

3. Using your senses to ground yourself

We have a multitude of senses, external and internal. Our senses are essential to how we perceive a situation, and any action of how we think, feel, and act.

In this video we will focus mainly on the external senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch – and have little focus on the sense of balance, and the internal senses, such as the senses of pain, hunger, movement, temperature, etc..

Using ones senses to ground oneself is a helpful strategy for many.

I remind you, that all examples given in the videos here are suggestions that you are invited to follow. You are free to choose the ones that are meaningful and helpful to you.

You can use any of the senses to connect to the present moment. A suggestion is to start with what you sense in your surroundings and describe what you sense: What do your surroundings look like? What sounds do you hear? What do you smell? How is the touch of an object or material in your surroundings? Describe the taste of some food or drink.

You can extend the use of the senses, and start with one of them, e.g.

- Vision: Look around you in the room or the place where you are. Notice three things. Describe the three things you see, one at the time, describe in detail how each of them looks? What do you see? The color, shape, size. You may focus on a detail, zoom in to it – notice and describe the details. Take time to find words that describe what you see.
- Touch: if you are sitting on a chair with some textile: sense the material, describe in details what you notice, how does it feel? Soft – hard, etc. What words describe what you feel and sense?

- You may use the sense of hearing: Describe in detail: What do you hear in the present moment where you are? What different sounds are there? High – low – sharp – soft - volume? What words best characterize these sounds?

You may combine the use of different senses: for example vision with touch (e.g. of the textile of the chair you are sitting on). What do you see? And how does it feel? You can combine any of the senses.

You may take time to find objects that help you to ground in difficult times, e.g. for:

- Touch: a stress-ball, one that is either hard or soft & squeezable. Perhaps something from nature a stone, a pinecone? etc..
- Vision: a suggestion is to have a painting within reach with details that capture your attention available, notice what you see; or books with pictures that work well for grounding for you; or photos of safe persons in the present available to look at in difficult times.
- Hearing: music that stimulates awareness and attention to the here and now
- Taste or smell: Coffee? Smelling salts? Breath mints? Spices?

Take time to make a plan and strategy for how you can have good grounding objects available within easy reach in your home, as well as when you leave your home – so that they are available when you need to ground yourself. You may carry objects along in your bag, etc.

The grounding objects should *not* be associated with past trauma, i.e., they should not include any kind of triggers. Take time to identify and remove objects from your near surroundings that are distressing.

One can extend the grounding strategies, some suggestions are to:

- Draw an object: This is not about performing drawing-skills. If you have a pencil and a corner of a paper, and you start to feel activated, you may start to draw what you see: notice details of an object and put 'lines' on a piece of paper – whatever is available. The process of exploring the details and putting some lines on a paper has been helpful to many to get grounded.
- Go for a walk, plan that you will notice 5 things you see, 5 things you hear, touch, smell – on this walking-tour. You may write down what you sense and notice.
- Drink a glass of cold water, while focusing on what you sense throughout the process: the grip and touch of the glass, how it is to swallow the water, etc. This exercise includes the internal sense of temperature.

You can practice and use the senses to ground yourself anywhere, by yourself, and whenever you need to ground yourself.

Take time to notice how well does the skill work? And in which situation does it help? On a scale of 1-10, how present in the here and now do you feel before doing the grounding exercise, and how grounded do you feel after?

Think of using some time on a daily basis to practice these skills, so you are familiar with them when you need them for grounding in difficult times.

By practicing these exercises several times a day – for short periods – they will start to become part of your natural strategy to handle difficult moments! Take time to notice and acknowledge any steps forward, towards being more present in the here and now. You will keep getting better at them!

Good luck! Thank you!

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