

Here are some grounding and breathing and self soothing exercises that may be helpful.

- 1. Starfish Breathing** - Open up one hand and stretch your fingers, Use a finger (on the other hand) and begin softly tracing the outline of your hand. As you go up, breathe in. As you go down, breathe out. Continue this for the rest of your fingers, and repeat as many times as needed. It is recommended to do the exercise slowly.
 - This exercise helps regulate and slow down breathing through the visualizing and using the finger and hand as a guide.
 - It also acts as a grounding touch, that helps us stay in the present moment
 - Using our body system to create a felt sense of safety and regulation
- 2. Index Finger and Thumb Squeezing** - Stick out a thumb from the left hand, then use the right hand's fingers (except the index finger) to wrap around the thumb. Stick out the right hand's index finger and allow the left hand's other fingers to curl around the right hand's index finger.

So that the left hand's thumb and the right hand's index finger are both held and can be squeezed.

Start by squeezing the thumb and breathe in, slowly release your thumb as you breathe out. Do a few breaths with squeezing, and slowly decrease the pressure each time. Do the same with the index finger.

 - This exercise helps release anxiety by regulating breath, applying and decreasing pressure
 - It is suggested to do this slowly, to keep applying more pressure if needed, and only decrease the pressure when ready
- 3. Self Hug-** Take your right hand and place it under your armpit with fingers extending to your back. Take your left hand and place it on your bicep. As you breathe in, squeeze your arms, as you breathe out, release the tension. Try holding your breath for a little and notice the sensation of the self hug. Do this as many times as you need.
 - This exercise is a self soothing exercise, when feeling dysregulated, or activated. It also helps with creating a sense of safety and comfort.
- 4. Arm Self-Havening-** Cross your arms, and put your palms on your arms, slowly move up and down along your arms, do as many times as you need, let your arms feel the touch and notice how that makes you feel
 - This exercise is a self soothing exercise, when feeling dysregulated, or activated. It also helps with creating a sense of safety and comfort.
- 5. Drawing circles-** Use and mark making tools that you have and a piece of paper. Paint or draw circles (or spirals) of various sizes. Focus on the circular movement and how it feels when making them. You can use different colours or materials. The circles do not have to be perfect. Let your hand draw the circle whatever way it feels like. It is almost impossible to draw perfect circles!

- This exercise helps with staying in the present moment. There is a certain element of relaxation and comfort when drawing circles.
- If there is no paper/pen available, you can try drawing circles on the palm of your hand.

6. Free writing- Take a pen and a paper/ journal, write down what came up in your mind, and let the words flow from your pen, don't be worried about grammar, or writing fragments, it doesn't have to make sense as well, the key is keep going and let the words out. Be curious about the words, and if it is activating to see the words/ phrases, go back to the previous breathing exercises and self-soothing exercises to take care of yourself.

- This writing exercise provides an outlet to the percolating thoughts or deep hidden thoughts. Be gentle with yourself.
- A few prompts:
 - I feel...
 - I want to...
 - I imagine...
 - I acknowledge...