

GROUNDING EXERCISES

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. You can do this anywhere. For example, on the subway: “I’m on the subway. I’ll see the river soon. Those are the windows. This is the bench. The metal bar is silver. The subway map has four colors...”
- Play a “categories” game with yourself. Try to think of “types of dogs”, “jazz musicians”, “states that begin with “A”, “cars”, “TV shows”, “writers”, “sports”, “songs”, “European cities.”
- Describe an everyday activity in great detail. For example, describe a meal that you cook (e.g., First I peel the potatoes and cut them, then I boil the water, I make a marinade of basil, garlic, and olive oil...”).
- 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. Or read each letter backwards so that you focus on the letters and not on the meaning of words.
- Count to 10 or say the alphabet very s.l.o.w.l.y.
- Repeat a favorite saying to yourself over and over (e.g., the Serenity Prayer).

Physical Grounding

- Practice “5-4-3-2-1” with your 5 senses: Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.
- Put a citrus fruit in the freezer. Hold it – feel the cold, texture, smell the scent.
- Smell something with a strong scent that is pleasant to you – essential oil, lotion, coffee, etc.
- Eat something. Describe the flavors in detail. A strong flavor like mint, sour candy, hot pepper is helpful.
- Get into your body – stand up, stand on one foot, do a wall sit, jump up and down, use balance board, etc.
- Grab tightly onto your chair as hard as you can.
- Run cool or warm water over your hands.
- Touch various objects around you: a pen, keys, your clothing, the table, the walls. Notice textures, colors, materials, weight, temperature. Compare objects you touch: Is one colder? Lighter?
- Dip 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 ground object in your pocket—a small object (a small rock, clay, ring, piece of cloth or yarn) that you can touch whenever you feel triggered.
- 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.
- Focus on your breathing. Noticing each inhale and exhale. Repeat a pleasant word to yourself on each inhale (for example, a favorite, color or a soothing word such as “safe” or “easy”).

Soothing Grounding

- Say kind statements, as if you were talking to a small child. E.g.. “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 (e.g., your children; and look at photographs of them).
- Remember the words to an inspiring song, quotation or poem (e.g. Serenity Prayer).
- 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. Pay attention to your five senses as you take this in (e.g., taste of the food, temperature of the water, smell of food/soap)