

Tools to Feel Better in 5 Minutes!



These **three simple yet powerful tools** can change your mood in just a few minutes by using your body's own systems to relax and come into the present moment

Stress and anxiety activate the human brain and nervous system in very specific ways. When we feel anxiety, the "Fight or Flight" response (known as the Limbic System or the Sympathetic Nervous System) are switched on. When these systems are activated, we get very "jacked up."

These following exercises force a quick change in the function of the brain and nervous system by forcing awareness into sensory perceptions. In order to answer the questions put to the various parts of our sensory awareness, the brain *has* to shift out of its fight or flight response. When it does, the "Rest and Digest" response (known as the Para-Sympathetic Nervous System) is activated and we become calm and our heart and breathing rate return to normal and we feel better. In fact, we start to **feel good physically emotionally and spiritually**.

The more focus you put into answering each question, the better the response in the brain and nervous system is and the calmer you become. It is often helpful to name three items for each sense and to repeat the exercise several times, picking different things to focus on.

NOTE: At first it might be difficult to shift awareness to answer these questions, but when you actually commit to focusing on it, the senses ARE there.

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Tools To Feel Better in 5 Minutes

"Come to Your Senses"



Tool #1: Answer each of the following questions based on your current environment (note that speaking out loud and pointing to the object are part of the exercise):

- 1) Name and *point to* something that you **SEE** (e.g. picture on wall, carpet)
- 2) Name and *point to* something that you **HEAR** (e.g. clock ticking, voices outside)
- 3) Name and *point to* something that you **SMELL** [if it's hard to smell, describe how this smell is different than if you were outside (if inside) or how it would smell inside (if you are outside)]
- 4) Name and *point to* something that you **TASTE** (e.g. bitter, sweet, salty, sour)
- 5) Name and *point to* something that you **TOUCH** (e.g. describe the texture of the seat you are sitting on)
- 6) Repeat, naming different things perceived. Take a breath and notice any changes in your overall feeling.

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"Colors Of The Rainbow"



Tool #2: Look around the room. For each color, one at a time, find, describe, and point to something that is that color. If you think there's nothing in your environment of a particular color, keep looking. There usually is something. (The acronym for the colors of the rainbow is "ROY G BIV.")

- 1) Name and *point to* something that you see that is: **Red**
- 2) Name and *point to* something that you see that is: **Orange**
- 3) Name and *point to* something that you see that is: **Yellow**
- 4) Name and *point to* something that you see that is: **Green**
- 5) Name and *point to* something that you see that is: **Blue**
- 6) Name and *point to* something that you see that is: **Indigo** (very dark blue)
- 7) Name and *point to* something that you see that is: **Violet** (purple)
- 8) Take a breath and notice any changes in your overall feeling. Repeat.

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Tools To Feel Better in 5 Minutes
"Four Seasons Breathing"



Tool #3:

- 1) Breathe IN for a count of five;
- 2) HOLD breath for a count of five;
- 3) Breathe OUT for a count of five;
- 4) HOLD breath for a count of five;
- 4) Repeat without pausing.

Repeat this exercise ten times in a row without stopping the count. The exercise may be repeated as often as needed until you feel calm. Over time, increase the number that you count to, so that it is always moderately challenging.

NOTE: This is an exercise that focuses your attention on a basic function of the body that you can control -- breathing. As you slow your breathing, you shift out of the "Fight or Flight" (sympathetic nervous system) response in your body, and move into the "Rest and Digest" (parasympathetic nervous system) response, which allows you to move from anxiety and stress into calmness. This exercise gives you a practical tool to use to manage stress and anxiety, while it strengthens your lungs and increases your breathing capacity. I am told there are monks who do this exercise to a count of 100!