

## In-the-Moment Mindfulness Practices for Anxiety

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Anxiety can show up suddenly — in the body, the mind, or the Heart. These brief practices are meant to help you **pause, ground, and respond with care**, rather than feeling pulled into anxiety's urgency.

These practices are grounded in evidence-based mindfulness and therapy approaches, offering gentle opportunities to cultivate meaning, compassion, and a sense of inner calm. Each practice can be used anytime, anywhere. Even a brief moment can help.

### **Breath: Regulating the Nervous System**

#### **Physiological Sigh (30–60 seconds)**

- Inhale slowly through your nose.
- Take a second, short sip of air.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth.
- Repeat 2–3 times.

This type of breathing helps calm the body's stress response. You may silently add:

*"I'm here. I can slow this down."*

#### **Longer Exhale Breathing (1–3 minutes)**

- Inhale for 4 counts
- Exhale for 6–8 counts.
- Let the breath be natural, not forced.

Longer exhales signal safety to the nervous system and support a sense of ease.

#### **Hand-on-Belly Breathing (1–2 minutes)**

- Place one hand on your chest, one on your belly.
- Let the belly rise gently as you breathe.

This can feel like coming back into yourself.

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### Grounding: Returning to the Present Moment

#### 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding (2–3 minutes)

Gently notice:

- 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.

This helps shift attention away from worry and back into the here and now.

#### Temperature Reset (30–90 seconds)

- Hold something cool or warm.
- Or splash cool water on your face

Strong sensory input can help interrupt anxious spirals and bring the body back to balance.

#### Sound Anchoring (1 minute)

- Choose one sound around you.
- Listen fully.
- When the mind wanders, gently return to the sound.

### Body Awareness: Releasing Held Tension

#### Mini Body Scan (2–3 minutes)

Bring attention to your:

Feet → legs → torso → shoulders → jaw

Invite each area to soften, even slightly.

Notice what your body may be holding — without needing to change it.

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### Grounding Through the Feet (1 minute)

- Press your feet into the floor.
- Notice the contact and support beneath you.

You might imagine the ground offering steadiness and support.

### Shoulder Drop (30 seconds)

- Inhale and gently lift the shoulders.
- Exhale and let them fall.
- Repeat 2–3 times.

### Mindful Awareness of Thoughts

#### Name the Experience (30 seconds)

Silently say:

"This is anxiety."

"This is a moment of discomfort."

Naming what's happening can reduce overwhelm and create space.

#### Thoughts as Passing Experiences (1–2 minutes)

- Notice thoughts as mental events, not facts.
- Imagine them floating by like clouds or leaves on water.

You are noticing the thought — not becoming it.

#### One Grounding Question (30 seconds)

Ask yourself gently:

*"What is happening right now, in this moment?"*

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### ♥ Self-Compassion: Meeting Anxiety with Kindness

#### Hand on Heart (30–60 seconds)

Place a hand on your chest and offer yourself supportive words, such as:

"This is hard."

"I'm allowed to feel this."

"I'm meeting this moment with care."

Research shows self-compassion can reduce anxiety and emotional reactivity.

#### Common Humanity Reminder (30 seconds)

Silently reflect:

"Others experience this too."

"I'm not alone."

### 🚶 Mindful Movement

#### Slow, Intentional Walking (2–5 minutes)

- Walk at a comfortable pace.
- Notice each step and the shift of your weight.

This can be especially helpful when anxiety feels restless or stuck in the body.

#### Tense and Release (1–2 minutes)

- Gently tense a muscle group
- Release and notice the difference.
- Repeat as needed.

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### A Gentle Reminder

You don't need to make anxiety disappear for these practices to help. Often, healing begins by **turning toward yourself with awareness, patience, and care.**

- Choose one or two practices that feel most supportive.
- Practice when you're calm so they're easier during stressful moments.
- Let consistency be gentle, not perfect.

These practices are supportive tools and are not a substitute for professional care. If anxiety feels overwhelming or persistent, additional support can be helpful.