

Grounding Technique

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Grounding is a technique you can use when you feel strong emotions. It can help you feel calmer and more in control. If you have experienced trauma, you may at times feel overwhelmed by memories, thoughts and feelings. You may feel 'triggered' or experience flashbacks. Grounding techniques are designed to help you be 'grounded' in the here and now – not thinking about the past or being overwhelmed by your thoughts or feelings. They include techniques that can help you feel more connected with your body and your surroundings. They also include techniques that refocus your attention away from unwanted memories, distressing thoughts or overwhelming feelings

Grounding techniques can help you cope with:

- Flashbacks
- Distressing emotions, such as fear or panic
- Intrusive or unwanted thoughts
- Self-harm urges
- Dissociation



These may affect you if you have experienced sexual violence, whether it was recently or a long time ago.

The aim is to help you feel calmer and more in control.

When can I use grounding techniques? Grounding techniques can be done anywhere and at any time. You can use them when you:

- Feel overwhelmed
- Experience a trigger
- Feel panic or anxiety
- Have distressing emotions
- Have flashbacks or intrusive memories
- Feel dissociated Have the urge to self-harm



To connect with the here and now, do something (or several things) that will bring all your attention to the present moment. Be sure to keep your eyes open while you're grounding yourself so you're aware of everything that's going on around you. If you notice that you're slipping into a flashback or a dissociative state, try some of these grounding techniques.

Sight

- Complete a crossword puzzle, sudoku, word search, or other puzzles.
- Count all the pieces of furniture around you.
- Play a distracting game on your tablet, computer, or smart phone.
- Put on your favourite movie or TV show. Read a book or magazine.
- Take a mental inventory of everything around you, such as all the colours and patterns you see, the sounds you hear, and the scents you smell. Saying this out loud is helpful too.

Smell

- Get some essential oils that remind you of good times (freshly cut grass, rain, clean laundry, of sugar cookies, for example) and smell one.
- Light a scented candle or melt scented wax. Sniff strong peppermint, which also has the benefit of having a soothing effect.



Sound

- Call a loved one.
- Put on some nature sounds such as birds chirping or waves crashing.
- Read out loud, whether it's a favourite children's book, a blog article, or the latest novel.
- Talk out loud about what you see, hear, or what you're thinking or doing.
- Turn up the radio or blast your favourite song.

Touch

- Cuddle and pet your dog or cat if you have one.
- Drink a hot or cold beverage.
- Grab an article of clothing, a blanket, or a towel and knead it in your hands or hold it to your cheek. Concentrate on what it feels like.
- Hold an ice cube and let it melt in your hand.
- Massage your temples.
- Pop some bubble wrap.
- Put your hands under running water.
- Rub your hand lightly over the carpet or a piece of furniture, noting the texture.
- Take a hot or cool shower.

Taste

- Bite into a lemon or lime.
- Let a piece of chocolate melt in your mouth, noticing how it tastes and feels as you roll it around with your tongue. Suck on a mint or chew peppermint or cinnamon gum.
- Take a bite of pepper or some hot salsa.



Other

- Dance.
- Go for a walk or run.
- Send a letter or card to someone you care about.
- Sit in another room or area for a change of scenery.
- Stretch your arms, neck, and legs.
- Take 10 slow, deep breaths.
- Write in a journal about how you're feeling or keep a list of prompts handy that you can use to decide what to write about.



The nice thing about using grounding as a coping technique is that many of these techniques can be done in any environment. You might be home alone or out in public, but once you feel that flashback or dissociation coming on, you can use grounding to move your focus back to the present.

Working on grounding takes dedication and it becomes easier overtime. If these particular grounding techniques don't work for you, try something else. For example, some people find that a rubber band on their wrist is useful to snap them back to the moment. The ultimate goal is to live in the now and focus on the present when the past starts coming up.