

# Grounding Exercises

## Grounding

Grounding is a technique of *bringing focus* to a physical space or to the body, moving away from intrusive thoughts and anxiety.

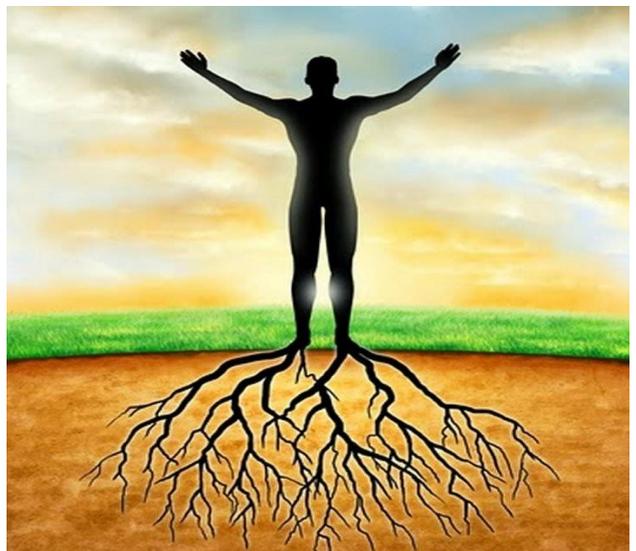
It is a great way to calm the racing mind, taking you back to the 'here-and-now', while helping to manage overwhelming thoughts, feelings and anxiety.

Grounding exercises help the brain to realize the body is not in danger by being in the 'here-and-now'. They help you get *out of your head*, and help you focus your mind on what you physically feel instead of on anxious and stressful thoughts.

There are many ways to "ground". You can use as many of your senses as possible, or use only one of your senses. You can use objects in your space, or a specific chosen item.

❖ Here are a few suggestions:

- Grounding chair
- Using your senses
- Grounding object
- Outside observer
- Distract yourself
- Working off excess energy



# Grounding Exercises

## Grounding Chair

1. Sit comfortably in a chair, scoot back to where your back is in full contact with the chair's back. Ensure you are comfortable, your feet should be touching the floor.
2. Take a slow breath in, and then let that breath out slowly, close your eyes. How does your body feel to sit in the chair?
3. Take a moment to notice where you feel your body making contact with the chair's surface, your back, thighs, and arms. What is the texture of the material?
4. Notice where there is support from the chair. Are your arms fully supported or part of your arm hanging off? Is the seat of the chair to the back of the knees or part of your thighs have no contact?
5. Next, press your feet into the ground. Imagine negative energy draining from your mind through your body, feet and then into the ground. What does that energy look like? Is it a colour? Is it a pattern?
6. As the energy moves from the head down through each part of the body to the toes, feel the heaviness it carries with it.
7. Now notice your body parts relax after the heaviness and energy have moved through them and into the floor.



# Grounding Exercises

## Using Your Senses

In this exercise, you will be using all your senses to “ground” and get back to the present moment.

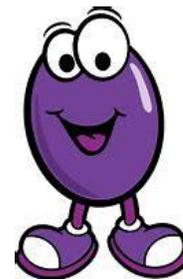


1. Start by sitting comfortably and closing your eyes. Take a couple of deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.
2. Open your eyes, look around you and name out loud:
  - 5 things you can **see** (*it can be items inside the room or outside through the window*).
  - 4 things you can **feel** (*this can be parts of your own body or the furniture in the room, notice the texture*).
  - 3 things you can **hear** (*the sound can be coming from inside the room or out. It is surprising the sounds that go unnoticed until we are paying purposeful attention or quiet the mind*).
  - 2 things you can **smell** (*hopefully it is enjoyable to smell*).
  - 1 thing you can **taste** (*you can carry with you a small morsel of food for this part of the exercise*).

# Grounding Exercises

## Using Your senses *continued..*

You can also use all 5 senses to explore 1 object:



1. Choose an edible item, such as a raisin.
2. Place the item between your finger and thumb.
3. Look at its colour, texture, lines and ridges. Hold it up to the light noticing the different colours.
4. Gently squeeze it and release several times, taking time to look closely at it, noticing its shape changing (if it changes).
5. Squeeze and roll it between your finger and thumb, think of words that describe the feeling. Think about how much pressure it would need before it popped.
6. Squeeze until it pops or breaks. Did it make a sound? Describe the sound.
7. Place the object in the centre of your palm.
8. Take time to think of the feeling of the item in the palm of your hand. You may feel almost nothing in the first instance, give this time, really concentrate, focus all you can on the feel of the item in your palm.
9. Notice the rest of your hand, does it feel cooler, hotter, are you aware of any slight breeze or cool air on it.

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# Grounding Exercises

## Using Your senses *continued...*

10. Hold it under your nose and think of words that describe the smell. Is there a smell to the item?
11. Now pop it in your mouth, just holding it on your tongue. Does it taste bitter, sweet, horrid or delightful?
12. Rub it on the roof of your mouth, notice your saliva increasing and what else is happening in your mouth.
13. Move it around in your mouth and begin to swallow gently again, noticing the taste is changing when it moves to different parts of your mouth.
14. Swallow the item, noticing it going down the back of your throat also the taste you have in your mouth now that it's gone.
15. Take a deep breath to end this exercise.



# Grounding Exercises

## Grounding Object

Find and keep a small item you find interesting to look at—something you can carry easily in your pocket or purse. Some examples are a small piece of crystal, a rock or favourite jewelry.

This exercise can be especially useful when going into a stressful situation or at any time.

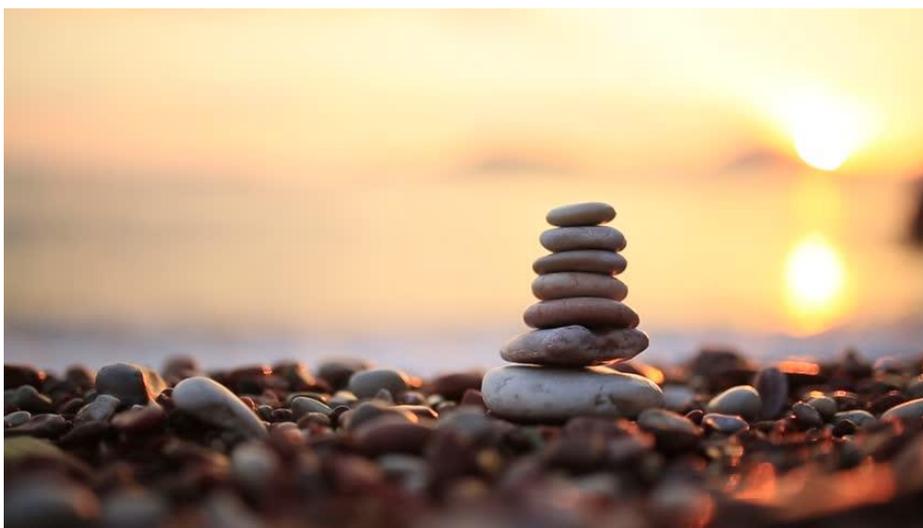
Place the item between your finger and thumb. *Feel* the texture on your fingertips.

*Look* at its colour, texture lines and ridges. Hold it up to the light noticing the different colours.

Squeeze and notice if its shape changes. Squeeze and roll it between your finger and thumb, describe the feeling.

Place the object in the centre of your palm, feeling how heavy or light it is.

- ❖ The goal is to bring your full focus to the object you are holding.



# Grounding Exercises

## Outside Observer

Thoughts have a way of becoming intrusive, they can feel like a never-ending merry-go-round in your mind. Worry and stress tend to worsen intrusive thoughts. Sometimes they keep building, and the more you try to stop them, the more they are there.



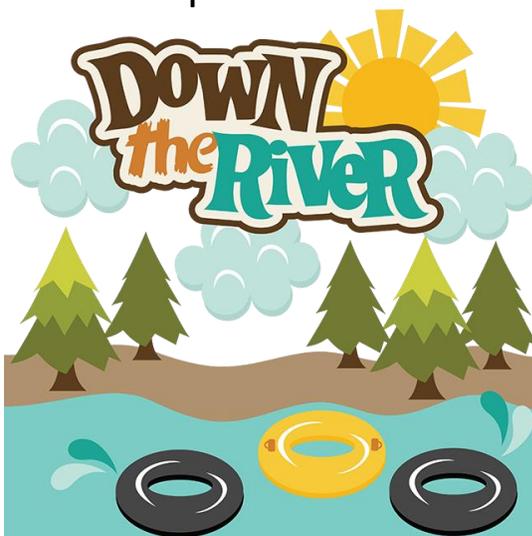
- ❖ Becoming the *outside observer* to your thoughts gives you a different perspective. Letting go can prevent the building and the merry-go-round in your mind.

1. Begin with imagining yourself standing outside of your mind, watching your thoughts as leaves floating on a stream.

2. As each thought enters the stream of your mind, acknowledge that it is there.

- The important part is letting it then float down the stream.

- ❖ The goal in this exercise is to allow your thoughts to come and go, you do not have to respond to them.



# Grounding Exercises

## Working Off Excess Energy

Grounding exercises can sometimes be challenging to focus on when you have excess pent-up energy. Getting the pent-up energy out using a physical means is an excellent way to begin your calming exercises.

- ❖ Some activities could include walking or running outside or on a treadmill, going up and down the stairs, cleaning or organizing your home, dancing while listening to music or other fun physical activities.

Once you are physically spent, try one of the different grounding techniques to calm the mind.

You will realize different techniques work better at different times, and others may not work well for you at all.

- ❖ The goal is to give them a try to see which ones work best and when.

After you have grounded and calmed the mind, challenge the thoughts that were causing anxiety and stress in the first place.



*This material has been adopted from Dr. Sarah Allen ([www.drSarahallen.com](http://www.drSarahallen.com)) and [www.fndhope.org](http://www.fndhope.org)*