

GROUNDING: YOUR ANCHOR IN THE STORM

TECHNIQUES TO CALM THE NERVOUS SYSTEM AND RETURN TO THE PRESENT

THE "GOLD STANDARD": THE 5-4-3-2-1 TECHNIQUE

Use this when your thoughts are racing or you feel "spaced out."

Acknowledge these things in your environment:

- 5 things you can SEE (e.g., a clock, a plant, a speck of dust, your own hand)
- 4 things you can TOUCH (e.g., your shirt, the chair, a cold desk, your hair)
- 3 things you can HEAR (e.g., traffic, your breath, a hum of a fridge)
- 2 things you can SMELL (e.g., coffee, laundry soap, the air)
- 1 thing you can TASTE (e.g., mint, water, or even just the inside of your mouth)

PHYSICAL GROUNDING (THE "BODY LOCK")

Use these when you feel a high level of anxiety or panic.

- The Floor Push: Sit in a chair and press your feet as hard as you can into the floor. Feel the solidness of the ground holding you up.
- Temperature Shock: Hold an ice cube in your hand or splash cold water on your face. This "shocks" the nervous system back into the "here and now."
- Finger Counting: Press each finger against your thumb, one by one. Focus on the exact point of pressure and the sensation of skin meeting skin.
- The Weight of the Body: Notice how your body feels in your seat. Describe the weight of your legs and the support of the backrest.

MENTAL GROUNDING (THE "FOCUS SHIFT")

Use these when you are stuck in a "thought loop" or catastrophizing.

- Categories: Pick a category (e.g., "Types of Dogs" or "Cities") and name as many as you can in 30 seconds.
- The Room Inventory: Find every green object in the room. Then find every square object.
- Backwards Counting: Count backward from 100 by 7s (100, 93, 86...). This requires high cognitive focus, which pulls energy away from the emotional centers of the brain.
- Describe a Mundane Task: Narrate the steps of how to make a cup of tea or how to drive to the grocery store in minute detail.

SOOTHING GROUNDING (THE "SAFE HARBOR")

Use these when you feel lonely, sad, or emotionally raw.

- The 20-Second Hug: Hug yourself or a pillow firmly. Research shows a 20-second hug releases oxytocin.
- Safe Place Visualization: Close your eyes and describe your "safe place" (real or imagined) using all five senses.
- Gentle Movement: Slowly stretch your neck or roll your shoulders. Observe the muscle movement without judgment.

