



Grounding Techniques

Grounding is a technique that helps keep someone in the present. They help reorient a person to the here-and-now and in reality. Grounding skills can be helpful in a variety of situations: with *dissociation symptoms; and managing overwhelming feelings or intense anxiety. They help someone to regain their mental focus from an often intensely emotional state.

(*Dissociation is a mental process, which produces a lack of connection in a person's thoughts, memories, feelings, actions, or sense of identity. Dissociation can manifest in a variety of ways: highway hypnosis, "spacing out", numbing, "losing touch" on a conscious level with our immediate surroundings or as chronic dissociation as in cases of Dissociative Disorders which can result in severe impairment or inability to function. (Source: Sidran Institute: Traumatic Stress Education and Advocacy website: www.sidran.org)

Grounding skills occur within two specific approaches:

- 1) Sensory Awareness
- 2) Cognitive Awareness

Sensory Awareness Grounding Exercise #1:

Begin by tracing your hand on a piece of paper and label each finger as one of the five senses. Then take each finger and identify something special and safe representing each of those five senses. For example: Thumb represents sight and a label for sight might be butterflies or my middle finger represents the smell sense and it could be represented by lilacs.

After writing and drawing all this on paper, post it on your refrigerator or other safe places in the home where it could be easily seen and memorize it.

Whenever you get triggered, breathe deeply and slowly, and put your hand in front of your face where you can really see it – stare at your hand and then look at each finger and try to do the five senses exercise from memory.

Source: www.stardrift.net/survivor/senses.html

Sensory Awareness Grounding Exercise #2:

- Keep your eyes open, look around the room, notice your surroundings, notice details.
- Hold a pillow, stuffed animal or a ball.
- Place a cool cloth on your face, or hold something cool such as a can of soda.
- Listen to soothing music
- Put your feet firmly on the ground
- FOCUS on someone's voice or a neutral conversation.

Sensory Awareness Grounding Exercise #3:

Here's the 54321 "game".

- Name 5 things you can see in the room with you.
- Name 4 things you can feel ("chair on my back" or "feet on floor")
- Name 3 things you can hear right now ("fingers tapping on keyboard" or "tv")
- Name 2 things you can smell right now (or, 2 things you like the smell of)
- Name 1 good thing about yourself

(Source: www.ibiblio.org/rcip//copingskills.html)

Cognitive Awareness Grounding Exercise:

Reorient yourself in place and time by asking yourself some or all of these questions:

1. Where am I?
2. What is today?
3. What is the date?
4. What is the month?
5. What is the year?
6. How old am I?
7. What season is it?