

# Orienting to Safety

Training your attention

From Ashley Russell, EMDR Therapist | [emdrbristol.org](http://emdrbristol.org)

 What is orienting?

Orienting is where your attention goes.

Your nervous system is constantly asking:

“Am I safe, or is there danger?”

This happens automatically.

 Why this matters

Humans are wired to notice threat first.

- The brain prioritises danger (**negativity bias**)
- This can keep you focused on what feels wrong
- Your body can feel on edge, even when you are safe

 When attention locks onto danger

You might notice:

- Anxiety or tension
- Hypervigilance
- Feeling unsettled

Even when nothing dangerous is happening.

 Orienting to safety

This is not about positive thinking.

It's about **including more of what is actually here**.

Notice:

- Something you can see
- Something you can feel (touch)
- Something you can hear

Let your attention land on **neutral or safe things**.

 Use your senses

Support your nervous system by:

- Looking around slowly
- Touching something solid (chair, clothing, floor)
- Noticing steady sounds

Touch can be especially grounding:  
“I am here. I am supported.”

 Quick practice

- Look around
- Name **3 things you can see**
- Notice **2 things you can feel**
- Notice **1 thing you can hear**

Take your time.

 Ashley's Tip

Don't try to “think your way out” of anxiety.

**Move your attention instead.**

Turn your head.


Let your eyes land.

Reach out and touch something.

 Remember

Your brain will still look for danger – that's normal.

**This is about expanding what you notice, not forcing how you feel.**

 *This resource was created by Ashley Russell, EMDR therapist at [emdrbristol.org](http://emdrbristol.org).  
Informed by Rick Hanson, Stephen Porges, Francine Shapiro  
Feel free to share it with others – just keep the credit and the care.*