

November 20, 2022 3 MINUTES TO READ · 600 WORDS

Mindfulness 5-4-3-2-1: A Technique to Focus Your Attention


By Scott L. Rogers

Share:



In this month's column, we explore a popular exercise that many find helpful for feeling less anxious amid stressful and emotionally turbulent moments. Known as 5-4-3-2-1, it is part mindfulness practice, part relaxation practice and involves turning attention in a particular way to each of the five traditional senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste, one after the other. Doing so tends to focus attention and steady the emotional roller coaster that has become a part of everyday life.

OUR TEAM MAKES SOPHISTICATED M&A DEALS DOWNRIGHT SIMPLE.

 **BridgeBank**
A Division of Western Alliance Bank. Member FDIC.

[SCHEDULE A DEMO](#)

Below I will describe the practice, after which I'll share a link so that you may learn a little more about the technique. As this is a popular practice, you can find many online articles and videos discussing and describing it.

The Technique

There are various mindfulness practices that zero in on focusing attention on an object, such as the breath or a region of the body or a sound. These practices invite one to turn attention in a particular direction with the intention of remaining attentive to what one observes. When the mind wanders, as it surely will, the noticing of such mind wandering prompts a return to the object.

The 5-4-3-2-1 technique carries some of these mindfulness components. Because it is primarily shared as a relaxation or grounding practice, less time is spent observing the object as a training of attention. Rather, the tactical shifting of attention among sensory objects helps you maintain a steadier attention and, in doing so, become less captured by mental content that can be a source of agitation.

The tactical shifting of attention involves actively seeking out a set number of objects in the external environment for each of the primary senses. Specifically:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you can touch

- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

This technique helps you to tactically home in on specific objects arising in the present moment. By doing this, you constrain the movement of attention, which tends to facilitate a more steady emotional state. The above structure takes into account the ready availability of objects in each sense's field, with the visual field most abundant and the taste field more limited. You may find you prefer a different order and can be creative in how you structure it.

It can be helpful to begin with a few slower, deeper breaths. You can practice with your eyes open (especially useful at the start) or closed. As a grounding technique, it is helpful to spend just a few moments within each sense field before moving on to the next one. The more curious you are about what you observe and the more detail you gather about the object, the steadier your attention. By the time you get to the end, you may well find that you are feeling a little more relaxed and less agitated. So that you might get a sense of this, take a few moments and practice 5-4-3-2-1 now.

Further Information

If you are interested in learning more or sharing information about this technique with others, click [this link](#) for a short video clip review. At the end of the clip, you'll learn how 5-4-3-2-1 can be both a settling technique and a mindfulness practice.

[Download the PDF of this issue](#)

ENTITY:

SOLO, SMALL FIRM AND GENERAL PRACTICE DIVISION

TOPIC:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The material in all ABA publications is copyrighted and may be reprinted by permission only. Request reprint permission [here](#).

Authors



Scott L. Rogers

-

Scott L. Rogers is a nationally recognized leader in the area of mindfulness and law, as well as a teacher, researcher, and trainer. He is founder and director of the University of Miami School of Law's [Mindfulness in Law Program](#), and he co-founded and co-directs the University of Miami's [Mindfulness Research and Practice Initiative](#). Scott is the author of six books, including the recently released *The Mindful Law Student: A Mindfulness in Law Practice Guide*.

Published in *GPSolo eReport*, Volume 12, Number 4, November 2022. © 2022 by the American Bar Association. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved. This information or any portion thereof may not be copied or disseminated in any form or by any means or stored in an electronic database or retrieval system without the express written consent of the American Bar Association. The views expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the American Bar Association or the Solo, Small Firm and General Practice Division.