

Grounding

Grounding is a coping strategy that is designed to “ground” you in the present moment. It is often used as a way of coping with flashbacks or dissociation.

Guidelines

1. Grounding can be done anywhere, any place and at any time and no one needs to know that you are doing it.
2. Use grounding when you are experiencing a trigger, when you feel strong emotion, when you feel like using substances, are having a panic attack, or when you feel yourself dissociating.
3. You can rate your mood before and after, on a 0-10 scale.
4. Keep your eyes open to stay in touch with the present.
5. No talking about negative feelings, you want to distract away from this.
6. Focus on the here and now, not the past or future.
7. Grounding is more than just a relaxation strategy, it is used to distract and help reduce extreme negative feelings. It is believed to be more effective for trauma than relaxation alone.
8. Grounding takes practice and not all suggestions will work for you. Try some out and see which works the best for you.

How to do it

Mental grounding

1. Have a good look around and describe your environment in detail, e.g. ‘I am on the train, I can see trees and a river....’
2. Mental games, e.g. go through the alphabet thinking of different things such as types of dogs, cities etc.
3. Age progression, if you feel you have regressed try counting yourself slowly back up to the age you are now e.g. I am now 9, 10 etc.
4. Describe an everyday activity in detail, such as how to make a specific recipe.
5. Use Imagery, for example imagine a stop sign in your head, gliding on skates away from the pain, changing the ‘TV channel’ in your head to a better ‘show’ or imagining a wall as a buffer between you and the pain.
6. Safety statements, thinking ‘I am safe now, I am in the present not the past, I am in this location and the date is.....’
7. Use humour, think of something funny.
8. Use concentration, say the alphabet backwards or practise some tricky sums.

Physical grounding

1. Run warm or cool water over your hands.
2. Focus on your breathing, notice each breath in and each breath out, slow it down and repeat the word safe on each breath in.
3. Grab tightly onto your chair as hard as you can.
4. Touch different objects, your pen, your keys etc.
5. Dig your heels into the floor; remind yourself that you are connected to the ground.
6. Carry a grounding object in your pocket that you can touch whenever you feel triggered, something that feels 'safe' and is from your current life.
7. Stretching, extend your arms fingers or legs as far as you can.
8. Clench and release your fists.

Soothing grounding

1. Say kind statements to yourself, e.g you will get through this etc.
2. Picture people you care about, look at photos of them.
3. Think of a safe place, it could be real or imagined, for example the beach, mountains etc.
4. Say a coping statement such as I can handle this, I have done it before etc.
5. Plan a safe treat such as a nice dinner, bubble bath etc.
6. Think of things you are looking forward to, like seeing a close friend.

What if grounding doesn't work?

People who have used grounding say it does work but requires practise to make it as effective as possible. The more you practise it the better it will work, so try to do some every day, it will become automatic after a while.

You don't have to use the methods listed above, you could think up your own method, you may find that it works far better for you. Try to start grounding as early as possible in a negative mood cycle, for example just after a flash back, don't leave it until later.

You could create a recording of a grounding message that you can play whenever you need it. If you don't want to use your own voice you could ask someone close to you to help. You can also teach family and friends about grounding so they can help if you become overwhelmed.

Notice which method works best for you, you can use the mood rating scale for this, and lastly**don't give up!**