.

You don't have to use every tool at once. Think of this as a collection of options - small, doable steps you can reach for when you feel that shift and your anxiety starts to build.

Some tools help you ground yourself in the present. Others help you challenge anxious thoughts or take small actions that reduce anxiety over time.

This isn't about "fixing" yourself - it's about giving your mind and body support. You deserve that.

Finding the Right Tools for You

Building your own collection of calming and grounding strategies helps create a strong foundation for managing anxiety. Just like a toolbox holds different tools for different jobs, having your personal go-to strategies means you'll be better prepared for whatever feelings or situations come up.

This section invites you to discover which tools feel most helpful to you; the ones that help you feel steadier, calmer and more in control when anxiety starts to build.

Build Your Own Calm Kit

A personal collection of comfort, distraction and grounding tools for anxious moments.

When anxiety builds, it can be hard to think clearly. That's why having a small collection of calming items prepared ahead of time and personalised to your needs can make a big difference.

You might choose to use a box, bag or tin; something easy to reach for when you need comfort, distraction or support. This isn't about "fixing" anything. It's about giving yourself something to *turn to* when you're feeling overwhelmed.

What Could Go in Your Calm Kit?

Your Calm Kit doesn't have to be fancy or expensive. It's about collecting a few comforting, sensory or creative items that *help you feel safe, soothed and supported*.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

A favourite herbal tea bag (like chamomile or peppermint)

A smooth or textured stone, shell or crystal

A small bottle of essential oil or a scented roll-on

A soft fabric square, cosy socks or a calming heat pack

Chewing gum or a boiled sweet (for mindful taste focus)

Headphones and a playlist: maybe nature sounds or calming music

A calming voice message or written memo from a loved one.

A stress ball or fidget toy

A pen and small notebook or journal

Adult colouring book or sketchbook and pencils

Sticky notes with calming reminders or CBT coping cards

A comforting photo - maybe a picture of your favourite landscape or place to visit

A bottle of water

An affirmation or positive quotes that really hits base

A familiar object that feels grounding

Crochet hook and a small ball of yarn - calming, repetitive movement

A pre-written postcard or letter to yourself, offering advice on what works well for you when your anxiety starts to grow or becomes overwhelming.

Bubble wrap

Meditation beads(also known as Mala beads a fab tool to use)

Grounding Tools to Anchor You in the Moment

You can print this page and add it to your Calm Kit as a reminder when you need it.

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

What it does: Helps to reduce anxiety by focusing on your five senses. By directing your attention to what you can see, feel, hear, smell, and taste in your immediate environment, you can ground yourself in the present moment and shift away from anxious thoughts. It is a quick and effective way to regain a sense of calm and control when feeling overwhelmed.

How to do it:

Take a good look around you - now slowly name:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Cold Water Reset

What it does: It can help reduce anxiety by activating the vagus nerve, which is associated with the body's relaxation response. This can lead to a decrease in the "fight or flight" response and an increase in the "rest and digest" response

How to do it:

- Splash cool water on your face
- Run your wrists under cold water
- Hold something chilled like an ice cube or cold can

Notice the sensation - feel the sensation. Let it bring you back into your body.

Feel Your Feet

What it does: Grounds you physically and gently shifts your focus away from racing thoughts and back to the present moment and your physical sensations, rather than dwelling on anxious thoughts.

How to do it:

Stand or sit still.

Press your feet firmly into the ground - Notice the feeling of your feet on the floor, the temperature of the surface and any sensations like pressure or tingling.

Gently wiggle your toes and pay attention to the sensations

Stay aware of the contact your feet are making with the ground.

Breathe deeply: Take slow, deep breaths, focusing on the rise and fall of your chest or abdomen

You might say to yourself: "I am here. I am safe."

Spend a few minutes focusing on the sensations in your feet. If your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to your feet.

Name the Room

What it does: It is a grounding technique that helps to calm your nervous system and reduce anxiety by bringing focus to the present moment through sensory awareness

How to do it:

Find a safe and comfortable space - a place where you feel relatively relaxed.

Look around and start to describe your surroundings, out loud or silently.

For example: *"I'm on the sofa. The light is soft. I can hear the fridge. The floor feels cool."*

Continue naming objects, moving around the room if you need to. You can also include objects you can touch or hear.

As you focus on naming objects, you may notice your anxiety lessening as your attention is drawn away from anxious thoughts and into the present environment.

Your Next Step

Which tool feels easiest to try first?

What could go in your Calm Kit this week?

Keep this toolbox nearby and remember: small steps count.