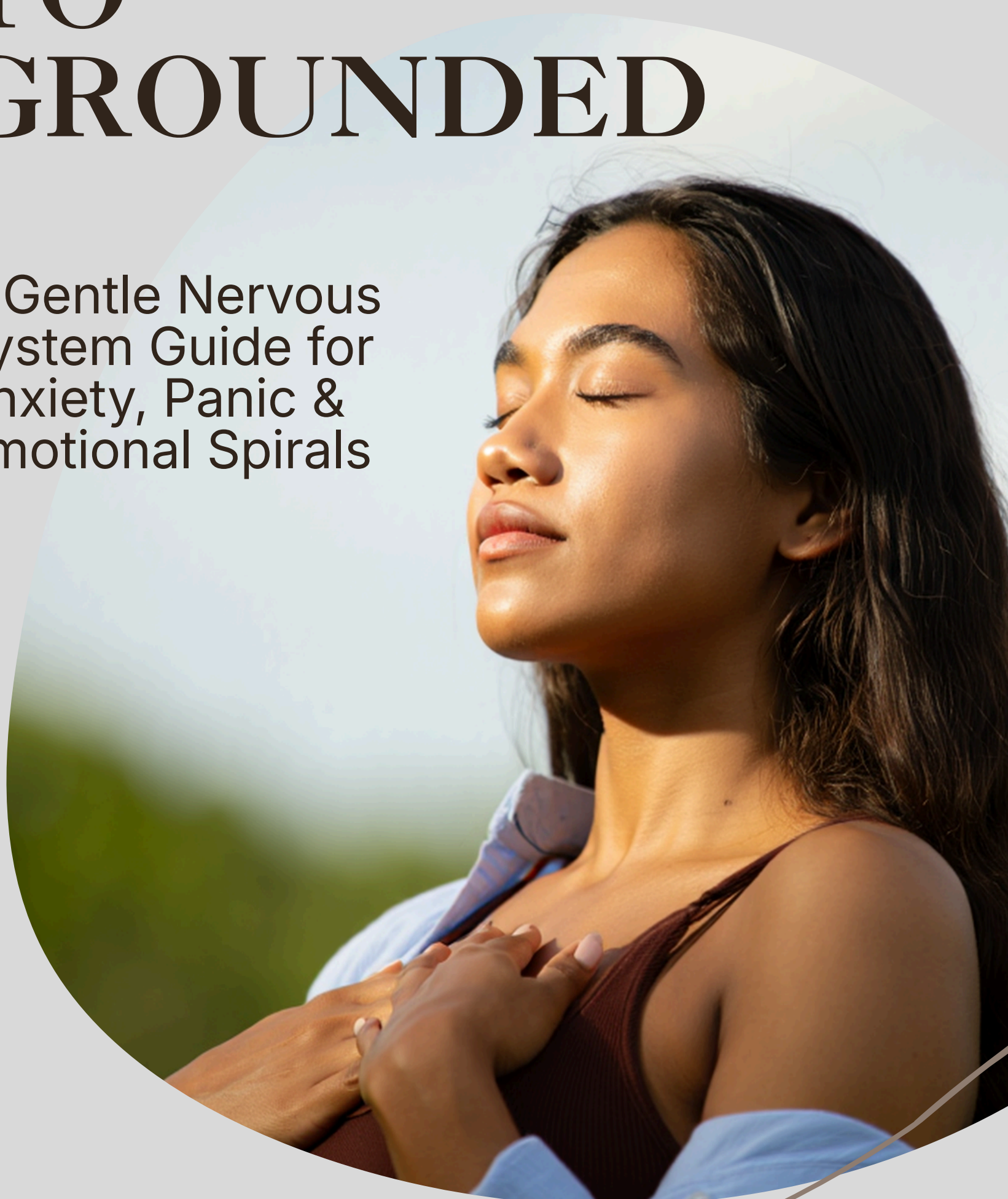


FROM OVERWHELM TO GROUNDED



A Gentle Nervous
System Guide for
Anxiety, Panic &
Emotional Spirals



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If You're Reading This During a Panic Spiral...



- You do not need to figure everything out right now.
- You do not need to stop your feelings immediately.
- You do not need to "calm down perfectly."
- Right now, your only job is to help your nervous system feel a little safer.
- Skip ahead to the tools section if you need immediate grounding.

Remember:

- Anxiety can feel intense without being dangerous
- Your nervous system is responding to stress, overwhelm, fear, or emotional activation
- Your body is trying to protect you, even if it feels uncomfortable right now
- You are not failing
- You are not "too much"
- You are not broken



What's Happening in Your Body



When your nervous system detects danger, emotional or physical, your body shifts into survival mode.

This can look like:

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
- Fawn
- Flop



When this happens, your body may:

- Increase heart rate
- Tighten your chest
- Speed up breathing
- Make your thoughts race
- Create dizziness or nausea
- Cause numbness, tingling, or shaking
- Make it hard to think clearly
- Leave you feeling disconnected or unsafe

Important Reminder:

Your nervous system is activated, not broken.

These sensations are real.

They are uncomfortable.

But they are not dangerous.



Why This Might Be Happening



Sometimes panic or overwhelm shows up because something inside your system no longer feels safe.

Maybe:

- You've been holding too much for too long
- A boundary was crossed
- You feel emotionally unsafe or overwhelmed
- Something reminded your body of past pain
- You've been stuck in overthinking or hypervigilance
- You've been masking your emotions all day
- You've been taking care of everyone except yourself
- Your nervous system has been under stress for a long time

For many people with trauma, anxiety became a way to stay alert, prepared, protected, or emotionally safe.

That is not weakness.

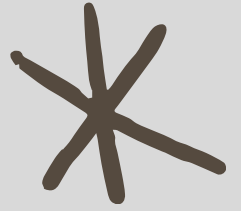
That is adaptation.

Your nervous system learned survival.

Now we help it learn safety.



HOW TO STOP THE SPIRAL



Choose One Tool.

You do not have to do every coping skill.

You do not have to do them perfectly.

Even small moments of grounding matter.

Your nervous system responds to repetition, gentleness, and safety...not pressure.



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Sensory Grounding:



5 • 4 • 3 • 2 • 1

Bring yourself back to the present moment. Look around slowly. Notice:



5 things you can SEE

4 things you can TOUCH

- Your clothing
- A chair
- The floor
- Your hands

3 things you can HEAR

2 things you can SMELL

1 thing you can TASTE

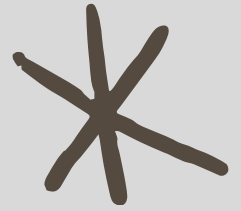
You are here.

You are in this moment.

Your body is allowed to slow down.



NS Temperature Reset



Why it can help:

Cold temperature can interrupt panic activation and activate the body's calming response.

It may:

- Interrupt shallow breathing
- Help your body reorient to the present
- Slow heart rate
- Reduce overwhelm



Try:

- Splashing cold water on your face
- Holding ice or something cold against your cheeks or chest
- Running cool water over your wrists
- Taking a cool shower
- Holding a cold drink slowly with both hands

You are not trying to force yourself to stop feeling.

You are helping your nervous system reset.





Box Breathing

Breathe with the rhythm below:

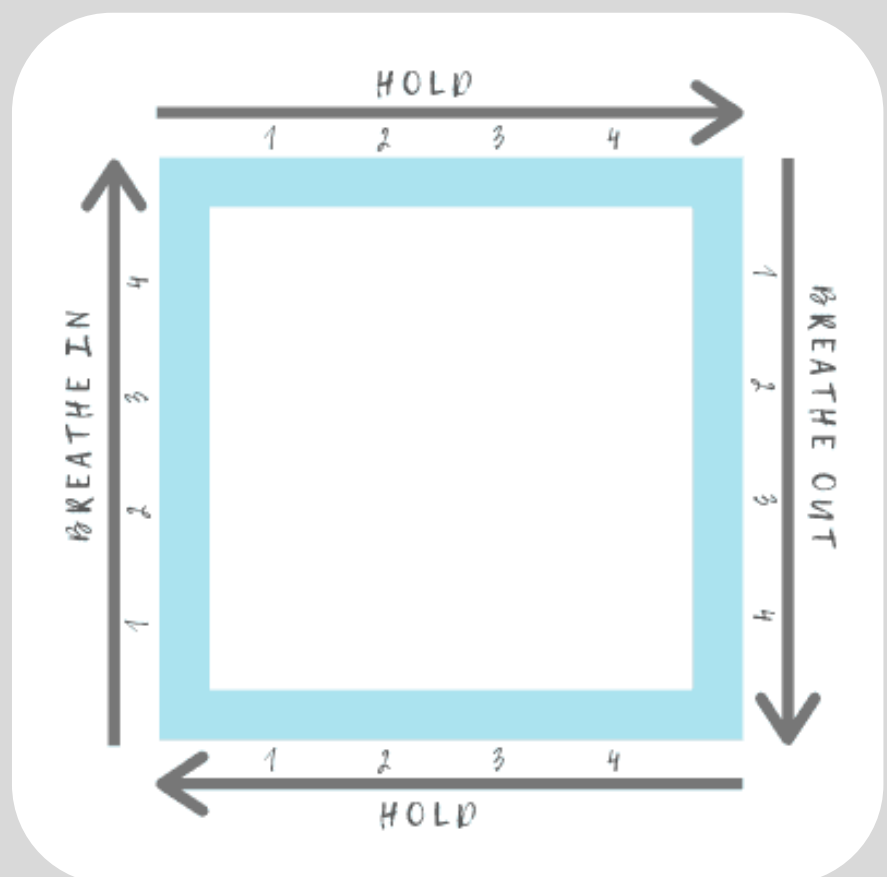
Inhale 4 seconds

Hold 4 seconds

Exhale 4 seconds

Hold 4 seconds

Repeat 4–6 times.



While breathing, remind yourself:

- "I am safe enough in this moment."
- "My body can settle."
- "This feeling will pass."
- "I do not need to panic about panic."

Your breath does not need to be perfect.
Slow and gentle is enough.



Name What's Happening



When panic rises, the brain often treats sensations like emergencies.

Naming what is happening can create space between you and the spiral.

Try saying:



- "I feel anxious right now."
- "My nervous system is overwhelmed."
- "My thoughts are racing."
- "My chest feels tight."
- "I am activated, not unsafe."
- "This feeling is intense, but temporary."

Naming your experience can help reduce fear and reconnect you with the present.



Create Space From the Spiral



Your thoughts and feelings are valid. But they are not permanent.

You do not have to believe every fear your nervous system sends you in this moment.

Gentle reminders:



- "These are thoughts, not facts."
- "My body is trying to protect me."
- "I can move through this one moment at a time."
- "This feeling will not last forever."
- "I do not have to figure everything out right now."
- "I can care for myself without criticizing myself."

You deserve compassion while you are struggling, not shame.



You Don't Have to Navigate This Alone

Healing is not about never feeling anxious again.

It is about helping your mind and body feel safer, more connected, and more supported.

Therapy can help you:

- Understand your nervous system
- Reduce overwhelm and emotional spirals
- Process trauma safely
- Build grounding and regulation skills
- Explore boundaries, self-worth, and emotional patterns
- Feel more connected to yourself

You deserve support that helps both your mind and body feel safer.



Cherish A. Smith, LMHC
Florida Trauma-Informed Therapist

www.CherishMentalHealth.com
CherishMentalHealth@gmail.com

