

Cwm Taf University Health Board – Psychological Therapies Department



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Grounding Stabilisation Pack

Grounding

Grounding is a way of helping you to gain some distance from your thoughts, feelings, and memories by bringing you back to the present moment. It helps you to get back in touch with what is happening around you right now, and to train your mind and brain to stay in the present. Grounding can also help you to find a balance between feeling overwhelmed by emotions and being out of touch with them.

When feelings, thoughts and memories become too intense and overwhelming, people can begin to feel unsafe and out of control. We may feel as if we are being pulled back into frightening situations from the past.

Grounding can be used to help when you:

- Feel very angry
- Feel very upset
- Feel very frightened
- Have a flashback
- Have a nightmare
- Have an intrusive memory
- Want to avoid using coping strategies (e.g. cutting, drinking) which may have harmful consequences

Grounding exercise 1: Noticing your environment

Focus on the present moment by using all your senses to notice where you are right at this minute.

Say aloud one thing that you can see, one thing you can hear, and one thing you can feel with your body. For example:

I can see the kitchen table.

I can hear music from the next flat.

I can feel my hands touching the chair.

Repeat this 3 times, or as many times as you need to.

Then describe the objects, sounds, textures, colours, smells and shapes around you. For example, 'The kitchen table is brown and has scratches on it. It is made of wood with a smooth plastic top. I can feel the grain and scratches on the surface', and so on.

Grounding exercise 2: develop a grounding phrase

A grounding phrase is made up of a few words which are positive and remind you that you are surviving in the present.

A grounding phrase acknowledges the feelings you are experiencing, such as fear or panic, and also reminds you that you are safe now. For example, you may use the phrase 'I am feeling **frightened** and I am **safe** now'. The word 'and' is important here. This is sometimes called dual awareness – being aware of 2 different things at the same time.

Alternatively, you may want to use a statement that reminds you of your strengths, such as 'I have survived the past and I am safe now.' Some people find it helpful to leave copies or post-its of their phrase around the house. This allows you to become more familiar with it so you can recall it more easily when you need to ground yourself.

Grounding exercise 3: Using your body

There are also a number of strategies using your body that you may find helpful.

- **Using a “grounding object”**

A grounding object is a comforting physical object you can hold which carries a positive meaning for you and can distract you when needed. When you start to re-experience unpleasant memories or feelings, hold your grounding object and really focus on its colour and different textures (temperature, roughness, smoothness, etc.).

Your grounding object should be something that you did not own when the trauma happened, and should be small enough to carry with you. For example, you might use a pebble from your favourite beach, or a ring given by someone important to you, or a piece of soft cloth.

Here are some other ways of grounding yourself in the present. Use them until you feel safer.

- Run cool water over your hands, noticing how this feels against your skin.
- Hold on to the arms of your chair as hard as you can, noticing the tension you feel when doing this.
- Touch every individual object around you: your keys, your clothing, a table, the walls. Notice textures, colours, materials, weight, temperature. Compare the different objects you touch: Is one colder? Lighter?
- Notice your body. The weight of your body in the chair; the feeling of wriggling your toes in your shoes; the feel of your back against the chair.
- Walk slowly, noticing each footstep, saying “left” or “right” with each step.
- Eat something, describing the flavours in detail to yourself.
- Focus on your breathing, noticing each breath as you breathe in through the nose, and out through the mouth. Repeat a pleasant word to yourself on each in breath. For example, a favourite colour, or a soothing word such as “safe” or “calm.”

GENERAL GUIDELINES WHEN USING GROUNDING

- Grounding can be used any time or place and no one has to know that you are doing it.
- Try to think about the things you notice just as they are, without judging them or thinking of them as good/bad or like/hate.
- Focus on the present and your surroundings. Try not to think about the past or the future.
- Practise as often as possible, even when you are not feeling anxious or overwhelmed. If you are able to use these strategies easily when you already feel relaxed, they will be much more helpful when your feelings, thoughts and/or memories become too intense to cope with.
- Notice which strategies or combination of strategies work best for you.
- **Create your own methods of grounding. These may be more helpful than the suggestions here, because they are your own and will be especially meaningful to you.**