**Grounding Techniques**

**Why is it necessary to ground yourself?**  
When we are in a time of stress or trauma the amygdala becomes activated. It is an almond shaped part of the brain which is part of the limbic (or emotion-processing) system. One of its roles is to detect threats and it activates the emotion of fear and a fight/flight/freeze/fawn response. The response involves switching off access to logic, and flooding the body with adrenaline ready for action. It can get extremely good at doing this, and sometimes this response is not necessary for survival – at these times, how do you calm this response?

**What is grounding?**

When you feel overwhelmed or disconnected, grounding brings you back to the here-and-now and is very helpful in managing overwhelming feelings or anxiety. It is a great way to calm down quickly. It allows you to reconnect with your body, and the other parts of the brain that may have been dampened by the amygdala.

**Grounding techniques**

1) Focus on your breath. Count your breaths, feeling the difference in temperature for the in-breath and the out-breath. Once you reach 10, begin again at 1.

2) Tense and relax parts of your body working from the feet up – this might be easier to do lying down, but can also be done in a chair. Feet, calves, thighs, buttocks, stomach, chest, arms, hands, shoulders, face.

3) The 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique (This is a great one to do while you are out walking)

Notice 5 things you can see

Notice 4 things you can hear

Notice 3 things you can touch

Notice 2 things you can smell

Notice 1 thing you can taste

4) Eat something sour or strong tasting – taste firmly grounds you in the present – have sour sweets handy or chewing gum.

5) Smell an essential oil – lavender can be calming and eucalyptus stimulating. Or a significant perfume.

6) Hold something – a pebble, a shell, playdough, a stress-ball – how heavy/light does it feels in your hand? how warm/cold? rough/smooth? texture? colour/patterns? does it have a smell?

7) Sometimes you might feel too full of adrenaline to be able to sit and concentrate on any of the above techniques. If this is the case you may need to do something physical to expel this feeling – shake your body, do some exercise – running, swimming, cycling, star jumps, press ups – sing at the top of your voice, do some cleaning, punch a pillow.

*Different things will work for different people at different times, don't be afraid to try more than one if the first thing you try doesn't work. Grounding also takes practise – try to do it several times a day, if only for 3mins.*