

Grounding Techniques

What is Grounding?

- Grounding is a set of strategies that can help detach you from the emotional discomfort (anxiety, anger, sadness, frustration, etc.) Grounding could be called a form of distraction by focusing your attention on something else. Many people would say grounding is a form of intentional centering or healthy detachment.
 - An example in popular culture would be from the film "Happy Gilmore" in which the character Adam Sandler plays find his "Happy Place" when he needs to calm down while playing golf. This would be a form of grounding.
- It is important to remember that grounding will not "solve" or "cure" the emotional discomfort that is happening around you or to you. What it does do though is give you a sense of control over your feelings, which will prevent them from getting worse.
 - An example would be if you wake up and forget something at your house. Afterward, you spill your coffee on your computer when you sit at your desk. Somebody might start getting upset and begin to react to the situation in a negative way. Grounding at this moment is meant to calm you down, refocus your attention on the problem at hand so you can solve the problem, instead of having negative thoughts that only cause more stress and discomfort.

There are three primary ways of grounding:



Mental: Focusing your mind



Physical: Focusing on your senses



Soothing: Self talk & Positive affirmations



Mental Grounding

Counting to 10 or say the alphabet.

- The key with this is not to run through the numbers or alphabet as fast as you can. Go slowly, focus on it, if you are counting maybe even say "1 Mississippi, 2 Mississippi, etc."

Think of a category, and name or write down as many things as you can think of in it.

- An example would be car brands. Ford, Ferrari, Dodge, General Motors, Fiat, Chrysler, Renault, Nissan, Infiniti, Toyota, MINI, etc. If you are a sports fan, it can't be any easier than seeing how many teams in your favorite sport you can name.

Describe an everyday activity in detail.

- No matter what you are doing, you can take a step back and think about the steps that will go into it. An example would be "First I will get the bag of coffee, Second I will take out two tablespoons, Third I will put in the coffee filter, Fourth I will put the coffee into the coffee filter, etc."

Describe the environment around you.

- Whether you are in your house, work office, or in nature. Take a second and glance around describing the small details around you. The more specific the detail the better.

Reading out loud.

- Whether it is on your phone, a book, or your computer screen take the time to just read out loud. This will instantly take over your attention as many people don't realize how much cognitive demand it is to read something out loud.



Physical Grounding

Focus on your breathing.

- Close your eyes and focus on your breathing. An example of imagery to think of would be that your lungs are a double-sided doorway. When you breathe in you are walking through them, when you breathe out you are coming out of them. This practice is scientifically shown to help reduce your heart rate and calm you down.

Notice your body.

- Many times, when we become distressed, we lose touch with our body sensations. Take a second with your eyes closed to push your feet on the ground, push your butt into your seat. If you are standing, wiggle your toes while feeling the pressure on your feet, maybe push your arms down to the ground and feel your shoulders muscles pull.

Touch an object around you.

- Naturally, you should not touch somebody whom you do not know or who has not given you permission. Maybe, grab the closet pen, phone, mug and close your eyes and feel the fine details of it. If it is your phone, can you find any micro scratches? If it's your mug, feel the hot or cold sensation that it is giving off, is there condensation? Be mindful of how it feels inside your hands.

Pour cold or hot water on your hands.

- When you enter the bathroom turn the water on and close your eyes. Feel the water wash down your hands, is it ice cold, room temperature, warm, or hot (don't burn yourself!). With your eyes closed, can you envision the water and how far wide it is spreading over your hands? Grab an ice cube and notice the sensation as it gradually melts in your hand.

Carry a grounding object.

- Do you have an object you feel lost without? When I was young having a rabbit foot was considered "lucky." Today, a rabbit's foot could be a great grounding object. The reason being would be the unique nature of it, having the soft fluffy end, but also the hard metal of the Keychain. When you need to ground you can take whatever your object is into your hands with your eyes closed and just feel the little details.



Soothing Grounding

Practice Affirmations

- This can be challenging when we are upset at someone, something, or ourselves. But speak to yourself in a supportive tone. An example could be "I am a strong and powerful individual. I have awesome skills and am a caring person."

Have a folder on your phone or computer of your favorite quotes, songs, or poems.

- With the ability to have access to a computer, phone, or the internet nearly all the time today it is easy to have a resource of positive content that reminds us of who we are and why we matter. If you have a smartphone, you can create a folder inside your photo storage of screenshots of these exact things.

Saying coping statements to yourself.

- "I can handle this" , "You survived so far, this isn't going to break you" , "What won't kill you makes you stronger".

Think of your favorite things.

- Depending on where, when, or what is happening you can think of your favorite relative things. If you are in an environment like a busy mall, you can think of your favorite stores. If you are at a restaurant, you can think of your favorite foods. A more general go-to would be your favorite music, movies, TV shows.

Picture People you care about.

- You may have a picture, whether hard copy or on your phone, ready to look at of people you care about. It is part of our humanity to feel calmer seeing individual's faces we care about.