**GROUNDING**

Grounding Techniques helps 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.