



Getting Grounded

Loss – particularly traumatic loss – is at its heart, a stress response. It is normal and adaptive, but none-the-less dysregulating. This protective response tells us that our autonomic nervous system is working just as it should, keeping us alert and ready to respond to the perceived threat. Unfortunately, this can leave us anxious and feeling ungrounded. Fortunately, we can engage our parasympathetic nervous system to counter this automatic response. Try these simple grounding techniques to enhance self-relaxation and create a sense of calm.

5-4-3-2-1

- Begin by taking three deep breaths, allowing your belly to expand.
- With your eyes softly gazing in front of you, notice **5** things you can see in the room.
- Inhale and exhale a deep belly breath.
- Notice **4** things you can feel (i.e., “chair on my back,” “feet on the floor”).
- Inhale and exhale a deep belly breath.
- Notice **3** things you can hear right now (i.e., “bird singing outside the window”).
- Inhale and exhale a deep belly breath.
- Notice **2** things you can smell right now (or two aromas you would like to smell).
- Inhale and exhale a deep belly breath.
- Notice **1** thing you noticed today since waking in the morning for which you are grateful.
- Inhale and exhale a deep belly breath.

4 Square Breathing

1. Breathe into a count of 4
2. Hold your breath to a count of 4
3. Breathe out to a count of 4, and
4. Rest to a count of 4
5. Repeat for 2-5 minutes.



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Starfish

Hold your right hand out in front of you. Starting at the base of your thumb, trace the sides of your right hand with the index finger of your left hand as you rise to the tips of your thumb and fingers breathe in. As you descend from the tips of your thumb and fingers, breathe out. Start at the base of your thumb and go in reverse until you reach the outside base of your pinkie.

Acupressure Massage

Locate the curved fold between your thumb and forefinger feeling beyond the edge of the skin to the point where you can feel meat. Gently massage that tissue as you breathe slowly to a count of 4 and exhale slowly to a count of 4. Continue this practice for 5 minutes.

Butterfly Hug/Batman Hug

With your hands in front of you, palms facing you, interlock your thumbs creating what would look like a bird or butterfly. With hands in this position, lay them over your chest so the fingertips touch the flesh below your collarbone. Gently tap this soft area alternating left and right as you breathe in and exhale slowly.

Alternately, you can cross your arms so that each hand is cupped around the opposite arm just above your elbows, gently tapping, alternating left and right while breathing in and exhaling slowly.

Grounding

Lay flat on the floor and starting at your feet, feel each area of your body as it rests on the floor: feet/heels, calves, back of the upper leg, bottom, lower back, upper back/shoulders, upper arms, forearms, hands, back of the head. Take one deep breath and exhale slowly as you consider each place where your body contacts the floor. Allow your body to relax and sink into the floor with each exhale.

Alternately, sit in a chair and do the same, starting with feeling your feet on the ground. Next, try to feel the floor with your feet passing through the soles of your shoes. Then, continue with the places where your body contacts the chair.



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Progressive Relaxation

Lay in a relaxed position. Beginning with your feet and breathing in, tense the muscles in your feet, holding that tension for a count of 5. Then exhaling, relax this tension for a count of five. Repeat this twice, and then move up your leg to the following areas:

1. Calves
2. Thighs
3. Bottom
4. Small of your back
5. Stomach
6. Upper back/shoulders
7. Chest
8. Upper arms
9. Forearms
10. Hands
11. Neck
12. Jaws
13. Forehead and scalp

Tapping

1. Take three deep belly breaths, exhaling slowly.
2. Start with your feet; firmly tap each foot simultaneously. Next, move up to your ankles, shins, calves, knees... continuing up your body, tapping each area's front, side, and back. Cross your arms as you approach your shoulders. Continue down your arms. Proceed with your neck, face, ears, and scalp.
3. Take three deep belly breaths, exhaling slowly.