

The 5 Senses Assessment

Joy Eidse

When there is a lot of adrenalin running through your system, your instinct is to run, fight or freeze. It can be difficult to think clearly and know which of these, if any, are warranted. The blood moves from the front of your brain (pre-frontal cortex) where you make decisions and think to the back of your brain (amygdala or lizard brain) where thinking is not necessary we just go by instinct. This exercise is intended to move the blood back to the front of the brain, to re-engage the pre-frontal cortex and to do a thorough assessment of your surroundings to let your brain know if you are safe and if you no longer need the adrenalin rush.

*A NOTE of CAUTION: For some people, particularly those who have been in dangerous situations over long periods of time (combat zones or abusive situations) sometimes this exercise increases anxiety to a paranoia level where the mundane becomes fearful when focused on too intensely. If this is you, or you find your anxiety heightened during this exercise, do not continue.

Look. What do you see around you, name the object out loud or under your breathe, if more appropriate. What are the colours? What are the shapes?

Listen. What do you hear? Can you hear traffic, birds, trains, people talking? Can you hear your own breathe?

Feel. What is under your feet? Is it solid, smooth or soft? Are you sitting, what is under you? How does it feel? Use your hands to feel textures around you, the chair, the floor, a table, grass. Can you feel the texture of your clothing? Is it rough or smooth? Rub your arms or legs, how do they feel?

Taste. Is there a taste on your tongue? Can you remember what you last ate? Lick your lips, what do you taste?

Breathe. Take a deep breathe. What do you smell? Car fumes or freshly cut grass, woodsmoke or a nearby restaurant.

Keep breathing. You're doing well. In and out. You can do it...