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# **POSES AND MOVEMENTS**



# **FOR GROUNDING**

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## Poses and Movement for Grounding



### Symptoms Addressed

- Emotional awareness and regulation
- Concentration and attention
- Dysregulated interoception
- Memory
- Stress response
- DSM-5 PTSD arousal and reactivity symptoms





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Grounding poses and movements help clients focus attention downward, attuning to what it feels like for the body to connect with the ground/floor. During these exercises, the client intentionally focuses on one or more areas of the body (the feet, or sit bones) making contact with the earth. Focusing on the connection between the ground and the body creates a sense of stability and is a way, metaphorically, to "come back down to Earth" and into the present moment. Each of the poses and accompanying movements presented here may be practiced with clients in the context of psychotherapy, with little space and no equipment required.

Trauma often results in clients feeling anxious, lost, out of control, and stuck in the past. When this happens, dissociation may occur, and clients may report feeling "spacey" and ungrounded. Additionally, trauma can create a sense of uncertainty about the body, which may feel unsafe and untrustworthy after trauma. Grounding techniques reconnect clients with their bodies, the earth, and the present moment in ways that feel safe and stable.

Over time, a client's connection with the body and the earth can provide them with resources, a sense of support, and improved inner strength. As with trauma treatment in general, one goal of grounding techniques is to shift a client's tendency to avoid the body (and the self) to engage in escape behaviors, and instead turn inward during times of distress..

**Please Note:** The Partner Grounding Exercise requires a partner and can best be conducted in a group context. This allows for discussion between group members about their experiences with the exercise. It is recommended that this exercise only be conducted with individuals who fully consent to being touched, and who feel safe having a partner with whom to complete this exercise. This exercise will not feel safe to all trauma survivors, so use it with caution.



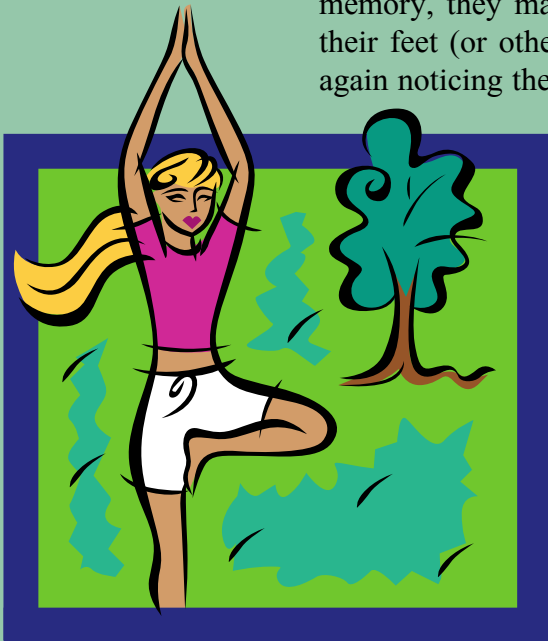


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## POSES AND MOVEMENT FOR GROUNDING TIPS

- The therapist may practice these poses and movements along with the client, especially as the client is learning them, in order to model the correct form.
- While in grounding poses, instruct clients to focus on the point at which their body makes contact with the earth, feeling the weight of the body on the ground, creating a sense of stability and connection with the present moment.
- During these exercises, attention may simultaneously be brought to the breath, focusing on long, slow, steady inhales and exhales.
- It is also recommended to have clients imagine that they are breathing into the poses and movement as they engage in them.
- If appropriate, these techniques can also be utilized with top-down, cognitive techniques, including trauma-focused approaches. For instance, while in a grounding pose, clients may be asked to access information regarding a traumatic memory. They remain in the pose as they do this, and continue to focus on pressing their feet or pelvis (or other body parts connected to the ground) into the earth as they discuss some aspect about the memory.
- Whenever a client experiences an unexpected, uninvited distressing memory, they may keep grounded in the present moment by pressing their feet (or other body parts connected to the ground) into the floor, again noticing the sensation of connecting with the earth.





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## THE EASY POSE

Gently enter a sitting position on the floor, meditation cushion, or chair. If you are seated on the floor or on a cushion, enter a cross-legged position. If you opt to complete this pose in a chair, plant your feet firmly on the ground.

Next, rest both of your hands (palm up) on the inside of your knees, or just above your knees, and allow your arms to fully relax. Notice what it feels like for your sit bones (and any other area of the body touching the floor or chair) to connect with the floor (or chair).



Begin to gently close your eyes and maintain continued focusing on what it feels like for your sit bones to make contact with the earth. As you do this, imagine your sit bones (and feet, if applicable) pushing further into the ground, creating a sense of strength and stability.

Now, as you continue to push your sit bones into the ground, begin taking long, deep breaths, maintaining focus on the connection between your body and the earth. Take three deep breaths while maintaining this awareness.

Next, as you continue to take long, deep breaths, begin to imagine that you are breathing into the sit bones, which remain firmly pressed into the ground. As you exhale, imagine breathing that air through the sit bones, into the ground, further stabilizing your connection to the earth. Maintain this focus and continue breathing in this way for a few



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## Incorporate Movement

Finally, begin to incorporate movement into this pose by gently rocking back and forth, shifting your weight from one sit bone to the other. Notice what it feels like to pendulate, or sway slightly off balance onto your left sit bone, and then rebalance at the center before swaying to your right sit bone. Continue to sway back and forth for a few moments, continuing to focus on the connection between your sit bones and the ground, breathing through the sit bones into the earth. When you are ready, you may gently begin to open your eyes and end this practice.







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## MOUNTAIN POSE

This yoga pose is called "mountain pose" because it creates the opportunity for the participant to feel strong, steady, and "grounded" into the earth, like a mountain. This beginner pose can be used as a foundation for other standing yoga poses, or can be practiced alone, to help you feel stable and strong.

To enter mountain pose, remove your shoes and stand up slowly from the chair, placing your feet hip distance apart. Direct your toes straight ahead and feel into the feet, noticing what it feels like for the feet to make firm contact with the ground (see figure below). At the same time, gently engage your hamstrings and quadriceps, and slightly tense the lower muscles of your abdomen area. During this pose it is recommended that you keep your eyes slightly open, gazing downward (but keeping your head upright) at a point on the floor about six feet in front of you.





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Next, return the focus back down to your feet, continuing to feel into the feet. Focus on pressing into the balls of each foot, the little toe mounds near the outside of the feet, and the heels. Imagine that these three areas of the foot form a triangle, and as you maintain this pose, concentrate on pressing into the three corners of the triangle. Imagine now that the corners of these triangles have nails, or roots coming out of them, extending down into the earth to ground and stabilize you. Stay here for a moment, continuing to notice the connection between your feet and the ground.

Now, as you continue to focus on this connection with the earth, begin taking long, deep breaths, visualizing the breath flowing upward through the body as you inhale, and back downward through the body and out the triangles of the feet, into the earth as you exhale.

Maintain this focus and continue breathing in this way for a few moments.



## Incorporate Movement

To incorporate movement into this pose, begin to gently rock back and forth, shifting your weight from one foot to the other. Notice what it feels like to pendulate, or sway slightly off balance onto your left foot, and then rebalance at the center before swaying to your right foot. Continue to sway back and forth for a few moments, continuing to focus on the connection between the triangles of your feet and the ground, breathing through the triangle points into the earth. Come back to center, holding this pose once more, grounding into the earth.

Once you have re-grounded your feet into the earth, begin to pendulate once more, this time by gently swaying forward and backward, slightly tipping yourself off balance as you do this. Continue this for a few moments before coming back to center, feeling once more into the earth with your feet. When you are ready, you may gently begin to open your eyes and end this practice.