

# Grounding

Grounding is useful for regulating intense emotional pain

Grounding involves generating signals of safety in the body that are transmitted to the brain and expanding awareness beyond emotional pain by using our senses: Sight, Hearing, Touch, Taste, Smell and Sense of space. Finding which grounding skills work for us takes practice and some experimentation. Here are some suggestions from the research that have been found to be helpful:



## Generate Bodily Signals of Safety

- Breathe slowly – slowly inhale for 4 seconds, pause for a moment, breathe out for 4 seconds, briefly pause again, and repeat. Count to 10 or more breaths or consider using a timer (such as the free ‘Calm’ mobile app).
- Smell something strong and soothing such as lavender or applying hand crème.
- Stimulate your touch: Splash your face with cold water, take a cold shower, rub your hands together, hold an ice cube.
- Use movements and pressure to connect to your space: ◦ Wiggle your toes, stamp your feet, notice the chair you are sitting in. ◦ Walk, stretch, push your feet hard into the ground ◦ Apply pressure to your muscles (for example, massage or lifting something heavy) or push something firm (for example, pushing a wall)



## Expanding Awareness

- Describe your surroundings in detail, using your senses: Sight, Hearing, Touch, Taste, and Smell
- Use the 54321 skill by naming - ⑤ Five things you can see, ④ Four things you can feel ③ Three things you can hear ② Two things you can smell or taste, and ① Notice what you are doing.
- Say today’s date and location, and your name aloud
- Pick up objects which are near you and explore their details – saying the words in your mind or aloud
- Describe what you are doing (for example, walking, sitting, eating) in as much detail as possible
- Think or say aloud encouraging statements and things that remind you of the reality of the current situation – such as “This won’t last forever”, “I will get through this, you’ve managed pain before”, “I’m safe now”
- Think of things you have planned in your routine or things you are looking forward to.



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## Suggestions of things that can help make grounding as useful as possible

Find what works for you and make a list. Keep the list close to you so you can access it when you most need it, consider storing it on your phone or on a piece of paper.

Experiment with different techniques, trying each one for a week or so to identify what works for you. Make sure to keep the skills that help and practice them regularly. Practice what works as often as possible at the earliest signs of stress. We have included an action plan here which may provide a helpful prompt.

### Things that help me to ground:

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

### Action plan to use a grounding skill

**If....** I experience these signs of stress or I am in this situation (consider describing a situation that is usually stressful or bodily experiences)

.....  
.....  
.....

**Then...** I will practice the following skill:

.....  
.....  
.....

