

Grounding & Stabilisation Toolkit

Simple exercises for overwhelm, anxiety, trauma responses and shutdown.

Important

This resource is for information and self-support. It is not a substitute for therapy, medical advice, emergency care, or a personalised clinical assessment. If there is immediate danger to life, call 999 or go to your nearest A&E.; For urgent mental health support in England, call NHS 111 and select the mental health option.

How to use this toolkit

Use these exercises when you feel anxious, disconnected, numb, angry, overwhelmed, panicky or pulled back into difficult memories. Start with one exercise and repeat it slowly. You do not need to do everything.

1. Orienting to here and now

Orienting helps the brain update that the danger is not happening right now. Move your head slowly and let your eyes look around the room.

- Name where you are.
- Name the date and time.
- Notice three things that show you are in the present.
- Say: "I am here, now. This is not then."
- Feel your feet or body supported by the floor/chair.

2. 5-4-3-2-1 grounding

5 things I can see 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____	4 things I can feel 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
3 things I can hear 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____	2 things I can smell + 1 thing I can taste 1. _____ 2. _____ Taste: _____

3. Breathing that does not force calm

Do not force a deep breath if that increases panic. Try a longer out-breath instead.

- Breathe in gently through the nose for 3.
- Breathe out slowly for 5 or 6.
- Let the shoulders drop a little on the out-breath.
- Repeat 5 times.
- If breathing exercises feel unsafe, use feet-on-floor grounding instead.

4. Body-based grounding

- Press both feet into the floor for 10 seconds, then release.
- Push hands gently together, notice pressure, then release.
- Hold a cold drink or splash cool water on hands.
- Name five objects with straight edges in the room.
- Stand up, stretch, and look towards a window or door.

5. Emotional temperature scale

0-3: steady enough What keeps me steady? _____	4-6: building pressure What early action helps? _____
7-8: overwhelmed Who/what helps me reduce risk? _____	9-10: crisis risk Immediate safety action: 999 / A&E; / urgent support

6. My stabilisation menu

A grounding exercise I can use: _____ _____	A place where I feel safer: _____ _____
A person I can contact: _____ _____	Something I should avoid when distressed: _____ _____
A phrase that helps me stay present: _____ _____	A simple action for the next 10 minutes: _____ _____

When to seek more support

- I feel unable to stay safe.
- I have a plan or intent to harm myself.
- I am dissociating or losing time.
- I am using substances to manage risk.
- Someone else may be at risk.

My usual grounding strategies are not working.