

# ***Grounding Exercises***

*thriv·ol·o·gy*



## ***Suggested citation***

Piper, M. & Sufrinko, N. (2025). Grounding exercises [Cards]. Healthy Teen Network.

[HealthyTeenNetwork.org/Thrivology/  
Resources/Grounding-Exercises](https://HealthyTeenNetwork.org/Thrivology/Resources/Grounding-Exercises)



We are Healthy Teen Network.

We believe every young person has the right to be who they are and love who they love.

And we see you—teachers and educators, counselors and clinicians, caring adults—helping them do this. Every day, providing honest, affirming care and education, and empowering the next generation to lead healthy, fulfilling lives.

*thriv·ol·o·gy*

At Healthy Teen Network, we know you do your best when you're connected to great opportunities and resources, and with others working in sexual and reproductive health. That's the magic of the Network—and why we're here every day to help professionals learn, improve, create, and advocate.

Learn more at [HealthyTeenNetwork.org](https://HealthyTeenNetwork.org).



*thriv·ol·o·gy*

# ***The science of how young people thrive.***

Thrivology brings you the latest research on how to provide the very best sexual and reproductive health education and care, so young people may thrive.

Learn more about our resources for youth-supporting professionals at [Thrivology.com](https://thrivology.com).



*thriv·ol·o·gy*

# ***Research behind grounding***

Interested in the research behind the grounding exercises? Read more to learn how grounding exercises help regulate stress and trauma.



# ***Why grounding exercises?***

When strong emotions take over, it might feel like you're losing control.

Grounding exercises can help you stay connected to the present and remind you that you are safe right now. They help calm your body's stress response and bring your clear thinking back.

While grounding exercises won't solve everything, they can help you manage your feelings and keep things from getting worse in the moment.

We understand that stress and trauma are complex issues that cannot be fully addressed with a single resource.

These exercises are not intended to be a comprehensive solution to trauma but rather a supportive tool to help you unwind, destress, and de-stimulate.

While these exercises can provide moments of relief and support, they are not a substitute for comprehensive trauma care and mental health support.



Grounding exercises are for everyone and can be used anytime you need them.

You can use these exercises during a stressful moment or make them part of your daily routine.

These exercises are especially helpful when anxiety feels overwhelming.

For some, that might mean feeling disconnected from your body, having flashbacks of past traumas, or experiencing a racing heart or rapid breathing.

The exercises in this guide are divided into three types:

**Mental:** These exercises help break distressing thoughts and focus your attention on the present.

**Physical:** These exercises use your senses or objects around you to help you stay grounded.

**Soothing:** These exercises use kind and positive thoughts to bring a sense of calm and improve your mood.

RECOMMENDED READ

## ***18 Grounding Techniques to Help Relieve Anxiety***



[calm.com/blog/grounding-techniques](https://calm.com/blog/grounding-techniques)

*thriv·ol·o·gy*

RECOMMENDED READ

## ***Grounding Techniques to Help Control Anxiety***



[hr.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/jheap-grounding-techniques-to-help-control-anxiety.pdf](https://hr.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/jheap-grounding-techniques-to-help-control-anxiety.pdf)

*thriv·ol·o·gy*

RECOMMENDED READ

# ***Grounding Techniques Worksheet***



[therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/  
grounding-techniques](https://therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/grounding-techniques)

*thriv·ol·o·gy*

*thriv·ol·o·gy*

# ***Print your own deck***

Want to print more decks on your own?  
We've made it easy to print this deck with  
the printer of your choice.

First, download the card deck and custom  
tuck box files from our website.

Get the  
printable files



Next, find a printer able to print custom  
playing cards with a finished size of 2.5 by  
3.5 inches.

*thriv·ol·o·gy*

While we cannot endorse a specific printer, we printed this deck using SmartPress ([smartpress.com/offering/playing-cards](https://smartpress.com/offering/playing-cards)).

Print where  
we printed

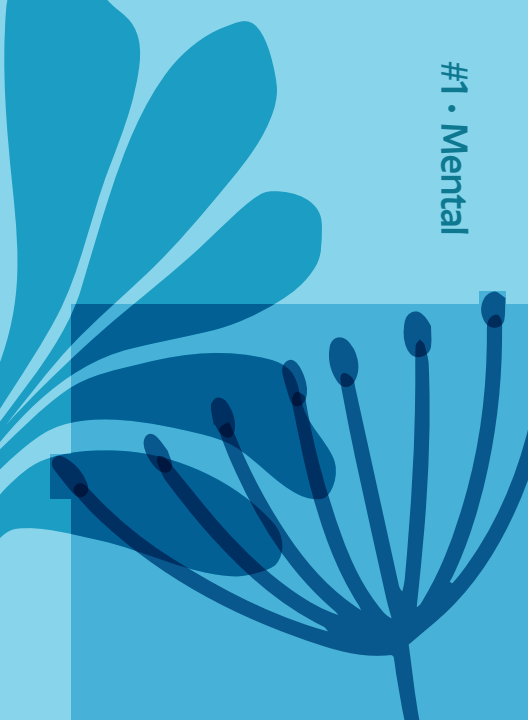


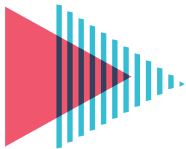
Specifications we selected:

- Paper Stock: 310 GSM Cardstock
- Card Face Styles: Custom Faces
- Packaging Options: Custom Printed Tuck Box



# #1 • Mental





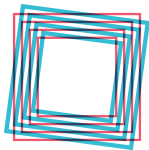
## *Scripting*

Write out your morning routine like a script. Use the present tense, such as “I wake up...then I turn off my alarm...”

thriveology

## #2 • Physical



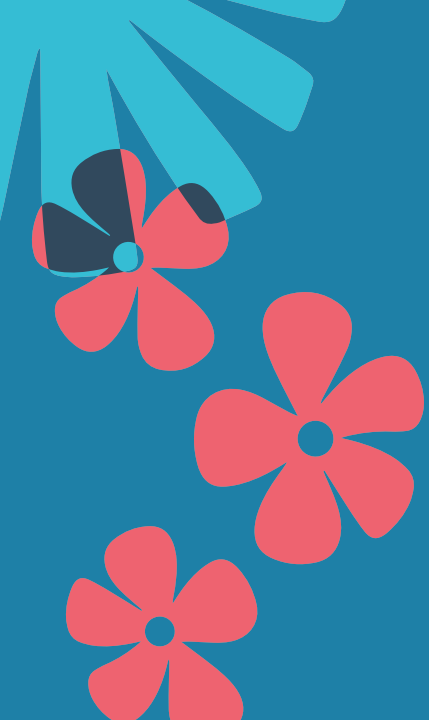


## ***Box Breathing***

Try "box breathing": Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, exhale through your mouth for 4 seconds, then hold your breath for 4 seconds. Repeat.

thriveology

## #3 • Soothing





## ***Positive Reframe***

Reframe the following statements positively. E.g., flip “I am not good enough”

→ “I’m always learning and growing.”  
thrivology

- I feel like giving up.
- I feel embarrassed.
- I feel anxious.

## #4 • Mental





## ***Visualization***

Close your eyes and picture your favorite, most peaceful place.

*thriveology* Imagine what you see, feel, hear, and smell there.



## #5 • Physical





## ***Sensory Awareness***

Pick an activity that engages your senses.

For example, splash your face with cold

*thriveology* water, light a scented candle, or sit  
outside and listen to nature.

# #6 • Soothing





## ***Post It***

Write something true and positive about yourself on sticky notes.

thriveology Put the notes where you can see them often, like on your desk, mirror, or bedside table.

## #7 • Mental





## ***Senses in 5-4-3-2-1***

Name...

- 5 things you see around you.
- 4 things you can touch.
- 3 things you can hear.
- 2 things you can smell.
- 1 thing you can taste.

## #8 • Physical





## ***Body Scan***

Sit comfortably or lie down.

Breathe deeply in through your nose and

thriveology ~~out~~ through your mouth.

Slowly move your focus from your head  
to your toes, paying attention to any  
sensations or emotions you notice.



# #9 • Soothing





## ***Stating Safety***

Say these phrases out loud:

- "It was just a thought or memory."

thriving only by

- "It's over now."

- "I am safe in this moment."

#10 • Mental





## ***Categories***

Set a timer for 2 minutes.

Choose a category you know well, like

types of cereal or dog breeds, and list as many items in that category as you can.

# #11 • Physical





## ***Feel It***

Hold a comforting object.

Pay attention to how it feels. Is it soft or

hard? Bumpy or smooth? Warm or cold?

# #12 · Soothing





## ***Gratitude Practice***

Make a list of people, places, and things  
you are thankful for, no matter how big  
or small.

thriveology



#13 • Mental





## ***Recite, Recite, Recite***

Think of a favorite song, prayer, poem, or book passage.

*throughout the day*

Recite it from memory, and repeat as needed.

## #14 • Physical





## ***Tense & Release***

Sit comfortably or lie down.

Clench your entire body—your jaw,

*thrivology* fists, and limbs. Hold for 20 seconds,

then relax.

# #15 • Soothing





## ***Positive Mantras***

Repeat positive phrases to yourself,  
such as:

thriving only  
• "I am capable,"

- "I am strong," or
- "I can handle this."

# #16 • Mental





## ***ABCs***

Go through the alphabet in your mind  
and think of a word for each letter (e.g., A  
for apple, B for ball).



## #17 • Physical





## *Tap, Tap*

Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor.

thriveology Close your eyes and cross your arms over your chest.

Gently tap your shoulders, one side at a time, while breathing deeply.

# #18 · Soothing





## ***Memory Recall***

Think about a time when you felt calm, confident, or at peace.

Then, try to relive the positive feelings from that memory.

#19 • Mental





## ***Name Objects***

Look around and name the objects you see, focusing on their colors, shapes, or what they do.

*thrive.org*

#20 • Physical





## ***Touching Ground***

Press your heels into the ground and feel how your feet connect.

thriveology

Spread your toes and press evenly from the big toe to the little toe, and from the front of your foot to the heel. Notice how your feet connect with the ground.



# #21 · Soothing





## ***Visualization of Support***

Picture someone who loves or supports you. Imagine where you are, what you're doing, and what encouraging words they are saying to you.

#22 • Mental





## *Counting*

Count slowly, either forward or backwards.

Try counting by twos, threes, fours, and

threes for a change.

## #23 • Physical





## ***Savor***

Eat or drink something you love.

Take your time and focus only on

thriving by  
enjoying it.

Don't do anything else while you savor  
the taste.

# #24 · Soothing





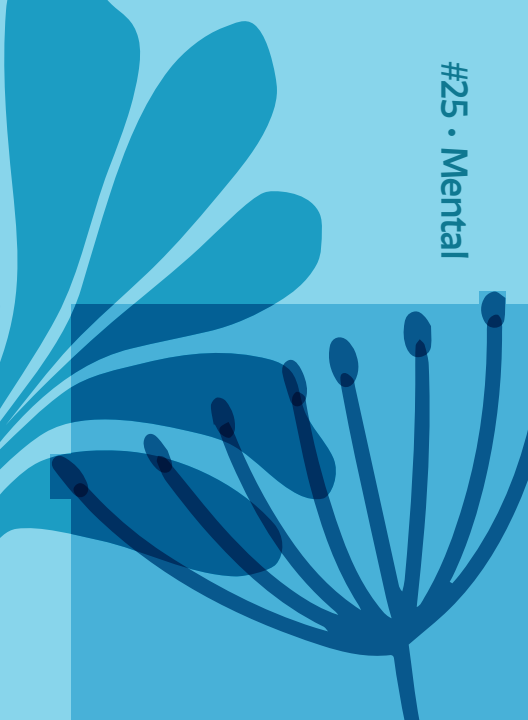
## ***Emotional Validation***

Acknowledge your feelings without  
judging them.

thriveology Accept that your emotions are valid and  
it's okay to feel this way.



#25 • Mental





## ***Solve the Puzzle***

Try a mental puzzle that makes  
you think.

*thriveology* For example: Five people are eating  
apples. A finishes before B but behind C.  
D finishes before E but behind B. What's  
the finishing order?

## #26 · Physical





## ***Self-Massage***

Gently massage your hands, arms,  
or feet.

thriveology  
Do not  
Pay attention to how it feels and adjust  
the pressure as needed.

# #27 • Soothing





## ***Relax & Affirm***

Relax your muscles one group at a time  
while repeating calming affirmations,

such as:

thrivology

- “I am relaxed” or
- “I feel at ease.”

#28 • Mental





## ***Memory Recall***

Think about a vacation or a favorite memory.

thriveology Describe the memory in detail to yourself, remembering as much as you can.



## #23 • Physical





## ***Stomp, Tap***

Sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor.

*thriveology* Close your eyes and focus on the feeling of your feet touching the ground.

Gently tap or stomp in place.

# #30 • Soothing





## ***Dear Friend***

Imagine your best friend came to you for support. Think about what comforting words you'd offer them.

thriveology

Then, consider what they might say to you if you needed encouragement.

#31 • Mental





## ***Describe an Activity***

Describe the steps in an activity you know well (e.g., how to shoot a basketball, how to prepare your favorite meal, or how to braid hair).

## #32 • Physical





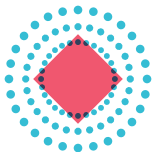
## ***Press & Hold***

Press your palms together, hard, and hold for 15 seconds. Notice the feeling of tension in your hands and arms.



# #33 • Soothing





## ***Reflect on Joy***

Write down or mentally list 5 things in your life that bring you joy. Visualize each thing briefly.

## #34 • Mental





## ***Spell in Reverse***

Spell your full name and the names of three other people backwards.

*thriv·ol·o·gy*

# #35 • Physical





## ***Brisk Rubbing***

Rub your palms together briskly for 15 seconds. Notice the sound and the feeling of warmth.

#36 · Soothing





## ***Make Yourself Laugh***

Look up a silly joke, watch a funny animal video, or find a clip from a comedian.



#37 • Mental





## ***Air Draw***

Think of an object and “draw” it in your mind or the air with your finger, such as your home, a vehicle, or an animal.

# #38 · Physical





## ***Reach for the Stars***

Reach your hands over your head and stretch for 10 seconds. Bring your arms down to relax at your sides.

# #39 · Soothing





## ***Leave It Behind***

Reflect on a negative feeling you're having. Imagine gathering up the emotions into a small ball and putting them in a box. Imagine closing the box, then picture yourself moving away from painful feelings.

#40 • Mental





## ***Describe an Object***

Pick up an object and describe it in detail.  
Consider the color, size, texture, scent,  
weight, and any other features you  
notice.



# #41 • Physical





## ***Wiggle & Curl***

Place both feet flat on the ground.

Wiggle your toes. Curl and uncurl your toes a few times. Notice the sensations in your feet.

# #42 · Soothing





## ***Practice Self-Kindness***

Repeat kind, compassionate phrases to yourself, aloud or in your head, as many times as you need. (You're strong; you can move through this pain. You're trying hard; you're doing your best.)

#43 • Mental





## ***Reverse It***

Read something backwards, letter-by-letter. Repeat for at least a few minutes.

# #44 · Soothing





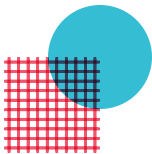
## ***Cuddle with a Pet***

Spend a few moments with a pet, if you have one. Pet them, if you can, focusing on how they feel. Notice their markings and unique characteristics.



#45 • Mental





## ***Touch a Stone***

Pick up a small stone. Run your fingers over it. Is it smooth or rough? Does it feel cold or warm? Is it round or jagged?

# ***Tell us what you think***

Your input makes a difference—share  
your thoughts!



*thriv·ol·o·gy*

