

In stressful moments, our brain's "alarm system" activates, making us feel anxious, overwhelmed, or tense. Fortunately, simple techniques can calm the brain and body, improving our ability to cope with stress. This activity introduces you to two easy practices—deep breathing and grounding—that you can use to feel more relaxed and in control. These practices help strengthen your resilience, both as an individual and within your community.

Step 1: Practice Deep Breathing

When we're stressed, our breathing often becomes quick and shallow. Slowing your breath helps the brain feel safe and signals the body to relax.

- Try this: Inhale deeply for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, and then slowly exhale for 4 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times, focusing on the sensation of your breath.
- Why it works: Deep breathing activates the part of your nervous system that tells the brain and body to relax, helping reduce stress and restore a sense of calm.

Step 2: Ground Yourself in the Present Moment

When we feel overwhelmed, our thoughts can spiral, pulling us away from the present. Grounding helps us reset our attention back to the "here and now."

- Try this: Look around and name:
 - 5 things you can see
 - 4 things you can feel
 - 3 things you can hear
 - 2 things you can smell
 - 1 thing you can taste
- Why it works: Grounding shifts your attention away from racing thoughts and brings your brain's focus back to the present, allowing the mind and body to relax.

Step 3: Reflect on Your Experience

After completing these exercises, take a moment to check in with yourself:

- How did your body feel before and after the exercises?
- What thoughts came up while you were practicing these techniques?
- Did you notice any specific triggers for your stress during the exercises?
- How did these techniques compare to how you usually cope with stress?
- What emotions did you experience during the exercises?
- How can you remind yourself to use these techniques in the future?
- What barriers might prevent you from using these techniques regularly, and how can you address them?
- In what situations do you think these techniques will be most helpful?
- How might using these techniques benefit your relationships with others?

Practical Tips for Consistency

Try incorporating deep breathing or grounding into your daily routine. Simple moments like before bed, while commuting, or during a break can be great times to practice. The more often you do it, the easier it becomes to calm your mind and body during stressful situations.

Note on Community Impact

When you take care of your mental wellbeing, you're better equipped to support others. By building your own resilience, you help create a more positive, supportive environment for those around you.

Journal Prompt

Reflect on a recent stressful situation:

- How did you respond?
- How might using these techniques have changed your response?

Encouraging Words for Growth

Remember, building resilience is a journey. Be patient with yourself as you practice, and celebrate the small improvements. Every time you use these techniques, you're strengthening your ability to manage stress and fostering stronger connections with yourself and others.

