



What is grounding?

Grounding is a simple way to reduce emotional pain and discomfort (e.g. craving, anger, sadness) in times where we might feel overwhelmed by negative thoughts or emotions. Distraction works by **focusing on the world around us, rather than looking inside** towards our own thoughts. You can also think of it as “distraction,” “centering,” “a safe place,” “looking outward,” or “healthy detachment.” When you are overwhelmed with emotional pain, grounding can help you to feel in control over your feelings and safe. **Grounding “anchors” you to the present moment** and to reality. Many people who have experienced something traumatic benefit from grounding.

Remember that pain is a feeling; it is not who you are as a person. When you get caught up in it, it feels like you are your pain, and that is all that exists. But it is only one part of your experience- other feelings are just hidden in that moment, and can be found again through grounding. Grounding can be done any time, any place, anywhere, and no one has to know. You can use grounding when you are faced with a trigger, are upset or angry, if you feel disconnected from your body or reality, having a craving, or whenever your emotional pain goes above 6 (on a 0-10 scale). Grounding puts healthy distance between you and these negative feelings. When doing grounding exercises, the following tips may be useful:

- Keep your eyes open, look around the room, and turn the light on to stay in touch with the present moment
- Rate your mood before and after grounding, to test whether it worked. Before grounding, rate your level of emotional pain (0-10, where 10 means “extreme pain”). Then rate it afterwards. Has it gone down?
- Try not to talk about negative feelings or write about them while you are “grounding” - you want to distract away from negative feelings, not explore them
- Try not to make judgments of “good” and “bad”; just focus on what you are seeing. For example, instead of “The walls are blue; I don't like blue because it reminds me of depression,” simply say “The walls are blue” and move on
- Focus on the present; not the past or future

Ways of grounding

There are many ways you can practice grounding. You may find that one type works better for you, or many types may be helpful; perhaps in different situations.

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, colours, smells, shapes, numbers, and the temperature. You can do this anywhere.

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 wall, dig your heels into the floor - literally “grounding” them! Notice the tension centred in your heels as you do this. Remind yourself you are connected to the ground.

Soothing Grounding

Say kind statements, 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.” Remember the words to an inspiring song, quote, or poem, or remember a place you feel safe and describe it to yourself.

Breathing Grounding

Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Breathe gently and notice your hands moving up and down. Try to gently breathe further down with each breath until the belly is moving up and down.

For more information or for further support, you can call Gippsland CASA on (03) 5134 3922.



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