

## Grounding as a Coping Skill

### GROUNDING AKA CENTERING AKA SAFE PLACE

All are simply different ways to describe the practice of bringing your awareness back to the 'here and now', provide a healthy detachment from uncomfortable emotions, and allow yourself to function in the moment and process your emotions later, when you are in a better head space. Experiencing emotional pain is almost inevitable. The day will come when you find out disturbing news, experience emotional pain, or witness a stressful event. You can think of it as a symptom of your humanity. The uncomfortable emotions that come along with these experiences are natural and expected, another part of your humanity. Anger, sadness, fear are all 1,000 percent OKAY! These uncomfortable emotions are neither good nor bad they are expected (as a part of your humanity). How you choose to respond to those emotions, what you do, how you behave, your actions are what can create either a good or bad situation.

One healthy option to cope with uncomfortable emotions is grounding! If you notice that you are experiencing racing or ruminating thoughts, grounding may help. For instance, Sheila has been obsessing over "stumbling over her words while presenting her new idea at work". The presentation was yesterday, however, Sheila can't seem to focus today at work. Her mind keeps slipping back into negative self-talk about her presentation. Sheila could benefit from grounding herself in this moment.

We can find ourselves 'stuck' in the past, re-playing situations over and over, this often leads to anxiety. The thing about what is done (in the past), is done. There is no time machine enabling us to rewind and undo anything. In these moments, it can be helpful to bring your awareness back to the here and now. When we can remind ourselves of the present moment, we can be realistic and logical, maybe even provide ourselves with a positive affirmation (Sheila may say, "You really did well and got your point across, they are already implementing your idea").

Grounding techniques can also be helpful when dealing with:

-Anxiety      -PTSD      -Self Harm Urges      -Traumatic Memories      -Substance Abuse Cravings

All of these grounding techniques can be done solo. No one else has to know what you are doing!

- Use your senses
  - 5 things you see, 4 things you hear, 3 things you are touching, 2 things you smell, 1 thing you taste
  - Start with A, name something in your environment that begins with A, move on to B, then C, and so on, all the way to Z
  - Light a candle, use your favorite lotion, drink a cup of flavored tea – inhale the fragrance of your choice mindfully/slowly, noticing any distinct qualities. You can try to describe the fragrance in detail
  - Go for a walk -you can mindfully notice your steps, count them. Take note of your stride, are you taking long or short steps, are you erect or slouching? Pay attention to how it feels to lift and drop your foot with each step, what muscles are you using?

- Eat something slowly, take in the flavor, aromas, texture.
- Extreme sensation – try holding a piece of ice and allow yourself to feel the iciness, the pool of water in your hand as it melts
- Texture exploration – pick up things in your environment that are soft, fuzzy, prickly, heavy, light
- Mental Exercise:
  - Crossword puzzles, Sudoku, Count as high as you can by 3's, 4s, etc. Remember to redirect your awareness back to the activity if you find your mind wandering
  - Test your memory – look at your environment, or a photo for 30 seconds. Then close your eyes and recount as many things as you can.
  - Categories. Think of a category (colors, restaurants, basketball players) and name as many things as you can in each category.
  - Describe an everyday activity in great detail, how to cook an egg, bake a cake, drive to work OR describe an everyday object in great detail (color, texture, shadow, shape)
  - Count as high as you can by 3s, 4s, 5, 6s, etc. Or count backwards by 3s,4s, etc.
  - Listen to music
  - List your favorite things
  - List positive things in your life
  - Plan something- vacation, weekend trip, party – do the necessary research

Remember, all good things take time. The more you practice grounding the easier it will become!