



FEELING OVERWHELMED?

A SIMPLE GROUNDING EXERCISE GUIDE

When stress or anxiety feels overwhelming, it can feel like your thoughts are racing, your emotions are heightened, or you're disconnected from the present moment.

Grounding techniques help bring your attention back to what is happening right now – helping your nervous system feel safer and more settled.

These exercises are simple tools you can use anytime you notice yourself feeling overwhelmed, anxious, stressed, or caught up in difficult thoughts.

1. The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise

This exercise uses your senses to reconnect you with the present moment. Take a slow breath and notice:

👁️ 5 things you can see

Look around and name five things you notice.

Example: a plant, a window, the colour of a cushion.

👋 4 things you can feel

Notice four physical sensations.

Example: your feet on the floor, the chair supporting you, the feeling of your clothing.

👂 3 things you can hear

Listen for three sounds.

Example: birds outside, a fan, voices nearby.

👃 2 things you can smell

Notice two scents around you.

Example: your coffee, perfume, fresh air.

👅 1 thing you can taste

Notice one taste.

Example: water, tea, a mint.

Reminder: You don't need to force yourself to feel calm immediately. The goal is simply to reconnect with the present moment.

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2. Grounding Through Your Body

When anxiety rises, we often become caught up in thoughts about the past or future.

Try bringing awareness back to your body:

Feet on the floor

Press your feet gently into the ground.

Notice:

- The pressure beneath your feet
- The support of the floor
- The sensation of being held

Remind yourself:

"I am here. I am safe in this moment."

3. The STOP Technique

A simple pause when emotions feel intense.

S – Stop

Pause what you are doing.

T – Take a breath

Slow your breathing and soften your body.

O – Observe

Notice:

- What am I feeling?
- What thoughts are showing up?
- What do I need right now?

P – Proceed

Choose your next step with intention.

More on the next page...



4. Calming Your Nervous System with Breathing

Try this gentle breathing exercise:

Longer Exhale Breathing:

1. Breathe in slowly for 4 seconds.
2. Breathe out slowly for 6 seconds.
3. Repeat for 1–2 minutes.

A longer exhale can help signal to your nervous system that it is safe to begin settling.

5. Create Your Own Grounding Toolkit

Everyone responds differently to grounding. Consider creating a list of things that help you reconnect with yourself.

Your grounding toolkit might include:

- ☐ Going for a mindful walk
- ☐ Holding a warm drink
- ☐ Listening to calming music
- ☐ Spending time in nature
- ☐ Journalling your thoughts
- ☐ Stretching or gentle movement
- ☐ Calling someone you trust
- ☐ Practising slow breathing

A gentle reminder

Feeling overwhelmed doesn't mean you are failing or that you "should be coping better". Sometimes your mind and body are simply signalling that you need a moment to pause, reconnect, and care for yourself.

When to Seek Support

Grounding exercises can be helpful tools for managing moments of stress and anxiety. However, if feelings of overwhelm are becoming frequent, affecting your sleep, relationships, work, or daily life, speaking with a counsellor can provide additional support.

At Élan Counselling, we support women navigating anxiety, stress, sleep difficulties, and life transitions with a compassionate, evidence-informed approach.