

What is Grounding?

Grounding is a way of dealing with emotional pain. It helps you to be in present reality rather than in painful experiences from the past or scary thought of the future.

Grounding can help you find a balance between overwhelming emotions and the need to be numb or dissociated. When you are grounded you are conscious of reality and able to tolerate it.

Guidelines

- Grounding can be done *any time, any place, anywhere*, and no one has to know.
- *Focus on the present, not the past or future.*
- *Keep your eyes open, scan the room, and turn the light on* to stay in touch with the present.
- *Stay neutral* – avoid judgments of “good” and “bad”. For example, instead of “The walls are blue; I don’t like blue because it reminds me of depression,” simply say, “The walls are blue” and move on.
- *Rate your mood before and after grounding*, to test whether it worked. Before grounding, rate your level of emotional pain (0-10, where 10 means extreme pain). Then re-rate it afterward. Has it gone down?
- Use grounding when you are *faced with a trigger, enraged, dissociating, having a substance craving, or whenever your emotional pain goes above a 6 (on a 0–10 scale)*. Grounding puts healthy distance between you and these feelings.
- *No talking about feelings or journal writing at this time*-you want to stay away from

distressing feelings, not get in touch with them. Processing feelings can happen later.

- Note that grounding is not the same as *relaxation training*. Grounding is much more active, focusses on distraction strategies, and is intended to help extreme feelings. It is believed to be more effective than relaxation training for PTSD.

Ways of Grounding

1. Mental grounding happens when you focus your mind. Two examples of this are:
 - Describe your environment in detail, using all your senses: for example, “The walls are white; there are five pink chairs; there is a wooden bookshelf against the wall...” Describe objects, sounds, textures, colours, smells, shapes, numbers, and temperature. You can do this anywhere. For example, on the bus: “I’m on the bus. I’ll see the river soon. Those are the windows. This is the bench. The metal bar is silver. The bus map has four colours.”
 - Describe an everyday activity in great detail. For example, describe a meal that you cook: “First I peel the potatoes and cut them into quarters; then I boil the water; then I make an herb marinade of oregano, basil, garlic, and olive oil...”
2. Physical grounding happens when you focus on your senses, like touch, sound and taste. Two examples of this are:
 - Touch various objects around you: a pen, keys, your clothes, the table, the walls. Notice textures, colours, materials, weight, temperature. Compare objects you touch: Is one colder? Lighter?

- Focus on your breathing, noticing each inhale and exhale. Repeat a pleasant word to yourself on each inhale (e.g. a favourite colour, or a soothing word such as “safe” or “easy”)
- 3. Soothing Grounding happens when you talk to yourself in a kind way. Two examples of this are:
 - Say kind statements, as if you were talking to a small child-for example, “You are a good person going through a hard time. You’ll get through this.
 - Say a coping statement: “I can handle this,” “this feeling will pass.”

What if Grounding Does Not Work?

- *Practice as often as possible*, even when you don’t need it, so that you’ll know it by heart.
- *Try to notice which methods you like best*-physical, mental, or soothing founding methods, or some combination.
- *Create our own methods of grounding*. Any method you make up may be worth much more than those you read here, because it is yours.
- *Start grounding early in a distressing mood cycle*. Start when a substance craving just starts or when you have just started having a flashback. Start before your anger gets out of control.
- *Make up an index card* on which you list your best grounding methods and how long to use them.
- *Have others assist you in grounding*. Teach friends or family about grounding, so that they can help guide you with it if you become overwhelmed.

- *Prepare in advance*. Locate places at home, in your car, and at work where you have materials and reminders for grounding.
- *Create a recording of a grounding message* that you can play when needed. Consider asking your therapist or someone close to you to record it if you want to hear someone else’s voice.
- *Try grounding for a loooooonnnnnnnngggggg time (20–30 Minutes)*. And repeat, repeat, repeat.
- *Think about why grounding works*. Notice the methods that work for you-why might those be more powerful for you than other methods?
- Don’t give up!

For more information:

Contact the UFV Counsellors in Abbotsford at 604-854-4528 (Room B214) or in Chilliwack at 604-795-2802 (Room A 1318)