



*“I had so much fun putting together my notes jar. I found a nice jar at an antique mall to put my “happy” notes into. I enjoyed that and have been finding it helpful. I need that jar to help when anxiety or panic takes over. I don’t need something complicated. It has honestly really been helping.”*  
Anon, Canada

## Coping Mechanisms for Emotional Overwhelm and Anxiety

Emotional overwhelm can occur when feelings of grief, stress, trauma, or other life events become too intense to manage. In these moments, it can feel impossible to function or cope. Overwhelm may arise at any time—on public transport, in a work meeting, or at a family event—and you may not always understand why. Sometimes, a clear trigger is present, but at other times, the cause remains hidden.

When faced with these moments, it is beneficial to calm yourself in a way that allows you to continue functioning, without drawing attention to the inner turmoil that could lead to anxiety or panic. Fortunately, there are several coping mechanisms you can use to lessen these feelings of overwhelm. Some techniques are discreet, while others may require you to briefly remove yourself from your environment. Either way, they can provide invaluable support.

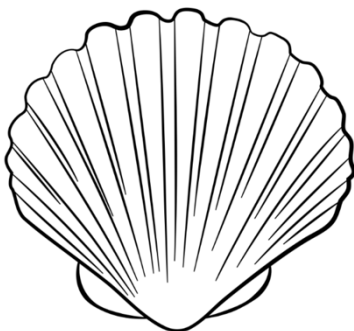
Here are a few tried-and-tested techniques that I have successfully used with clients. These methods have helped them manage emotional overwhelm, and with consistent practice, can reduce the intensity of such emotions over time. Why not give them a try?

### Grounding with a Treasured Keepsake

Carrying a small, meaningful item—like a polished stone, personal treasure or a seashell—can provide comfort during stressful moments.

#### How to use:

When you feel anxiety rising, reach into your pocket and touch the keepsake. Focus on the texture: trace the smoothness of the stone or the ridges of the shell. Let your fingers explore its details as you ground yourself in the present. Close your eyes, if you can, and allow the object to take you back to a comforting memory of when you found or received it. Let its calming presence soothe you, while breathing deeply and slowly.



### Single Nostril Breathing (Nadi Shodhana)

This calming breathing technique helps balance the mind and reduce stress, particularly during moments of anxiety or panic.

#### How to practice

1. Sit in a comfortable position, with legs crossed or on a chair with your feet flat on the ground.
  2. Place your left hand on your left knee.
  3. Lift your right hand toward your nose.
  4. Exhale completely, then use your right thumb to gently close your right nostril.
  5. Inhale slowly and deeply through your left nostril.
  6. Close your left nostril with your right index finger, then open the right nostril and exhale fully.
- Repeat for several cycles, alternating nostrils, focusing on the breath to calm your mind.



## Jar of Activities

This is a useful technique for when anxiety visits, and you struggle to calm your emotions. The idea is to have a pre-prepared list of enjoyable activities at hand, which can act as a healthy distraction.

### How it works:

Think of activities that take 10–30 minutes and help you feel grounded, such as taking a scented bath, making a favourite recipe, watching a video, talking to a friend, or walking in nature. Write each activity on small pieces of paper or Post-It notes and place them in a jar. When you feel overwhelmed, reach into the jar and do the first activity you pull out. The act of focusing on something different, or even just changing your environment, can help ease the intensity of your emotions.



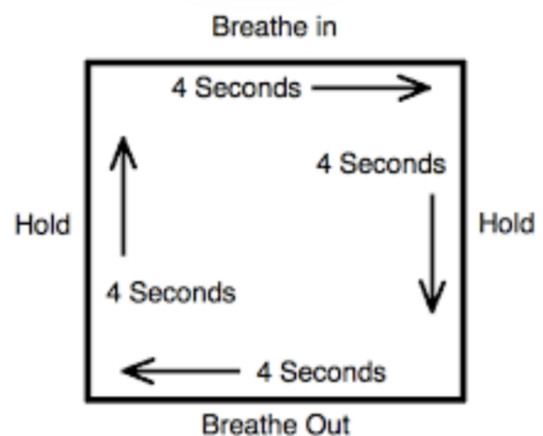
## Square/Box Breathing

This simple but effective breathing exercise can be used anywhere, at any time. I've even successfully used it in a lift with a client who was feeling panicked.

### How to practice:

1. Take a couple of deep breaths in through your nose.
2. Inhale for a count of 4, hold the breath for 4, exhale for 4, and hold again for 4.
3. Repeat as needed.

For added effect, visualize each step as one side of a square in your mind, drawing the square as you complete each breath cycle. This mental imagery can enhance the calming effect, helping to refocus your thoughts.



By incorporating these techniques into your daily routine, you will begin to manage overwhelming emotions so that episodes are less frequent and less impactful. With time and practice, these coping mechanisms will allow you to navigate your grief journey with more peace.

If you would like to learn more about coping mechanisms, including colour breathing meditation and somatic exercises, then please reach out to me at:

[embraceyourfuture@outlook.com](mailto:embraceyourfuture@outlook.com)

or book a session/package with me at:

[www.embraceyourfuture.net](http://www.embraceyourfuture.net)