

5-4-3-2-1 Sensory Grounding Technique

CBT TOOL

Visual Cheat Sheet for Anxiety & Emotional Regulation

Step 0: Prepare with Box Breathing

Slow your heart rate and settle your nervous system before starting the sensory sequence.

Inhale
(4s)

Hold
(4s)

Exhale
(4s)

Hold
(4s)

5

Things You Can SEE

VISUAL ANCHOR

Look around your environment. Notice small details: shadows, textures, colors, a clock, or shapes in the room. Acknowledge them silently.

4

Things You Can TOUCH

TACTILE ANCHOR

Notice physical sensations: your feet firm on the floor, fabric of your clothes, the smooth surface of a desk, or cool air on your skin.

3

Things You Can HEAR

AUDITORY ANCHOR

Tune into background sounds: traffic outside, ticking clock, distant footsteps, wind, or the quiet hum of an air conditioner.

2

Things You Can SMELL

OLFACTORY ANCHOR

Identify subtle scents around you: fresh air, coffee, paper, soap, or essential oils. If no scent is present, recall your favorite smell.

1

Thing You Can TASTE

GUSTATORY ANCHOR

Focus on the current taste in your mouth: coffee, mint, water, or simply notice the neutral taste. You can also pop a mint or sip water.

Why it works: Sensory grounding pulls your brain out of fight-or-flight overthinking by forcing it to process immediate sensory data from your physical environment right now.

Grounding Practice & Observation Log

[PRACTICE LOG](#)

Work through the 5 steps and log your observations to reduce distress.

DATE & TIME

TRIGGERING EVENT / SITUATION

PRE-GROUNDING ANXIETY (1-10)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

POST-GROUNDING ANXIETY (1-10)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

5 SEE — 5 Things I Can See

4 TOUCH — 4 Things I Can Touch / Feel

3 HEAR — 3 Things I Can Hear

2 SMELL — 2 Things I Can Smell

1 TASTE — 1 Thing I Can Taste

Grounding Reflection & Body State:
