

## Get Grounded!

Presented by Suzanne Vickers, June 23, 2026

[Suzanne] Again, my name is Suzanne Vickers. I'm one of your in-house OSU EAP counselors on the internal team. Today we're going to talk about grounding. It's one of my favorite topics because as a former overthinker worrier, I really need to get grounded in my body and in the moment so I can kind of avoid doing the overthinking and the worrying. But as humans, we tend to kind of live from the neck up. So, our thinking gets ahead of our bodies. We make up stories. We maybe have, I know I have, conversations sometimes that never happen. But grounding helps us to be in our full being, reducing anxiety and that overthinking which in turn helps us to stay more present. So, I really love this topic and glad to be sharing it with you today.

So, when we are in the future worrying or in the past regretting perhaps it's hard to be grounded in the present moment as the thoughts and feelings that we're having take us away from it. Grounding our bodies and our minds can help to alleviate stress and anxiety. Again our minds as humans we tend to go toward the negative. We call that the negativity bias. And sometimes we can even get into a fight, flight or freeze mode. and that stress response cycle. Grounding can help to bring our attention and focus away from the triggering event or thought and back into our bodies and into a feeling of safety because that's what we're really looking for. I think when we feel anxious or worried, we're looking for a sense of safety. There are lots of benefits of grounding. There's a variety of ways that grounding can benefit us. It can help to bring our focus back to our body instead of in our mind. It helps to bring us back into the moment where we are instead of in the again in the future in the past and it interrupts the stress response cycle or as Dr. Young from the Cleveland Clinic says, it kind of short circuits that stress response cycle. We're going to try different techniques today and you can see what works best for you. Next we're going to review the techniques and go from there.

So, we're going to explore these various grounding techniques next. So, we have some practical strategies so you can ground yourself if needed. So the first one is called reorienting. Reorienting is around using our senses to kind of notice where we are. Like right now, even with my blurred background, I can see my artwork on the wall there. So just noticing where we are in the room that we're not maybe where our minds are. Like



sometimes I can get into my to-do list and all of a sudden in my mind I'm in the grocery store or I'm driving home or I'm someplace other than where I actually am. And so reorienting helps us to come back to the moment and ground.

Feeling your feet. I like that one. Feeling your, we'll go over these in more detail, but feeling your feet is kind of again getting back into the moment and feeling a part of your body that touches the ground. Distracting the mind. So we can have healthy distractions. We can also have unhealthy distractions. But healthy distractions can help us to come back into the moment and get grounded. Using the breath. Of course we can use our breathing to notice, because our breathing happens automatically right it's part of that automatic part of our system, our nervous system and everything. But we can use our breath to come back to the moment and then we can notice our physical sensations, or proprioception it's also called.

So reorienting. Reorienting is using our five senses to come back to the moment and come back to where we currently are. So, a favorite of mine which you might have heard before or heard of before is 5 4 3 2 1. So the first part of it, I'll just say you can scan that QR code. That is a recording of the 5 4 3 2 1 exercise. If you want to scan that, that's available to you. Either myself or my director, I can't remember, recorded that, but it's a favorite of mine and it's really is helpful. So the first part is looking around and simply noticing the sights, sounds and smells that are present in your environment. When you turn your head and look around, you actually are activating the vagus nerve which is part of the parasympathetic nervous system. It travels all the way from the brain to the belly and the parasympathetic nervous system helps to calm us. So make sure that you do look fully and not just by moving your eyes. Also, the brain takes in the idea that there are no lions, tigers or bears present and thus nothing dangerous or unsafe. So, when we scan the horizon that's kind of a primal thing that used to do thousands of years ago to make sure that there was no danger and that there is safety. So that's why we scan the room where we are and notice the things that we can see. So, after you do notice the things that you can see, you can notice the things that you can feel. Not that you can touch necessarily, not like reaching out and touching someone...something, but feeling what you can feel in this moment without doing that. So, I can feel my glasses on my face. I can feel the chair underneath me. Those kinds of things. I can feel my feet on the floor. And then notice three things that you can hear,

two things that you can smell, and one that you can taste if that's accessible to you. Then you can continue this exercise starting back at the five things you can see using your senses until you feel even a 5% shift in your body and mind toward grounding. And again, we did a recording of this exercise which is available by scanning the QR code on this slide. So, that is available to you if you want to do that.

Then next is feeling your feet. To be completely honest I do not walk in the grass as much as I probably could. About last night I was on my way to my neighbor's house and I was in my bare feet. I went to get her mail for her and I happened to just like walk in the grass instead of on the sidewalk or whatever on the pavement and I was like, "Wow, yeah, there is a big difference between walking on the pavement and walking on the grass." I could really sense the grass underneath my feet and feel that grounding feeling. So, the feeling your feet though can be done inside by pressing your feet into the floor with pressure that is equal with your toes all the way from your toes to your heel. Feel how the pressure of your foot on the floor feels. And then take a deep breath feeling the support beneath you. This is important. Feeling that support beneath you. You can also do this outside on the grass which is called earthing. Grounding techniques like earthing help you connect with the present moment and your physical body, offering a sense of stability and safety. The earthing piece is about having direct skin contact with the surface of the earth whether it's your bare feet, your hands or other parts of your body. And we can feel the electromagnetic field of the earth when we do that. And that connects with our own electromagnetic field. And that's why it is so beneficial. So, you can walk barefoot outside, sit or lie down in the grass or the sand. How good does that feel? And we do it as kids but forget to do it as adults. Sit in a chair and let your bare feet touch the ground. Swim or relax in a natural body of water. Get your hands dirty by touching or playing with the soil, gardening or whatever you do. And the theory is that when we physically connect with the ground again, it's the electrical energy rebalances our own. It works because it gets you outside and helps to get your body connected to nature in ways that most of us in the modern world don't do very often. Right. All right.

Next is distracting your mind. We might think that this is not a healthy thing to do, but there are actually some healthy distractions that we can do. So, mental grounding techniques such as distraction can help us come back to the moment by stopping the



thought or emotion, and I call it a swirl or you can call it a cycle or a spiral or whatever, that can happen. Give yourself a break from the strong emotion or thought pattern and that can help to kind of stop it. So, when we focus our minds on something else other than that thought that's going on in our heads. There are many ways to do that. You can play a word game, contact a friend or loved one by phone, count backwards, which I sometimes do that and that is very helpful. You can start from a kind of a larger number. Watch a funny video. Do some menial tasks like wash the dishes or dust the dining room table. Make a list of your own ways that you might temporarily distract yourself to come back to baseline. So again, it could be doing a puzzle. It could be watching some funny video. Maybe not necessarily doom scrolling, right? But watching something that's a couple minutes long, something that will take us out of our mind's worrying and overthinking and back into the moment

And then using the breath. This is a simple but powerful way to get grounded and come back to your body in the present moment and it only takes a few minutes to do. And there are lots of different instructions about breathing. The nice thing about doing a breathing exercise is that it's portable. You can do it anywhere. You can do it in a work meeting, talking to a friend, walking outside, anytime. A few simple breathing techniques are as follows. So, you want to inhale slowly through your nose to the count of three, then hold for one second, and then blow the breath out through your mouth on the count of three. So, I also use the 4-6 breath, which is not holding the breath for a second but just four inhale through your nose and six exhale through your mouth. And another good breathing exercise is using your imagination to breathe in calm and exhale stress. So you can use the four-six breath with this one. So breathing in through the nose on the count of four. If you can place a hand on your chest and one on your belly since that's where our breath is generally, we can feel it. And then exhale on the count of six through your mouth and really blow it out. So, you're inhaling calm and exhaling stress. Repeat this three times and see how you feel. At the same time you're breathing, feel your body settle into whatever you're sitting on. I talk about the feet, the seat, and the back of the body. And this will help you with the grounding aspect of your breathing exercise.

And then noticing your physical sensations. Start by sitting or lying down in a comfortable position and then begin doing a body scan. Some of you may have done a



body scan meditation...very, very helpful. So, from head to toe or from toe to head kind of scanning your body and what I notice when I do that is that I tend to hold my shoulders up toward my ears which is not helpful, and I tend to get muscle tension there. So, notice any sensations that you may feel in your feet, calves, thighs, hips, belly, arms, back, shoulders, neck and head. So, feel it into those areas. It could be tension. It could be a buzzing feeling. It could be a clenching of muscles, warmth or coolness or something else. Just take note of these sensations and try not to judge them. So, we're just observing without judgment using that mindfulness. When you feel a place of holding or tension, take a deep breath and direct it to that area of your body and then exhale. So, for me, I direct my breath to my shoulders and I exhale. And when I do that, I can feel my shoulders fall immediately. It could be that you're clenching your jaw or something like that. And when we breathe into that area, we can get some relief. Just noticing that area of the body can bring relief. After you do the body scan, notice what you can feel that you're sitting on. Is it a rough surface or a smooth surface? Is it soft or textured? Does it feel cool or warm? So, getting a somatic or bodily sense of our bodies can ground us by focusing our attention away from our minds, our worries, our thoughts, our feelings, and into our physical selves, which we may tend to neglect. So again, that body scan, we're just noticing our physical sensations and then noticing the textures that you can feel. And in this case, you can also pick up something that has a texture. You know, rubbing it in between your fingers a little bit and just feeling that. That can help to guide the mind to something other than the thoughts and the feelings.

Now to practice. So I suggest finding some quiet moments in the morning, midday or evening or maybe taking some micro breaks, which I am a huge advocate of, that 5 minutes or 15 minutes of taking a break during your workday to go outside or to just step away from your desk for a few moments and do some of these exercises. You can set a timer on your phone or your smartwatch to remember to pause. So hopefully these exercises will be helpful to you and you'll get to grounding and come out of your mind and into your body. And just a reminder of the EAP benefits and services that we offer and our phone number and how to get a hold of us. Thank you so much for your attention. I appreciate it. Any questions or comments?