Grounding Tips

*Grounding is a strategy that can help you detach from overwhelming emotional pain. It connects you to the present moment and to reality, which can be helpful when you are feeling disconnected, emotionally overwhelmed, or experiencing flashbacks. Different types of grounding strategies work for different people, so you may want to experiment with these until you find what is most helpful for you. When using grounding strategies, it is recommended that you keep your eyes open and turn the lights on, focus on the present, and avoid judgment.*

Adapted from Seeking Safety: A Treatment Manual for PTSD and Substance Abuse by Lisa M. Najavits

Mental Grounding

- **Describe your environment in detail**, using all your senses -- for example, “The walls are white; there are five pink chairs, there is a wooden bookshelf against the wall...” Describe objects, sounds, colors, textures, colors, smells, shapes, numbers, and temperature. You can do this anywhere. For example, on the bus: “I'm on the bus. I'll see the Hoover Tower soon. Those are windows. This is the bench. The metal bar is silver.”

- **Play a categories game with yourself**. Try to think of “types of dogs,” “jazz musicians,” “states that begin with A,” “cars,” “TV shows,” “writers,” “sports,” songs, or cities.

- **Describe an everyday activity in great detail**. For example, describe a meal that you cook (e.g. “First, I peel the potatoes and cut them into quarters; then I boil the water; then I make an herb marinade of oregano, basil, garlic, and olive oil...”).

- **Count to 10 or say the alphabet**, very s...l...o...w...l...y.

- **Use humor**. Think of something funny to jolt yourself out of your mood.
Physical Grounding

- Run cool or warm water over your hands.
- Grab tightly onto your chair as hard as you can.
- **Touch various objects around you**: a pen, keys, your clothing, the table, the walls. Notice textures, colors, materials, weight, temperature. Compare objects you touch: is one colder? Lighter?
- **Dig your heels into the floor**—literally grounding them! Notice the tension centered in your heels as you do this. Remind yourself that you are connected to the ground.
- **Carry a grounding object in your pocket**—a small object (a small rock clay, a ring, a piece of cloth or yarn) that you can touch whenever you feel triggered.
- **Notice your body**: the weight of your body in the chair, wiggling your toes in your socks, the feel of your back against the chair. You are connected to the world.
- **Stretch**. Extend your fingers, arms, or legs as far as you can; roll your head around.
- **Clench and release your fists**.
- **Walk slowly, noticing each step**, saying “left” or “right” with each step.
- **Eat something**, describing the flavors in detail to yourself.

Soothing Grounding

- **Say kind statements**, as if you were talking to a small child—for example, “You are a good person going through a hard time. You'll get through this.”
- **Think about things you love**. Think of colors, animals, foods, TV shows, etc. that you love.
- **Picture people you care about** and look at photographs of them.
- **Remember the words to an inspiring song, quotation, or poem** that makes you feel better.
- **Remember a safe place**. Describe a place that you find very soothing (perhaps the beach or mountains or a favorite room); focus on everything about that place—sounds, colors, shapes, object, textures.
- Say a coping statement: “I can handle this,” “This Feeling will pass.”
- **Plan a safe treat for yourself**, such as a piece of candy, a nice dinner, or a warm bath.
- **Think of things you are looking forward to in the next week**—perhaps time with a friend, going to a movie, or going on a hike.