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## **Grounding Skills**

### **Definition**

Grounding techniques are strategies designed to help individuals bring their focus to the present moment. These techniques are particularly useful when someone feels overwhelmed by distressing emotions, flashbacks, or anxiety. Grounding helps to break the cycle of negative thoughts and emotions, allowing a person to feel more centered and in control.

### **Practical Grounding Skills (Physical, Mental, Soothing)**

#### **Physical**

##### **Temperature change**

1. Fill a bowl with cold water and another with warm water (not hot).
2. Place your hands in the cold water for 30 seconds, then switch to the warm water for 30 seconds.

Can be done in the shower or under a faucet.

##### **Vagus Nerve Stimulation through Cold Exposure**

1. Splash cold water on the face or,
2. Hold an ice back against the chest or back of the neck.

##### **5-4-3-2-1 Technique**

1. Look around the room and name five things you can see.
2. Focus on four things you can feel (e.g., the chair you're sitting on, the texture of your clothing).
3. Listen for three sounds you can hear.
4. Identify two things you can smell.
5. Notice one thing you can taste.

##### **Tactile Grounding with Texture Exploration**

1. Gather a variety of small objects with different textures (e.g., a smooth stone, a rough piece of sandpaper, a soft piece of fabric).
2. Spend a few minutes exploiting the texture of each object, noting how each feels against your skin.

Can be done with any objects near you that you can touch.

### **Planted Grounding**

1. Dig your heels into the floor.
2. Notice the tension centered in your heels as you do this.
3. Remind yourself that you are connected to the ground.

### **Grounding Object**

1. Choose a small object (e.g., a stone, piece of jewelry, or a stress ball).
2. Focus on the object's texture, weight color, and temperature.
3. Hold it in your hand and describe it in detail to yourself.

### **Mental**

#### **Puzzles, Games, Problem-Solving**

1. Do a puzzle, complete a crossword, play sudoku, play a logic game on your phone.
2. Spend a few minutes solving these problems or playing these logic games when you feel distressed.

Can be any form of mental game or focused problem-solving.

### **Alphabet Game**

1. Choose a broad category (e.g., brands, countries, types of trees)
2. Name an item in that category for each letter of the alphabet (e.g., A for apple, B for banana, etc.).

### **Counting backwards**

1. Start at 100 and count backward by threes (100, 97, 94, etc.).
2. Focus on the numbers and the process of subtracting.

### **Saying Words of Song**

1. Choose a song that you know well.
2. Either sing or say the lyrics out loud.
3. Focus on the words and the melody.

### **Soothing**

#### **Safe Place Visualization**

1. Close your eyes (or softly focus on the floor if you are uncomfortable closing them)
2. Listen to a guided audio on how to create your safe place.
3. Imagine a place where you feel safe and relaxed (e.g., a beach, forest, or cozy room).
4. Use all of your senses to make the visualization vivid: What do you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel?
5. You can store this place in your mind to return to in the future.

### **Bi-Lateral Stimulation**

**\*\* It is important to discuss this grounding skill with your therapist first.**

1. Cross your arms over your chest and alternate tapping each shoulder with the opposite hand.
2. Continue this rhythmic tapping for a few minutes, focusing on the sensation and movement.

### **Scent Grounding**

1. Choose a calming scent (e.g., lavender, vanilla, eucalyptus).

2. Use an essential oil, scented candle, or lotion and take deep breaths, focusing on the scent.

### **Self-Soothing Statements**

1. Write down a list of positive affirmations or comforting statements (e.g., “I am safe,” “This feeling will pass,” “I am in control”).
2. Read these statements aloud or silently to yourself when feeling distressed.

### **Wrapping Yourself into Your Own Space**

1. Using a long shawl or a light blanket, wrap it around your shoulders or the midsection of your abdomen.
2. Gently twist the ends, that way you can apply gentle pressure on the wrapping motion.
3. Do this to apply pressure to the point where you find the pressure that is comforting to you.
4. Now slowly release the wrap when ready.

### **Tips for grounding techniques:**

- Stay neutral- no judgment- good or bad.
- Use grounding when you are at a 6 on a 0-10 scale. Rate the emotional pain before and after so you know if the grounding technique worked for you.
- If a grounding technique works this time, remember it may not work every time depending on the trigger.
- Having many different coping skills at our disposal sets us up for more success when combatting triggers.