

FOUR ELEMENTS EXERCISE - Developed by Elan Shapiro

Courtesy of Maria G. Masciandaro, Psy.D. and the Fairfield, CT TRN

Adaptation by the Boston Area TRN – April 2013

We will do a grounding exercise called the Four Elements. Please feel free to practice this whenever you need to feel more present in the here and now, whenever you are feeling a little anxious or triggered. Take note of your stress level before you start and again after the exercises.

In this exercise the four elements are in a different order from the one you may know, they are in the order: EARTH, AIR, WATER, and FIRE

The 1st element is Earth for grounding and safety in the present moment -
Take a minute or two to “land”... to be here now... place both feet on the ground, feel the chair and the earth supporting you... direct your attention out...look around & notice & say aloud three new things...things you hear or see to help you know YOU ARE HERE – YOU ARE SAFE ... RIGHT ... NOW.

Follow your body up – The 2nd element is Air for being centered in your breath –
Just notice your breathing. Take 2 or 3 deeper slower breaths from your stomach rising to your chest, then making sure to breathe all the way out to make room for fresh energizing air. YOU ARE SAFE – YOU ARE HERE, NOW AND YOU ARE CENTERED.

The 3rd element is Water for switching on your relaxation response –
When you have saliva in your mouth, you activate the part of your nervous system that helps you relax – the opposite of dry mouth. Do you have saliva in your mouth? If yes, make more. If not think of eating a juicy orange or swallowing a cool refreshing drink of water... (or have a mint)YOU ARE SAFE, YOU ARE HERE NOW, YOU ARE CENTERED - CALM AND CONTROLLED.

The 4th element is Fire for the power of imagination –
Light the path to your imagination. Bring up an image of a safe, secure place where you feel calm, soothed or secure, or recall a memory in which you felt good/ whole and totally with yourself.

Notice the light, colors, smells, and sounds. Where do you feel it in your body? Allow that feeling to spread and flow throughout your body.

INSTALL this with brief slow BLS/butterfly hugs.