

Grounding Exercises

Explain fight, flight or freeze - adrenaline and its impact - e.g. can lead to panic attacks.

Explain Diaphragmatic Breathing:

Diaphragmatic breathing is a type of a breathing exercise that helps strengthen your diaphragm, an important muscle that helps you breathe. This breathing exercise is also sometimes called belly breathing or abdominal breathing.

It has a number of benefits that affect your entire body. It's the basis for almost all meditation or relaxation techniques, which can lower your stress levels, reduce your blood pressure, and regulate other important bodily processes.

The most basic type of diaphragmatic breathing is done by inhaling through your nose and breathing out through your mouth.

Diaphragm breathing basics:

- Sit in a comfortable position or lie flat on the floor, your bed, or another comfortable, flat surface.
- Relax your shoulders.
- Put a hand on your chest and a hand on your stomach.
- Breathe in through your nose for about two seconds. You should experience the air moving through your nostrils into your abdomen, making your stomach expand. During this type of breathing, make sure your stomach is moving outward while your chest remains relatively still.
- Purse your lips (as if you're about to drink through a straw), press gently on your stomach, and exhale slowly for about two seconds.
- Repeat these steps several times for best results.

Rib-stretch breathing (use diaphragmatic breathing into your stomach):

- Stand up straight and arch your back.
- Breathe out until you just can't anymore.
- Inhale slowly and gradually, taking in as much air as possible until you can't breathe in anymore.
- Hold your breath for about 10 seconds.
- Breathe out slowly through your mouth. You can do this normally or with pursed lips.

Numbered breathing (use diaphragmatic breathing into your stomach). Numbered breathing is a good exercise for gaining control over your breathing patterns. Here's how you can do it:

- Stand up, staying still, and close your eyes.

- Inhale deeply until you can't take in anymore air.
- Exhale until all air has been emptied from your lungs.
- Keep your eyes closed! Now, inhale again while picturing the number 1.
- Keep the air in your lungs for a few seconds, then let it all out.
- Inhale again while picturing the number 2.
- Hold your breath while counting silently to 3, then let it all out again.
- Repeat these steps until you've reached 8. Feel free to count higher if you feel comfortable.

Anchoring or can be used as a check-in or check-out:

This might be something like, "I'm Full Name. I'm X years old. I live in..... Today is Friday, June 3. It's 10:04 in the morning. I'm sitting at my desk. There's no one else in the room." You can expand on the phrase by adding details until you feel calm, such as, "It's raining lightly, but I can still see the sun. I need a break. I'm thirsty, so I'm going to make a cup of tea."

Short grounding:

Lower your gaze, hands in lap or on diaphragm and take 3 breaths in and out (using diaphragmatic breathing). Feel your feet on the floor, and then starting with your toes, press them to the floor, then the balls of your feet, your arches and the heels. Make a whole foot connection! Then imagine roots growing out of your feet into the earth. Imagine those roots growing longer and combining with all the root systems underground. Feel connected to our earth. Then in your mind, take yourself to a place in nature, somewhere you love or maybe visited recently. Remember what it felt like. How warm or chilly, dry or drizzly, still or windy. Stay with those feelings for a few moments. Then bring yourself slowly back into the space with everyone. And when you're ready, open your eyes or clear your gaze and then if you can, stretch or shake yourself in whatever way you feel comfortable.

Longer grounding:

Cognitive Behavioural Technique (CBT) - The 5 senses.

- Ask participants to lower their gaze or close their eyes whichever feels comfortable, then to focus on their breathing for the count of 3 breaths in and out.
- Gradually look around themselves and take in their environment and then look at 5 different things as if seeing them for the first time - study each one for a few seconds.
- Then touch 4 different things, again as if feeling them for the first time, taking in temperature and the material they're made from.
- Then listen for 3 different sounds focussing on each one for a few seconds. If in a very quiet space, participants can snap their fingers, clap hands, whistle etc.
- Then smell two things - their clothing, skin, hair, whatever their drinking or an object to hand. Lastly to taste one thing - if nothing to hand then they can lick the back of their hand. This technique takes the person 'out of their mind' - in other words helps them to stop focussing on their thoughts which can break the cycle of panicked thinking and lower adrenaline.

Longest grounding:

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT): I'd like to invite you to close your eyes, focus on your breath - in and out. And then to just feel into your body, scanning up and down looking for some tension. Do you have tightness, stress or pain anywhere? Is it in your neck, shoulders, lower back or somewhere else? If you can't find anything in your body, then look outside for whatever is causing you tension at the moment. Then tap the side of your hand with the other hand and repeat after me, "Even though I have this tension (or you can name the specific tension, e.g. this headache/back pain/frustration) in my body and life, I deeply and completely accept myself." Repeat this x 3.

Then tap **gently** and **repeatedly**:

- Inside of the eyebrow, where the nose meets the eyebrow, say - this tension (or headache/pain)
- Side of the outside of the eye on the bone, say - this tension.
- Underneath the eye on the bone - this tension.
- Under the nose, above the top lip - this tension.
- Under the bottom lip in the crease above the chin - this tension.
- Feel for your collarbone and then to the outside towards your arm move an inch - this tension.
- Under the armpit and 3 inches below - this tension.
- Lastly, top of the head - this tension. Then drop your hands to your lap and close your eyes or unfocus your gaze and take 3 deep slow breaths. And when you're ready come back into the group.

Check outs:

List favorites - List three favorite things in several different categories, such as foods, trees, songs, movies, books, places, and so on.

Plan an activity - This might be something you do alone or with a friend or loved one. Think of what you'll do and when. Maybe you'll make your favourite dinner, take a walk somewhere you love, watch a film you've been looking forward to, call a friend. Focus on the details, describing as much as possible.

List positive things - Write or mentally list four or five things in your life that bring you joy, visualising each of them briefly.
