

EMBRACING UNCERTAINTY: SELF CARE

Grounding

These techniques may help distract you from what you're experiencing and refocus on what's happening in the present moment. You can use grounding techniques to help create space from distressing feelings in nearly any situation.

PUT YOUR HANDS IN WATER

Focus on the water's temperature and how it feels on your fingertips, palms, and the backs of your hands. Does it feel the same in each part of your hand? Use warm water first, then cold. Next, try cold water first, then warm. Does it feel different to switch from cold to warm water versus warm to cold?

PICK UP OR TOUCH ITEMS NEAR YOU

Are the things you touch soft or hard? Heavy or light? Warm or cool? Focus on the texture and colour of each item. Challenge yourself to think of specific colours, such as crimson, burgundy, indigo, or turquoise, instead of simply red or blue.

TAKE A SHORT WALK

Concentrate on your steps — you can even count them. Notice the rhythm of your footsteps and how it feels to put your foot on the ground and then lift it again.

HOLD A PIECE OF ICE

What does it feel like at first? How long does it take to start melting? How does the sensation change when the ice begins to melt?

LISTEN TO YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Take a few moments to listen to the noises around you. Do you hear birds? Dogs barking? Machinery or traffic? If you hear people talking, what are they saying? Do you recognize the language? Let the sounds wash over you and remind you where you are.

TRY THE 5-4-3-2-1 METHOD

Working backward from 5, use your senses to list things you notice around you. For example, you might start by listing five things you hear, then four things you see, then three things you can touch from where you're sitting, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. Make an effort to notice the little things you might not always pay attention to, such as the colour of the flecks in the carpet or the hum of your computer.

USE AN ANCHORING PHRASE

This might be something like, "I'm Full Name. I'm X years old. I live in City, State. Today is Friday, June 3. It's 10:04 in the morning. I'm sitting at my desk at work. There's no one else in the room." You can expand on the phrase by adding details until you feel calm, such as, "It's raining lightly, but I can still see the sun. It's my break time. I'm thirsty, so I'm going to make a cup of tea."

DESCRIBE A COMMON TASK

Think of an activity you do often or can do very well, such as making coffee, locking up your office, or tuning a guitar. Go through the process step-by-step, as if you're giving someone else instructions on how to do it

LIST FAVOURITES

List three favourite things in several different categories, such as foods, trees, songs, movies, books, places, and so on.

DESCRIBE WHAT IS AROUND YOU

Spend a few minutes taking in your surroundings and noting what you see. Use all five senses to provide as much detail as possible. “This bench is red, but the bench over there is green. It’s warm under my jeans since I’m sitting in the sun. It feels rough, but there aren’t any splinters. The grass is yellow and dry. The air smells like smoke. I hear kids having fun and two dogs barking.”

LIST POSITIVE THINGS

Write or mentally list four or five things in your life that bring you joy, visualizing each of them briefly.

REMEMBER TO PRACTICE

It can help to practice grounding even when you aren’t dissociating or experiencing distress. If you get used to an exercise before you need to use it, it may take less effort when you want to use it to cope in the moment

START EARLY

Try doing a grounding exercise when you first start to feel bad. Don’t wait for distress to reach a level that’s harder to handle. If the technique doesn’t work at first, try to stick with it for a bit before moving on to another.

CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

Before and after a grounding exercise, rate your distress as a number between 1 and 10. What level is your distress when you begin? How much did it decrease after the exercise? This can help you get a better idea of whether a particular technique is working for you.

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN

Avoid closing your eyes, since it’s often easier to remain connected to the present if you’re looking at your current environment.