



In the thick of it...

Body Awareness

When you have been triggered this means your stress response is active and you need to get grounded in the moment. The following mindfulness strategies are sensory based solutions for self-soothing and de-escalation.

Using Grounding to Self-regulate Emotions

What is Grounding? Grounding is a set of simple strategies to self-regulate, manage stress or detach from emotional pain (e.g., drug cravings, self-harm impulses, anger, sadness). Distraction works by *focusing outward on the external world*, rather than inward toward the self. You can also think of it as “distraction,” “centering,” “a safe place,” “looking outward,” or “health detachment.”

Why Use Grounding?

When you are overwhelmed with stress or emotional pain you need a way to detach so that you can gain control over your feelings and stay safe. Many people with PTSD or high levels of toxic stress struggle with feeling either too much (overwhelming emotions or memories) or too little (numbing and dissociation). In grounding, you attain balance between the two: conscious of reality and able to tolerate it.

Strategies include:

- Breathe slowly and deeply
- Place your hand on your heart
- Notice your breath and heart rate
- Positive Affirmations or Mantras
- Notice (count or identify) things around the room, such as the color of the floors,

paintings, type ceiling, etc.

- Think of something funny
- Make yourself smile
- Flex your muscles
- Smelling essential oils
- Chewing gum
- Drink water
- Body Scan/ Bio Feedback
- Touchstone or totem (lucky rabbits foot)
- Stretch
- Magic Button: press an invisible button that indicates you are aware that you have been triggered and you are enacting a plan.
- Visualize calm places and favorite things
- Put on lotion/ hand massage
- Massage pressure points
- Think of someone that you care about
- Imagine the other person as a child
- Eat chocolate or something delightful
- Think of something that you are looking forward to
- Focus on the present moment



Ways of Grounding

Grounding can be done any time, any place, anywhere. Three major ways of grounding are described below—mental, physical, and soothing. Individuals may find that one type works better, or all types may be helpful.

Mental Grounding

Mental grounding helps focus your mind.

Describe your environment in detail, using all of your senses. Describe objects, sounds, textures, smells, shapes, numbers, and temperature.

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 _____.”

Count to 10 or say the alphabet, very slowly . . . o . . . w . . . l . . . y

Play a “categories” game with yourself. Try to think of “types of dogs”, “states that begin with ‘A’”, “cars”, “TV shows”, “writers”, “sports”, “songs”, “cities.”

Physical Grounding

Physical grounding means focusing on your senses.

Run cool water over your hands.

Dig your heels into the floor—literally “grounding them” Notice the tension centered in your heels as you do this.

Carry a grounding object in your pocket—a small object.

Stretch. Extend your fingers, arms, or legs as far as you can; roll your head around.

Focus on your breathing, noticing each inhale and exhale. Repeat a pleasant word to yourself.

Soothing Grounding

Soothing grounding means talking to yourself in a very kind way.

Say kind statement, as if you were talking to a small child—for example, “You are a good person going through a hard time. You’ll get through this.”

Remember a safe place. Describe a place that you find very soothing (perhaps a beach, or mountains, or favorite room).; focus on everything about that place—sounds, colors, objects.

Say a coping statement: “I can handle this. This feeling will pass.”

WHAT IF GROUNDING DOES NOT WORK?

Grounding does work! But, like any other skill, you need to practice to make it as powerful as possible. Some suggestions to help make it work for you:

Practice faster: Speeding up the pace lets you focus on the outside world quickly.

Try grounding for a long time (20-30 minutes). And repeat, repeat, repeat.

Try to notice which methods you like best—physical, mental, soothing, or your own methods.

Prepare in advance. Locate places at home, in your car, at work where you have materials and reminders.

Don’t give up!

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