Grounding and Centering Practices

Breathing

Breathing is one of the fastest and most direct ways to ground oneself because it communicates to the amygdala (survival brain) that we are in control of our breath, allowing our pre-frontal cortex (thinking brain) to resume executive functioning.

Example: Square Breathing- Breathing through the nose, breathe in for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4, breathe out for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4. Repeat

Meditation

Meditation is the process of quieting the mind in order to spend time in thought for relaxation or spiritual purposes. The goal is to attain an inner state of calm awareness and focus. In practice, meditation involves concentrated focus on something such as a sound, image or feeling, or just connecting to breath.

Example: Sit comfortably and focus on your breath. Close your eyes or soften your gaze. Try to clear your mind. As thoughts or images come into your awareness, notice them and try to move past them. Connect back to your breath.

Mindfulness Practices

Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one's attention to the internal and external experiences occurring in the present moment, which can be developed through the practice of meditation or other training.

Example: During a stressful situation, before speaking or reacting, pause for a count of 3, take 1-2 deep breaths, connect to your purpose and values. Consider context and perspective prior to responding or acting on the situation.

Connecting to the Five Senses

Mindfully connecting to the five senses can support your pre-frontal cortex (thinking brain) to resume executive functioning.

Example: Identify one thing in your immediate surrounding that you can: see, hear, touch, smell and taste. Calmly, and without judgement, notice the subtle qualities of the thing your senses are perceiving.

Body Scanning

Mentally scanning your body from bottom to top supports us in identifying physical responses to stress or trauma.

Example: Start at your feet and notice how each part of your body feels. Do you feel tension, heat, cold, numbness, tightness, pain, other sensations? Notice how that part of your body feels with as little judgement as possible. Continue scanning up your body until you reach you head.



Grounding and Centering Practices

Movement

Moving our bodies (in whatever ways they can) and raising our heartrate, on a regular basis, can significantly reduce stress and anxiety responses. Ideally, the movement activity should be something the person enjoys, or be accompanied by music or something that brings the person joy (for instance, being outside).

Examples: Dance, stretching, running or jogging, martial arts, swimming

Art and Creativity

Trauma and stress impact the mind, emotions, and body. Creative practices uniquely allow for synthesis that promotes healing and connection between these by working in the mind and heart, through the hands. Art can also support people in finding meaning in their experiences.

Examples: Writing (poetry, prose, journaling), singing, creating music, creating any type of art (collage, painting, drawing, sculpture, mixed-media)

Connecting to Nature

Just being outside in nature has been proven to dramatically drop our stress (cortisol) levels. Being in a part of nature that we feel connected to, or has a significance to us, will further deepen this practice.

Examples: nature walks, gardening, returning to a natural environment during different times of year to observe the change in seasons.

Gratitude Practices

Gratitude practices can decrease stress and promote calm when practiced in the moment or as a daily practice.

Example: During a stressful moment, identify one thing for which you are grateful and focus on the emotions/sensations connected to your gratitude for that thing.