



Sexual Assault Support Services

## **Grounding Exercises: What to do when you are overwhelmed**

**What is Grounding?** Grounding is the set of exercises to become re-oriented to the present and feel centered again after having a trigger, flashback or emotionally overwhelming state.

### **Basic Safety**

Safety should always come before grounding.

- ✓ Do what you need to feel safe: lock the door; turn the lights on/off; call a trusted friend or the crisis line.
- ✓ Make sure you are not hungry or tired. If you need food, eat; if you need rest, make the space and time to get it.

### **Breathing Exercises**

Remember that the first thing we do when we get scared is to stop breathing normally. The first thing to do to invite our bodies to relax again is to breathe long and deep.

- ✓ Belly Breathe: pull in your tummy all the way when you exhale, and fill it up like a balloon when you inhale.
- ✓ Slow down your breath by counting 1-2-3 on the inhale and 3-2-1 on the exhale. Increase the numbers until you get to 7 and then count back down to 3.

### **Thinking Exercises**

When we feel scared or overwhelmed we go into “fight-or-flight: mode, which means we stop thinking with our logical brain and we think from our survival instinct. As survivors, we temporarily lose the ability to distinguish between danger and discomfort. Coming aback to our logical brain through the use of thinking exercises helps us be present and notice if we are in danger or just feeling uncomfortable.

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**Sexual Assault Support Services - [www.sass-lane.org](http://www.sass-lane.org)  
24 hr. Crisis/Support Line: 541-343-7277 or 1-800-788-4727**



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- Repeat your name, age and location over and over.
- Pick a color, and start naming all the things in the room that have that color.
- Name 5 animals, 5 states, 5 rivers, 5 countries etc.
- Repeat a poem, rhyme or song over and over.
- Describe the view out the window, your room, your house, etc.
- Do some simple math:  $4 \times 7$ ,  $53 + 96$ , etc.
- Pray in the way that works for you.

### **Sensation exercises**

For many of us another effect of feeling scared or overwhelmed is the sensation of “leaving our bodies”, or dissociating. Sensation exercises are helpful for “coming back” to our bodies.

- Press your feet onto the ground, your body and your hands onto the chair. Feel and describe the sensations of pressure, texture and temperature on your body.
- Hug a stuffed animal and rock in place.
- Walk around the room, around the block, around the neighborhood, walk anywhere that feels safe to you. If you can, walk with someone.
- Carry a polished stone, acorn, piece of wood or silly putty to knead and hold in your hand.
- Rub your favorite scented lotion on your hands or feet.
- Drink tea or juice or any non-caffeinated, soothing drink (drinking caffeine is like drinking stress, it launches your body into hyperalertness and you don't need that).
- Draw, paint or do any kind of expressive art.

**GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO RECOVER FROM FLASHBACKS AND OVERWHELMING FEELINGS.**