

Dissociation & Grounding Techniques

Raluca Ursica UK/Romania

Psychologist, Positive Psychotherapist, Trainer

What is Dissociation?

- ▶ Dissociation is being disconnected from the here and now. Everyone occasionally has times of daydreaming or mind wandering, which is normal.
- ▶ Dissociation may be a normal phenomenon, but like everything in life, all in moderation.
- ▶ When dissociation becomes the go-to solution is when it becomes a problem. When people are dissociating they disconnect from their surroundings, which can stop the trauma memories and lower fear, anxiety and shame.
- ▶ Anxiety, Panic, Phobias, Depression, Pain, Conversion disorder, PTSD, Delirium, Schizophrenia

Dissociation signs

- ▶ Spacing out; day dreaming
- ▶ Glazed look; staring
- ▶ Mind going blank
- ▶ Mind wandering
- ▶ Sense of world not being real
- ▶ Watching self from outside
- ▶ Detachment from self or identity
- ▶ Out of body experience
- ▶ Disconnected from surroundings

5 Important Things about Dissociation

- ▶ **The person dissociating is not dangerous:** when people dissociate, they are doing it not because *they* are dangerous, but because they perceive danger *toward themselves*.
- ▶ **Reality is not an option:** Trying to reason with someone who has dissociated is not going to be effective.
- ▶ **Anger is not helpful:** they are already reacting to a perceived threat, and anger will only build on that threat. If you must speak with them, use a calm voice and don't be surprised if they do not respond.
- ▶ **Acceptance is key:** Accept them. Try to understand them. Ask kind questions about what they think would help. Make them comfortable. Tell them they are safe.
- ▶ **Grounding techniques can help**

What are grounding techniques?

- ▶ Grounding is a practice that can help you pull away from challenging emotions, flashbacks, unwanted memories, etc.
- ▶ You can use grounding techniques to help create space from distressing feelings, they can help you stay in the present moment and focus on the here and now

Tips and Recommendations

- ▶ **Practice:** the more you do it the more it works
- ▶ **Start early:** at the first signs of distress
- ▶ **Avoid assigning values:** concentrate on the basics of your surroundings, rather than how you feel about them
- ▶ **Check in with yourself:** before and after the exercise
- ▶ **Keep your eyes open:** stay in the here and now
- ▶ **Keep both feet on the ground**
- ▶ **Practice the exercises with your clients!**

Types of Grounding Techniques

- ▶ Physical
- ▶ Mental
- ▶ Soothing

Physical techniques

- ▶ Pick up or touch items near you
- ▶ Breathe deeply 3 minutes: square breathing, blowing out candles / soap bubbles
- ▶ Move your body: tense and relax different muscle groups
- ▶ Feel your body: body scan, rub hands together
- ▶ Try the 5-4-3-2-1 method (see, hear, touch, smell, taste)

Mental techniques

- ▶ **Think in categories:** ice cream flavours, musical instruments, flowers, etc
- ▶ **Use math and numbers:** counting backward from 100, timetable
- ▶ **Use an anchoring phrase:** I am... I live in... today is... the time is... the weather is... I am sitting...
- ▶ **Describe a common task:** making your favourite food, using the washing machine
- ▶ **3 step breathing space:** How is my mind?, How am I feeling?, How is my body?
Now breathe

Soothing techniques

- ▶ **Practice self-kindness:** *My you be safe, May you be happy, May you be loved*

Talk to yourself as you would someone you love

- ▶ **List favourites:** food, music, people, animals, places
- ▶ **List positive things in your life**
- ▶ **Listen to music**

Thank you