



Combat against Stress, Anxiety and Panic Attacks: 5-4-3-2-1 Coping Technique

Abdul Imran*

Introduction

As per saying “A Calm Mind is an Effective Mind” and also there are plenty of scientific evidences to support this saying that the brain works more effectively and efficiently when it’s relaxed. Hence, with a balanced, grounded mind, you can better explore those challenges in life that you may wish to achieve, not with anxiety, but with calmness and centered awareness.

Keywords: Stress; Anxiety; Panic attack; Meditation; Trauma

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise is a calming technique. It is simple yet effective method for regaining control of your mind. It brings you back to the present and roots you or ground you into ‘now’ and away from the tough and stressful situations.

This technique incorporates all 5 senses to help remind you of what your senses are telling you about the world around you at present. It can look like meditating which can be done where ever you are and whenever you are feeling anxious or overwhelmed.

Grounding meditation is not a magic that make all your problems disappear or simply distract a hyperactive mind but it can help to train your mind to be more grounded and present. It can help interrupt your unhealthy thought patterns.

When is 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Method Helpful?

When anxiety or panic threatens peace of mind: It becomes very difficult to stay in the “moment” when our mind is bouncing between various anxious thoughts and worries, but the mindfulness tool has the potential to pull anxious mental energy back into the body, grounding and calming it, so that you can release stress and focus again, in the “here” and “now”. It is an effective way to calm anxiety during a panic attack.

For trauma sufferers: People after trauma, experience flashbacks, anxiety, panic attacks and other uncomfortable symptoms. This technique helps control these symptoms by turning attention away from thoughts, memories, or worries and refocusing on the present moment.

During stressful situation: Public speaking, performance reviews or promotion at work, new job responsibilities, stress of

news alerts, emails from your boss, taking final exams or fighting a competition, anxiety thoughts about the future, feeling of depression, thinking about the past, feeling nothing within control, etc. are such situations that can cause even the calmest person to feel a little stressed. That’s where the 5-4-3-2-1 Coping Technique comes in, as it is designed to ease your state of mind so that you can get through stressful moments.

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

To practice this technique, you basically have to do a roll call of everything what you’re seeing, touching, smelling, and hearing right in this moment. Engaging all your senses helps bring you back to the present moment and rule over your racing mind and anxiety.

For practicing this technique, you don’t even need to be at home. This 5-steps exercise requires 60 seconds.

For each step, it would be better to think and say aloud the sensations you’re observing.

Take a deep belly breath to begin.

5 - SIGHT: Look around and recognize 5 things. Take your time to really look and acknowledge what you see and say them out loud. For example, you could say, I see the computer, I see the cup, I see the picture frame.

4 - FEEL: Pay attention and acknowledge 4 things that you can feel irrespective of the texture or looks of it, and say them out loud. For example, you could say, I feel the floor cool beneath my feet, I feel the hair on the back of my neck, or I feel the pillow I am sitting on and spend a moment literally touching these things.

3 - HEAR: Listen for 3 sounds around you that you can hear. It could be the sound of traffic outside, the sound of typing, people talking, walking, phone ringing, birds chirping, raining, etc. Instead of listening to your own thoughts or sounds from your body like your stomach growling, focus on external voices, noise or tunes that are audible to you. You can focus on more ambient sounds like-ticking of the clock, hum of the fan and many more. Name all the three and say aloud.

2 - SMELL: Say two things you can smell like smell of your pen, or hair, the smell of the plant. If at first you don’t feel like you can smell anything, simply try to sense the subtle fragrance of the air around you, it’s okay to move to another spot and sniff something. If you can’t smell anything at the moment or you can’t move, then remind yourself about two of your favorite smells, think about them and say their name aloud.

1 - TASTE: Say one thing you can taste. It is not necessary to have something to eat. It can be an aftertaste of mint, tea, coffee, sandwich or anything else that you can sense. But, if you can’t taste anything, say your favorite thing to taste be it chips or your favorite childhood candy.

Take another deep belly breath to end and follow the 5-5-5 rule. Breathe in for 5 seconds, hold it for next 5 seconds, and finally breathe out for 5 seconds. Your breath can be a strong anchor to pull yourself back into the present moment.

*Corresponding author: Abdul Imran, Manipal University, India; Email: abdulimran92@gmail.com

Received: July 27, 2020 Accepted: September 21, 2020 Published: September 28, 2020

Benefits of 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

1. This mindfulness method works by allowing you to be in the present. It makes you realize that you are more powerful and calmer in the current moment, which as a result holds the anticipatory ideas and helps you in dealing with the anxiety.
2. Insomnia, cravings and addictions, stress management, PTSD flashbacks and panic disorders can all be de-fused, slowed and calmed this way.
3. Mind can dissociate anytime from the moment, carrying us off with it but reconnecting with the senses can pull us back again.