

## Grounding Techniques

As a survivor of traumatic experience, you may at one time or another may experience flashbacks and/or periods of intense anxiety surrounding the memories of abuse/trauma. You may also feel numb or disconnected from yourself or your thoughts and feelings. During those times, it's important to find ways to ground yourself in the here-and-now until the feelings pass.

Below is a compilation of several techniques that may help you through the rough moments. As with anything, if a particular technique makes you uncomfortable, don't try it; only you know what will work best for you. Once you have found techniques that work for you, type them up, print them out, and keep them handy to ensure you'll use them when you need them:

- Pull up the daily newspaper. Notice the date and read a current article.
- Stomp your feet to remind yourself where you are. Press your feet firmly into the ground.
- Try to notice where you are, your surroundings including the people, the sounds like the TV or radio.
- Concentrate on your breathing. Take a deep cleansing breath from your diaphragm. Count the breaths as you exhale. Make sure you breathe slowly so you don't hyperventilate.
- Cross your legs and arms. Feel the sensations of you controlling your body.
- Ask a friend to talk with you about something you have recently done together.
- Take a warm relaxing bubble bath or a warm shower. Feel the water touching your body.
- Mentally remind yourself that the memory was then, and it is over. Give yourself permission to not think about it right now.
- Find your pulse on your wrist and count the beats per minute. Concentrate on feeling the blood pulse throughout your body.
- Go outside and sit against a tree. Feel the bark pressing against your body. Smell the outside aromas like the grass and the leaves. Run your fingers through the grass. If you can't go outside, imagine what it would be like to go there.
- If you are sitting, stand. If you are standing, sit. Pay attention to the movement change. Remind yourself -- you are in control.
- Rub your palms; clap your hands. Listen to the sounds. Feel the sensation.
- Speak out loud. Say your name or a loved one's name.
- Hold something that you find comforting (e.g., a stuffed animal, a blanket, your pet). Notice how it feels in your hands. Is it hard or soft?
- Eat something. Focus on how it tastes. Is it sweet, salty or sour? Is it warm or cold?
- If you have a pet (e.g., a dog, cat, hamster, bird) use that moment to touch them. Feel their fur or feathers and speak the animal's name out loud.
- Go to a mirror and make yourself smile. Watch your reflection as the expression changes. How does it make you feel?
- Visualize a bright red STOP sign to help you stop the flashback and/or memory
- Step outside. If it's warm, feel the sun shining down on your face. If it's cold, feel the breeze. How does it make your body feel?

- During a non-crisis time, make a list of things that are in your environment and what room they are in. Give this list to friends that you can talk with during a flashback so they can help remind you what is around you.
- During a non-crisis time, make a list of positive affirmations. Print them out and keep them handy for when you are having a flashback. During a flashback, read the list out loud.
- Take a walk outside and notice your neighborhood. Pay attention to houses and count them.
- Listen to familiar music and sing along to it. Dance to it.
- Make a list of known triggers and give it to your therapist. Ask them if they can help you find a way to desensitize those triggers so they aren't quite so powerful.
- Write in your journal. Pay attention to yourself holding the pencil. Write about what you are remembering and visualize the memory traveling out of you into the pencil and onto the paper. Tear the paper up or seal it in an envelope. Give it to your therapist for safekeeping.
- Imagine yourself in a safe place. Feel the safety and know it.
- Watch a favorite TV program, movie or video. Play a video game.
- If you have a garden, work in it. Feel your hands running through the dirt.
- Wash dishes or clean your house.
- Meditate if you are comfortable with it.
- Exercise. Ride a bike, stationary or otherwise. Lift weights. Do jumping jacks.
- Blow and pop bubbles like when you were younger. Focus on the effort it takes to blow the bubble, the visual rainbow sheen on the bubble itself, and the feeling as you pop it. Try to catch a bubble on your hand without popping it.
- Use the 5-4-3-2-1 technique (find and really focus on the details of 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste).
- Change the scenery. Go outside if you're inside or inside if you're outside. Try to notice things around you.
- If you play an instrument, play a song that relaxes you. Focus on your fingers and how they feel against the instrument (e.g. guitar strings, piano keys, trumpet keys).