

#03



Understanding the Limbic System

Part of understanding trauma's impact on the brain is learning about the limbic system and its drive to protect us from danger, even when no actual threat is present.



Each Saprea Support Group meeting begins with 'Group Leader A' reading the script while participants follow along. The script will be the same for every group meeting. **To find the script, visit saprea.org/support-groups.** Below are the additional meeting materials for this course.



To watch the intro video for this lesson, scan the QR code or go to <https://vimeo.com/showcase/10293739>.

Group Activity

GROUNDING TO THE PRESENT

When you practice grounding, you are learning to anchor yourself to the present moment. This allows you to be more in tune with what you're feeling and experiencing now. By doing this, you can be aware of what you need in this moment—whether that's calming your body breathing, soothing racing thoughts about the past or future, or reminding your limbic system that you are in a safe place. One technique that can help you connect (or anchor) to the present is actively focusing on details that let you know you aren't a child trapped in an abusive situation from the past but an adult who is safe and practicing healing tools in the present.

ACTIVITY STEPS

PART 1—ANCHOR WITH QUESTIONS

- 01 Take a minute to go through the following list of questions. State the answer to each question in your head.
 - Where am I right now?
 - What's the time, day of the week, and date?
 - What temperature does it feel like?
 - What am I doing right now? ("I'm sitting in a support group ..." or "I'm practicing a grounding technique")

- What am I feeling in my body right now? Focus on each sensation.
- What is a color I can see right now? What else around me is that same color?
- What is an object I can see right now? What details do I notice about that object? (shape, texture, size)

02 After you've answered each of these questions, consider which question(s) you want to try out the next time you are practicing Mindfulness or are experiencing a trigger. Write that question down on something you can carry with you.

PART 2—ANCHOR WITH SAFE TOUCH

01 Hold up one hand and splay the fingers.

02 Trace upwards along the thumb of this hand as you inhale.

03 Pause your tracing at the top of the thumb. Hold for a couple of seconds.

04 Trace downwards along your thumb as you release your breath, making sure your exhale is longer than your inhale.

05 Repeat these steps as you trace the rest of your fingers, timing your breath as you trace upwards then downwards.

06 After you have finished tracing your fingers, allow yourself a moment to take a couple more paced breaths.

Grounding Exercise

5-4-3-2-1

This simple exercise is an example of sensory grounding, which involves directing your attention toward one or more of your five senses.

So let's begin.

Activity Steps

- 01** Take a moment to get comfortable and focus on the setting around you.
- 02** Name 5 things you can see. As you do so, label each one in your head.
- 03** Name 4 things you can hear.
- 04** Name 3 things you can feel.
- 05** Name 2 things you can smell.
- 06** Name 1 thing you can taste. Some people will carry oils or a mint so they have them ready should they need to ground using their senses.
- 07** Finally, take a moment to notice any other details around you or sensations you might be experiencing in this moment. Take a few deep breaths and allow yourself to simply be.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to explore the following articles in the Online Healing Resources section of our website at saprea.org.

- **TRAUMA AND THE BRAIN AND BODY**
- **GROUNDING TECHNIQUES**
- **TRIGGERS**

NEXT TOPIC:

#04



UNDERSTANDING SHAME

Survivors of child sexual abuse often experience persistent and intense feelings of shame, despite the truth that you did nothing to warrant that shame.