

## SENSING AND RATING ANXIETY IN THE BODY

This exercise helps you pay attention to sensations of anxiety that occur in your body in a whole new way. You can use it anytime you feel anxious. It is also a useful way to "drop into the body" anytime throughout the day -- just to check in and get more familiar with this precious gift that we all possess.

Whether the body's signal is related to old trauma, a difficult life situation, or stress,

the ability to notice these warning signals can help you respond more quickly and effectively.

No one is immune from anxiety. **Sensing and Rating** will help you be present and cope with it in a healthy way. The practice of noticing sensations take time, so be kind to yourself as you learn how to do this. If possible, do this practice in quiet location so you can observe the sensations in detail.



1. Begin this practice when you first notice any sensation of anxiety. If you wait until a full-blown anxiety attack is underway, it might make it more difficult to practice. The more you do this practice, the more easily you will begin to notice the early onset of anxiety -- whether it's just a tightness in the chest or a shallower than normal breath.
2. Bring your palms together and press your heels into the floor as a way to get grounded in the body. Press them tighter for about 5 seconds, then release and exhale to let go of stress.
3. Bring attention to where you are feeling anxiety in the body and ask yourself:
  - Where in the body is the sensation of anxiety present? (*Name as many different places as you can, from where there's the strongest feeling to the smallest feeling.*)
  - What is the anxiety level on a 1-7 scale, with 1 being the lowest.
  - If the anxiety sensation had a name, what name would you give it?
  - If the anxiety sensation had a color, what color would it be?
  - If it had a shape, what shape would it be?
  - If this anxiety had a size, how large or small would it be?
  - If it had weight, how heavy would it be?
4. For a moment, take several slow, calming and soothing breaths. As you do this, try to visualize the breath traveling in the place where you are experiencing the anxiety. Let your breath fill up that area. With each exhale, visualize the sensation drain out of your body.
5. Go back now to Step 3 and review those questions. Re-rate the level of the anxiety you feel now on the 1-7 scale.
6. Continue to observe the sensation for up to 5 minutes, noticing how it changes moment by moment, even subtly.

What did you learn from **Sensing and Rating** your sensation of anxiety?

When can you routinely schedule **Sensing and Rating** your body as a way of noticing your early warning signs of anxiety?