

Grounding Techniques

Grounding is a particular type of coping strategy that is designed to "ground" you in, or immediately connect you with, the present moment. Because of its focus on being present in the moment, grounding can be considered a variant of mindfulness. It can also be a method of distraction to get you out of your head and away from upsetting thoughts, memories, or feelings. Some of these may be helpful for children and young people too.

How Grounding Works

Grounding techniques often use the five senses—sound, touch, smell, taste, and sight—to immediately connect you with the here and now. For example, singing a song, rubbing lotion on your hands, or sucking on some sour sweets are all grounding techniques that produce sensations that are difficult to ignore or that will distract you from what's going on in your mind. This helps you directly and instantaneously connect with the present moment.

Grounding is highly personal. What may work for one person may trigger anxiety or anger in another. You may need to do some trial and error before you figure out what grounding techniques work best for you or your child. Pay attention to the coping mechanisms you've already developed to help you get through your anxiety and/ or anger in order to remain calm.

Grounding Techniques

To connect with the here and now, do something (or several things) that will bring all your attention to the present moment. Be sure to keep your eyes open while you're grounding yourself so you're aware of everything that's going on around you.

Sound

Turn up the radio or blast your favourite song.

Talk out loud about what you see, hear, or what you're thinking or doing.

Call a loved one.

Put on some nature sounds such as birds chirping or waves crashing.

Read out loud, whether it's a favourite children's book, an article, or the latest novel.

Touch

Hold an ice cube and let it melt in your hand.

Put your hands under running water.

Take a hot or cool shower.

Grab an article of clothing, a blanket, or a towel and knead it in your hands or hold it to your cheek. Concentrate on what it feels like.

Rub your hand lightly over the carpet or a piece of furniture, noting the texture.

Pop some bubble wrap.

Massage your temples.

If you have a dog or cat, cuddle and pet him or her.

Drink a hot or cold beverage.

Smell

Sniff strong peppermint, which also has the benefit of having a soothing effect.

Light a scented candle or melt scented wax.

Get some essential oils that remind you of good times (freshly cut grass, rain, clean laundry, or sugar cookies, for example) and smell one.

Taste

Bite into a lemon or lime.

Suck on a mint or other sweet, chew peppermint or flavoured gum.

Take a bite of a pepper or some hot salsa.

Let a piece of chocolate melt in your mouth, noticing how it tastes and feels as you roll it around with your tongue.

Sight

Take a mental inventory of everything around you, such as all the colours and patterns you see, the sounds you hear, and the scents you smell. Saying this out loud is helpful too.

Count all the pieces of furniture around you.

Put on your favourite movie or TV show.

Play a distracting game on your tablet, computer, or smartphone.

Complete a crossword puzzle, Sudoku, word search, or other puzzle.

Read a book or magazine.

Other

Write in a journal about how you're feeling or keep a list of prompts handy that you can use to decide what to write about.

Write a letter or card to someone you care about.

Dance.

Stretch your arms, neck, and legs.

Go for a walk or run.

Take 10 slow, deep breaths.

Go to another room or area for a change of scenery.

Grounding Can Be Done Anywhere

The nice thing about using grounding as a coping technique is that many of these techniques can be done in any environment. You might be home alone or out in public, but once you feel that anxiety or anger coming on, you can use grounding to move your focus back to the present.

Working on grounding takes dedication and it becomes easier over time. If these particular grounding techniques don't work for you, try something else. For example, some people find that a rubber band on their wrist is useful to snap them back to the moment. The ultimate goal is to live in the now and focus on the present when the past starts coming up/ your emotions begin to take hold.