



Self Help

Dropping Anchor



Sometimes during distressing or crisis situations we may feel that we're caught in an emotional "storm" – tossed around by the waves and wind (i.e., our distressing thoughts and emotions) and unable to see and think clearly.

Grounding is a mindfulness technique that helps us bring our attention to the present moment. When we feel overwhelmed by our feelings and thoughts, we may lose track of our surroundings. Mindfulness helps us to reconnect to the present moment. It's about taking a moment to pause and check-in with ourselves. Though it can be very difficult to engage in mindfulness during times of distress or crisis, it is a helpful skill to practice and our capacity to use this technique will increase.

You can think of this practice as similar to a boat dropping anchor during a storm. Although dropping anchor won't necessarily make the storm pass, it does provide safety for the boat until conditions are calmer. Practicing this skill over time can help us feel more stable and improve our ability to handle stressful situations.

Follow the instructions below to '*drop an anchor*' when you notice yourself getting overwhelmed by your emotions and thoughts:

1. *Pause for a moment* to re-orient yourself with your surroundings
2. Take slow *deep breaths*, noticing how your chest rises and falls with each breath
3. Firmly *plant your feet* into the ground, feeling the muscles in your legs tense up
4. *Stand or sit up straight*, feeling the muscles in your back contract
5. Then look around you and describe *three things that you can see*
6. Listen to the sounds that might be present and describe *three things that you can hear*
7. *Repeat* the exercise until you feel more calm or grounded

Remember that it is normal for your attention to wander, and when you notice this happening gently turn your attention back to the exercise. You might find that practicing this exercise doesn't make all of the distressing thoughts and feelings go away – that's ok. See if you can create just a little bit of space between yourself and your distress. You may also notice yourself making judgements. This is a common and almost automatic response. If this happens, simply notice that a judgement has been made and gently bring your attention back to whatever it is that you are observing.