



Grounding Techniques

A Guide to Coping with Anxiety, Trauma, and Stress

Grounding Techniques

These techniques can be used to help others when they are feeling anxious, tense, or having a strong emotional response due to a traumatic event. A person may have a sudden and severe emotional or physical response stemming from the traumatic event. This can be caused by a flashback. A flashback is when the person feels as if they are reliving the terrifying experience. Flashbacks are caused by a trigger, which can be anything that makes their body respond as if they are back in the traumatic event. Specific triggers will vary from person to person, but they can include sounds, smells, sudden movements, or returning to the location of the traumatic event. The person may have difficulty breathing, feel scared, begin crying, want to run and hide, or have an out-of-body experience. You can help the person by redirecting their attention from what they are experiencing to what is happening in the present moment. These techniques are called grounding techniques, and a person can learn to do it themselves, or a person can help prompt them.

Physical Grounding Techniques

- Pick up and touch an item near you. Ask yourself, “Does it feel heavy or light, warm or cool? What are the colors or textures of the item?”
- Breathe deeply, imagine your breath coming into your body and filling you from your head to your toes. Hold it for five counts and then exhale for eight counts pushing the breath out of your lungs. Repeat several times. You can also imagine a bubble of your favorite color around you as you breathe in and then exhale the bubble further around you.
- Take a short walk and count the number of steps or set a pace of six quick steps and then two long steps.
- Try the 5-4-3-2-1 Method. Use your senses to notice things around you: 5 things you hear, 4 things you see, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.



Thought Grounding Techniques

- Think in categories, for example, name as many animals, musical instruments, or Bollywood movies as you can
- Count backwards from 100 or say the multiplication tables in your head
- Recite a song, poem, mantra, prayer, or shabad. Imagine what the words look like on paper or in the Guru Granth Sahib.
- Look at something in the room and anchor yourself. For example, I am looking at my chai mug in my kitchen. I can see the curry plant in my kitchen and see it needs some water. It is Monday and my daughter will come down soon to go to school. I can see the refrigerator where she packed her lunch last night.
- Think of a positive memory of someone or an event that made you feel happy and safe

Relaxing Grounding Techniques

- Wrap yourself in a soft blanket and drink something warm
- Say kind words to yourself, as you would to someone you love. Examples: “This is a hard day, but I’m doing the best I can.” “I am strong, and it’s ok to take care of myself.” “Taking care of myself is helping me be a better person for myself and others.”
- Listen to music while focusing on each beat, sound, and word as if you are hearing it for the first time.
- Paint, knit, draw, color, do puzzles or crosswords
- Play with your children or grandchildren

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If you have any symptoms, questions or concerns, consult with your healthcare provider. If you have a psychiatric or medical emergency, please contact 911 or seek immediate care. This is not medical advice and does not replace care provided to you by your physician. If you need additional support, you may contact Sikh Family Center at 866-732-7392. This educational information may be reproduced or distributed with attribution and without alteration or permission. Additional educational resources are available at saldef.org. The content of this video or document was developed by the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) in partnership with the Sikh Healing Collective (SHC). This project was funded through a grant from The Asian American Foundation (TAAF). Learn more at: saldef.org.

