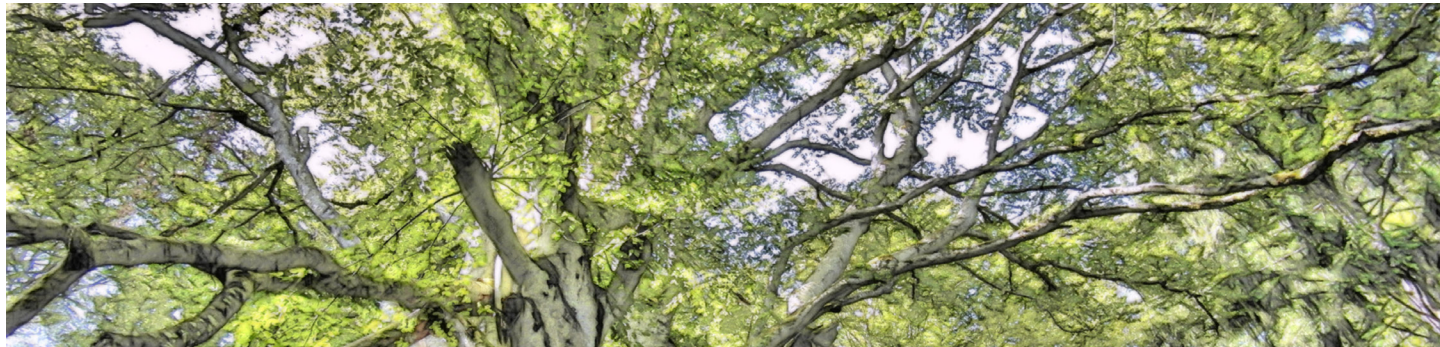


Grounding Activities and Trauma-Informed Practice



Maxine Harris says that in trauma-informed services “trust and safety, rather than being assumed from the beginning, must be earned and demonstrated over time.” Learning grounding activities can be important for staff and clients in trauma-informed organizations and systems.

For clients, they can help to manage a trauma response, increase feelings of safety, and support the development of the skills needed to begin healing. Grounding activities can increase awareness of trauma responses, help build therapeutic relationships, be included in safety plans and offer validation. For staff, grounding activities can help you remain present when working with clients and be included in your own self-care practices.

1. **Butterfly Hug.** Try a butterfly hug by crossing your arms (as if giving yourself a hug) and alternately tapping your left and right upper arm. Breathe and gently tap for a minute or two.
2. **Listen to your voice.** Say the words to an inspiring or comforting poem. Try “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou: “Just like moons and like suns, With the certainty of tides, Just like hopes springing high, Still I’ll rise.” Feel the vibration in your throat and listen to the sound in the air around your face.
3. **Ocean Waves.** Try breathing in and out like ocean waves. As you breathe out through your mouth, make a sound like the waves reaching land. Feel the rhythm of your breathing, like ocean waves moving in and out.
4. **Be Kind to Yourself (Self-soothing).** Whisper gentle reminders to yourself: “I am safe here and now. I can get through this. I am strong. I am loved. I am a good person. I am kind.”
5. **Say Your Name.** Remind yourself of who you are now. Say your name. Say your age. Where are you now? What have you done today? What will you do next?

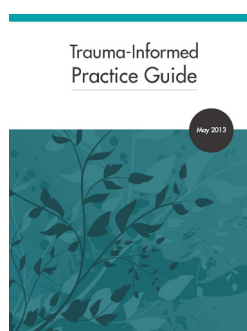
6. **Comfort Object.** Carry a grounding object such as a stone or photo in your pocket. Touch it for comfort when you need it.

7. **Beach Escape.** Imagine you are lying on a beach. Feel the sun on your face. Dig your feet in the sand. Notice the wind blowing your hair, the sound of the ocean and kids playing, and the smell of the salt air.

8. **Tree Roots.** Dig your feet into the ground. Pretend you are a tree, strong yet flexible. Feel rooted and connected to the earth.

9. **Ten Breaths.** Take ten breaths, focus your attention on each breath on the way in and on the way out. Say the number of each breath to yourself as you exhale. Gradually, allow your breath to expand and fill every corner of your body.

10. **Clap Your Hands Together.** Clap strongly and feel the slight sting as your hands meet. Now clap softly and feel for the movement of air between your hands. Put your full attention on this one simple act and see how many things you can notice about what your hands feel. Now rub your hands together vigorously until they generate some heat. Feel the heat in your palms and then bring your hands to rest over your eyes and take a few slow deep breaths.



For practice tips, see *Trauma-Informed Practice Guide* available for download from www.bcewh.bc.ca