

Appendix B: Suggested Resourcing, Grounding & Stabilization Techniques

These are possible preparation/stabilization/resource/grounding techniques the therapist can utilize to prepare the client for trauma processing and to use during processing if necessary. Some individuals may not be able to do Safe Place, so there are many possible alternatives. The therapist will use clinical judgment in determining when the client can tolerate the affect necessary to process the trauma and is ready to proceed.

Grounding/Breath Skills

“Make yourself just as comfortable as you can in your chair. Notice your feet on the floor. Feel the floor beneath your feet, press your feet into the floor to feel how it supports your feet.” (Pause for a few moments.) “Allow your focus to move up your legs to where you feel your weight in the chair, and just focus on that for a moment. Feel the support of the chair under you.” (Pause for a few moments.) “Then allow your focus to move up to where you feel your back against the chair and focus on that for a few moments.” (Pause for a few moments.)

“What do you notice now?” Ct. may respond with “I feel more present,” “I feel calmer,” or something similar.

“Allow yourself to notice that for a moment, just notice what that’s like to feel _____” (their words).

”What do you notice now?” If positive response from ct., you may install this with BLS by asking, “Where do you feel that in your body? Just notice that as I turn on the equipment/you follow my fingers.” Use slow, short sets to install, per standard resource development procedures.

Instruct the client to practice this skill throughout the days following the session.

Breathing Skills

“Make yourself as comfortable as you can in your chair. Just take a big, deep breath, all the way down into your belly and hold it for just a moment.” (Pause for a moment, but not to the point of discomfort.) “Just breathe that out.”

“What do you notice now?” Ct. may respond with something like “that feels good,” “I feel a little calmer,” etc.

“So just allow yourself to take that deep, slow breath again, and really notice what that _____ (client’s words) feels like as the air goes into your lungs, holding it for just a moment, and then allowing yourself to exhale slowly, noticing what it’s like as the breath leaves your lungs.”

“What do you notice now?” If you have a positive response from ct., you may install this with BLS by asking, “Where do you feel that in your body? Just notice that as I turn on the equipment/follow my fingers.” Use slow, short sets to install, per standard resource development procedures.

Instruct the ct. to practice this skill throughout the days following the session.

Safe/Peaceful Place

The goal of this exercise is to allow the first experiences of BLS to be positive, to assess readiness, ego strength, to develop a tool to be utilized before, during and after processing, and to help create a safe place in the office for processing.

Utilize the procedures you learned in EMDR Basic Training to develop and install an imaginary place or the memory of an actual experience when the ct. feels calm, safe, peaceful, maybe the best they have ever felt. Anchor this place/ experience in the body. Develop/install a cue word. Instruct the ct. to practice this skill to make it more available for them in the future.

If the client is not able to find a safe/peaceful place, use another skill for calming and soothing.

Alternatives to Safe/Peaceful Place

The following suggestions can be developed and installed similarly to safe/peaceful place and other resources. Elicit this information from the client:

Where is a place you feel safe?
Who is a person you feel safe with?
How safe do you feel here now?
Where in your body do you feel the most calm, most comfortable?
If you had a safe/peaceful place, what would it be like?
What experience of strength/success/self-efficacy/coping can you recall?
What positive body feelings do you have from a sport/music/creative activity, etc.?
What memory do you have of a time when you felt good about yourself?

With anything positive you are able to elicit, ask “where do you feel that in your body?” and then simply say “just notice that” and add short sets of BLS to strengthen.

Containers

Using an imaginal container allows the client to modulate the amount of material they are accessing at any given time. Use of a container reduces processing between sessions when the client does not want the material readily accessible. A client will learn that they can be in charge of what they are thinking about/feeling with using and practicing a container.

“I want you to imagine a container of some kind that you could use to hold _____ (unfinished material/uncomfortable or intolerable feelings/etc.) Think of something that can be temporarily sealed up, like a box, a jar, a chest, a small room, etc. It can be as big or small as you need it to be. What comes to mind?”

Client states something like “a box” or “a barrel.”

“Okay, great. Using your imagination, just see yourself putting all that _____ (unfinished material/uncomfortable or intolerable feelings/etc.) in that container. Take all the time you need, and get it all in there. Taking all the time you need, when it’s all in there, just seal it up.”

Check with the client to see if they need more time. If so, allow them to continue until they have the container sealed up. If they are struggling to get the material in there, ask if they need help, like a tool or someone to help them. The client can use their imagination to bring in whatever help they need and continue to put the material in the container, taking all the time they need, and sealing it up temporarily. The client can continue until they feel complete, and just check in with them to see if they need more time.

Ask the client “What do you get?”

The client will usually state something like, “it’s all in there,” or “most of it is in there,” or “that feels better.”

Then ask, “What do you notice in your body?” With any positive client response, install.

“Notice how that feels in your body,” and add BLS for installation.

Suggest that the client practice this skill whenever anything sneaks out of the container. A client can also contain material/affect by sending it to the future (their next session, etc.) or sending it to the therapist’s office.

Resource Extending

In Roy Kiessling’s section on “Extending Resources,” in Marilyn Luber’s *EMDR Scripted Protocols, Basics and Special Situations* (2009, pp. 87-92, see references), the client is asked to identify a skill, strength, or resource they feel will help them deal with the trauma. After being asked to focus on that resource, add BLS, asking at the end of the set, “what do you notice and feel?” This resource can be anchored with a cue word or physical anchor (pressing a knuckle, etc.) and then should be practiced with cued and uncued distress to further install the resource. An anticipated disturbance can also be cued, with the client utilizing their resource for calming and soothing.

Four Elements “Light”

Based on the “Four Elements Exercise for Stress Management” by Elan Shapiro (in Luber, *Basics and Special Situations*, 2009), this shortened version is very useful for quick grounding.

Explain that the “four elements” are air, earth, water and fire. For air, ask the client to take a deep breath. Give them a moment to stay with that. For earth, ask the client to notice their feet on the ground, the chair under and behind them, and again, give them a moment to stay with that. For water, ask the client to make saliva, and give them a moment. For fire, ask the client to look around the room for something the color of fire, such as red, orange, yellow, blue, and white. Bring the client back to air, with a big deep breath, and then ask what the

client notices. Most of the time, the client will say something like, “better,” “more present,” “calmer,” etc.

Future Healthy Adult Self

The therapist asks the client to describe how they want their life to be, what they want to be different, how they want to feel, when treatment is complete. They may say, “I want to be sober, happy, independent, and have a job I like.”

Read this description back to the client with BLS and ask them to see if an image of that “future healthy self” begins to show up.

They will report an image of what they will look like/feel like/act like as that future healthy adult, further develop that image by asking questions like “what are you wearing as that future healthy adult?” “How does that future healthy you feel in his/her body?”

Install further with BLS and strengthen with BLS until there is no change. Ask for a name for that future healthy self, things like “Healthy Joe,” “Happy Susan,” etc., and install with the name, possibly anchoring physically to a knuckle, etc. You can also further install with cued and uncued distress to strengthen their access to this resource. You can further install with a physical anchor with pressing a knuckle, etc.

Ask the client to practice this resource by bringing up this image/name/anchor, until they notice a shift in their body, in the days following installation of this resource.

This resource can be utilized as an interweave if processing is stuck, or if the emotions become too overwhelming for the client during processing.

Oasis/Healthy Pleasurable Activities

This tool can also help the client develop skills of affect regulation/self-soothing. Ask:

“What is a favorite activity that you have?” Client may say things like “needlepoint,” “watching football on TV,” “running,” “petting my dog,” etc. Keep the focus on a non-addictive/compulsive activity (i.e., not smoking, drinking alcohol, snorting cocaine, etc.).

“Bring up an image of yourself doing that. Describe the scene to me. What do you see, hear, smell, and feel?”

Keeping the client focused on the positive aspects only of this experience, further develop as necessary and install with BLS. Ask for a cue word and possibly anchor to a knuckle, etc. Suggest again that the client practice in the days after the session.

Spiritual Beliefs

This is another possible resource to assist the client with affect management and tolerance, self-soothing, etc. Ask:

“What spiritual beliefs do you have that are particularly helpful to you?”

Client may say things like, “I believe in God,” “I know God is there to help me,” “I really like to say the rosary,” “I believe everything happens for a reason,” etc.

“What do you notice in your body when you say that?”

Client may say things like, “My heart feels warm,” “I feel calmer,” “I feel more hopeful,” etc.

“Focus on that,” and use BLS to install. Perhaps ask for a cue word for this resource, install with a physical anchor, further install with cued/uncued distress, etc. Ask the client to practice this resource in the hours or days following the session.

Skills/Strengths Client Would LIKE to Have

“What do you feel you need inside to be able to process the trauma?” The client may say something like “courage.”

“I want you to think of a time when you felt courage, when you really faced the fear and did what you needed to do even though you were afraid.”

Client can describe the time they had that experience.

“What image represents that experience?” The therapist will ask the client to brighten/turn up the volume on that image. Strengthen with BLS until it no longer changes. Ask for a cue word and/or physically anchor in the body.

Ask the client to practice going to this resource in the days following the session.

Light Stream (Shapiro, 2001)

“Notice any upsetting sensations in your body. If it had a shape, what shape would it be?” Wait for ct’s response, and then say: “If it had a size, what size would it be?” Again, wait for ct’s response, and then say: “If it had a color, what color would it be?” Wait for response. “If it had a temperature, what temperature would it be?” Wait for response. “If it had a texture, what texture would it be?” Wait for response. “If it had a sound (high pitched, low pitched, etc.), what sound would it be?” Wait for response. “What is your favorite color that you associate with healing?” Wait for response.

“Imagine that a light of this favorite color is coming in through the top of your head and directing itself at that sensation in your body. Let’s pretend that the source of this light is the cosmos so the more you use, the more you have available. The light directs itself at the sensation and resonates, vibrates in and around it. As it does, what happens to the sensation shape, size, color, temperature texture or sound?”

If the client reports any change, continue to repeat the direction in the paragraph above (underlined) and ask for feedback until the shape is completely gone. This may correlate with the disappearance of the upsetting body sensation. After reducing this sensation, bring the light into every portion of the person’s body, ask for a positive statement for peace and calm until the next session. Ask the client to bring themselves back into the room.