



## GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

### WHAT IS GROUNDING?

Grounding is a set of simple strategies to **detach from emotional pain** (for example, feeling overwhelmed, angry or deep sadness). Healthy distraction works by focusing on something you deliberately choose—rather than on the overwhelming thoughts or feelings. It puts a healthy distance between you and these negative feelings temporarily so that you can gain perspective and stability. You can also think of it as "centering," "a safe place," or "healthy detachment."

### GUIDELINES

- Grounding can be done **any time, any place, anywhere** and no one has to know.
- **Keep your eyes open, scan the room, and turn the light on** to stay in touch with the present.
- **At this time, your goal is not to talk about negative feelings or write in a journal.** You want to gain a healthy distance from negative feelings, not get in touch with them (that can come later).
- **Stay neutral**—no judgments of "good" or "bad."
- **Focus on the present, not the past or future.**
- **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 negative feelings.

### Mental Grounding

- ♣ **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, colors, smells, shapes, numbers and temperature.
- ♣ **Play a "categories" game** with yourself. Try to think of types of dogs, musicians, cities that begin with "A", cars, TV shows, authors, sport teams, songs, etc
- ♣ **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, I make an herb marinade of oregano, basil, garlic, and olive oil...").
- ♣ **Imagine** a make-believe scenario or image. For example, glide along on skates away from your pain; change the TV channel to a better show; think of a wall as a buffer between you and your pain.
- ♣ **Say a safety statement.** "My name is \_\_\_\_\_; I am safe right now. I am in the present, not the past. I am located in \_\_\_\_\_ the date is \_\_\_\_\_."
- ♣ **Read something, saying each word to yourself slowly.** Or read each letter backwards so that you focus on the letters and not on the meaning of words.
- ♣ **Use humor.** Think of something funny to jolt yourself out of your mood.
- ♣ **Count to 10 or say the alphabet** very s..l..o..w..l..y.
- ♣ **Repeat a favorite saying** to yourself over and over (like a poem, passage, quote or song lyric).



# *Amanda Rocheleau Counselling and Consulting*

*Registered Social Worker \* Compassion Fatigue Specialist*

## **Physical Grounding**

- ✕ ***Run cool or warm water over your hands.***
- ✕ ***Grab tightly onto your chair as hard as you can.***
- ✕ ***Touch various objects around you:*** a pen, keys, your clothing, the table, the walls. Notice textures, colors, materials, weight, temperature.
- ✕ ***Dig your heels into the floor***— literally “grounding” them! Notice the tension centered in your heels as you do this. Remind yourself that you are connected to the ground.
- ✕ ***Carry a grounding object in your pocket***—an object that you can touch whenever you feel triggered or overwhelmed, such as a small rock, clay, a ring, a piece of cloth or yarn.
- ✕ ***Notice your body:*** The weight of your body in the chair; wiggling your toes in your socks; the feel of your back against the chair. You are connected to the world.
- ✕ ***Stretch.*** Extend your fingers, arms or legs as far as you can; roll your head around.
- ✕ ***Walk slowly,*** noticing each footstep, saying “left,” “right” with each step.
- ✕ ***Eat something.*** Describe the flavors in detail to yourself.
- ✕ ***Focus on your breathing.*** Noticing each inhale and exhale. Repeat a pleasant word to yourself on each inhale (for example, a soothing word such as “safe” or “calm”)

## **Soothing Grounding**

- ♥ ***Say a kind statement,*** 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.”
- ♥ ***Think of favorites.*** Think of your favorite color, animal, season, food, time of day, TV show.
- ♥ ***Picture people you care about*** or even look at photographs of them.
- ♥ ***Remember the words to an inspiring song, quote or poem*** that makes you feel better
- ♥ ***Remember a safe place.*** Describe a place that you find very soothing (perhaps the beach or mountains, or a favorite room). Focus on everything about that place—the sounds, colors, shapes, objects, textures.
- ♥ ***Say a coping statement.*** “I can handle this”, “This feeling will pass.”
- ♥ ***Plan out a safe treat for yourself,*** such as a piece of candy, a nice dinner, or a warm bath.
- ♥ ***Think of things you are looking forward to in the next week.*** Perhaps time with a friend or going to a movie.

## **WHAT IF GROUNDING DOESN'T WORK?**

- ♠ ***Practice as often as possible.*** Even when you don’t “need” it, so that you’ll know it by heart.
- ♠ ***Practice faster.*** Speeding up the pace gets you focused on the outside world quickly.
- ♠ ***Try grounding for a looooooonnnng time (20-30 minutes).*** And, repeat, repeat, repeat.
- ♠ ***Try to notice whether you do better with physical, mental or soothing grounding.***
- ♠ ***Create your 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 negative mood cycle.***