

Inclusive Mental Wellness LLC

# GROUNDING GUIDE

Simple ways to return to the present moment

**BREATHE • NOTICE • CONNECT**

**A gentle invitation** Choose what feels supportive. You may keep your eyes open, change the count, skip breath-holding, or use a sensory practice instead.

START HERE

# One-minute grounding

A short practice for a busy, anxious, or overwhelmed moment.

## Feet • breath • senses

1 **Feel support —** Press both feet into the floor or notice where your body meets the chair. Let the surface hold some of your weight.

2 **Lengthen the exhale —** Breathe in gently for 3. Breathe out softly for 4 or 5. Repeat three times. Do not force a deep breath.

3 **Orient —** Slowly look around. Name three colors, two shapes, and one sound. Remind yourself: "I am here, in this moment."

4 **Choose the next small step —** Sip water, loosen your jaw, text a support person, step outside, or return to one manageable task.

> **If breathing feels activating** Skip the breath count. Keep your eyes open and focus on pressure, texture, color, sound, or movement instead.

### A phrase to carry with you

***"This moment is here. I can meet it one breath—or one sensation—at a time."***

### Before you begin

- Get as comfortable as you can. Sit, stand, or lie down; loosen restrictive clothing if helpful.
- A smaller, quieter breath is often more comfortable than a very deep breath.
- Stop and return to normal breathing if you feel dizzy, faint, numb, short of breath, or more distressed.

BREATHING PRACTICES

# Find a rhythm that feels steady

Try 3–5 rounds first. Comfort matters more than reaching a perfect count.

## 1. Gentle belly breathing

- Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly, if touch feels comfortable.
- Breathe in through your nose and notice a soft expansion low in the body.
- Let the breath leave slowly through your mouth. Keep your shoulders easy. Continue for 1–3 minutes.

### See it guided

A clear abdominal-breathing explanation and practice from Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. Visual guide

## 2. Longer-out breathing (3 in / 5 out)

- Inhale gently for 3. Exhale softly for 5. Pause only if it feels natural.
- Repeat 4–8 cycles. Shorten either count if you feel air hunger or strain.

### Try a rectangle visual

Trace a short side as you breathe in and a long side as you breathe out. Visual + video

## 3. Equal-count breathing

- Breathe in gently while counting 1–4. Breathe out while counting 4–1.
- Repeat several times, letting the breath stay smooth rather than extra deep.

### Learn more

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs breathing handout includes counted-breath options and guided imagery. VA breathing PDF

BREATHING PRACTICES

# More patterns to explore

Breath-holding is optional. Choose a flowing version whenever that feels better.

## 4. Box breathing (optional holds)

| INHALE | HOLD | EXHALE | HOLD |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

Trace an imaginary square: inhale 4, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4. Repeat 3–4 rounds. If holds feel uncomfortable, use a steady 4-in / 4-out rhythm instead.

### Watch a visual

Use a guided animation, or search YouTube for a paced visual from a health or wellness organization. YouTube: box breathing visuals

## 5. Pursed-lip exhale

- Breathe in gently through your nose for about 2 counts.
- Pucker your lips as if cooling soup. Breathe out slowly for about 4 counts—without forcing the air out.
- Repeat until your breathing feels easier or steadier.

### See clinical guidance

Cleveland Clinic explains pursed-lip breathing, steps, and common uses. Pursed-lip breathing

## 6. Mindful natural breathing

- Let the breath breathe itself. Notice one place where you feel it most clearly: nostrils, chest, or belly.
- When your attention wanders, gently return to one inhale or one exhale. Practice for 1–5 minutes.

### Listen or watch

Choose a guided awareness-of-breath practice; eyes may stay open. NHS guided meditation • YouTube: NHS mindful breathing

SENSORY GROUNDING

# Come back through the senses

Useful when breath focus is not comfortable—or anytime you want another doorway to the present.

## 5–4–3–2–1 noticing

| | |
|---|---|
| 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—or one kind thing you can say** |

### Use a guided visual

The VA Whole Health workbook includes a 5–4–3–2–1 mindfulness practice. VA Whole Health workbook • YouTube: 5–4–3–2–1 grounding

## Three more ways to ground

1. **Press and release —** Press your palms together or your feet into the floor for 5 seconds, then release. Notice the change in pressure.
2. **Name categories —** Name five blue things, five animals, five cities, or five songs. Let your thinking mind reconnect with the room.
3. **Use temperature gently —** Hold a cool glass, wash your hands in comfortably warm water, or notice air on your skin. Avoid extreme temperatures.

KEEP WHAT WORKS

# Build your personal grounding plan

Practice when you are relatively calm so the steps feel more familiar when stress rises.

## My early signs

I may notice: _____

In my body: _____

## My first-choice practice

I will try: _____

For about: _____ My helpful phrase: _____

## Support I can reach for

Person / place: _____ Contact: _____

Professional support: _____ Contact: _____

**Safety and care** These practices are educational and are not a substitute for medical or mental health care. If you have a breathing, heart, or other health condition—or you are pregnant—ask a qualified clinician which practices are appropriate for you.

# Trusted resources

### NHS: breathing exercises for stress

A simple calming exercise that can be done sitting, standing, or lying down. Open guide

### Royal Brompton & Harefield hospitals

Free guided audio for mindful breathing, peaceful-place relaxation, and progressive muscle relaxation. Listen to audio

### Immediate emotional support (United States)

Call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. If there is immediate danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. 988 Lifeline