



THE WELL WOMAN CONNECTION

Calm in the Moment: 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

A 2-Minute Nervous System Reset

WHAT THIS IS FOR

When you're feeling:

- Overwhelmed or anxious
- Spinning in your thoughts
- Disconnected from your body
- Like everything is too much
- On the edge of panic or a meltdown

This simple technique brings you back to the present moment and calms your nervous system.

You can do it anywhere—in your car, the bathroom, between meetings, before bed, or whenever you need to feel more grounded.

HOW IT WORKS

The 5-4-3-2-1 technique uses your five senses to anchor you in the present moment. When your mind is racing or your nervous system is activated, shifting your attention to what you can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste interrupts the stress response and helps you feel more settled.

It takes about 2 minutes. You don't need anything special. Just you, right now.

THE TECHNIQUE

Take a slow breath in and out to start.

Then, slowly work through each sense:

5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE

Look around you and name 5 things you can see right now.

Say them out loud or in your head. Be specific.

Examples:

- "I see a blue coffee mug on my desk"
- "I see a crack in the ceiling"
- "I see my hand resting on my lap"
- "I see a tree outside the window"
- "I see the pattern on the carpet"

Take your time. Really look at each thing.

4 THINGS YOU CAN TOUCH

Notice 4 things you can physically feel or touch right now.

Examples:

- "I feel my feet on the floor"
- "I feel the chair supporting my back"
- "I feel my hands resting on my thighs"
- "I feel the texture of my shirt"
- "I feel the coolness of the table under my fingers"

You can gently touch or press into each thing as you name it.

3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR

Pause and listen. Name 3 sounds you can hear.

They can be obvious or very quiet—it doesn't matter.

Examples:

- "I hear the hum of the refrigerator"
- "I hear birds outside"
- "I hear my own breathing"
- "I hear distant traffic"
- "I hear the sound of the heating"

Let yourself really listen for a moment.

2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL

Notice 2 things you can smell right now.

If you can't smell anything obvious, you can smell your hands, your clothing, or move to something nearby like soap, coffee, or fresh air.

Examples:

- "I smell coffee"
- "I smell my hand cream"
- "I smell fresh air coming through the window"
- "I smell the soap on my hands"
- "I smell the fabric of my jumper"

If you genuinely can't smell anything, that's okay—skip to taste.

1 THING YOU CAN TASTE

Notice 1 thing you can taste right now.

Examples:

- "I taste the mint from my toothpaste"
- "I taste coffee lingering in my mouth"
- "I taste the inside of my mouth"
- "I taste nothing specific, just my own mouth"

If you don't taste anything distinct, that's completely fine. Just notice that.

FINISHING

Take one more slow breath in and out.

Notice how you feel now compared to when you started.

You might feel:

- A bit calmer
- More present
- Less overwhelmed
- More connected to your body
- Like your thoughts have slowed down

Any shift, even a small one, is enough.

TIPS FOR USING THIS TECHNIQUE

You don't have to do it perfectly.

If you can't find 5 things to see, that's fine—just do what you can. The point is to shift your focus, not to get it "right."

You can modify it.

If 5-4-3-2-1 feels like too many steps, try 3-2-1 (3 things you see, 2 you hear, 1 you feel). Or just do one sense—whatever helps.

Use it before things escalate.

You don't have to wait until you're in full panic. Use this when you first notice tension building, before a difficult conversation, or when you feel yourself starting to spiral.

It works because it interrupts the stress response.

When you're anxious or overwhelmed, your brain is focused on threats (real or perceived). Shifting your attention to neutral sensory information tells your nervous system: *"I'm safe right now."*

WHEN TO USE THIS

- Before or after a difficult conversation
- When you wake up anxious in the middle of the night
- Before a medical appointment
- When you're feeling overwhelmed at work
- In the car before going into a stressful situation
- During a hot flush or panic attack
- When you notice your thoughts spiraling
- Any time you need to feel more present and less scattered

PERMISSION SLIP

You are allowed to take 2 minutes for yourself.

Even if you're busy. Even if people are waiting. Even if it feels "silly" or "too simple."

Your nervous system deserves support. This is not self-indulgent—this is self-care.

WHAT IF IT DOESN'T "WORK"?

Sometimes grounding techniques don't create an immediate sense of calm, and that's okay.

Success doesn't always mean feeling instantly better. Sometimes success is just:

- Interrupting the spiral for a moment
- Giving yourself a tiny break from the overwhelm
- Practicing the skill so it's there when you really need it

If you try this and still feel dysregulated, that's information—not failure. It might mean:

- You need additional support (therapy, medication, medical review)
- Your nervous system needs more time to settle
- A different technique might work better for you right now

If you notice these feelings most days for more than two weeks, or they interfere with your sleep, work, or relationships, that's a sign you deserve professional support. Talk to your GP or a mental health professional.

IMPORTANT: If you ever feel at risk of harming yourself or others, or your panic feels unmanageable, seek urgent medical or mental health support right away.

In New Zealand: Call or text **1737** (Need to Talk?) or call **111** for emergencies.

And that's all okay.

OTHER QUICK GROUNDING OPTIONS

If 5-4-3-2-1 doesn't resonate, here are other simple techniques:

Only do what feels physically safe and comfortable for your body today.

Box breathing:

Breathe in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4, hold for 4. Repeat 4 times.

Cold water:

Splash cold water on your face or hold an ice cube. This activates the "dive reflex" and calms your nervous system quickly. *(Avoid if you have heart conditions or concerns—check with your doctor.)*

Feet on the floor:

Press your feet firmly into the ground. Notice the pressure and connection. Rock slightly forward and back.

Name it to tame it:

Simply say out loud: "I'm feeling anxious/overwhelmed/panicked right now." Naming the feeling can reduce its intensity.

REMEMBER

Your nervous system is doing its best to protect you.

Midlife brings hormonal shifts, sleep disruption, and often a lot of life stress—your nervous system is working hard. Grounding techniques are one small way to support it.

You're not broken. You're just overwhelmed right now. And that's manageable.**Want more support? I'm here.**

If you're finding yourself needing grounding techniques frequently, or if anxiety and overwhelm are significantly affecting your daily life, that's a sign you deserve more support—whether that's coaching, therapy, or a conversation with your GP.

You don't have to manage this alone.

Gail Rothstein, MSN, RN

The Well Woman Connection

gailrothstein@thewellwomanconnection.com | +64 027 553 9236

www.thewellwomanconnection.com