

Grounding & Orienting Skills

Sometimes, anxiety can make it hard to focus on what is happening around you. If you find that your worries are distracting you from doing things and being present, certain “grounding” and “orienting” techniques can be helpful for bringing you back to the present moment.

Grounding

Grounding is a process of tuning into our physical presence. It can help neutralize anxiety, distress, and trauma reminders. The goal is to bring ourselves into the here and now. Grounding exercises can be helpful for people who are distressed by thoughts or internal sensations (such as those accompanying flashbacks, panic attacks, anxiety spirals, etc.)

Soles of the Feet

1. Sit in a chair.
2. Press your hands into your thighs. Notice the pressure as you press into your legs.
3. Then, dig your heels into the floor, followed by your toes. Notice the pressure of your feet against the floor.
4. Take at least 3 full breaths while you rock your feet back and forth against the floor.

Fire Hands

1. Rub your hands together quickly.
2. Feel the heat generating between your hands.
3. Once your hands are warm, place your palms on different parts of your body (e.g., forehead, cheeks, arms).
4. Focus on the warmth coming from your palms for at least 3 breaths.

Sand Legs

1. Stand with your knees bent.
2. Slowly shift your weight from side to side as if pouring sand down each leg.
3. Notice the feeling of your legs getting heavier and heavier and sinking into the ground.
4. After several breaths, shake your legs out of the “sand.”

Orienting

Orienting is bringing awareness to our current location in space and time. Orienting techniques help us refocus our attention to where we currently are.

Scan the Room

Slowly look around the room or location you are currently in. Look above, behind, and next to you. Try to find different colors or shapes (e.g., 5 red objects or 5 circles).

Listen for...

Take a moment to pause and listen for sounds occurring in your immediate environment.

- Can you hear birds chirping?
- Can you hear the hum of an air conditioner?
- Do you hear nearby traffic?

Five Senses

Look around you slowly and name:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Resourcing

Resourcing guides us to identify sources of strength, support, and resilience in our lives or memories. A resource can be a physical sensation, a person, a place (real or imagined), an animal, a sound/song, etc.

- What (who/where) brings you joy? Describe that person/place/thing.
- Where do you feel safest or happiest, even if you’ve never been there? Picture you are there. What do you see, hear, touch? Who is with you? What time of day is it? What is around you?