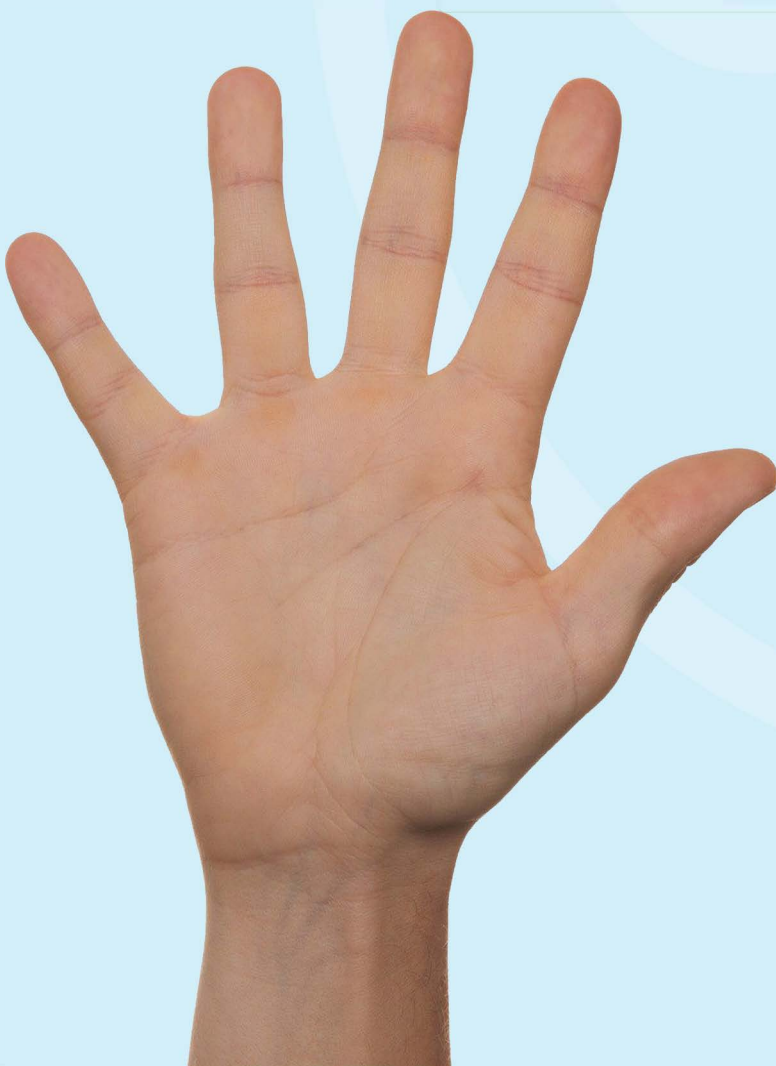


# *Count on 5-4-3-2-1 to quieten your anxious mind*

Often it can feel like stress and anxiety are just unwritten terms and conditions for being an artist or creative freelancer, or choosing to run your own creative business.

From anxiety about where the next gig is going to come from or how you're going to make the finances work to the stress of deadlines or doing more with less, these are all things most of us will have experience at some point.

But one of the things we've found can change those Ts and Cs, and help stave off those rising moments of panic or anxiety we all recognise, is a 5-step exercise called the 5-4-3-2-1 exercise. It's what's known as a 'grounding exercise' because it can be useful in bringing us back to the present and helping us realise we are safe and in control. It's delightfully simple, but really powerful! So here's how it works....



- 5 Look around and **name FIVE things you can see around you**. If you're in the studio it might be a brush or an instrument. In the office, maybe you can see a screen, or a pen. Maybe you see a spot on the ceiling, or if you're outside, a cloud in the sky.
- 4 Next up, **focus on FOUR things you can touch or feel around you**. If you're at your desk, maybe you can feel the chair under your bottom. Or the floor under your feet? If you're outside, maybe you feel the sun on your shoulders, or the wind blowing your hair? Sometimes, it helps to say these things out loud if you can!
- 3 The third step is to **name THREE things that you can hear around you**. Again, this can be anything: the sound of a colleague or family member, the radio, a bird out of the window, the fridge switching on or off. It could even be your tummy rumbling!
- 2 OK, so the next thing to do is **notice TWO things that you can smell around you** right now. Maybe you can smell your coffee if you're inside, or food if you've nipped out for lunch? Maybe traffic fumes if you're walking on a busy street? If you can't smell anything around you, then try conjuring up 2 smells you really like!
- 1 The final step is to **focus on one thing that you can taste**. What does the inside of your mouth taste like—gum, coffee, or whatever you had for lunch? If you can't taste anything, then instead you can choose to imagine a taste that you like.

In this [Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing](#) part of our toolkit, we've also shared some of our other favourite anxiety exercises – including another numbers-based one, called the [5 x 5 exercise](#).