

# Thought Stopping Techniques



## **Introduction**

According to science, the best way to stop unwanted thoughts is to focus or concentrate on another task. We will present to you different thought-stopping techniques that you can try right away!

If you more evidence-based strategies, in-depth guides, tricks and personal insights for managing anxiety, don't forget to check out our website [Anxiety For Beginners!](#)

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## **What research says**

The techniques I will tell you about later are back-up by science. There was a study conducted where participants were asked to perform the following tasks:

- Trying to suppress some distressing thoughts
- Trying to suppress the thoughts by focusing on a distraction task (focused-distraction)
- Just focusing on a distraction task (concentration)
- Thinking about anything without restrictions

In the end, it was found that focused distraction and concentration were much more efficient in reducing intrusive thoughts than actively trying to suppress the distressing thoughts. This means that making yourself busy with another task is much more helpful than just trying to not overthink or avoid thinking about something in particular. Your mind deserves a break.

## **Practical Thought-Stopping Techniques**

Next, we will introduce you to two thought-stopping techniques:

- Grounding Techniques for Anxiety
- Distraction Techniques for Anxiety

# What are Anxiety Grounding Techniques?

Grounding techniques are techniques and strategies that can help you to lower your anxiety by making you focus on the present moment, instead of your thoughts and worries. There are three categories:

- Physical
- Mental
- Emotional

You can implement these techniques into your daily life, as they are free and very easily accessible. You can apply them almost anytime, anywhere.

## How to Use Grounding Techniques

Effectively harnessing grounding techniques involves a mindful and personalized approach.

**Step 1: Awareness**—recognizing when anxiety is starting to kick in, manifesting on your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. Once you sense anxiety's presence, choose a grounding technique that resonates with you from the categories we've mentioned: physical, mental, or emotional. It's best to try doing a grounding exercise when you first start to feel bad, and not waiting until it feels like it's too much to handle.

**Step 2 - Experimentation.** Experiment with different techniques to discover which ones work best for you. When applying a chosen technique, focus your attention entirely on it. For instance, if you opt for sensory grounding, immerse yourself fully in the sensory experience, whether it's the texture of an object or the aroma of a scent. In physical grounding, engage in the chosen physical activity with intention and presence.

**Step 3 - Practice. Consistency is key**—practice these techniques regularly to build resilience and familiarity. Remember that what works best can vary from person to person, so personalize your toolkit with the techniques that better work with you.

Here are some further tips:

- You can make a sensory box and keep it into your bedroom or where you need it the most. You can have items of different textures, smells, or store photographs.
- You are trying to take distance with your thoughts, not connect with them. Don't journal or talk about your negative feelings during this time. Also, try to use neutral statements. For example, say "this rooms is cold" instead of "this room is so cold because it is winter and I do not like winter".
- You can change the grounding exercises as you want, and create your own methods of grounding
- Try to record in your personal toolkit which techniques work for you.
- If you need it or if you feel like grounding isn't working, try it for longer periods of time, such as for 30 minutes.

## Anxiety Grounding Techniques Toolkit

### Physical Grounding Techniques

- 5-4-3-2-1 Method: Ground yourself by identifying five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. You can always change it, and choose five things you can touch for example.
- Smell a scent: You can smell lavender to relax, or the turn some aromatic candles on. You can try other smells such as citrus (you can bite into a lemon), coffee or peppermint. Spray yourself with some perfume.
- Smell essential oils: Use calming essential oils like lavender or chamomile.
- Touch something comforting: Hold or touch a comforting object like a soft blanket or a stuffed animal. Describe how it feels. Notice textures, colors, materials, weight, temperature.
- Drink some tea: (or just enjoy the smell), and savor the taste and smell, and feel its temperature.
- Temperature: Pay attention to the temperature around you, noting warmth or coolness on your skin.
- Go in nature: Hear the birds chirping, the wind blowing, the colors around you. Touch some grass, hug a tree.
- Feel the sun: Go out to the sun and focus on how hot you are. Feel the warmth in your skin.
- Put your hands in water: Immerse your hands in warm or cool water.
- 4-7-8 breathing: Regulate your breath with the 4-7-8 technique (inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, exhale for 8 seconds) to reduce anxiety.
- Deep (Balloon) Breathing: Count to 4 as you breathe in, hold for 4, exhale for 4. As you inhale, notice your lungs expanding with air, and as you exhale, your lungs shrinking.
- Take a short walk: Step outside for a walk to change your environment and get fresh air. The temperature difference can also help you, for example, if it is chilly outside.
- Hold a piece of ice: Ground yourself through the sensations of cold by holding an ice cube.
- Play with a stress ball: Squeeze and release a stress ball to release tension.
- Wrist stretch: Relieve physical tension by gently stretching and rotating your wrists.
- Grounding yoga poses: Practice grounding yoga poses such as Child's Pose or Mountain Pose.
- Physical activity: Engage in short bursts of physical activity, like doing push-ups or jumping jacks
- Tapping EFT: Try Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) by tapping on specific points on your body to release emotional stress.
- Rub your hands together: Feel the warm travelling through your body while you close your eyes.
- Clap your hands: Feel the sensations of the clap, how long it lasts.

- Stomping your feet in the ground: Feel the floor under you.
- Chew some gum: You can focus on the physical task, or you can also focus on the sensations and flavors.
- Splash your face with some cold water (or some warm water too)
- Pop bubble wrap
- Try a weighted blanket. Feel its weight, the texture.
- Doodle. Take a pen and just doodle.

### **Mental Grounding Techniques**

- Counting: Divert your thoughts by counting backward from 100 or counting objects in the room
- Reverse countdown: Engage your mind by counting backward from 1000 in increments.
- Sudoku: Challenge your brain with Sudoku puzzles.
- Mental calculations: Perform mental calculations or math exercises to redirect your thoughts, such as multiplication tables.
- Memory game: Improve memory and focus by playing memory games or recalling movie scenes in detail.
- Think in categories: Organize your thoughts by categorizing objects or ideas.
- Describe a common task: Verbally describe a common task in detail to refocus your mind
- Describe what is around you: Enhance awareness by describing your environment.
- Distract yourself: Fully engage your attention with an absorbing activity like a puzzle or hobby
- Read words backward
- Say the alphabet

### **Emotional Grounding Techniques**

- Noting meditation: Try the noting meditation technique, or mindful meditation
- Focusing on your breath: Cultivate mindfulness by focusing on your breath, counting each inhalation and exhalation.
- Guided imagery: Immerse yourself in guided imagery or visualization exercises to transport your mind to a calming mental space.
- Have an anchor object. Have an anchor object that reminds you of the present moment. It can be a bracelet, a photograph, a clay figure, whatever you want.
- Listening to music: You can listen to relaxing songs, or just some song you like. Try the song Weightless by Marconi Union, called the "most relaxing song in the world". You can also try dancing which gives you the benefit of putting your body into motion.

## Interactive Anxiety Grounding Techniques Toolbox - Notion Template

We also created this Notion Template to help you keep building your toolbox (for free!).

### ✨ Key Features ✨

- A library of all the Anxiety Grounding Techniques we previously mentioned
- A space for you to keep track of all your resources, tips, and ratings for each strategy
- A personal toolbox for you to keep strategy of all the techniques that work for you

Get your free Interactive Anxiety Grounding Techniques Toolbox [here!](#)

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## **Distraction techniques for anxiety**

Distraction can be a way to get some distance from our thoughts and realize that they are just thoughts – not truths about ourselves or the world.

Having a few distraction techniques can be handy when having distressing thoughts. Just try to focus on something else for a few minutes. The distraction techniques will help you to absorb your focus, helping break the cycle of anxious thoughts and emotions.

However, remember that distraction techniques are short-term anxiety management techniques. Other coping skills may be more beneficial for long term benefits.

Here, I'll mention different distraction techniques that you can use:

- 1 - Go for a walk or for a jog
- 2 - Practice yoga
- 3 - Do some stretching exercises
- 4 - Do some Hula hooping
- 5 - Dance (If you don't know what to do you can watch a Just Dance video on YouTube)
- 6 - Go for a walk in nature
- 7 - Draw or doodle
- 8 - Paint, color a mandala or a coloring book
- 9 - Write in a journal or start a short story or a poem
- 10 - Build with some LEGO blocks
- 11 - Take some photos
- 12 - Try to solve a Sudoku
- 13 - Try to solve some Crossword puzzles
- 14 - Engage in trivia or quiz games
- 15 - Try to solve the Rubik's Cube
- 16 - Call or message a friend
- 17 - Spend time with loved ones
- 18 - Spend time with pets
- 19 - Listen to a podcast
- 20 - Listen to your favorite playlist
- 21 - Play a music instrument
- 22 - Read a book
- 23 - Watch a movie or a TV show



- 24 - Play a video game
- 25 - Cook your favorite meal, or try a new recipe
- 26 - Start a DIY craft
- 27 - Engage in home improvement tasks
- 28 - Plan a trip
- 29 - Try gardening
- 30 - Practice meditation
- 31 - Organize and declutter your living space.

## **Distraction vs Grounding Anxiety Techniques**

Distraction techniques aim to shift your focus away from distressing thoughts, while anxiety grounding techniques aim to anchor you in the present moment. Depending on the situation and personal preferences, you may find one set of techniques more helpful than the other, or you can use a combination of both.

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