

TIP SHEET 8.3

Grounding

Grounding is an essential prerequisite when working with traumatised clients, as it can help to stop a trauma reaction. It is also extremely useful when clients feel overwhelmed by cravings or urges to engage in their addictive behaviour.

Grounding is also referred to as distraction, centering, or healthy detachment, and involves detaching from emotional pain or cravings by focusing outward on the external world.

Grounding strategies can be grouped according to whether they are mental, physical, or soothing strategies.

Mental grounding includes activities such as:

- describing objects in the environment in great detail, and using all five senses (such as a tree outside the window, picture of the wall, etc)
- thinking of categories of things
- counting backwards from 20
- describe an everyday activity in great detail
- using a 'mantra' or similar to come back to the present. This can be very helpful in relation to traumatic memories and flashbacks, and could include saying something like, 'that was then and this is now', while noting how the current situation differs from that associated with the trauma.

Physical grounding includes activities such as:

- gripping the back of a chair
- jumping up and down
- pushing your heels into the floor
- touching various objects around you
- focusing on your body – the feeling of your clothes, the heaviness of your feet and hands, the feeling of your chair, etc.
- running your hands under hot or cold water.

Soothing grounding includes activities such as:

- having a bath
- lighting nice smelling candles
- rubbing nice smelling hand cream slowly into your hands/ arms and noticing the sensations;

- saying encouraging things to yourself.

Try out different strategies to find the ones that suit you best, and highlight them so that you know which one's you can use when you are distressed.

Remember, it is important to practice these techniques even when you are feeling well – this will help you to remember to use them when you are not feeling so great.