

## Fighting the Anxiety Monster

One of the hardest parts of trauma is that sometimes those overwhelming, scary feelings can sneak up on a person when they are least expecting it and cause an anxiety attack.

This kind of feels like being attacked by a great big, giant anxiety monster.

But the good news is that there are some simple things that we can do to help our students (and ourselves) calm down.

### 3 Calming Techniques

**1. Flower/Candle Deep Breathing** - Deep breathing helps people calm down because it gives the brain more oxygen and stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system. The Flower/Candle Technique is a kid-friendly way to explain how to take deep breaths.

Ask the student to pretend that they will be holding a flower and a candle. First, ask them to imagine smelling the flower by breathing in through their nose as you count to 4. Once this is done, tell them it's time to blow out the candle, by breathing out through their mouth as you count to 6. Help your student repeat this flower inhale, candle exhale for three or four times until they feel better.

**2. 5.4.3.2.1 Grounding** - When unwanted thoughts are hard to stop, refocusing on the present moment can help.

Ask the student to tell you 5 things that they can see in the room. 4 things they can feel around them. 3 things they can hear right now. 2 things they can smell. And 1 thing they can taste. Encourage them to take their time and notice all the details around them in their environment. This will help bring them back to the reality of the present moment.

**3. Positive Affirmations** - Anxiety often comes with negative self-talk. Help your student by speaking life into them instead.

Remind your student of God's truth, no matter what they are dealing with, they are worthy, they are loved, they are never alone. Jesus loves them. Remind them that they are strong and capable. Give them an encouraging Bible verse to tuck away in their heart. Invite them to come up with their own positive affirmation for themselves that they can always use. Remember that positive affirmations not only help in the moment, sometimes they can last a lifetime.