5-4-3-2-1 (after Yvonne Dolan)

The goal:

To stop your head from constantly spinning, and to prevent that upsurging feeling of panic – to come back to the here and now and regain a sense of calm, to fall asleep lying down.

What you need:

- This exercise requires very little preparation. Just make sure you have a few minutes of your time and that you are in a situation where you don't have to speak.
- To begin with you'll need 15 minutes during which you can sit still, no need to withdraw into your own space.

What to do:

- Allow your eyes to look in one direction, concentrate them on a point that is a little higher than eye level.
- Be aware of your breathing and let this guide the rhythm with which you do the exercise.
- Name (to yourself) 5 things you can see or 5 impressions you have right now; while doing so, pay attention to how wide your field of vision is, even when you allow your eyes to just gaze forwards in a relaxed manner. Give yourself time. For example. You might say: I see a leaf and it's moving, ... I can see the hands of a clock, ... I can hear my own heartbeat ...
- Name 5 things your body can feel (not emotions!) as you sit there. For example, I can feel my bottom on the chair, ... I can feel my right foot touch the floor, ... I can feel an itchiness in my nose, ... I feel as if there is a hole in my stomach ...
- Repeat each one 4 times.
- Then 3 times.
- Then 2 times.
- Then 1 time.
- (and if you want to, you can start from the beginning again)

What else you should know:

- It's absolutely fine if you get the counting wrong; just go back to the right place and start again.
- It doesn't matter if you change the order.
- If something distracts you, then just name it!
- You can say the same thing more than once if that feels right.
- All this is just a sign that you are relaxing! In other words, you're coming back to the here and now.

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Turning the exercise back to front as the 1-2-3-4-5 exercise:

- To prevent a feeling of crisis or to stop flashbacks, some clients find the exercise easier to use the other way round and as a way of getting out of their head and back into the outside world.

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