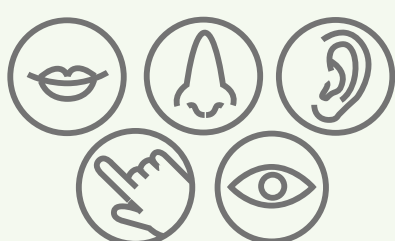
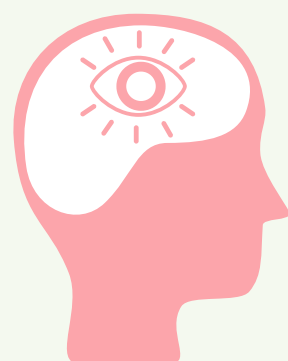


# Grounding Exercises 101

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## What are Grounding Exercises?

Broadly, there are three different kinds of Grounding Exercises. You may notice that you find one category of grounding more helpful than the others. Experiment with all three, if one category doesn't work well for you, try another, you just have to find one grounding exercise that works well for you!



## What is Grounding Used For

Grounding involves detaching yourself from emotional pain by focusing on the outside world rather than what is going on inside you. It is useful for extreme emotional pain and for managing panic symptoms by helping to refocus the mind away from the internal symptoms.



## How Not To Use Grounding Techniques

If you use these techniques in hopes of making the pain go away, then you'll likely be disappointed, and it may exacerbate your pain. The point isn't to make the painful emotions go away. The goal is to give you an anchor to help buoy you while you ride out the intensity of the storm. If these are done in the hopes of "making the pain go away," it tends to add pressure, which can make things worse. This also contributes to the avoidance cycle of avoiding hard feelings.

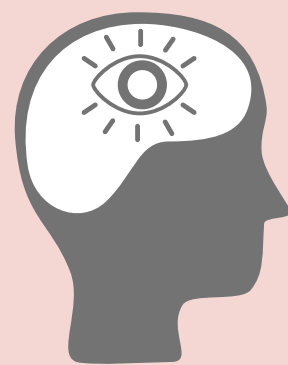
Grounding helps create a sturdiness from which you can let the pain pass through.



# Grounding Exercises 101

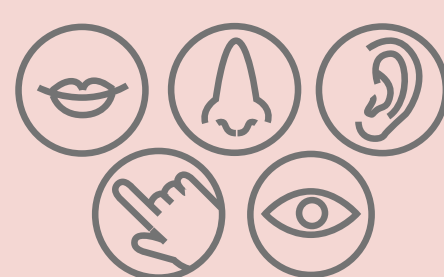
## Examples of Mental Grounding

- Describe your surroundings in detail, using all of your senses—vision, hearing, smell, tastes, and feeling (Sometimes referred to as the 5.4.3.2.1 Grounding Technique)
- Describe what you're doing, such as eating, walking, or driving, in great, tedious detail
- Mentally Categorize---categorize books, sports teams, cars, or music. Name as many objects in each category as you can, such as naming all the states that start with "M" or as many TV shows from the 90's as you can
- Say the alphabet slowly. Find a word in the room and spell it backwards, slowly focusing on each letter. ·Think of something funny
- Play with numbers--do math problems or count down from 100 by 7s



## Examples of Physical/Sensory Grounding

- Rub your hands together hard-bringing your attention to the physical sensation.
- Press your heels into the floor, and noticed how it feels
- Touch objects around you as you say their name and explore them using all your senses
- Stamp your feet
- Changer posture to a more upright one
- Put your hands under running water and focus on the sensation
- Carry something small with you that grounds you, such as a rock or a piece of fabric or a favorite fidget toy.
- Hold ice in your hand for 60 seconds



## Examples of Soothing Grounding

- Use the power of visualization--Think of a place where you feel calm and peaceful: Slowly, bring to mind everything about it, using all of your senses (smell, sounds, colors, and feel of the place)
- Tell yourself self-soothing and calming statements, such as "I can do this," or "I can do hard things," or "I will survive this moment"
- Go to a safe place you have already created in your imagination: Noticed all the details in terms of the environment, air temperature, shelter, or other people there, animals, and so on
- Plan something nice for yourself, such as a bath or a good meal
- Bring to mind your favorite smell, person, or memory. Carry a photo or some other reminder of a person you love/are comforted by
- Think of good things coming up in the next week or so
- As you breathe, on the exhale say something calm such as "relax" or "calm"



## Suggestions to make grounding work well

- Practice the strategies
- Have a list of best grounding strategies somewhere handy (such as a note in a diary, or a note stuck in the car or on the fridge) to remind you to use them
- Start doing grounding exercises early in the distress/anxiety cycle
- Rate your stress/pain levels before and after grounding, so you can tell which strategies work best for you

# Grounding Exercises 101

And my Personal Favorite Grounding Technique, The 5.4.3.2.1. It combines mental and sensory and can be powerful, especially if you start this early in the panic/flashback/sensory overload cycle.

For the simple version, you simple focus on and name the following:

## The 5.4.3.2.1 Grounding Technique



- 5 things you see



- 4 things you hear



- 3 things you feel



- 2 things you smell



- 1 thing you taste

I often adjust this Grounding exercise for a longer version that is more repetitive. I find this works well for many Autistic folks who find repetition soothing. My alternative version goes like this:

- Notice and name 5 things they can SEE, followed by 5 things they can HEAR, then 5 things you can PHYSICALLY TOUCH.
- Now do the same thing in groups of 4: 4 (new, as in not ones you've already noticed) things you can SEE, 4, (new) things you can HEAR, 4 (new) things you can TOUCH.
- Now do the same thing with groups of 3 (SEE, HEAR, TOUCH).
- Now 2 Things you can SEE, HEAR, TOUCH.
- NOW 1 Thing you can see, one thing you can HEAR, one thing you can TOUCH.
- It takes about 5 minutes and is a more intense/repetitive way of doing the traditional 5.4.3.2.1 Grounding Exercise.



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