

Grounding 101

Grounding is a therapy skill meant to bring our full attention back to the moment in order to help us cope with intense feelings, thoughts, sensations, and / or urges. The idea is they help us bring down the intensity of our experience so we can then employ other strategies and consciously decide our next steps. Therefore, they are brief, simplistic exercises. They work because our mind can truly only focus on one thing at a time.

Try out a few of these and then pick 2 or 3 that are your favourite and use these when it feels overwhelming. It is better to really know 2 or 3 well and train your body/brain how to do them by practicing.

- **5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1** - Probably the most utilized grounding technique in therapy. Focus on naming 5 things you see, 5 things you hear, 5 things you smell, and 5 things you feel as in tactile stimulation (i.e. your feet on the floor). Then repeat this sequence naming 4 things you see, 4 things you hear, 4 things you smell, 4 things you feel. Repeat again with 3 things you see, 3 things you hear, 3 things you smell, and 3 things you feel. Then 2, then 1.
- **Colour Breathing** - Pick two colours, imagine the one colour on the inbreath, imagine the other colour on the outbreath. Repeat for as long as needed/wanted.
- **Animal Alphabet** - Name an animal that begins with the letter 'a', 'b', 'c', 'd', etc. Go through the entire alphabet before stopping.
- **Ice Cream Flavours** - List as many ice cream flavours as you can think of. Say them out loud.
- **Ice** - Grab ice or an ice pack and place it on the back of your neck, in your hands, on your forehead. Whatever works for you. Use your full awareness to experience how this feels and the sensations that it creates.
- **Move** - Do a vigorous physical activity for 10 minutes, or as long as you can tolerate (i.e. running on the spot, speed walking, jumping jacks, push ups, burpees).
- **The Letter "F"** - Name as many words that you can think of that start with the letter "F". Say them out loud. Can be repeated with any other letter.
- **Anchor** - Firmly anchor yourself into the chair you are sitting in. Dig your feet into the ground noticing how it feels. Dig your buttocks into the cushion noticing how it feels. Use your hands to push into the fabric of the chair again noticing all of the sensations that you feel.