

# Grounding Exercises 101



**Dr. Megan Anna Neff**

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## Grounding Exercises

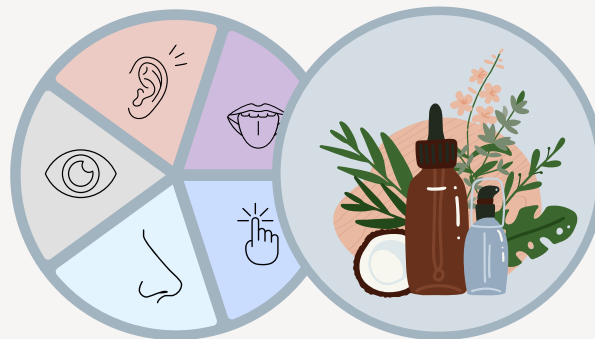
When it comes to grounding exercises, there are three main types to choose from. You might find that one category works better for you than the others. So, don't be afraid to give them all a try. If one doesn't quite click, no worries, just move on to another until you find the grounding exercise that works for you!



**Mental**



**Visualization & Self-Soothing**



**Tactile & Sensory**

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## When to Use Grounding

1. **During Intense Emotions:** Grounding can be particularly useful when you're experiencing overwhelming or intense emotions, such as anger, anxiety, or panic. Grounding can help you regroup.
2. **Anxiety or Panic Attacks:** Grounding exercises can help manage the symptoms of anxiety or panic attacks by shifting your focus away from the distressing thoughts or sensations.
3. **Flashbacks or Intrusive Memories:** When you're dealing with distressing memories or flashbacks, grounding can help you reconnect with the present moment and get out of the traumatic memory more quickly.
4. **Feeling Disconnected:** If you ever feel detached from reality or your surroundings or are starting to dissociate, grounding techniques can help you regain a sense of presence.

## How Not To Use Grounding

1. **As a Distraction from Emotions:** Grounding should not be used as a way to avoid or suppress your emotions as a long-term strategy.
2. **When Driving or Operating Machinery:** Grounding exercises that require your full attention should be avoided when you need to focus on tasks like driving or operating heavy machinery.
3. **When Seeking a Quick Fix To Emotional Pain:** Grounding isn't a magic solution to make pain vanish instantly. Grounding techniques are not a quick fix or a magic solution to instantly eliminate pain. Their purpose isn't to make emotions disappear but rather to provide a stable anchor during challenging moments. If you're anticipating immediate relief, it's essential to adjust your expectations, as these practices are more about gradual support and resilience-building than something that makes the emotional pain resolve.

*The key is to use grounding as a tool for managing and navigating difficult emotions, not as a means to escape them.*



## Examples of Mental Grounding

- **Describe your surroundings in detail:** Describe your surroundings in intricate detail, using all of your senses—sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. This technique is sometimes referred to as the 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique (see the next exercise).
- **Detailed narration:** Narrate your current activities with exquisite attention to detail. Whether you're eating, walking, or driving, describe each action in a thorough and methodical manner.
- **Mental categorization:** Challenge your mind by categorizing objects, such as books, sports teams, cars, or music. For example, try to name as many items as possible in each category, like listing all the states that start with "M" or recalling TV shows from the 90s.
- **Alphabet focus:** Slowly recite the alphabet, letter by letter or pick an object in the room and spell its name backward, concentrating on each letter.
- **Number play:** Engage your brain with numbers. Solve math problems or count down from 100 by sevens to divert your thoughts and regain control.

## The 5.4.3.2.1 Grounding Technique

This is my personal favorite grounding technique: The 5.4.3.2.1. This technique combines both mental and sensory elements and can be particularly effective when initiated early during moments of panic, flashback, or sensory overload.

### The 5.4.3.2.1 Grounding Technique



**5 things you see**



**4 things you hear**



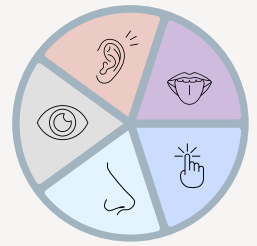
**3 things you feel**



**2 things you smell**



**1 thing you taste**



## Examples of Tactile Grounding

- Rub your hands together vigorously, directing your attention to the physical sensation of friction.
- Press your heels firmly into the floor and pay close attention to how it feels beneath your feet.
- Engage with objects around you by touching them while verbally naming them. Explore these objects using all your senses.
- Stamp your feet purposefully to create a physical connection with the ground.
- Adjust your posture to a more upright position, focusing on the change in your body's alignment.
- Run your hands under running water and concentrate on the sensation as it flows over your skin.
- Keep a small grounding item with you, such as a rock, piece of fabric, or a favorite fidget toy, to provide comfort and stability.
- Hold an ice cube in your hand for 60 seconds to redirect your focus to the physical sensations and ground yourself in the present moment.



## Examples of Sensory Grounding

Sensory grounding techniques offer a powerful form of grounding, helping to stabilize and soothe. These can range from engaging in vigorous movement to activate the proprioceptive system, to more calming methods like aromatherapy for sensory soothing. Below are some activities that serve as sensory grounding:

- Jumping jacks
- Yoga
- Using a TENs unit
- Sitting on a balance ball
- Moving furniture
- Cleaning
- Yard work
- Rocking in a glider or rocker
- Get under a weighted blanket
- Holding/chewing ice
- Eating lemon/spicy food
- Aromatherapy
- Kinetic sand/clay/pottery
- Listening to music
- Clapping your hands
- Creating tension (push hands together)
- Lifting weights
- Aromatherapy
- Mindful stretching
- Tossing medicine ball
- Cuddling a dog/cat/pet
- Push-ups/wall push-ups
- Clenching fists/jaw
- Cold/warm cloth to face/neck
- Hot/cold shower
- Playing an instrument
- Mindfully drinking something cold or hot
- Eating lemon/spicy food
- Kinetic sand/clay/pottery
- Listening to music
- Bean bag tapping
- Walking/running



## Examples of Visualization and Self-Soothing Grounding

- Harness the power of visualization: Picture a place where you feel calm and peaceful. Slowly immerse yourself in this mental image, using all your senses to imagine the smells, sounds, colors, and physical sensations of that place.
- Reassure yourself with self-soothing statements like "I can handle this," "I am resilient," or "I will get through this moment."
- Retreat to a safe mental sanctuary you've created: Pay attention to every detail of this imaginary place, from the environment and air temperature to any people, animals, or shelter that provide comfort.
- Plan a treat for yourself, whether it's a relaxing bath or a delicious meal, as a way to show self-care.
- Summon pleasant memories, scents, or thoughts of loved ones. Carry a photo or a keepsake that reminds you of someone who brings you comfort.
- Focus on positive events happening in the upcoming week or near future to shift your perspective toward hopeful anticipation.
- During each exhale, repeat calming words such as "relax" or "calm" to anchor your mind in a tranquil state as you breathe.



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## Suggestions to make grounding work well

- **Regular Practice:** Consistently practice grounding techniques to build your skill and make them more effective over time.
- **Create a Handy List:** Keep a list of your preferred grounding strategies readily accessible. You can jot them down in a diary, leave a note in your car, or attach it to the fridge. Having this reminder makes it easier to incorporate grounding into your daily routine.
- **Early Intervention:** Start employing grounding exercises as early as possible when you sense distress or anxiety creeping in. This proactive approach can help prevent the escalation of negative emotions.
- **Before-and-After Assessment:** Monitor your stress or pain levels by rating them before and after practicing grounding. This self-assessment enables you to identify which grounding techniques work best for you and can guide your future choices.

# GROUNDING HELPERS

Tactile objects and other items can help facilitate grounding. Some of my favorites include pop-its, essential oils, fidget rings, and other high-textured items. Below are some of my favorite items to have on hand with me for grounding purposes.

## Pop-it fidget toys



## Gravity Blanket

## Essential Oils



## Natural Campfire Incense



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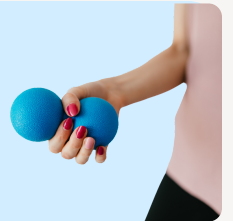
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## Fidget Cube



## Fidget Bracelet

## Stress Balls



## Fidget Ring



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