MOOD & STRESS • SOMATIC GROUNDING & CBT

Exam Panic & Blank-Out Reset Protocol

3-minute somatic de-escalation for acute anxiety spikes in exam halls.

CLINICAL INSTRUCTIONS: One line per step in your own words. Short, honest answers are easier to trust.

Participant Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Target: 5m**

1 THE PHYSIOLOGICAL SIGH (HEART RATE DOWNSHIFT)

Take two quick inhales through the nose, followed by one long, slow exhale through the mouth. Repeat 3 times to engage the vagus nerve.

CLINICAL HINT: The double inhale pops collapsed alveoli in the lungs and clears CO2 quickly.

2 SOMATIC 5-4-3-2-1 SENSORY GROUNDING

Look at 5 distinct objects in the exam hall. Feel 4 physical contact points (feet on floor, pen in hand). Listen for 3 ambient sounds.

CLINICAL HINT: This pulls neural activation from the hyperactive amygdala back to sensory cortex.

3 COGNITIVE NEUTRALIZER STATEMENT

Say internally: 'My body is experiencing an adrenaline spike. Adrenaline peaks in 90 seconds. I do not need to know question 1 yet; I will find the easiest question first.'

CLINICAL HINT: Never tell yourself 'Just calm down'. Acknowledge the adrenaline wave and let it pass.

4 RAMP-UP MOMENTUM ACTION

Turn the exam sheet and find the easiest 1-mark question or write down memorized formulas. Build cognitive momentum before returning to hard items.

CLINICAL HINT: Success on a single 1-mark item restores working memory bandwidth.