

# How To 'Drop Anchor'



Dropping anchor is a useful skill to learn.

- **Handle** difficult thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories, urges, and sensations more effectively.
- **Switch off** auto-pilot and engage in life; ground and steady yourself in difficult situations.
- **Disrupt** rumination, obsessing and worrying.
- **Focus** your attention on the task or activity you are doing; develop more self-control
- **Use as a 'circuit-breaker'** for impulsive, compulsive, aggressive, addictive or other problematic behaviours.

## What is involved?

Dropping anchor involves playing around with **A-C-E**:

**A:** Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings

**C:** Come back into your body

**E:** Engage in what you're doing

## **A: Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings**

Silently and kindly acknowledge whatever is 'showing up' inside you: thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories, sensation, or urges.

Take the stance of a curious scientist, observing what's going on in your inner world...

*Continue to acknowledge your thoughts and feelings, also...*

## **C: Come back into your body**

Come back into and connect with your physical body.

You could try some or all of the following, or find your own methods:

- Slowly push your feet hard into the floor.
- Slowly straighten up your back and spine; if sitting, sitting upright and forward in your chair.
- Slowly press your fingertips together
- Slowly stretch your arms or neck, shrug your shoulders.
- Slowly breathe.

### **Note**

You are *not* trying to turn away from, escape, avoid, or distract yourself from what is happening in your inner world.

The aim is to:

- remain aware of your thoughts and feelings
- continue to acknowledge their presence; at the same time:
- come back into and connect with your body.

In other words, you are expanding your focus:

- ✓ aware of your thoughts and feelings
- ✓ also aware of your body while actively moving it...



*Continue to acknowledge thoughts and feelings; connect with your body; and also...*

## **E: Engage in what you're doing**

Get a sense of where you are and refocus your attention on the activity you are doing.

Try some or all of these suggestions, or find your own:

Look around your surroundings:

- Notice    **5 things you can see**
- 4 things you can hear**
- 3 things you are touching**
- 2 things you can smell**
- 1 taste in your mouth**

Finally    **notice what you are doing.**

End the exercise by giving your full attention to the task or activity at hand.

Ideally, run through the ACE cycle slowly 3 or 4 times, to turn it into a 2- 3 minute exercise.

**NOTE:** please don't skip the A of A-C-E; it's so important to keep acknowledging the thoughts and feelings present, especially if they are difficult or uncomfortable.

If you skip the A, this exercise will turn into a distraction technique - which it's not supposed to be.



## WHAT'S THE POINT OF THIS PRACTICE?

Most purposes for practicing this skill are listed in the first paragraph on the first page.

In addition, this skill is often used as a first step in handling flashbacks, panic attacks, chronic pain, and many other issues.

## MODIFY THIS AS NEEDS

If you're pushed for time, just do a 30 second version: run through the ACE cycle once.

If you're up for a challenge, run through the ACE cycle extremely slowly, over and over, for 5 to 10 minutes.

There are many ways to modify this exercise, to accommodate your needs (e.g. physical pain) or overcome any difficulties you may have with it.

## PRACTICE OFTEN

Remember: you can practise these kinds of exercises, any time, any place, and any activity.

It's a good idea to practise them often in less challenging situations, when your thoughts and feelings are less difficult, so you can build up your skill levels.

Over time, the idea is to use this in more challenging situations, when your thoughts and feelings are more difficult.

