

## Mental Health Resources for Dental Students

### **MINDFULNESS EXERCISES**

A collection of mindfulness exercises to  
help tackle clinical and exam stress



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## Introduction to mindfulness

Mindfulness is about taking notice of the world around us and how our body is feeling in the present moment. By understanding mindfulness, you can become more present in the moment, allowing yourself to enjoy the world around you more and enabling you to notice and tackle issues more effectively when they arise.

This resource will provide advice and guidance on mindfulness activities that you can use to help ground yourself in the moment by focusing on your body and the world around you. You can use these activities at any time, including to help manage clinical and exam stress.

We will focus on the following techniques, before sharing additional ideas:



**Body Scan**

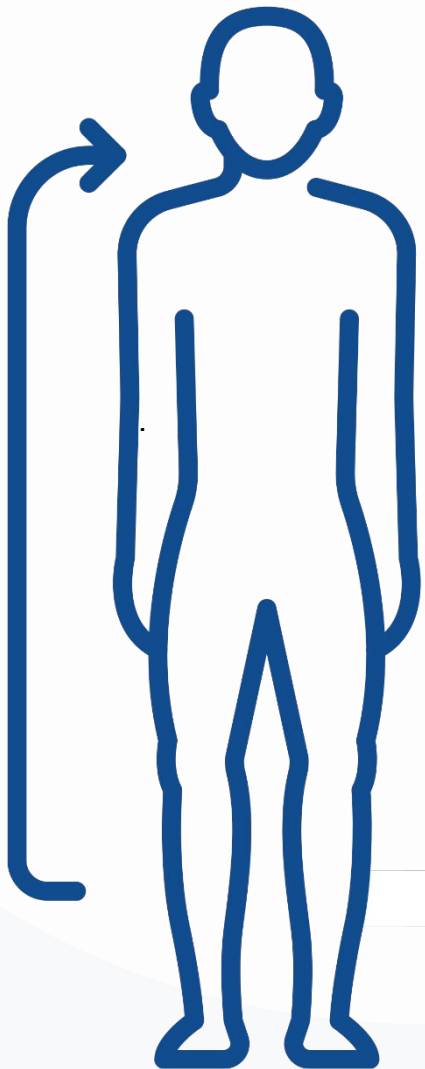


**5-4-3-2-1 Grounding**

# Body Scan

The **Body Scan** technique is a form of meditation that aims to focus your mind on different parts of your body to help you relax, reduce stress, and gain greater awareness of your body.

The 6 steps for completing the Body Scan technique are:



1

**Get comfortable** – Choose a position that you find comfortable.

2

**Breathe** – Close your eyes and notice your breath filling and leaving your lungs.

3

**Start at your toes** – Focus your attention on your toes, taking note of any sensations.

4

**Gradually work your way up** – Slowly shift your focus up your body, through your ankles, calves, knees, thighs, hips, abdomen, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, neck and head, pausing for a few moments at each stage.

5

**Acknowledge any tension** – If you notice any areas of tension or discomfort as you scan your body, acknowledge and accept this discomfort and let any emotions pass before moving on.

6

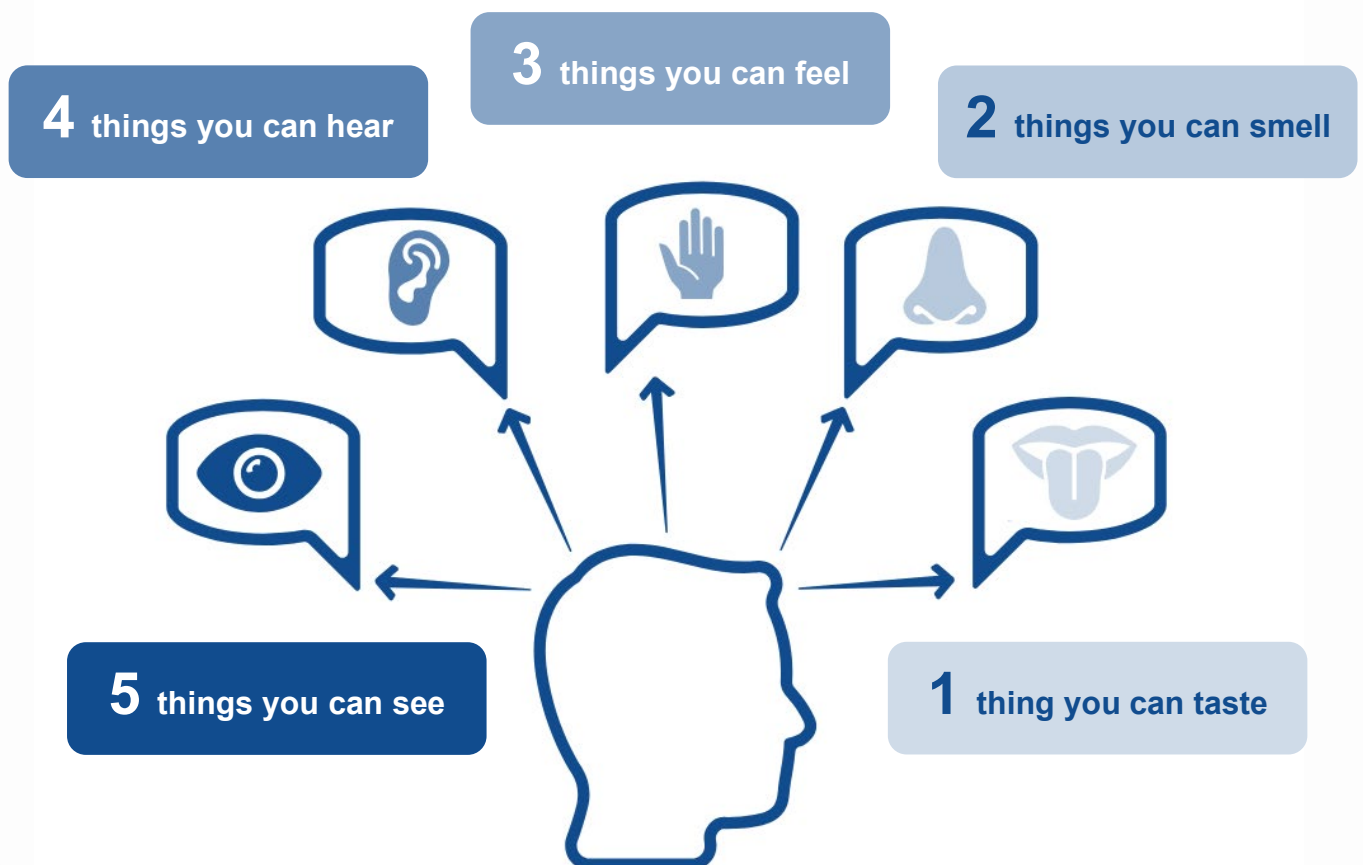
**Return to your breathing** – After you have scanned your body, return to your breath, again noticing your lungs filling and emptying with your breath, before releasing your focus and returning to your surroundings.

If you find a similar technique works better for you, don't hesitate to tweak this exercise to suit your mind, body, and purpose.

*You can find out more about the Body Scan technique at [Anxious Minds](#).*

## 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

**5-4-3-2-1 Grounding** is a very simple technique that can be used anywhere at any time and is a way of managing and regulating our emotions by shifting and focusing our attention to the present moment. It involves thinking about the 5 senses:



If you find a similar technique works better for you, don't hesitate to tweak this exercise to suit your mind, body, and purpose.

You can find out more about the 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding technique at [Calm](#) and the [Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#).

## Other ideas

There are plenty of other exercises, tips and tricks that you can use to help improve your mindfulness. For example:

- **Try something new** - Trying new things, such as sitting in a different seat in meetings or trying a new cafe, can help you notice the world in a new way.
- **Dedicate a certain time** - Pick a regular time that you can dedicate to focusing on mindfulness. For example, during a commute or coffee break.
- **Yoga** - A balance of movement, flexibility, breath control, and mindfulness to improve self-awareness and overall well-being.
- **Tai-chi** - A mindfulness exercise that combines balance, breathing, and martial arts into a dance-like flow to promote physical and mental well-being.

For more information and ideas, you can access the **additional resources** below.

## Additional resources

For further advice, tips, and tricks to help you live in the moment, please explore the resources below, which focus on mindfulness exercises.

- NHS
  - <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/tips-and-support/mindfulness/>
- Mind
  - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/mindfulness/mindfulness-exercises-and-tips/>
- Calm
  - <https://www.calm.com/blog/mindfulness-exercises>

As before, links are also available to learn more about the techniques we introduced in this exercise pack.

- Body Scan
  - <https://www.anxiousminds.co.uk/guide-to-mindfulness-body-scan/>
- 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding
  - <https://www.calm.com/blog/5-4-3-2-1-a-simple-exercise-to-calm-the-mind>
  - <https://www.lpft.nhs.uk/young-people/lincolnshire/about-us/whats-new/grounding-activity>



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