

# centering yourself 26

## for you to know

When you focus your attention and energy on the physical center of your body, you can help yourself manage anxiety by gaining balance and stability.

Annie had a hard time managing anxiety when she had to do a lot of things in a short period of time. One evening when she was babysitting for her neighbor, she found herself holding the baby on her hip while she stood at the stove cooking macaroni and cheese for the six-year-old, who was crying because she had just spilled her soda. At the same time, the phone rang, and Annie noticed that the dog was chewing through the straps of her backpack. Annie felt scattered and frazzled and like she wanted to scream. Then she remembered the centering exercise she had learned in health class.

Instead of screaming, Annie took just a few seconds and focused on the center of gravity in her body. She pictured herself pulling all her scattered energy into her central point of strength and balance. By focusing on this center for a short time, she was able to regain her composure and act from that core of peace rather than from an anxious state. She turned off the stove burner, set the baby in the high chair, moved the backpack from the floor to the table, grabbed a roll of paper towels to soak up the soda, and let the answering machine get the phone.

Annie found that she could use centering to help herself feel grounded and balanced whenever she started to feel anxious. She used the exercise before her ice-skating competition, as her history teacher was passing out the final exam, when her little brother was irritating her, and as she approached the guy she had a crush on. Practicing centering helped Annie remain peaceful.

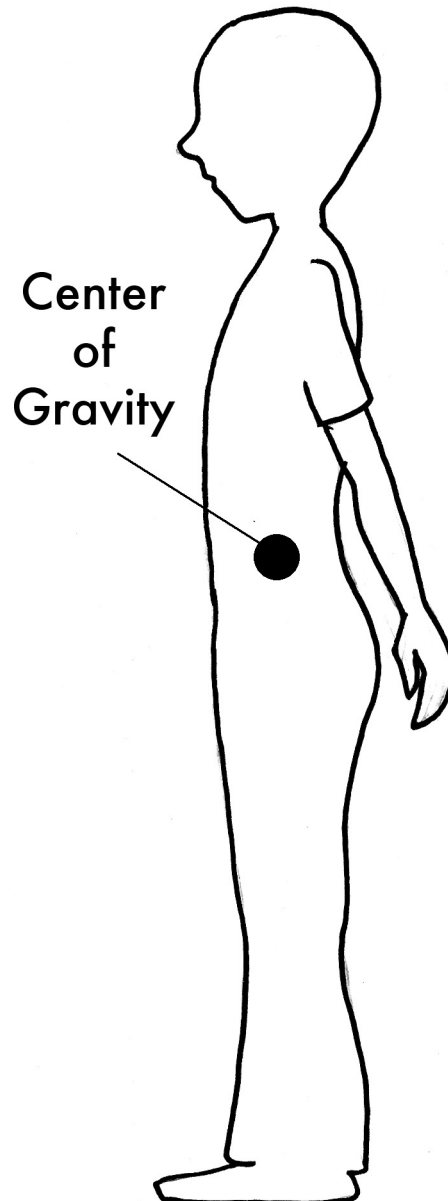
## activity 26 \* centering yourself

### directions

To find your center, or the geographic middle of your physical body, look at the picture below and then try this activity. You may want to have someone read it to you as you stand with your eyes closed.

Stand straight with both feet flat and solidly on the floor, shoulder-width apart. Close your eyes. Adjust yourself so that you feel balanced. Place your attention on your physical body. Without moving or touching your right hand, put your attention on it. Now without moving or touching your left knee, put your attention on it. Next, without moving or touching your navel, put your attention on it. Now be aware of a spot an inch or two behind and two or three inches below your navel, in the back center of your abdomen. With your eyes closed, try to get a sense of this inner spot that is the center of gravity of your body.

Keep your attention focused on this point. Imagine yourself drawing in all your scattered energy and concentrating it here. Continue to focus your energy here for a few minutes until you feel stable and balanced.



## more to do

Sometimes people find it hard to locate their center of gravity on the first try. If you had trouble finding it, try the activity again when you are feeling calm. Tell what it was like when you tried again.

---

---

Describe any common situations in your life in which you feel that your energy gets scattered and you feel anxious.

---

---

---

Describe a situation you encountered in the past week in which you felt anxious. At what point could you have taken a few seconds to center yourself so that you could act from a point of balance rather than anxiety?

---

---

---

Once you have a good sense of where your center is, you don't have to be standing up to practice. You can center yourself while you are alone in your bedroom, sitting in class, or walking through the mall. Try to practice regaining your balance in different situations as you go through your week.

Describe a situation in which centering helped you let go of anxiety and feel more stable.

---

---

---