

Grounding as a Coping Skill for Dealing with Emotional Pain

Grounding is a variation of mindfulness practice, designed to connect you with the present and stay focused. Often if you experience flashbacks, triggers, or emotional outbursts, you can lose touch with the present moment; this symptom of PTSD can be scary for you and for your friends and family. These practices can help you remember that you are in a safe place now and in this moment rather than in the traumatic experience or the feelings associated with it. Try one or two practices from each list, as you might find that some work better for you than others. Keep your eyes open and speak out loud during these practices. Like any skill, practice is important. Try using these techniques when you are calm; then, when you find yourself needing it, you will feel more comfortable and be familiar with how to do it.

Mental Grounding

- Touch objects around you and describe them (sounds, textures, colors, smells, shapes, numbers, and temperature). "I am sitting on a park bench and I feel the rough wood, I smell fresh grass, and hear the sounds of birds."
- Describe an everyday activity in great detail. For example, steps in a meal that you cook.
- Imagine. Use an image such as gliding along on skates or climbing a hill away from your pain.
- Say a safety statement. "My name is _____; I am safe right now. I am in the present, not the past. I am located in _____; the date is _____."
- Use humor. Think of something funny to jolt yourself out of your mood.
- Count to 10 or 100 or say the alphabet, very slowly.

Physical Grounding

- Run cool or warm water over your hands.
- Touch various objects around you. Notice textures, colors, materials, weight, temperature.
- Carry a grounding object in your pocket such as a small rock, clay or silly putty, ring, piece of cloth, or stress ball that you can touch when you feel triggered (anxious, panicky, etc.).
- Use all five senses. For example: notice five things around you that are a certain color, four things you can touch, three sounds, two feelings, one smell. The order doesn't matter.
- Notice your body: The weight of your body in the chair; wiggling your toes in your socks; the feel of your back against the chair. Scan up and down your body. Feel connected to the world.
- Stretch. Extend your fingers, arms, or legs as far as you can; roll your head around.
- Walk slowly, noticing each footstep, saying "left" and then "right," with each step.
- Focus on your breathing, noticing each inhale and exhale. Repeat a pleasant word to yourself.

Soothing Grounding

- Think of favorites. Name your favorite color, animal, season, food, time of day, or music.
- Picture people you care about and look at photographs of them.
- Remember the words to an inspiring song, quotation, or poem that makes you feel better.
- Remember a safe place. Describe in detail a place that you find soothing.
- Plan a treat for yourself, such as a nice dinner, a phone call with a loved one, a warm bath.
- Think of things you are looking forward to in the next week, such as going to a movie.
- Record yourself or a loved one saying a grounding message that you can play when needed.

<https://livingproof311.wordpress.com/2014/01/25/grounding-a-coping-skill-for-clients-people-with-emotional-pain/>, accessed June 5, 2015.