



**Stress Management Society**  
from distress to de-stress



# OCTOBER PURPLE PAPER

# CREATING RIPPLES, FINDING ROOTS

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# WELCOME AND HAPPY MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY

## The Humility and Hope in This Work

Finding your ground doesn't mean you're above the struggle. It doesn't mean you're enlightened or finished or exempt from pain. You'll still get knocked off balance. You'll still have days where nothing feels steady. You'll still rage and grieve and doubt.

But if you know where your ground is, if you've practiced coming back to it, you won't stay lost as long. You'll have a way back to yourself. And from that place, you'll be able to choose your next step, rather than just reacting to whatever chaos is loudest.

This is humble work. It's not glamorous. Nobody's going to give you an award for pausing to breathe before you respond to that email, for choosing the walk instead of the scroll, for remembering your values when it would be easier to abandon them.

But it's also hopeful work. Because it reminds us that we're not powerless. We can't control the world, but we're not just victims of it either. We have agency over our inner lives. And that inner work isn't separate from outer change, it's the foundation of it.

## The Invitation

So the invitation isn't to fix yourself before you engage with the world's problems. It's not to become perfectly calm before you act.

The invitation is to notice: What helps you stay connected to yourself? What helps you remember who you want to be? What helps you show up as someone who can hold complexity, who can be both fierce and tender, who can fight for justice without becoming the very thing you're fighting against?

That's your ground. And returning to it, again and again, imperfectly, with patience, that's where your power lives. We can't heal the world alone. But we can choose how we show up in it. And that choice, that act of inner grounding, is where real change begins. Not because it fixes everything. But because it changes everything about how we meet this moment.

And maybe, just maybe, if enough of us do that work, if enough of us show up grounded instead of reactive, present instead of dissociated, clear instead of confused, we'll discover we're not as alone as we thought.

We'll discover we're building something together. One grounded moment at a time.

## THE REAL LOCATION OF CHANGE

We often think of change as something that happens out there first — new policies, new leaders, new systems. And yes, those matter. But lasting change, sustainable change, doesn't start with external shifts. It starts with internal ones.

Think about every major social movement, every revolution, every moment of collective transformation. It didn't begin with perfect conditions or unanimous agreement. It began with individuals who found their ground first — who connected to something deeper than fear, who chose courage when courage made no sense, who acted from values instead of from trauma.

The civil rights movement wasn't built by people who had it all figured out. It was built by people who knew what they stood for, who found their ground in faith, community, and dignity, and who showed up from that place again and again. The same is true on a smaller scale. Change in your family, your workplace, your neighborhood — it starts when someone chooses to be different in the face of the same old patterns. When someone pauses instead of reacts. When someone listens instead of defends. When someone stays steady when everyone else is spiraling.



## GROUNDING AS RADICAL RESPONSIBILITY.

This isn't about self-help for its own sake. This isn't "find your calm so you can ignore injustice" or "just think positive while the world burns." Finding your ground is actually a form of radical responsibility. Because when you're grounded:

You can see more clearly. You're not making decisions from pure panic or exhaustion. You can distinguish between urgent and important. You can think strategically instead of just reactively. You have more to give. You can show up for others without depleting yourself completely. You can be generous without becoming a martyr. You can sustain your work over the long haul instead of burning out in six months.

You model something different. In a world that's constantly escalating, constantly reactive, constantly running on fumes — your groundedness is countercultural. It shows people there's another way to be, even now.

You interrupt cycles of harm. When you don't pass on your panic, your rage, your desperation — when you metabolize it instead of spreading it — you break a chain. That's not passive. That's powerful.



# YOUR PERSONAL STRESS SIGNAL

## Stress Signal Recognition

"Let's identify YOUR early warning stress signal. In the chat or privately to yourself, complete this sentence:"

"I know I'm stressed when I notice myself..."

Common examples participants might recognise:

- Clenching my jaw
- Snapping at loved ones
- Reaching for my phone constantly
- Holding my breath
- Skipping meals or sleep
- Withdrawing from others



**"Whatever you noticed is valid. Awareness is always the first step."**

# EXAMPLES OF GROUNDING PRACTICES

## Creative & Expressive Grounding Practices

- A journal entry where you don't censor yourself. Pouring everything onto the page — the rage, the fear, the confusion. No one has to see it. It's just the act of getting it out of your head and into the world.
- Art-making without needing it to be good. Painting. Drawing. Coloring. Clay. It's not about the outcome. It's about the focus, the texture, the way your hands move, the way your mind quiets.
- Writing letters you might never send. To someone who hurt you. To your younger self. To God. To the future. Sometimes we need to say things out loud (or on paper) before we can move forward.

## Ritual & Routine Grounding Practices

- Morning coffee or tea — the whole ritual of it. Not rushing. Actually sitting down. Feeling the warmth of the cup in your hands. It's small, but it's yours. It's a moment you can count on.
- A bedtime routine that signals safety. The same order of things every night. Washing your face. Brushing your teeth. Reading a few pages. Turning off the lights. When the day has been chaos, the routine says, "You made it. You're safe now."
- Lighting a candle. Something about the act of striking the match, watching the flame catch, sitting with that small light in the darkness. It's ancient. It's simple. It works.
- Gardening or tending plants. Watering. Pruning. Watching something grow. It's slow. It requires patience. And that patience can be grounding when everything else demands urgency.

## Restorative & Rest Grounding Practices

- Permission to do nothing. Not productive rest. Not self-care as another task. Just... stopping. Lying on the floor. Staring at the ceiling. Letting yourself be without performing or achieving.
- A nap when you actually need one. Not powering through. Not pushing past exhaustion. Just listening to your body and letting yourself rest. Sometimes sleep is the most grounding thing you can do.
- Saying no to protect your energy. Declining the invitation. Not answering the phone. Choosing not to engage. Sometimes grounding is about boundaries — about not letting the chaos follow you everywhere.

## Memory & Meaning Grounding Practices

- A photo album or memory box. Looking at pictures from better times. Holding objects that carry stories. Reminding yourself that you've had joy before and will again.
- Revisiting a place that holds good memories. The park where you used to play. The coffee shop where you wrote your first paper. The bench where you had that important conversation. Physical spaces can hold emotional ground.
- Remembering who you were before this crisis. What made you laugh? What lit you up? What did you care about? Sometimes grounding is about reconnecting with the parts of yourself that the chaos has buried.

# EXAMPLES OF GROUNDING PRACTICES

## Spiritual & Faith-Inspired Grounding Practices

Holding onto your sense of faith or spiritual connection.

Whether through meditation, reflection, journaling, or simply speaking from the heart — connecting to something greater than yourself can help you stay centered when life feels uncertain. It's the reminder that you're supported, even when the path ahead isn't clear.

Exploring wisdom or inspirational texts.

Reading from writings, poetry, philosophy, or teachings that speak to your inner life.

Sometimes a single line or passage can become the foundation you return to for strength and clarity.

Shared spiritual or reflective community.

Gathering with others — in conversation, song, silence, or shared practice — can create a sense of belonging and collective grounding. There's power in being among people who are also seeking meaning, peace, or purpose.

## Relational Grounding Practices

- A friend who always listens without fixing. That rare person who doesn't jump in with advice or try to make it better. They just hold space. They let you be messy. They remind you that you're not alone in it.
- A mentor or elder who's lived through hard things. Someone whose presence says, "I survived my storms, and you'll survive yours." Just talking to them can help you remember that difficulty isn't forever.
- A pet who needs you. The dog who still wants their walk. The cat who curls up in your lap. They don't care about your crisis — and somehow, that's exactly what you need. They ground you in the simple, immediate present.
- Your children's routines. Making breakfast. Reading the bedtime story. Helping with homework. When your own life feels chaotic, caring for them can give you structure and purpose that steadies you.

## Sensory & Physical Grounding Practices

- Music that reminds you who you are. That song from high school. The album that got you through your last heartbreak. Gospel music that makes you feel held. Music doesn't solve anything, but it can bring you back to yourself.
- Cooking a family recipe that connects you to home. Chopping vegetables the way your grandmother taught you. Making the dish that smells like childhood. There's grounding in the ritual, in the muscle memory, in the taste of continuity.
- A walk outside, where the air feels steady even if you don't. Stepping out the door. Feeling the temperature on your skin. Watching trees that don't know or care about your problems. Nature keeps going — and sometimes that's comforting.
- Movement that gets you back into your body. Running. Dancing. Yoga. Boxing. Stretching. When your mind is spinning, sometimes your body knows the way back to ground before your thoughts do.
- Water — showers, baths, swimming. The sensation of water on your skin. The white noise that drowns out the mental chatter. The feeling of being held by something larger than yourself.

# EXAMPLES OF GROUNDING PRACTICES

## Values-Based Grounding Practices

- Acting in alignment with your values, even in small ways. Choosing honesty when lying would be easier. Choosing kindness when you're tempted toward cruelty. These acts don't fix the crisis, but they remind you who you are in the middle of it.
- Helping someone else, even when you're struggling. Making a meal for a neighbor. Checking on a friend. Small acts of care that remind you that you're not just surviving — you're still human, still connected, still capable of love.
- Activism or advocacy work. For some people, taking action — showing up at the meeting, making the phone calls, doing the work — is grounding. It's the opposite of helplessness. It's agency. It's choosing to be part of the solution.



## THE 5-5-5 ACTION MENU

"Now, choose ONE micro-action that takes 5 minutes or less. This is YOUR ripple starter."

Which will YOU commit to?

### PHYSICAL ACTIONS

- 5 breaths: Box breathing (4 counts in, 4 hold, 4 out, 4 hold)
- 5-minute walk (even around your room)
- 5 body scans: Notice 5 points of tension and consciously relax them

### MENTAL ACTIONS

- 5 gratitudes: List 5 specific things from today
- 5-minute journaling: "What's one thing I can control right now?"
- 5 senses grounding: Name 5 things you see, 4 you hear, 3 you feel, 2 you smell, 1 you taste

### SOCIAL ACTIONS

- 5-minute connection: Message someone genuinely
- 5 compliments: Notice 5 positive things about others
- 5-minute listening: Give someone your full attention

"Choose one. Write it down. This is your commitment."



# THE RIPPLE ACTION FRAMEWORK

## For the Next 24 Hours:

- **WHEN** will you practice your 5-minute action?
  - Attach it to an existing habit: "After I make coffee" / "Before lunch" / "During my commute"
- **WHERE** will you do it?
  - Be specific: At your desk, in your car, on your balcony
- **HOW** will you remember?
  - Set a phone reminder
  - Put a sticky note where you'll see it
  - Tell one person (accountability ripple)

## For the Next 7 Days:

- Practice your action daily
- Notice: How do YOU feel?
- Observe: Does anyone around you notice a change?



## Share Your Ripple:

- Remember: You don't need to be "fixed" to inspire others.
- When someone asks "What's your secret?", share your practice

# ABOUT US

## THE STRESS MANAGEMENT SOCIETY

(SMS) is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to helping individuals and organisations navigate the pressures of modern life, build resilience, and foster healthier, happier communities. Founded in 2003, our mission is simple yet profound: to empower people to take control of their wellbeing through greater understanding, awareness, and practical action.

For over two decades, The Stress Management Society has been at the forefront of workplace wellbeing, mental health advocacy, and stress reduction education. We partner with global organisations across every sector—ranging from healthcare and education to technology and manufacturing—to create cultures where wellbeing is prioritised and people can truly thrive.

### What We Do

Our work spans research, education, and practical implementation. We design and deliver evidence-based programmes, campaigns, and resources that inspire individuals and teams to take proactive steps towards better mental, emotional, and physical health. From large-scale corporate wellbeing initiatives to community-based campaigns such as Stress Awareness Month and #LeadWithLove, we aim to make wellbeing accessible, actionable, and meaningful for everyone.

### Our Approach

We believe that managing stress isn't just about coping—it's about creating the conditions that allow people to flourish. Our holistic approach is grounded in science and infused with compassion. It acknowledges the interconnectedness of mind, body, and environment, encouraging people to live in greater alignment with their values, purpose, and natural rhythms.

Through our training, resources, and consultancy, we help organisations cultivate supportive cultures, train Mental Health Champions and Ambassadors, and develop leadership practices that embody empathy, authenticity, and connection.

### Our Vision

A world where mental wellbeing is universally understood, valued, and supported—where every person has the tools, confidence, and community to live a balanced and fulfilling life.



We provide a range of services across the UK and internationally. We are always happy to discuss how we can support you.

We look forward to supporting your wellbeing journey.

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We have supported many organisations, including:



The Commonwealth

