

What is Grounding?

- A set of distraction techniques to decrease extreme emotional pain and increase connection to the outside world.
- It includes naming and listing things in the present by using as many of the five senses as possible.

Changing Focus, How do you start?

- Grounding can be done any time, any place, anywhere and no one has to know you are doing it.
- Use it when you are faced with a trigger, enraged, dissociating or whenever your emotional pain goes above 6 (on a 0 to 10 scale, 10 being the worst).
- Rate your level of emotional pain before and after completing a technique from a scale of 0 to 10.
- Take a deep breath in from the nose and breathe slowly out from the mouth.
- Keep your eyes open and the lights on while scanning the room.
- Do not talk about negative feelings or do journal writing while grounding
- It is important to stay neutral. Avoid judgments of "good" and "bad". When the thought comes to your mind, acknowledge it then move on. For example say – *"The shirt is yellow"* not *"I look bad in a yellow shirt"*.
- Focus on the present, not the past or future.

Examples of Grounding

1) Mental Grounding

- **Play a "categories" game with yourself.**
 - List "types of dogs", "celebrities", "foods", "zoo animals", or compare and contrast
- **Describe an everyday activity in great detail.**
 - For example, describe a meal that you cook (e.g., *"First I peel the potatoes and cut them into quarters"*)
- **Imagine**
 - Picture in your mind you are changing the TV channel to get to a better show or that you are putting your pain in a safe with a lock and key.
- **Say a safety statement.**
 - *"My name is _____; I am safe right now. I am in the present, not in the past."*
- **Read out loud.**
 - Say each word to yourself or read each letter backward so that you focus on the letters and not on the meaning of the words.
- **Use humor.**
 - Think of something funny
- **Count to 10 or say the alphabet, very s...l...o...w...l...y.**
- **Do an age progression.**
 - If you have regressed to a younger age (e.g., 10 years old), you can slowly work your way back up until you are back to your current age.

2) Physical Grounding

- **Run cool or warm water over your hands or splash water on your face.**
 - Pay attention to the sensations
- **Touch or grab tightly various objects around you.**
 - Such as a pen, keys, your clothing, the wall. Pay attention to the texture, colour, weight, temperature, and compare it with other objects nearby.
- **Dig your heels into the floor-literally "grounding" them.**
 - Notice the tension in your heels and remind yourself that you are connected to the ground.
- **Carry a grounding object in your pocket.**
 - It can be a small object such as a rock, piece of jewelry, a toy, or a strong scent which you can touch or smell whenever you feel triggered.
- **Jump up and down.**
 - Notice how you can move your body.
- **Stretch.**
 - Roll your head from side to side, extend your fingers up to the sky then down to your toes.
- **Tense and release different parts of your body.**
 - Focus on one muscle group at a time, for example your right hand. Take a slow breath and squeeze the muscle as hard as you can for about 5 seconds. Feel the tension then release the tension as you exhale. Pay attention to the tension disappearing as you relax the muscle.
- **Walk slowly**
 - Notice each footstep, saying "left foot" and "right foot" as you walk
- **Eat something slowly, describing the flavours in detail to yourself**
 - Is it sweet, sour, bitter?
- **Focus on your breathing**
 - Notice each inhale and exhale. Repeat a safe word to yourself as you breath in or out

3) Soothing Grounding

- **Say kind statements to yourself.**
 - *"I am a good person going through a hard time. I **WILL** get through this."*
- **Think & say your favourite things.**
 - It can be your favourite colour, animal, season, food, time of day, activity etc
- **Picture people or animals you care about** (e.g., your children, family members, celebrity crushes).
 - Look at a photograph and think of what you like
- **Remember the words to an inspiring song, quote, or poem.**
- **Remember a safe place.**
 - Focus on the colours, smells, textures, and sounds of a soothing place.
- **Say a coping statement.**
 - *"This feeling will pass." "I can handle this." "I am safe."*
- **Plan a treat for yourself.**
 - It can be a warm bath, a massage, a tasty dessert, a special walk, going for a coffee
- **Think of things you are looking forward to in the next week.**
 - For example, spending time with someone you care about, watching a television show, going grocery shopping, etc.

Other Grounding Activities

“54321”

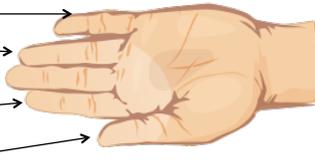
- Name 5 things you can see in the room with you
- Name 4 things you can feel
- Name 3 things you can hear right now
- Name 2 things you can smell right now or 2 things you like the smell of
- Name 1 good thing about yourself

“Five Senses”

Trace your hand on a piece of paper and label each finger as one of the five senses (touch, taste, smell, hearing, sight). Take each finger and identify something special and safe representing each of those five senses.

For example:

- **Touch:** a furry cat
- **Taste:** honey
- **Smell:** lavender
- **Hearing:** waves
- **Sight:** a baby laughing



After writing and drawing this on the paper post it somewhere visible in your home and memorize it. When triggered, breathe deeply and slowly and put your hand in front of your face where you can really see it. Stare at your hand and concentrate on each finger and repeat each sense with its safe association.

How to make it work!

- **Practice** as often as possible, even when you don't need it
- **Create your own plan** to use grounding techniques as your new coping strategy.
- **Start doing grounding exercises early** in the distress cycle
- **Try** it for at least 20 minutes
- **Rate your emotional pain before and after** completing a technique so you can tell which strategies work best
- **Notice which methods you like the best** then have a list somewhere handy to remind yourself to use them
- **Use auto tape of grounding messages, index cards, and/or a significant object** (i.e. stone, photograph, fragrance, piece of jewelry, etc.)
- **Remind yourself why you are doing it**



Create Your Own Plan

Example:*

When I feel anxious (name the emotion),
 I am sensing tingling in my chest (describe the body sensation)
 because I am remembering the sexual assault (name the trauma by title only, no details).
 Here I am in the laundry room at home (name the place where you are)
 and I will count to 10 slowly then pay attention to the cool sensation of the water dripping from my hands (select your grounding techniques you will do)
 so I know the sexual assault (name the trauma)
 is not happening now/any more.

When I feel _____ (name the emotion),
 I am sensing _____ (describe the body sensation)
 because I am remembering _____ (name the trauma by title only, no details).
 Here _____ (name the place where you are) and
 I will _____ (select grounding techniques you will do)
 so I know _____ (name the trauma)
 is not happening now/any more.

Additional Resources

Najavits, L.M. (2002). *Seeking Safety: A Treatment Manual for PTSD and Substance Abuse*.

Prince Edward Island Rape & Sexual Assault Centre. (2008). *Grounding Techniques*. Retrieved April 30, 2014 from www.peirsac.org/peirsacul/er/educational_resources10/pdf

Rothchild, B. (2000). *The body remembers: The psychophysiology of trauma and treatment*. New Year: W.W. Norton.