Dropping anchor

Three steps for steadying yourself when emotions are overwhelming.

When a storm hits, a boat drops anchor. The anchor does not make the storm go away. It holds the boat steady until it passes. This exercise does the same for you. Run through the three steps slowly, three or four times.

A: Acknowledge	Silently name what is here. "I notice anxiety." "Here are thoughts that I cannot cope." "There is a knot in my stomach." No fighting it, no judging it.
C: Come back into your body	Push your feet into the floor. Straighten your back. Press your fingertips together. Stretch your arms. Take a slow breath. You are taking back control of your body.
E: Engage with the world	Look around. Name five things you can see, three you can hear. Notice where you are and what you are doing. Then give your attention to the task or the person in front of you.

Things to remember

- You are not trying to distract yourself or make the feeling go. The feeling can stay. You are widening your attention so it is not the only thing there.
- It takes a minute or two. Repeat the steps until you feel steadier.
- Practise in mild stress first, so it is ready for the big storms.

When	What was going on	How caught up before (0 to 10)	After (0 to 10)

Dropping anchor and the ACE steps were developed by Russ Harris.

© 2026 Patrick O'Hare Therapy · patrickoharetherapy.com
This handout supports your therapy. It does not replace professional advice.