Therapy Care
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FREE RESOURCE · FEELING OVERWHELMED OR FAR AWAY · PICK WHAT SUITS THE MOMENT

Grounding techniques menu

Distressing thoughts, memories or feelings can carry you away from the present. You might feel numb, far off, or as if things aren't quite real. This is sometimes called dissociation, and it's common, especially after difficult or frightening experiences. Grounding gently brings your attention back to now. Choose whichever idea suits the moment; there's no right one.

Notice your senses

What you can see, hear and touch right now is happening in the present.

- ✓ **5-4-3-2-1:** name five things you can see, four you can feel, three you can hear, two you can smell and one you can taste.
- ✓ **Cold water:** run it over your hands or wrists, or splash your face.
- ✓ **A strong scent:** peppermint, coffee, or a hand cream you like.
- ✓ **Something to hold:** keep a small object in your pocket, like a smooth stone or a keyring, and notice how it feels.

Move your body

Movement reminds your body where it is and helps use up stress.

- ✓ **Plant your feet:** press them into the floor and feel the ground holding you up.
- ✓ **Change position:** stand up, move to another room, or sit somewhere different.
- ✓ **Stretch:** reach up high, then let your arms drop and roll your shoulders.
- ✓ **Get going:** a brisk walk, a few star jumps, or dancing to a song you like.
- ✓ **Squeeze and let go:** clench your fists or curl your toes for a few seconds, then release.

Settle your body

A calmer body helps a racing mind slow down too.

- ✓ **Slow your breathing:** make each out-breath a little longer than the in-breath, or try box breathing.
- ✓ **Relax your muscles:** tense and release one part of your body at a time, working up from your feet.
- ✓ **Gentle stretches:** a few slow stretches or yoga poses.
- ✓ **Comforting touch:** a hand on your chest, your arms wrapped round yourself, stroking a pet, or a hug from someone you trust.

Shift your attention

When your mind keeps going somewhere painful, give it something else to do.

- ✓ **Step outside:** notice the sky, the weather and the air on your face.
- ✓ **Reach out:** call or message someone and talk about everyday things.
- ✓ **Count or list:** count back from 100 in sevens, or name an animal for each letter of the alphabet.
- ✓ **Get absorbed:** a puzzle, a game, a favourite programme or a few pages of a book.
- ✓ **Listen:** music, a podcast or an audiobook that steadies you.

Find where and when you are

Feeling far away can blur the place and the time. Name them.

- ✓ **Where:** say out loud the room, the building and the town you are in.
- ✓ **When:** say the day, the date and the time, and check them on a clock or phone.
- ✓ **Now, not then:** if a memory has taken you back, notice what is different today: where you are, who is around you and how much time has passed.

Remind yourself you're safe

Old memories can feel as if they are happening again. They are not.

- ✓ **Words to say:** "I'm safe now." "This is a memory." "This feeling will pass." "I've got through this before."
- ✓ **Something from now:** carry a photo, a note or an object from your life today.
- ✓ **A note to yourself:** write a few lines when you feel calm, to read when things are hard.

Be kind to yourself

Being hard on yourself only adds to how bad you feel.

- ✓ **Make sense of it:** "Of course I feel like this. Something stirred up old feelings, and I'm safe right now."
- ✓ **Treat yourself like a friend:** what would you say to someone you care about who felt this way? Say it to yourself.
- ✓ **Look after yourself:** rest, have a warm drink, or wrap up in something soft.

Use your imagination

Your mind responds to what you picture. These work best when practised while you are calm.

- ✓ **A calm place:** picture somewhere, real or imagined, where you feel settled. Notice what you see, hear and smell there.
- ✓ **A kind presence:** imagine being with someone warm and accepting, real or imagined, who wants the best for you.
- ✓ **Good memories:** bring to mind a time, a place or a person that felt safe.

Helpful tips

- ✓ Try a few ideas while you're calm, so you know which work for you. Circle them on this sheet.
- ✓ It's fine if one doesn't help. Move on and try another.
- ✓ Grounding often works best with more than one idea together, such as slow breathing while you name what you can see.

Need help right now? If you're in crisis or worried about your safety, call 999 or go to A&E. For urgent mental health support, call 111 and choose the mental health option (in Northern Ireland, call Lifeline on 0808 808 8000), or call Samaritans free on 116 123, any time.

A gentle note. These tools aren't a replacement for counselling or medical care. If something here brings up a lot for you, it's okay to stop. You don't have to work through things on your own. If you'd like to talk to someone, get in touch: 07826 774307 · carey@therapycare.co.uk · www.therapycare.co.uk.