

# 5-4-3-2-1 COPING TECHNIQUE

// 5-4-3-2-1 COPING TECHNIQUE

**By:** Jordan Killebrew

## **5...4...3...2...1 I want relief!**

There are 5 steps to take to help create progress towards finding symptom reduction and/or relief. Taking these 5 steps might not be overnight magic but can significantly help reduce symptoms of anxiety, trauma triggers, and other unwanted emotions or thoughts. With any type of trigger, emotion, or thought that needs coping skills, it is important to always remember the breath! Like in yoga, slow, deep, long breathing can help maintain a sense of calm or help return to a calmer state. Start with deep breathing as the introduction to any coping skill. Breathe in for 5 seconds, hold the breath for 5 seconds, and breathe out for 5 seconds. Continue this pattern until you find your thoughts slowing down or until necessary. I suggest at least 5 rounds of these sets but more is of course allowed and encouraged. After you are able to find your breath, go through the numbers in order to help ground yourself in present thinking through external factors:

**5:** Acknowledge FIVE things you see around you. Maybe it is a bird, maybe it is pencil, maybe it is a spot on the ceiling, however big or small, state 5 things you see.

**4:** Acknowledge FOUR things you can touch around you. Maybe this is your hair, hands, ground, grass, pillow, etc, whatever it may be, list out the 4 things you can feel.

**3:** Acknowledge THREE things you hear. This needs to be external, do not focus on your thoughts; maybe you can hear a clock, a car, a dog park. or maybe you hear your tummy rumbling, internal noises that make external

sounds can count, what is audible in the moment is what you list.

**2:** Acknowledge TWO things you can smell: This one might be hard if you are not in a stimulating environment, if you cannot automatically sniff something out, walk nearby to find a scent. Maybe you walk to your bathroom to smell soap or outside to smell anything in nature, or even could be as simple as leaning over and smelling a pillow on the couch, or a pencil. Whatever it may be, take in the smells around you.

**1.** Acknowledge ONE thing you can taste. What does the inside of your mouth taste like, gum, coffee, or the sandwich from lunch? Focus on your mouth as the last step and take in what you can taste.

These five steps are a way to ground yourself in the NOW! Take you out of your head and help stop you flooded thoughts. In Cognitive Behavioral Therapy it is believed that your thoughts are directly linked to how you feel and although we feel like we lose control of our thought processes, we have tools that can help us gain back a sense of control and lead to healthier thought patterns. In moments of anxiety or triggered trauma it is important to stay present focused to help find symptom relief. Hopefully this coping technique can help you or someone you know stay present, stay grounded, and stay healthy.