Illinois Human Resources
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

5-4-3-2-1 | Five Senses to Achieve a Calm, Focused Mind

Redirect your brain's focus to help manage feelings of anxiety or overwhelm.
This simple technique engages your senses to help you stay present.

How to do this exercise:

Follow the prompts below to complete the five senses grounding technique.
Use during time of high stress or feelings of anxiety.



5 things you can see: Name five distinct visual elements in your environment, like the color of a wall, a picture frame, or a person nearby.



4 things you can touch: Identify four objects you can physically touch, such as the texture of your clothes, a chair, or a table.



3 things you can hear: Listen for three different sounds around you, like the ticking of a clock, traffic noise, or someone talking.



2 things you can smell: Focus on two distinct smells in your environment, like the scent of coffee, perfume, or fresh air.



1 thing you can taste: Think of a taste sensation you can currently perceive, even if it's just the taste of your saliva in your mouth.

For more information about supporting your wellness, view the Faculty/Staff Assistance & Well-Being Services website and the Resources Hub.

Last Modified: May 6, 2025