

# Anxiety Management Toolkit

Evidence-based techniques for immediate relief

## Understanding Your Anxiety

Anxiety is your body's natural response to stress. While it can feel overwhelming, understanding its mechanisms empowers you to regain control. This toolkit provides evidence-based techniques validated by leading researchers in perinatal mental health.

*"The postpartum period presents unique anxiety triggers, from hormonal fluctuations to sleep deprivation. Recognizing these as temporary and treatable is the first step toward recovery."*

— Dr. Samantha Meltzer-Brody, UNC Perinatal Psychiatry Program

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

When anxiety peaks, ground yourself in the present:

1. **5 things you can see:** Look around and name five objects in detail
2. **4 things you can touch:** Notice textures, temperatures, surfaces
3. **3 things you can hear:** Listen for subtle sounds around you
4. **2 things you can smell:** Identify scents in your environment
5. **1 thing you can taste:** Focus on the taste in your mouth



### Quick Relief Tip

Keep a small bottle of lavender essential oil handy. Research shows that lavender aromatherapy can reduce anxiety symptoms within minutes.

## Box Breathing for Immediate Calm

This Navy SEAL technique activates your parasympathetic nervous system, signaling safety to your brain:

Step	Action	Duration
1	Inhale through your nose	4 counts
2	Hold your breath	4 counts
3	Exhale through your mouth	4 counts
4	Hold empty	4 counts

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Systematically tense and release muscle groups to release physical anxiety:

**Feet and calves:** Tense for 5 seconds, then release for 15 seconds

**Thighs and glutes:** Tense for 5 seconds, then release for 15 seconds

**Abdomen:** Tense for 5 seconds, then release for 15 seconds

**Arms and hands:** Make fists, tense for 5 seconds, then release

**Shoulders and neck:** Raise shoulders to ears, hold, then release

**Face:** Scrunch all facial muscles, then release into a soft expression



### When to Seek Immediate Help

If anxiety is accompanied by chest pain, difficulty breathing, or thoughts of self-harm, contact your healthcare provider immediately or call 988 for crisis support.