

Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault

(ECASA)



If you have any English language difficulties, please ask staff to book an interpreter. From home contact the Telephone Interpreter Service on 9605 3056. Services are provided free of charge. Ask staff if this information is available in your preferred language.

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What is Grounding?

Grounding is a set of strategies to help you get anchored in the present moment. As a trauma survivor, it is common to experience memories, flashbacks and nightmares that can make you feel like the trauma is happening all over again. This can be a very confusing and distressing experience. You may also find yourself frequently worrying about the future, anxious that something bad might happen. Or you may experience 'dissociation', which refers to a mental process that produces a lack of connection in your thoughts, memories, feelings, actions, or sense of identity. During a period of dissociation you may feel numb, disconnected from your body, outside of yourself, or as if things 'aren't real'.

Grounding can help reorient you to reality and the immediate here-and-now. It can help you to feel anchored in the midst of overwhelming anxiety, and remind you that you are safe and the trauma is not happening again. Grounding can help prevent you from dissociating, or bring you back to the present when you notice that you are dissociating. It can also help keep you safe and free from injury, since behaviors such as substance use, cutting and bingeing and purging are often used as a way to cope with dissociative symptoms or overwhelming anxiety. Grounding skills are useful in many ways.

Grounding can be done any time, any place, and no one has to know. Practice grounding whenever you are faced with a trigger, having a flashback, have just woken from a nightmare, are worrying about the

future, dissociating, or having a craving to self-harm or engage in a self-destructive behavior. Intervene early, and get grounded as soon as you notice yourself becoming distressed.

Grounding Ideas

Physical Grounding

- Carry a grounding item in your pocket (eg. a small rock, piece of cloth or yarn) that you can touch and use to connect with your senses
- Say aloud 5 things that you can see around you, 5 things that you can hear, and 5 things that you can feel. Describe them in as much detail as possible
- Focus on your breath, and follow the air as it goes in and out. Notice the rise and fall of your chest, the rise and fall of your belly, and the air coming in and out of your nose
- Press your feet into the floor-- literally "grounding" them! Notice the tension in your feet as you do this. Remind yourself that you are connected to the ground
- Tap your hands on your thighs, left to right, back and forth
- Run water over your hands. Focus your attention on the sensation of the water
- Notice your body - the weight of your body in the chair, wiggling your toes in your socks, the feeling of your back against the chair
- Walk slowly, noticing each footstep, saying "left, right" with each step
- Eat something and describe aloud the flavours that you can taste



For more information or to book an appointment, call **9870 7330** or call the 24 hour sexual assault crisis line on **1800 806 292**

Protecting Your Privacy

Eastern Health is committed to protecting your privacy.

We will keep your personal information secure and will disclose information about you only when required or permitted by law. We comply with relevant information and privacy legislation.

If you would like more information, please ask a staff member or visit our website www.easternhealth.org.au
Eastern Health is accredited by the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards.

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Mental Grounding

- Say a safety statement. "My name is _____; I am safe right now. I am in the present, not the past. I am located at/in _____; the date is _____; I am _____ years old"
- Slowly count backwards from 100 aloud
- 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."
- Do an age progression. If you are experiencing a flashback which has taken you back to a younger age (e.g., 8 years old), slowly work your way back up aloud (e.g., "I'm now 9"; "I'm now 10"; "I'm now 11"...) until you are back to your current age.
- 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 into quarters, then I boil the water, I make an herb marinade of oregano, basil, garlic, and olive oil...")
- Read something aloud, 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

Soothing Grounding

- Repeat a coping statement, such as "this feeling will pass" or "this feeling is unpleasant, but it cannot harm me"
- Repeat a comforting saying or quotation (eg. the serenity prayer, a poem, religious scripture)
- Imagine being in a safe place. Describe a place that you find very soothing (perhaps the beach or mountains, or a favourite room) and focus on everything about that place-- the sounds, colours, shapes, objects, textures

To be effective, grounding techniques need to be practiced regularly. Some will be more helpful than others. You will need to experiment a little bit to find out which ones will help you the most. Practice as often as possible, even when you don't "need" to, so that you'll know your preferred grounding techniques by heart.



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