

Grounding exercises

It is useful to have a selection of grounding exercises that you can draw upon to keep your mind and body connected and working together, particularly for those times when you are becoming overwhelmed with distressing memories, thoughts, and feelings.

People who have experienced childhood sexual abuse, or adult sexual assault, can sometimes be confronted by flashbacks or intense memories of what was done, to the point that they feel as if they are back there, re-living the abuse all over again.

Grounding exercises are a way for you to firmly anchor yourself in the present.

The following grounding exercises are about using our senses (see, hear, smell, taste, touch) to build our mind and body connection in the present. In working through the grounding exercises suggested here, you might find one or two that work for you—remembering only to use the exercises that you feel comfortable with.

- Remind yourself of who you are now. Say your name. Say your age now. Say where you are now. Say what you have done today. Say what you will do next.
- Take ten breaths, focus your attention on each breath on the way in and the way out. Say the number of the breath to yourself as you exhale.
- Splash water on your face.
- Sip a cool drink of water.
- Hold a cold can/bottle of soft drink in your hands. Feel the coldness, and the wetness on the outside. Note the bubbles and tastes as you drink.
- As you wake during the night, remind yourself who you are and where you are. Tell yourself who you are and where you are. What age are you now? Look around the room. Notice familiar objects and name them. Feel the bed you are lying on, the warmth or coldness of the air, and notice any sounds you hear.
- Feel the clothes on your body, whether your arms and legs are covered or not, and the sensation of your clothes as you move in them.
- If you are with other people, and you feel comfortable with them, concentrate closely on what they are saying and doing, and remind yourself why you are with them.
- If you are sitting, feel the chair under you, and the weight of your body and legs pressing down onto it.
- If you are lying down, feel the contact between your head, your body, and your legs as they touch the surface you are lying on. Starting from your head, notice how each part feels, all the way down to your feet, on the soft or hard surface.
- Stop and listen. Notice and name what you can hear, nearby and in the distance.
- Hold a mug of tea in both hands and feel its warmth. Don't rush drinking it—take small sips, and take your time tasting each mouthful.
- Look around you, notice what is in front of you and to each side. Name first large objects, and then smaller ones.
- Get up, walk around, and take your time to notice each step as you take one, then another.
- Stamp your feet. Notice the sensation and sound as you connect with the ground.
- Clap and rub your hands together, hear the noise, and feel the sensation in your hands and arms.

- Wear an elastic band on your wrist (not tight) and flick it gently, so that you feel it spring back on your wrist.
- If you can, step outside. Notice the temperature of the air, and how much it is different or similar to where you have just come from.