

GROUNDING

What is Grounding?

- ❖ A set of simple strategies to detach from emotional pain
- ❖ Uses distraction to focus outward on the external world, rather than looking inward toward the self
- ❖ Also known as “centering”, “a safe-place”, “healthy detachment”

Why do Grounding?

- ❖ When you're overwhelmed with emotions
- ❖ To gain control over your feelings and to stay safe
- ❖ It anchors you to the *present* and to *reality*

Guidelines:

- Grounding can be done any time, any place, anywhere, and no one has to know
- Use grounding when faced with a trigger, flashback, are dissociating, having a substance craving, or when emotional pain becomes too great.
- Keep your eyes open, scan the room, turn on the light → helps stay in touch with the *present*
- Rate your mood before & after to test if the grounding worked
 - Rate level of emotional pain from 0-10 (10 being extreme pain) before and after grounding, notice which grounding techniques work best for you.
- No talking about negative feelings or journal writing.
- Stay neutral → no judgments of “good” or “bad”
 - E.g. “The walls are blue, I dislike blue, it reminds me of being depressed” vs. “The walls are blue”
- Focus on the *present*, not the past or future
- Note: Grounding is not the same as relaxation training → grounding is much more active, uses distraction techniques, intended to help extreme negative feelings.
 - Grounding is believed to be more effective for PTSD than relaxation training

MENTAL GROUNDING

- ❖ **Describe your environment in detail using all your senses**
 - E.g. “The walls are white, there are five blue chairs, there is a wooden bookshelf against the wall..”. Describe objects, sounds, textures, colors, smells, shapes, numbers, temperature. You can do this anywhere! For example, “I’m on the bus, I see a river, I see buildings, the seat is blue, the bar is silver, it is raining”.

- ❖ **Play a categories game with yourself**
 - Try to think of types of dogs, jazz musicians, cities beginning with the letter A, cars, TV shows, writers, songs, European cities...etc.

- ❖ **Do an age progression**
 - If you have regressed to a younger age, you can slowly work your way back up until you’re back to your current age. E.g. “I am now 9, I am now 10, I am now 11,...”

- ❖ **Describe an everyday activity in great detail**
 - E.g. Describe a meal that you cook, “first I peel the potatoes and cut into quarters, then I boil the water, I make a marinade using these herbs...”

- ❖ **Imagine**
 - Use an image to distance yourself from the pain, eg. Put on skates and glide away from the pain, change the TV channel to get to a better show, think of a wall as a buffer between you and the pain, think of window blinds you can close to shut out the painful images.

- ❖ **Say a safety statement**
 - E.g. “My name is ____, I am safe right now. I am in the present, not the past. I am located in ____ and the date today is ____.”

- ❖ **Read something**
 - Say each word to yourself or read each letter backwards so you focus on the letters and not the meaning of the words.

- ❖ **Use humor**
 - Think of something funny or a funny experience to jolt you out of the mood

- ❖ **Count to 10 or say the alphabet very s..l..o..w..l..y**

- ❖ **Repeat a favorite saying, poem, or song to yourself**
 - E.g. The Serenity Prayer

PHYSICAL GROUNDING

- ❖ **Run cool or warm water over your hands, notice the sensations**
- ❖ **Grab onto your chair as tightly as you can**
- ❖ **Touch various objects around you**
 - E.g. A pen, keys, clothing, the table, the walls. Notice textures, colors, materials, weight, temperature. Compare the objects you touch.
- ❖ **Dig your heels into the floor**
 - Notice the tension created in your heels and remind yourself that you are connected to the ground
- ❖ **Carry a grounding object in your pocket**
 - A small object that you can touch whenever you feel triggered, Eg. A small rock, clay, ring, piece of cloth, yarn.
- ❖ **Jump up and down**
- ❖ **Notice your body**
 - Notice the weight of your body in the chair, the wriggling of your toes in your socks, the feel of your back against the chair. You are connected to the world.
- ❖ **Stretch**
 - Extend your fingers, arms, or legs as far as you can, roll your head around.
- ❖ **Walk slowly**
 - Notice each footstep, saying “left” “right” with each step
- ❖ **Eat something**
 - Describe the flavors and textures in detail to yourself
- ❖ **Focus on your breathing**
 - Notice each inhale and exhale. Repeat a pleasant word to yourself with each inhale, e.g. A soothing word such as “safe”, “easy”, “stillness”.

SOOTHING GROUNDING

- ❖ **Say kind statements**
 - Make statements to yourself such as “you are a good person going through a hard time, you’ll get through this”.
- ❖ **Think of favorites**
 - Think of your favorite color, animal, season, food, time of day, TV show.
- ❖ **Picture people you care about**
 - Eg. Your children, family, you can even look at photographs of them
- ❖ **Remember the words to an inspiring song, quotation, or poem that makes you feel good**
- ❖ **Remember a safe place**
 - Describe a place that you find very soothing (eg. Beach, mountains, favorite room), focus on everything about that place, the sounds, colors, shapes, objects, textures.
- ❖ **Say a coping statement**
 - Eg. “I can handle this”, “This feeling will pass”
- ❖ **Plan out a safe treat for yourself**
 - Eg. Favorite candy, bath, nice dinner
- ❖ **Think of things you are looking forward to in the next week**

What if grounding does not work?

- Practice as often as possible
 - Even when you don’t need it, so that you will memorize the techniques by heart
- Practice faster
 - Speeding up the pace gets you focused on the outside world quickly
- Try grounding for a long time (20-30mins)
- Try to notice whether you do better with physical or mental grounding
 - Any method you make up or already use may be of more use to you than the ones suggested here
- Start grounding early in the negative mood cycle
 - Start when the craving just starts, or when you have just started to have a flashback, or right when you become aware of painful emotions