

HANDOUT

GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

Mental Grounding Exercises

- **Breathe**...focus on your breathing. When you feel overwhelmed, scared, angry, etc... it is likely you have stopped breathing normally, and are breathing in shallow, short breaths. Shallow breathing from your chest can cause more anxiety and can leave you feeling more ungrounded. Begin by turning your attention to your breathing and try to breathe from deep within your diaphragm, which is located just under your stomach. Just allow yourself to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth as deeply as you can until you begin to breathe more normally.
- **Tell yourself that you are safe** and that you have already survived the worst. Remember that memories cannot hurt you and that these feelings will pass and are only temporary.
- Tell yourself that today is _____ (i.e. Monday), the year is _____, and that you are at _____. Remind yourself that you are ____ years old and an adult that is fully able to take care of herself.
- **Visualize some sort of object that you can place between you and your intense feelings** to create some distance. Ex: a wall, a suit of armor, a large field, an ocean, a gate. Imagine anything that can create a safe distance between you and your intense feelings.
- Name as many **colors** as you can in the room.
- Name as many **objects** as you can in the room.
- How many chairs, pictures, lamps, windows, etc... are in the room?
- Describe a picture in the room in as much detail as you can.
- What color is the carpet or rug in the room? What color are the walls?
- Name all of your favorite TV shows, movies and/or books.
- Name all of the people in your life who love and support you.
- Name all of the sports teams you can remember.
- Take the number 100 and subtract 5. Now subtract 5 again. Subtract 5 again. Do this again and again until you reach 0.
- List all your favorite things, such as your favorite animal, place to visit, movie, book, song, etc.

Physical Grounding

If you are standing:

- Place both feet on the floor and notice that they are connected to firm, solid ground. This works best if you feel safe enough to take off your shoes and socks and feel your bare feet on the floor.
- Wiggle your toes and dig your heels into the floor.
- Gently roll up onto the balls of your feet, which is the wider part of your foot that connects your toes with your feet. Notice whether you feel less stable and balanced than when your feet were firmly planted on the floor. Then roll back so that your feet are solidly on the ground. Notice how good it feels to feel stable and grounded in this position. Repeat as often as you want.
- Stand with your feet a few inches apart and bend your knees slightly. You may close your eyes if you feel safe. Gently roll back on your heels and try to balance. Notice whether you feel more or less stable and balanced than when your feet were solidly on the floor. Roll forward so that your feet are solidly on the ground. Notice how stable and grounded you are in this position. Repeat as often as you want.

If you are sitting:

- Focus on your body and be aware of what is supporting it. Notice how the chair, sofa, floor, etc... supports your body and molds itself to you. Be aware of what is supporting you and whether it feels hard, soft, cold, warm, rough, smooth, etc.
- Be aware of your need to feel safe and contained. Wrap yourself in a blanket, hold a pillow, or sit in a small space such as a closet or an area between pieces of furniture. Explore different places that help you feel safer and more grounded.
- Pick up a small item near you and hold it. Describe everything you can about it. Is it light or heavy, cold or warm, sharp or round, etc.
- Tense and release different muscle groups, such as making fists and releasing, curling your toes and releasing, tightening your stomach and releasing, raising your shoulders and releasing, etc.

Remember that you can try all of these or choose a few that work the best for you. It is entirely up to you!