



# Grounding

No feeling is final. No matter how miserable a feeling, it can change even though it feels like it never will. Grounding is a strategy to detach from pain and strong emotion for a short time. It works by focusing attention outward, rather than inward toward yourself, your emotions and your pain. It is especially useful for very strong feelings or times when you feel unsafe.

Anytime you are overwhelmed you can use these exercises to detach and step back, so that you can have control over your feelings and stay safe. Grounding helps anchor you to the present and to reality. It is useful sometimes to ground feelings out and have a mental break so that you can come back to a situation and are better equipped to handle it now that you are calm and in control.

## Cool facts about grounding

- You can do it anywhere and anytime and no one has to know
- You can use it when you are faced with a trigger, having a flashback, disassociating, craving a substance, and are anxious, angry or depressed.
- Your focus doing these is in the present NOT in the past or future.
- It gets you away from negative thoughts and emotions. We are trying to distract ourselves- not dwell!
- No judgments. We observe things but don't have feelings or opinions about them. Observe them and then move on. The floor is blue and the air is cold. It is not how I feel about blue or cold.
- It is not the same as relaxation training, because it is more active and focuses on distraction. It is for extreme or severe emotions and is very effective.
- You can rate your mood before and after to see how well it worked.
- There are some basic types: mental, physical, and soothing.



## Mental Grounding

- Describe your environment in detail, using all 5 senses. Describe objects, sounds, textures, colors, smells, shapes, numbers and temperature. For example, "I'm on a bus. We are passing a Chinese restaurant. There are 11 benches in front of me, and 3 windows on the right. The metal railing is cold. My seat is orange. I can smell plastic and exhaust. I can hear tires, a car honking somewhere, and that lady is on the phone..."
- Play a categories game with yourself. Try to think of types of dogs, states that begin with the letter A, cars made by GM, songs with the word "love" in them...whatever categories you like.
- Describe an everyday activity in great detail. For example, imagine that you're telling me how to start a car and put it in gear. "First, you open the door and you get in the car. Then close the door. Then you put on your seatbelt by pulling it across your body and clicking it into the seatbelt receptacle. Then you take the car key and you..."
- Imagine. Imagine yourself gliding away from your pain on roller skates, or changing the channel to a better station, or thinking of a wall to act as a buffer between you and your pain.

## Mental Grounding- continued:

- Read something, saying each word in your mind. Or read each letter or word backwards so you focus on the letters and not on the meaning of the words.
- Use humor. Think of something funny to jolt yourself out of your mood.
- Count to ten or say the alphabet s l o w l y.
- Repeat a favorite saying over and over. You can use something like "the serenity prayer" or an inspirational quote or saying. A statement that makes you feel good is a good idea.



## Physical Grounding

- Run cool or warm water over your hands, concentrating on the feeling of the water.
- Grab as tightly to your chair as you can.
- Touch objects around you. Touch a pen, keys, clothing, the table, the walls. Notice textures, color, material, weight, temperature etc.
- Carry something in your pocket to ground you. Carry a rock, ring, piece of cloth, figurine, coin etc. and touch it if you become triggered or upset. Feel it and notice its texture and shape.
- Jump up and down.
- Notice your body. Notice the weight of your body in your chair, wiggle your toes in your socks and feel your back against your chair. You are connected to this world.
- Stretch. Extend your fingers, arms and/or legs as far as you can and roll your head around.
- Walk slowly, noticing each footstep. You could say "left" or "right" with each of your steps.
- Eat something. Describe the flavors in detail of what you are eating.
- Focus on your breathing, noticing each inhale and exhale. Repeat a pleasant word to yourself on each inhale, such as "safe" or "easy".



## Soothing Grounding

- Say kind statements to yourself.
- Think of favorites. Name your favorite animal, TV show, season, food, color, sound etc.
- Picture people you care about. You can also look at pictures of them.
- Remember the words to an inspiring song, quotation or poem that makes you feel better.
- Remember a safe place. Describe a place you find soothing- maybe a beach or mountain or a favorite room. Focus on everything about that place- sounds, colors, smells, objects etc.
- Say a coping statement. "I can handle this" or "this will pass" are great examples.
- Plan out a safe treat for yourself, such as a piece of candy, a nice dinner, or a warm bath.

## What if grounding doesn't work?

- Practice as often as possible, even when you don't "need" it so that you know it by heart.
- Practice faster.
- Try grounding for a LONNNNG time (20 minutes) and repeat repeat repeat.
- Try to notice if you do better with physical or mental or soothing grounding.
- Create your own method. It may be even better because it's YOURS.
- Start grounding early. Do it when you just start to feel worse or want to drink or have a flashback or notice things aren't great start doing grounding exercises right away.