

# Here are a few self-soothing exercises that can help you to manage stress, calm your emotions, and reconnect with yourself

## Deep Breathing Exercise (Box Breathing)

**Purpose:** To help calm your nervous system and reduce stress by focusing on the breath.

**How to do it:**

- Find a comfortable, quiet space where you won't be disturbed.
- Close your eyes and take a deep breath in through your nose for a count of 4 seconds.
- Hold your breath for 4 seconds.
- Slowly exhale through your mouth for 4 seconds.
- Pause and hold the breath out for another 4 seconds.
- Repeat the process for 4-5 minutes, focusing solely on the rhythm of your breath.
- As you breathe, notice any tension in your body and release it with each exhale.

## 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise

**Purpose:** To help you focus on the present moment and alleviate overwhelming feelings of anxiety or stress.

**How to do it:**

- **5 things you can see:** Look around and name five objects you can see.
- **4 things you can touch:** Focus on four things you can physically feel, like the ground beneath you or the texture of your clothes.
- **3 things you can hear:** Listen carefully and name three sounds you can hear right now.
- **2 things you can smell:** Take a deep breath and identify two smells around you. (If there are none, try imagining your favourite scents.)
- **1 thing you can taste:** Take a sip of water or focus on the taste in your mouth.
- This exercise helps you to reconnect with your surroundings and brings awareness to the present moment.

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

**Purpose:** To release tension in the body and promote physical and mental relaxation.

**How to do it:**

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- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.



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- Start by tensing the muscles in your feet. Hold the tension for 5-10 seconds, then slowly release.
- Move upwards, tensing and releasing each muscle group: calves, thighs, stomach, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, and face.
- Pay attention to how your body feels as you release the tension. Focus on the contrast between tension and relaxation.
- Continue until you've worked through your entire body, taking deep, slow breaths throughout.

### Counting Backwards

**Purpose:** To calm racing thoughts and centre yourself when feeling anxious.

How to do it:

- Sit or stand in a quiet space.
- Close your eyes and slowly begin to count backwards from 100. If you get distracted, start again from where you left off.
- Focus your attention on each number as you count down. This helps distract your mind from anxious thoughts and brings you into the present moment.
- If you feel overwhelmed, you can count by tens (e.g., 100, 90, 80) for an added challenge.
- The key is to engage fully with the counting, helping you ground yourself in the now.

### Gratitude Journaling

**Purpose:** To shift focus from stress or negativity to feelings of appreciation.

How to do it:

- Take a notebook or open a digital document.
- Write down three things you're grateful for each day. They can be small or big, from something as simple as a warm cup of tea to something significant like family or good health.
- If you're feeling stressed, try to find at least one positive thing in your day, no matter how small, and reflect on why it made you feel good.
- This exercise can shift your focus to the positives in your life, helping you feel grounded and content.

