



Reduce Your Stress with Grounding Protocols

In many ways, our world today is more stressful than in previous generations.

Constant bombardment with emails, texts, and social media, in addition to our “do more” culture makes it easy to feel overwhelmed and stressed out. On top of that, many of us deal with young families, elderly parents, and financial worries. Another common area where we experience stress is on the evermore congested roadways in our urban areas.

There are many ways to reduce stress. Exercise is a proven and effective way to do this. Medical practitioners can prescribe medications in cases where health is compromised due to stress. Meditation and mindfulness are also commonly suggested to mitigate or handle stress in a more constructive way.

In the area of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder treatment, much research has been done and therapies developed to assist those with this diagnosis. One of the most successful and powerful techniques is the use of grounding protocols.

Grounding protocols bring us more fully into our bodies and the present moment and are used by those diagnosed with PTSD to mitigate and reduce the level of anxiety and panic of extreme reactions to triggers for the PTSD patient. Commonly referred to as the Subjective Units of Distress (SUDS) scale, those suffering from PTSD rate their levels of anxiety or distress based on a scale of 1 to 10: 1 being not stressed at all and 10 representing a state where the person literally cannot function because their panic/anxiety is so high. Patients using grounding techniques find that their SUDS rating can be reduced drastically using the protocols. These grounding protocols bring the patient’s levels of panic and distress down to far more manageable levels. These protocols are not reserved solely for those

with PTSD. They can be helpful to overcome common stressors such as driving in traffic or feeling overwhelmed and stressed from day-to-day events.

Try a few of these simple techniques the next time you feel stressed, overwhelmed, or panicked by an event or situation:

1) **Naming objects:** Begin naming objects in the environment around you. By focusing on the objects in front of or around you, your cycle of panic may be broken. The concentration required to look at and name the objects interrupts the cycle of thoughts bringing on the panic or stress state.

2) **Naming the colour of objects:** Similar to #1 but simpler and very effective.

3) **5,4,3,2,1 technique:** This is a more complex, but effective technique, since it takes more intense thought to accomplish. Requiring more effort can be more effective because the mind needs to be engaged to a greater degree on the task, leaving less ability for the mind to continue thinking the thoughts causing the stress. This technique involves naming 5 things you can see, 5 things you can hear, 5 things you can feel. Once this is done name 4 things you can see, hear, and feel. It is okay to name 4 of the 5 things from the first group. Next name 3 things then 2, then 1. If levels are still too high repeat the process.

4) **Counting breaths:** This technique is especially useful if you are driving in a car. The other techniques may not be suitable if you are driving, since they may distract you from your driving tasks. However, simply counting the breaths is a powerful grounding mindfulness technique that is also used in meditation. Don't worry about how you are breathing, simply count the breaths. This is sometimes enough to bring you to the present moment and distract you from whatever situation or thoughts are causing you stress.

5) **Connect with nature:** Get in to green spaces, go for walk on the beach, go for a hike, or visit a park. Not only is the fresh air good for us, but we can't help but almost instantly feel calmer.

There are many other grounding techniques but getting started with these practical examples above can help to reduce all ranges of anxiety and stress.

Visit the link below to find the various meditation/mindfulness articles and videos offered by Curtis Health on Thrive:

<https://curtishealth.com/thrive>

References :

Orion Health: Resilience Over Psychological Trauma. <https://www.orionhealth.net/about-us/resources>