



GROUNDING

Grounding techniques help keep someone in the present

(The material below is adapted from Najavits, L. (2002). *Seeking Safety: A Treatment Manual for PTSD and Substance Abuse*. New York: Guildford Press. Handout: 'Using grounding to detach from emotional pain':133–5).

Grounding involves detaching yourself from emotional pain by focusing on the outside world rather than what's going on inside you. It is useful for extreme emotional pain.

Examples of mental grounding

- Describe your surroundings in detail, using all your senses—vision, hearing, smell, taste, and feeling
- Describe what you are doing, such as eating, walking, or driving, in detail
- Think of categories: for example, categories shoes, hair, cars, or books
- Use imagery: for example, hop on a cloud and float away from your pain; put your pain in a bubble and let it float away
- Use a grounding statement, such as: 'I am Jo'; 'I am 23 years old'; 'this is the present, and not the past'; 'I am safe here'; 'today is ...'
- Say the alphabet slowly
- Think of something funny.

Examples of physical grounding

- Rub your hands together—hard
- Press your heels into the floor, and notice how it feels
- Touch objects around you as you say their name, and explore them using all your senses
- Stamp your feet
- Change your posture to a more upright one
- Put your hands under running water
- Carry something small with you that grounds you, such as a rock or a piece of fabric.

Examples of soothing grounding

- Make encouraging statements to yourself, such as: 'you can do this'; 'just hang in there'
- Think of a place where you have felt calm and peaceful: remember everything about it, using all your senses
- Go to a safe place you have already created in your imagination: notice all the details in terms of environment, air temperature, shelter, other people there, animals, and so on
- Plan something nice for yourself, such as a bath or a good meal
- Think of people you care about; carry a photo or some other reminder of them with you
- Think of good things coming up in the next week or so
- As you breathe, on the exhale say something calming, such as 'relax' or 'it's OK'.

Suggestions to make grounding work well

- Practice the strategies
- Have a list of best grounding strategies somewhere handy (such as a note in a diary, or a note stuck in the car or on the fridge) to remind you to use them
- Start doing grounding exercises early in a distress cycle
- Rate your distress levels before and after grounding, so you can tell which strategies work best.