

Grounding Activities

FAMILY ACTIVITY

“Grounding” is a way to help you relax by reconnecting with your immediate surroundings using your five senses (touch, taste, smell, sight, sound). Sometimes it can be difficult to take breaks from stressful situations. Our hope is that these family grounding techniques will help you reconnect and find a sense of calm. Before you start the activities, take some time to notice how everyone is feeling by taking turns to choose a number on the scale that best expresses how they are feeling in that moment.

1	2	3	4	5
I’m having a really hard time.	I’m having a hard time.	Meh, I’m okay.	I’m pretty good.	I’m AMAZING.

Invite your family to re-do this scale after each grounding activity you try to help decide which activities work best for family members. Remember, some might work better than others for different family members and that is OK!

Materials

- Comfortable space to sit and be as a family, either outside or inside your home.
- Art materials if you wish to get creative: colored pencils, markers, paper, coloring sheets, magazine cutouts, etc.
- Music: you can choose music you find relaxing or fun music to hold a family dance party!

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Activity

As a family, find a comfortable place to sit together, either inside or outside, and take three big breaths. Breathe in through your nose like you’re smelling a flower, and out through your mouth like you’re blowing out candles on a birthday cake. Next:

1. Using your eyes, notice 5 things you see in the space you are sitting in. Quietly list those things in your head.
2. Use your ears, notice 4 sounds you hear in the space around you. It might be sounds inside or outside. Maybe it’s the sound of your own breathing.
3. Now take some time to notice 3 things that you can feel against your skin. Maybe it’s the feeling of clothing, or something you’re sitting on or against.
4. Using your nose, notice 2 things that you smell in the space around you.
5. Finally, in your head think of 1 thing that you’re really good at.

As a family, you can decide if you want to share about any of the things you noticed.

Circles and Squares

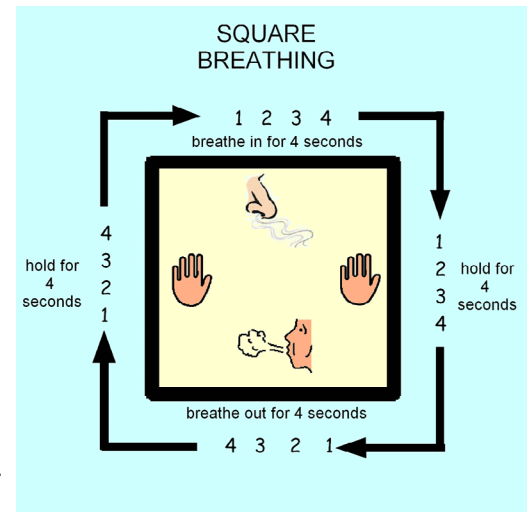
Find a comfortable place to sit together as a family. Start a timer for one minute and have family members look around and notice the total number of circles that they see. When the one-minute timer is up, have each family member share the number of circles that they found. You can try the activity again, this time using squares. You can also try the activity using a color (e.g., find all the things in this space that are orange) or texture (e.g., soft, hard, spiky, smooth, bumpy).

Deep Belly Breathing

Use one of the techniques below to take some deep, calming breaths as a family.

Square Breathing

1. Begin by slowly exhaling all of your air out through your mouth.
 2. Then, gently inhale through your nose to a slow count of 4.
 3. Hold at the top of the breath for a count of 4.
 4. Then, gently exhale through your mouth to a count of 4.
 5. At the bottom of the breath, pause and hold for a count of 4.
- Repeat this breathing technique three to five times. Have family members draw a picture of a square they can trace while they're doing the activity, or use the one to the right.



Source: elearning.autism.net

Self-Hug Breathing

1. While sitting down in a comfortable spot, give yourself a hug. Make it a firm hug if you need a firm hug, or a gentle hug if that's what you're needing.
2. While holding the hug, take a deep breath in through your nose feeling your chest expand up and out, and then breathe out through your mouth, feeling your chest drop.
3. Repeat these breaths three to five times.

Flower/Candle Breathing

1. While sitting down in a comfortable spot, breathe in deeply through your noses, imagining that you are breathing in the smell of a favorite flower. Then exhale out through your mouth as though you're blowing out the candles on an enormous birthday cake.
2. Repeat these breaths three to five times.

Exercise

Fun family exercise can be a great way to let off steam and release stress. Try some of the following activities:

Family Dance Party

Dance your stress away with a family dance party. Let family members take turns choosing a song they want to dance to and invite the whole family to dance. Let loose with your dance moves and have fun as a family!

Running in Place

Set a timer for one minute and have family members run in place until the minute is up. Do some gentle stretches afterwards.

Wall Push-Ups

Have each family member find a spot on the wall, making sure everyone has enough space to themselves. Stand facing the wall an arm's-length away. Bend your elbows like you're doing a normal push-up. See how many you can do before your arms start to get tired. This can help to release energy and feel grounded.

Get Creative

Engaging in a simple art or craft activity can be a great way to relax and distract ourselves from current stresses. Try out some of the following ideas:

Family Coloring Session

Get out some of your favorite coloring pages, colored pencils, markers, or crayons and get coloring! Try putting on some relaxing music in the background. You can download coloring pages for free from crayola.com.

Family Collage Making

Try making a collage using images or words from magazines, newspapers, old books, or printed from the computer. Your collage can show images and words that help you to feel calm or relaxed or which remind you of the things you can do to help yourself with difficult feelings. You can also choose to make a collage about your strengths and values as a family. Decide if each family member wants to make their own collage, or if you want to create one together. Do a family show-and-tell afterwards to share about your creations.

Connect with Nature

Being in nature can help us to take breaks from worries and stress by connecting us with the world around us. Remember, you don't have to go far to find nature. As a family, try sitting in your yard, on the porch or balcony, or looking out a window. You can simply sit quietly, or challenge each other to notice the following pieces of nature:

- Birdsong
- The wind
- Dogs or animal friends
- Different flowers or trees
- Squirrels
- Insects
- Different cloud shapes

Make Your Own List as a Family

Add to this list with your own ideas about ways you can find peace and relaxation as a family during stressful times. We hope that these activities have given you some ideas about ways you cope and feel grounded as a family.

"The greatest gift you can give your children is not protection from change, loss, pain, or stress, but the confidence and tools to cope and grow with all that life has to offer them."

–Wendy Schlessel Harpham