

# MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

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## The Practice of Holding Space

“Holding space” has become a viral phrase lately, but it’s not a new concept. Holding space is about being present for someone in a way that allows them to feel seen, heard and valued. Mental health professionals say this practice involves being fully present with someone else without trying to solve their problems or minimize them. This is a healthy practice that can help reduce stress, anxiety and depression.

Holding space is important because it provides a sense of safety and acceptance. It allows individuals to process their emotions, gain clarity and feel supported. This practice can be especially beneficial during times of grief, stress or personal growth. Holding space allows you to help others navigate their challenges and find solutions.

Here are some ways to practice holding space for others:

- **Be present.** Give the person your full attention and remove distractions like your phone.
- **Listen actively.** Your goal is to listen to understand, not to respond. Show engagement by nodding, maintaining eye contact,

and using phrases such as “I see” or “That sounds tough.”

- **Avoid judgment.** Make the person feel safe to share by creating a judgment-free space. It’s also best to avoid making assumptions and offering unsolicited advice.
- **Validate feelings.** Acknowledging their emotions and letting them know it’s okay to feel what they’re feeling is important.
- **Offer support.** Ask how you can support them. Sometimes, just being there and listening is enough, but other times, people might need help or advice.
- **Respect the process.** Everyone processes emotions differently, so respect their pace and avoid rushing them to feel better or move on.

In today’s fast-paced world, finding someone who truly listens and supports without judgment may be challenging. As such, holding space is a compassionate practice that can make a significant difference in someone’s life.

For further guidance or support, contact a mental health professional.

## Using the 5-4-3-2-1 Technique to Reduce Anxiety

Panic and anxiety can feel overwhelming, but grounding exercises can help manage them. One such method is the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique. This simple yet powerful exercise can help bring you back to the present, regain your thoughts and, as a result, reduce anxious feelings. This sensory awareness can interrupt the cycle of worry and help you feel more connected to your environment.

### What Is 5-4-3-2-1?

The 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique is a mindfulness exercise that uses your five senses to help you focus on the present moment. Paying attention to your surroundings can interrupt anxious thoughts and bring your mind back to the present.

To ground yourself with this technique, identify the following items:

- **Five** things you can see
- **Four** things you can feel
- **Three** things you can hear
- **Two** things you can smell
- **One** thing you can taste

As you describe each item, you can say them out loud or quietly to yourself in your mind.

Engaging your senses can create a mental distraction, which calms your mind and body. Consider these tips when practicing 5-4-3-2-1:

- Be as specific and detailed as possible.
- Take your time, and don’t rush through the steps.
- Practice this exercise regularly so it becomes more effective.
- Use this technique anywhere as a discreet way to manage anxiety on the go.
- Pair it with deep breathing for a more calming effect.

The 5-4-3-2-1 technique is a simple yet effective way to manage anxiety. By focusing on your senses, you can bring yourself back to the present moment and reduce feelings of panic. This technique can become a valuable tool with regular practice and mindful attention.

Contact a mental health professional for further guidance and support for managing anxiety.