

## **CWSH 8: Client handout Grounding**

(The material below is adapted from Najavits, L. (2002). *Seeking Safety: A Treatment Manual for PTSD and Substance Abuse*. New York: Guildford Press. Handout: 'Using grounding to detach from emotional pain':133–5).

Grounding involves detaching yourself from emotional pain by focusing on the outside world rather than what's going on inside you. It is useful for extreme emotional pain.

### **Examples of mental grounding**

- Describe your surroundings in detail, using all your senses—vision, hearing, smell, taste, and feeling
- Describe what you are doing, such as eating, walking, or driving, in detail
- Think of categories; for example, categorise shoes, hair, cars, or books
- Use imagery; for example, hop on a cloud and float away from your pain; put your pain in a bubble and let it float away
- Use a grounding statement, such as: 'I am Jo'; 'I am 23 years old'; 'this is the present, and not the past'; 'I am safe here'; 'today is ...'
- Say the alphabet slowly
- Think of something funny.

### **Examples of physical grounding**

- Rub your hands together—hard
- Press your heels into the floor, and notice how it feels
- Touch objects around you as you say their name, and explore them using all your senses
- Stamp your feet
- Change your posture to a more upright one
- Put your hands under running water
- Carry something small with you that grounds you, such as a rock or a piece of fabric.

### **Examples of soothing grounding**

- Make encouraging statements to yourself, such as: 'you can do this'; 'just hang in there'

**CWSH 8: Client handout Grounding (continued)**

- Think of a place where you have felt calm and peaceful: remember everything about it, using all your senses
- Go to a safe place you have already created in your imagination: notice all the details in terms of environment, air temperature, shelter, other people there, animals, and so on
- Plan something nice for yourself, such as a bath or a good meal
- Think of people you care about; carry a photo or some other reminder of them with you
- Think of good things coming up in the next week or so
- As you breathe, on the exhale say something calming, such as 'relax' or 'it's OK'.

**Suggestions to make grounding work well**

- Practise the strategies
- Have a list of best grounding strategies somewhere handy (such as a note in a diary, or a note stuck in the car or on the fridge) to remind you to use them
- Start doing grounding exercises early in a distress cycle
- Rate your distress levels before and after grounding, so you can tell which strategies work best.