

Grounding Techniques

Have you ever found yourself getting sleepy when you are driving and done things to wake up and stay alert? Maybe you shifted your position, opened the windows or turned the AC on high to awaken your senses. Maybe you put on a favorite song, cranked up the volume, and sang along at the top of your lungs. These types of strategies are ways to be aware and “grounded” in the present moment.

Grounding techniques focus on your body physically in the moment and focus your thoughts in the present or near future. They can be useful to bring calm when you are overwhelmed with a disturbing feeling, when you are obsessing about the past, or when you are worrying about the future. The goal is to be really aware and “grounded” in your body and thoughts in the present moment. Try out some different options:

Use your senses.

- **Visual:** Open your eyes and don't stare at anything too long. Look for specific objects, such as things that are blue, circles, or diamond shaped objects. What is the largest and smallest object in room? The shiniest?
- **Auditory:** Identify the sounds you are hearing right now, such as a clock ticking, your computer fan humming softly, or a bird in distance. Which sounds are closer/further away?
- **Taste/Smell:** Focus on the sensations of taste and smell such as a flavored gum or candy, the strong smell of a perfume or peppermint, or a sip of a flavorful coffee or beverage.
- **Touch/kinesthetic:** Use movement. Start with small movements such as scrunching up your toes, rolling your ankles, and wiggling your fingers. Feel parts of your body come to life. Stretch, dance, twist, or do a few jumping jacks. Vary sensations and temperatures, such as petting a soft animal, holding ice briefly, splashing your face with water, or running a finger over a smooth stone. Do a balance activity and be really aware of different parts of your body while you balance.
- **Combine the 5 senses.** For example, what are 5 blue things you can see, 4 different textures you can touch around you, 3 sounds you can identify, 2 taste/temperatures you can sense, and 1 smell.

Focus your mind to ground in the present. Think about the present or immediate future. For example, what time is it right now? What exactly are you doing later today? What do you plan to make and eat for your next meal? What is your next meeting, work task or email that you will send? What do you think you will see on a walk later today?

Experiment with different grounding techniques to add to your toolkit of ways to calm in the moment when needed. Feel free to contact EAP to talk to a counselor about grounding techniques and building calm in the moment.