

## Grounding

We all have moments when our feelings, thoughts and memories are so intense and overwhelming we feel unable to cope. This may take us back to distressing or frightening experiences from the past and can make us feel out of control and unsafe.

Grounding is a really helpful way to bring yourself back to the present moment and create a sense of safety and calm. It can stop you from feeling overwhelmed by creating some distance from your feelings, thoughts and memories. Grounding can provide you with the skills and tools to remind your mind and body to stay in the present and get back in touch with what is happening in the 'here and now'. It can also be a really helpful way to reconnect with your mind and body in moments where you are so overwhelmed by your emotions that you have detached or dissociated.

You can use grounding to support you when you are experiencing:

- Any overwhelming feeling such as intense anger, fear or sadness
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Intrusive memories or thoughts
- Urges to engage in unhelpful coping strategies, such as cutting or drinking, which may have harmful consequences

### Different techniques to try.

Remember that different things work well for different people at different times. Try as many of these as possible and be open and curious about whether they can help. Try to remember that this is like any skill – it takes repetition and practice. Try to practice this when you are feeling safe, relaxed and calm as this will make it easier to draw on these skills when you are feeling very overwhelmed.

1. Notice your body – notice how your clothes feel on your skin, how it feels to be sitting or standing the way you are, how your feet feel on the ground
2. Move your body - Change your position, move your fingers, tap your feet and try to pay attention to the way in which your body is moving and focus on the control you have over the way your body moves
3. Try to eat or drink something and, using your senses, pay close attention to how it tastes, how it feels against your skin, how it smells
4. Talking out loud helps – use your voice by reading something aloud, describing in detail what you are doing here and now, or singing a song you like
5. Get outside and pay detailed attention to things you can see. What colours are there? What can you smell? What can you hear? How does the air feel on your skin?
6. Use a grounding object – choose an object which you associate with a positive memory or feeling, perhaps it's a soft toy or a smooth stone. When you are feeling overwhelmed hold your object in your hands and use all your senses to bring your attention to its different features (e.g. roughness, temperature, weight, smoothness)
7. Use your senses – smell is a really grounding sense and helps to bring your attention to the present. Try to carry around a certain scent with you which is associated with a positive memory or feeling. Perhaps this is a certain perfume, essential oil or coffee granules. When you are feeling overwhelmed focus on this scent and all its different features.

8. Use a grounding phrase – this is a personal phrase, just a few words, which remind you you are safe and surviving in the present “I am safe now”. This may also acknowledge how valid your feelings are right now “it is okay I feel this way” or remind you of your strength “I have survived the past”. Some people find it helpful to write this down and keep it somewhere in view so they can access it easily.
9. Use the 5,4,3,2,1 mindfulness exercise – say out loud 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell (or like the smell of) and 1 grounding, affirming phrase about yourself (e.g. I have survived the past and I am safe now).
10. Get playful or active – other activities can be really grounding and peaceful, such as doing a puzzle or drawing or crossword puzzle which focuses your attention. The very experience of moving your body in different ways, such as walking outside, doing the washing up, dancing to your favourite song, cooking or gardening can also be grounding.

You might find it helpful to write down the techniques you find helpful or seem right for you, and then keep this list with you so that you have quick access when you are feeling overwhelmed.

Remember that there will be other grounding skills and methods not written here which may help you. There is no right or wrong. Try and remember it's about making these your own and finding the ones which are most meaningful to you.