



BARNES COUNSELING COLLABORATIVE, LLC
SUPPORT • GROWTH • HEALING

Anxiety Grounding Toolkit

Simple breathing exercises, grounding techniques, and calming strategies you can begin using today.

A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This workbook is intended for educational purposes and personal reflection only. It is not a substitute for psychotherapy, medical care, diagnosis, or treatment. If you are experiencing significant emotional distress or a mental health crisis, please contact a qualified healthcare professional or emergency services immediately.

Using this workbook does not establish a therapist-client relationship with Barnes Counseling Collaborative LLC or Darla Barnes, Ed.D., LPC Associate.

What Is Grounding?

Grounding techniques interrupt anxious spirals by directing your attention to the present moment, helping calm the body's stress response. They work best when practiced regularly — not only in moments of high anxiety.

Breathing Exercises

Box Breathing

Inhale for 4 counts → hold for 4 counts → exhale for 4 counts → hold for 4 counts. Repeat for 4–6 cycles.

4-7-8 Breathing

Inhale through the nose for 4 counts → hold for 7 counts → exhale slowly through the mouth for 8 counts. Repeat 3–4 times.

5-4-3-2-1 Sensory Grounding

Slowly name, out loud or in your mind:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel or touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste, or one thing you're grateful for

Try it now:

Physical Grounding Techniques

- Hold a cold object or splash cool water on your wrists/face
- Press your feet flat into the floor and notice the support beneath you
- Progressive muscle relaxation — tense and release each muscle group
- Take a brief walk or gently stretch
- Hold a textured object and describe it in detail

Cognitive Grounding Statements

Personalize a few of these to use when anxiety rises:

- "I am safe right now."
- "This feeling is uncomfortable, but it will pass."
- "I am in [place], today is [date], and I am okay in this moment."

My personalized statement:

Build Your Personal Toolkit

My top 3 grounding tools	When I'll use them	Where I'll keep this list

Closing & Support Resources

Growth takes time, and reflection is itself a meaningful step. If any part of this workbook brought up feelings that feel too heavy to carry alone, please reach out for support.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org (available 24/7).

Crisis Text Line: text TX to 741741 (available 24/7).

Texas Health and Human Services: dial 2-1-1 (option for mental health) to connect with your local mental health authority and crisis services.

For ongoing support, Barnes Counseling Collaborative, LLC welcomes the opportunity to connect. This workbook is a starting point — you do not have to navigate this alone.

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

The concepts, frameworks, and exercises in this workbook draw on the following published sources and established clinical literature. This workbook offers original explanations and exercises inspired by this work; it does not reproduce any source's text, assessments, or materials.

- Weil, A. (2015). 4-7-8 Breathing. Andrew Weil, M.D. drweil.com
Source for the 4-7-8 breathing pattern; Dr. Weil notes its roots in the ancient yogic practice of pranayama.
- Divine, M. (2013). The Way of the SEAL: Think Like an Elite Warrior to Lead and Succeed. Reader's Digest/Trusted Media Brands.
Source for box breathing ("tactical breathing"), which Divine introduced into U.S. Navy SEAL training; now widely used in clinical and athletic settings.
- 5-4-3-2-1 sensory grounding technique, commonly attributed to Ericksonian psychotherapist Betty Alice Erickson (1938–2019); widely used in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills training and trauma-informed care.
- Jacobson, E. (1938). Progressive Relaxation. University of Chicago Press.
Foundational source for the progressive muscle relaxation technique listed under "Physical Grounding Techniques."
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). samhsa.gov/mental-health/988
- Texas Health and Human Services, Mental Health and Substance Use Resources (2-1-1 Texas; local crisis lines). hhs.texas.gov/services/mental-health-substance-use