

# Grounding Techniques



Grounding is a type of coping strategy that can be used to support the process of healing from trauma. It is designed to "ground" you in, or immediately connect you with, the present moment. You may also think of grounding as centering, distracting, or creating a safe place. You are reminding yourself that you are not in the same environment or situation that caused these feelings.

- Trauma can continue to have a presence long after the event itself has passed. Grounding can be used in the moment if you are or feel like you're going to be triggered.
- Many things we do every day for enjoyment or self-care can be grounding when we are feeling heightened feelings of anxiety or distress. Grounding uses these activities with intentionality as a way to re-center.
- Grounding might look completely different for different people. It is up to you to decide what - if any - form of grounding works for you.

## Mind

Mental grounding centers around focusing your mind and bringing it back to the present moment. **Examples include:**

- Forming self-affirmations:
  - Ex: I am loved, my feelings matter, I am good enough just the way I am
- Creating a mental space where you feel safe:
  - Imagining you are with a person you really love or in a place where you have happy
  - Memories and picturing it in as much detail as you can
  - Looking at photos that remind you of happy memories
- Observation - focusing on details:
  - Describing your environment, an object, or an everyday activity in detail
  - Finding all the objects you can see that fit a characteristic (all are green, square, etc.)
- Counting up and back down again (as high as you need to go). Ex: 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1
- Playing category or concentration games (there are lots of free phone apps for this!)
- Singing a song that you know well in your head

**Soothing grounding** is a type of mental grounding that focuses on kind words to yourself, such as the affirmations mentioned above, to help reframe inner monologues.

**Examples include:**

- Self-talk: Creating a set of words that are calming and can act as a mantra
  - Ex: "I am in control," "I am safe," "I will be okay"
- Saying kind statements as if speaking to a friend or loved one
- Saying the words to a song, quote, poem, or prayer that you like or that is meaningful to you
  - Perhaps read it to yourself or write it out
- Thinking about things that you are looking forward to, or are curious about, in the near future
- Creating a plan for self-care such as eating food you enjoy, taking time to do something creative, watching a movie, etc.



## Body

Physical grounding is a way to connect with and calm the body, mobility permitting.

Examples include:

- Body scan: Slowly move through each part of your body and tense up the muscles for 5 seconds, then release all of the tension to relax that section of your body. This exercise acts as a way to consciously let go of the stress and tension that we hold onto in our bodies
- Breathing exercises: regulating your breath can act as a way to give a physical focus in the body with which to center yourself. Examples:
  - Box breathing: Inhale for 4 counts, hold the breath in for 4 counts, exhale for 4 counts, hold the emptiness for 4 counts. Repeat as much as needed.
  - 4-7-8 Breathing: Like Box Breathing, but inhale for 4, hold for 7, and exhale for 8.
- Walking meditation: Walking mindfully, paying attention to the way your body moves and how your feet connect with the ground on each step Simple yoga poses: Final relaxation pose: laying on the ground with your body completely open and relaxed Child's pose: kneel and allow your torso to lower in between your knees until your head is resting on the ground. Place your arms by your side or stretched out in front of you. Tree pose: stand with both feet hip distance apart, facing forward. Lift one leg and rest it on your other calf (or inner thigh for a challenge). Focus on balancing while resting your hands near your heart. Repeat with the other leg.

## Senses

Senses based grounding can be connected to physical grounding. It focuses on tangible things that surround you and help re-orient you in the present. Examples include:

- 5-4-3-2-1: Find and name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste
- Place a mint or chocolate in your mouth and focus on the sensations that accompany it
- Take a shower, bathe, or splash your face, focusing on the feeling and temperature of the water
- Drink a cold glass of water
- Listen to soothing music (whatever that is for you)
- Touch a special object such as a rock, a ring, a piece of cloth, etc.
- Put a drop of an essential oil on a pulse point such as your wrists, palms, temples, or under your jaw. Rub it into your skin and take in the smell.

## No thanks...

Create your own - Grounding is an individual process. While this sheet has a number of examples, if none of those work for you, feel free to tailor them to fit your needs or create your own method entirely. This is about supporting you in whatever way is best for you.

What if grounding doesn't work? - It's okay if grounding isn't for you! It is one coping strategy, but by no means the only one. There are other forms of emotional safety planning you can explore.

