

About Grounding

Grounding is a set of simple strategies to detach from emotional pain (e.g., substance cravings, self-harm impulses, anger, sadness). It works by *focusing on the here and now*, rather than the past or future. You can also think of it as centering.

Being grounded means being aware of your body, your feelings, your thoughts and feelings connected to them. It is about being grounded in current reality rather than being lost in the throes of powerful emotions. When you are in touch with your physical and emotional experience you are better able to keep yourself safe. Being conscious of current experience allows you to make decisions about what you need to do for yourself.

There are many techniques that can help bring you back to the present moment; ways to orient you to the *now* and the fact that you are safe in the *now*. Most survivors have used some grounding techniques to get through difficult times - you might not even be aware of them- it is important to become aware of what has worked for you.

For example, one simple device is to keep something with you that will remind you to come back to the safety of the present moment and your current experience, a grounding object. Carrying a stone in your pocket or purse is useful for many people.

More grounding ideas:

- Rubbing feet on floor,
- Being Barefoot in the grass
- Gardening
- Smelling flowers or essential oils.
- Orienting self to here and now - What day is it? What time is it? Who am I? Where am I?
- Call someone (e.g. crisis line; friend)
- Pet an animal
- Imagine growing roots

WHY DO GROUNDING?

When you are overwhelmed with emotional pain, you need a way to detach so that you can gain control over your feelings and stay safe. Grounding 'anchors' you to the present and to reality. Many people with PTSD struggle with feeling either too much (overwhelming emotions and memories) or too little (numbing and dissociation). In grounding, you attain a balance between the two: conscious of reality and able to tolerate it. Remember that pain is a feeling; it is not who you are. When you get caught up in it, it feels like you *are* your pain, and that is all that exists. But it is only one part of your experience – the others are just hidden and can be found again through grounding.

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 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, focuses on distraction strategies, and is intended to help extreme feelings. It is believed to be more effective than relaxation training for PTSD.