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| Five Senses Mindfulness Exercise  **Try this exercise next time you're feeling overwhelmed.**  Stressed out? Can’t stop worrying or thinking about something? Can’t focus? Feeling upset? Sometimes we feel like we’re caught up in a tornado of thoughts and emotions. The exercise below is a quick and easy method for feeling more in the present moment in the here and now on a tough day. It’s also great to practice at times when you’re not as stressed so you know exactly how to use it when you need it the most.  Begin to notice thoughts coming into your mind, this is COMPLETELY normal. Our brains are designed to think but we can learn to refocus our attention. Take this as an opportunity to be kind to yourself and not judge. Just notice that you are having thoughts, then, redirect your attention back to the present moment. In a simple kind way say to yourself come back to where you are now then the follow these steps.  1. **Sit in a comfortable upright position** with your feet planted flat on the ground. Rest your hands on your thighs or on your chair. |
| 2. **Notice your breathing**  No need to breathe in any particular way. Just bring attention to each part of the breath-the inhale, exhale, and the space in between. Bring your spotlight to where you most notice your breath.  3. **Now bring your awareness to each of your 5 senses.** One at a time, for about one minute each. The point here is to focus on the present moment and how each sense is being activated in that moment. The order in which you pay attention to each sense does not matter.  **Hear:** Begin to listen and pay attention to and notice all of the sounds around you. Try not to judge the sounds- just notice them, accept they are there. They are not good or bad, they just are. Sounds might be internal, like breathing. Sounds might be close by, like a clock ticking or more distant like the sound of traffic. Are you now hearing more than you were before you started? You may begin to notice subtle sounds you did not hear before. Can you hear them now?  **Smell:** Now shift your attention to notice the smells of your environment. Maybe you smell food, herbs or spices. You might become aware of the smell of trees or plants if you are outside. Notice what feelings this smell gives you? How do those feelings affect your mood? Positive or negative? What memories does it evoke? Close your eyes if it helps you sharpen your attention.  **See**: Observe your surroundings and notice the colors, shapes and textures. If you really look, you may notice things that have gone unnoticed. Now look for objects in the room or area you are in that have 4 sides.  **Taste:** You can do this one even if you do not have food in your mouth. You may notice an aftertaste of a previous drink or meal. You can just notice your tongue in your mouth, your saliva, and your breath as you exhale. We have tastes in our mouth that often go unnoticed. You can run your tongue over your teeth and cheeks to help you become more aware.  **Touch:** Last one. Bring your attention to the sensations of skin contact with your chair, clothing, and feet on the floor. You can notice the pressure between your feet and the floor or your body and the chair. You can observe temperature like the warmth or coolness of your hands or feet. You might take time to feel the textures of the clothes that you are wearing. Fully focus your attention on the texture of your clothes beneath your fingertips. |
| When you are finished, pause to notice how your body feels in this moment.  Compare how you feel now with how you felt 5 minutes ago- what has changed?  This can be useful to help bring yourself back into the here and now instead of going over what happened in the past or becoming anxious by thinking about what might happen next or in a potentially stressful situation. |