



The Care You Trust

Grounding Tools to Help in Hard Times

Grief and trauma have a way of pulling us out of the present moment into distress about an experience in the past or anxiety about the future. Grounding means reorienting to the present moment with our senses. Choose a few of these strategies to use the next time you feel overwhelmed.

Visual

- Keep your eyes open, look around the room, and name the things you see closest to you. Notice their details, gently turning your head to take in this near field of vision. Do the same thing with things slightly farther away from you in the room. Finally, look at, name, and notice the details of the things farthest from you in the room.
- Develop a “split screen” technique. Imagine one half of the screen is filled with an image of calmness or peace (e.g., favorite color, animal, place) and the other half of the screen holding the difficult memory or thought.

Tactile

- Breathe! Take 3 deep breaths, inhaling through your nose and exhaling fully through open lips.
- Chew a piece of ice, eat some ice cream, or drink cold water.
- Put a cool cloth on your face.
- Hold something cool such as a soda can or smooth rock.
- If you're sitting, stretch and slowly stand up. Stamp your feet, clap your hands.
- Take your shoes off and rub your feet on the floor.
- Take a walk or do some yoga postures.
- Pet your cat, dog, or a fuzzy blanket or stuffed animal.
- Take a shower; feel the warmth and notice the feeling of the water stream washing over each part of you.
- Take a bath with bubbles and make shapes with the bubbles.
- Dig in the garden or a container pot.
- Walk through the home turning on lights, then reverse your path to turn them off.
- Ride a bike, go to the gym, swim at the pool or lake.
- Hug a tree – feel the solidity, the bark, notice the leaves' shapes and colors.



The Care You Trust

Olfactory

- Keep nearby a small bag of lavender or other fragrance that is pleasant for you.
- Peel an orange or lemon, notice the smell of the oils.
- Spray yourself with your favorite perfume.

Auditory

- Listen to music that helps you soothe and feel secure.
- Speak out loud, recite your favorite poem or song lyrics.
- Step outside and notice the sounds of the breeze, birds, traffic, etc.

Verbal

- Call a friend and talk about a fun time spent together.
- When overwhelmed with a memory of the past, say aloud to yourself, "That was then, this is now".
- Name aloud 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can feel/touch, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste at this moment.

Combination

- Touch things around you and name them as you do.
- Practice taking a difficult thought and storing it in a secure place such as a wooden box, a safe, or a submarine under water, until you are with a safe person to access it again and discuss it.
- Write affirmations or gratitude lists and post them on the fridge for easy viewing.
- Color, paint, or do your favorite craft.
- Buy cheap cups and saucers at a garage sale or thrift shop and break them into a garbage can or an oil drum for energy release.
- Journal or write letters to yourself or another significant person, living or deceased.
- Develop a list of 6 people who you can call when you are struggling and tell them each how they can help in those moments.