Grounding with your five senses

The 5-4-3-2-1 exercise, for bringing your attention back to the present.

When anxiety or a memory pulls you out of the present, your senses can bring you back. Go slowly. Say each thing out loud or in your head, and really look, listen and feel.

5 things I can see	Look around. Notice colours, shapes, light and shadow. Pick out small details.
4 things I can feel	Your feet in your shoes. The chair under you. The air on your skin. An object in your hand.
3 things I can hear	Near and far. Traffic, a clock, your own breathing.
2 things I can smell	Coffee, soap, fresh air. If nothing is there, name two smells you like.
1 thing I can taste	A sip of water, a mint, or just the taste in your mouth.

Finish with one slow breath out, and remind yourself where you are: "It is Tuesday afternoon. I am in my kitchen. I am safe right now."

Make it yours

Things I can keep nearby to help me ground (something to hold, smell, taste or look at)

A sentence that reminds me where and when I am

When I tried this, what did I notice?

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