



Self Help



Five Things

When experiencing strong emotions and thoughts, we can sometimes get caught up in them and lose track of our surroundings. This exercise uses our five senses to help us center and ground ourselves, and can help us to be more aware of our surroundings. Using our five senses can help us to be in touch with the present moment in a non-judgmental way to get through a difficult moment.

Instructions:

When you notice yourself being caught up in strong emotions and thoughts, pause for a moment:

- Look around your surroundings and *name five things that you can see...*
Notice the details of things around you, such as the colour, shape, texture, height, or width of an item.
- Listen to the sounds that are around you, and *name four things that you can hear...*
You might hear the sound of air conditioning, birds, wind, or your own stomach. Depending on where you are you might have to listen very carefully.
- Now turn your attention to things that are in contact with your body and *name three things that you can touch or feel...*
These could be the feeling of your body sitting in a chair, the feeling of the clothes you are wearing, the weight of your hair on your back, or the grass under your feet.
- Now turn your attention to the smells in your environment, and *name two things that you can smell...*
You might notice the smell of flowers, trees, food, candles or simply fresh air.
- Now focus on things that you can taste, and *name one thing that you can taste...*
This could be the toothpaste from brushing your teeth or food or drink that you just had.

As you notice each sense, try to describe what you notice with as much detail as possible, as this will assist to focus attention on the activity. Remember that it is normal for your attention to wander, and when you notice this happening gently turn your attention back to the exercise. You may also notice yourself making judgements (e.g., becoming irritated by a noise). This is a common and almost automatic response. If this occurs just notice that a judgement has been made, and bring your attention back to what you are observing (e.g., "I heard a loud noise"). Try to foster a sense of curiosity towards the present moment.