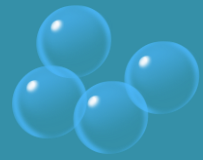


# Grounding Techniques



## What is grounding?

Grounding techniques stop trauma memories from becoming too real. They are simple actions that serve to remind you where you are and restore a sense of safety in the present.

## Triggers & early warning signs

A “trigger” is anything that brings back memories of a traumatic event. They are specific to individuals.

They can be situations, places, people or sensations

- They can also be feelings (e.g. feeling overwhelmed or trapped)
- Sometimes it may not be clear what triggered a trauma memory.

Sometimes there are early warning signs that you are slipping into a flashback or a dissociative state e.g. things may begin to look fuzzy, or you may experience a sense of losing touch with your surroundings. It can help to be aware of your own early warning signs so you can use grounding techniques early on.



*Combat Stress. Session 1*

## Flashbacks

Flashbacks are powerful memories of a traumatic experience. Unlike normal memories, flashbacks feel as if the event is happening all over again, or being “replayed” in your mind. Sometimes the memories may not be that clear but still leave you with strong feelings or sensations like those you felt at the time.

## Dissociation

Traumatic memories may leave you feeling emotionally overwhelmed. But they can also lead to a state of feeling disconnected, numb or “spaced out”. This is known as “dissociation”. Dissociation is a kind of escape mechanism the mind uses to withstand situations of overwhelming stress.

Dissociation can feel quite alarming (although not necessarily) and can cause problems as you become less in tune with your surroundings and less in control of your actions. Sometimes it can lead to periods of time passing without you being aware of what has happened.

## Why is grounding helpful?



Grounding can also help to calm down the body at times of strong emotion (e.g. when you're angry, upset)



Grounding helps you to keep in touch with the present moment, concentrating and focusing on what's around you.

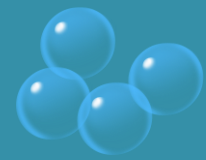


Grounding can help to get rid of the images and feelings you are left with after a nightmare








Grounding involves simple techniques that can help you to feel calmer and safer.

# Grounding Techniques



## Grounding & 5 senses

Combat Stress. Session 1

 Smell	 Sight	 Taste	 Hear	 Touch
*Star of Bethlehem remedy *Lavender- aroma therapy oil.	*Look outside and count the trees, cars, birds. *Visualise a safe place where you feel calm *Look at a flashback *"I am doing the best I can with the tools I have". " I can get through this".	*Taste something strong, lemon, mints, menthol sweets. * Eat something & describe it. Is it hot, cold, sweet, sticky, crunchy?	*Play calming music in soft lighting *Play a musical instrument *Call a friend *Hum or sing *Use a safety statement, "I'm safe, its 2013, I am at home in ".	*Use a stress ball * Twang a rubber band on your wrist * Touch an object nearby & describe it. *Carry a pebble or stone you feel connected to. * Hold onto something comforting e.g. blanket * Shower/wash

### Building a grounding box

A grounding box is where you have a collection of objects you can select from and use which work best for you. It works best when a combination of mental, physical (sensory) and self-soothing (calming) strategies and objects are available.



If your partner is willing, helping them to create a grounding box can be a valuable exercise. Many veterans' partners have also created grounding boxes for themselves too! It can generate lots of discussion and promote mutual understanding.

Here are some examples of objects some veterans we have worked with have put in their grounding boxes;

Juggling balls/Stress ball. Making shape out of plasticine. Scented oils. Sweets. Grounding stone. Sweets that are soothing. Picture of a person you care about. Something comforting that makes you feel safe e.g. blanket.



### Awareness grounding exercise

Re orientate yourself in time & place with these questions;

- Where am I?
- What is the date?
- What is the month?
- How old am I/?
- What season is it?

### 5,4,3,2,1 Exercise

1. Name 5 things you can see in the room with you
2. Name 4 things you can feel ("chair on my back" or "feet on my floor").
3. Name 3 things you can hear right now ("fingers tapping on keyboard" or "TV").
4. Name 2 things you can smell right now (or 2 things you like the smell of).