

# Coping Skill Idea

## Grounding Your Body and Mind

Grounding exercises can improve concentration, decrease anxiety and enhance decision-making and problem-solving skills. This is an exercise to help develop awareness and to focus the mind on the present moment. Use a gentle voice to prompt your child to pay attention to what's happening around her; this will allow her to stay in the present moment and stay calm.

### How to practice grounding

- To help calm a busy mind, start by taking several slow, deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Next, use your 5 senses to notice the following:



**5 things you can see around you.** Maybe it's a book, a paintbrush or a chair. However near or far, big or small, name 5 things you can see right now.



**4 things you can touch around you.** Maybe it's your dog, your desk or your leg. However big or small, name 4 things you can touch and feel around you right now.



**3 things you can hear around you.** Maybe it's a ticking clock, a car alarm or a dog barking. Name 3 things you can hear right now.



**2 things you can smell.** Maybe it's the scent of soap or lotion on your hands, air freshener or freshly cut grass. Name 2 things you can smell right now.



**1 thing you can taste.** Maybe you taste the gum you are chewing or the snack you just ate. Name 1 thing you can taste.

- How does your body feel after completing this exercise? Are you relaxed? Is your mind calmer? Did your intense feelings decrease?

Remind your child that this coping skill can be used at any time, when she wants to calm down and refocus her mind and body. Ask your child when she thinks that this may be helpful for her; perhaps it is before a test or on the way to soccer practice.



**PARENT TIP:** *This exercise can be shortened depending on how much time you have. For example, if your child is nervous at the doctor's office, you may want to help him take a few deep breaths and then name 3 things he can see around him (but not address all 5 senses). Focusing his attention on that may make him less nervous about the doctor's appointment.*

## How to make grounding fun!

- Take your child outside to try this exercise. Encourage her to pay attention to what is outside in the environment. What does she see? Hear? Feel? Smell?
- Remove 1 of the senses (sight). Ask her to close her eyes and pay attention to what she can hear, smell, taste and touch. Did things change once she had her eyes closed? Was it easier for her to hear noises that were quiet or farther away? Keep in mind that closing eyes can feel unsafe for some children. Never force them to close their eyes if they are uncomfortable.
- For those who need more specific instructions, ask her to look around and name 3 objects that are round, 2 things that are soft, 1 thing that makes noise, etc. You can come up with many options to help your child pay attention to the present moment!

### Helpful Hint

It's difficult to learn things when we are anxious, angry or too distracted, so it is important to try new coping skills during a time when your child is calm instead of during a time of stress. A skill that works one day might not work the next, so encourage your child to try different strategies to help build her coping skills toolbox. Keep in mind that your child is watching and listening to you, so it's important that you practice with your child and role model using healthy coping skills to manage your own stress and emotions.