

MODULE 8

Containment II

Session VIII

Containment

Week 2

Meeting A Grounding

Materials EV Grounding pp. 17-19
EV Worksheet #1
Specialist grounding demonstration
Kluft time temporizing technique article

Goal – Members will identify different grounding techniques.

Goal – Members will practice grounding techniques daily, outside of group.

Discussion Questions

Meeting B Imagery

Materials EV p. 27 with worksheet
MTSTA exercise 2
EV pp. 37-38

Goal – Members will be able to select imagery techniques that are symptom appropriate.

Goal – Members will practice imagery techniques outside of group at least twice a week.

Tool: Grounding

Objectives: to increase present focused awareness; to facilitate clear reality contact; to reduce posttraumatic experiences (i.e., flashbacks, hypervigilance, and intrusive recollections) and to reduce dissociative experiences (i.e., spontaneous trance, depersonalization, time loss and uncontrolled switching).

Concepts:

1. **Present focused awareness** is an important way of combating the avoidance which occurs through dissociation (spontaneous trance, uncontrolled switching, time loss, and depersonalization) and traumatic stress adaptations (numbing, avoidance, flashbacks, nightmares, and panic). If we are paying attention to the here and now, then we are less likely to be lost in the past with no awareness of present day resources. In addition, we are also less likely to be caught up in fearful thoughts about the future. In the past, dissociation may have been the only defense against trauma; leaving the body was a helpful skill back then. It was too painful and/or dangerous to focus on experiences as they happened. In the present however, shutting thoughts and feelings out or leaving our bodies re-creates the old fears and makes us feel just like we did as a child. Present focused awareness is your defense against becoming trapped in the hopeless and helpless feelings of the past.
2. **Grounding** is the process of achieving present focused awareness and becoming connected to reality in the present moment. Stress responses can numb people so they don't experience the terror and the horror of trauma in the moment. Dissociation and numbing continue to reduce present awareness in an attempt to protect against overwhelming traumatic events and experiences. However, over time, dissociation and numbing may fail or may interfere with

everyday life. Survivors become aware of stress responses such as flashbacks. Dissociation and numbing were wartime survival techniques. Using wartime strategies during peacetime is not effective. Dissociation may have helped you to manage the unmanageable, but, as an adult in peacetime, you need life skills rather than survival skills. Just like war veterans with PTSD who struggle to cope with peacetime living, you need to learn how to manage intense, overwhelming experiences in more present-focused ways.

Bill had a traumatic childhood. He witnessed terrible fights between his parents and had to protect his brothers and sisters from his father. He was always afraid when he heard people yelling because it had always meant danger in his house. He used to "fade away" (trance out) whenever the yelling would start so that he wouldn't have to be scared. Now, as an adult, Bill can't go anywhere that might expose him to yelling because he becomes terrified and "fades away" (trances out) almost automatically. Bill's inability to manage his reactions to yelling severely restricts his life because he can't be around his children when they yell, and he can't enjoy things like ball games because of the yelling. Sometimes he hears yelling in his head, and he can't stop himself from fading away. Bill's posttraumatic experiences (flashbacks) and wartime coping mechanisms (fading away) are interfering with his peacetime life.

There are several things that Bill can do to help himself. The first of those things is to begin using grounding techniques with self-talk. Bill will need to practice the techniques almost constantly in order to combat the automatic numbing and dissociation that takes over when he is "triggered" by the yelling.

Grounding Worksheet 1

Interventions

Using Your Five Senses

- **Sight** - open your eyes; look around; name present day sights; connect with them (this is my driver's license etc.) realize that you're an adult; look at how tall you are
- **Sound** - listen for present day sounds and name them; let them bring you closer to the present; talk to yourself inside; say reassuring things
- **Taste** - suck on a peppermint; chew gum; drink coffee; use tastes that are connected with being safe and being an adult
- **Smell** - use scented hand lotion; potpourri; perfume; or scented candles to remind you of the present
- **Touch** - hold a safe object; feel textures and let them bring you closer to the present, pet your cat or dog (or parrot!) connect with a loving presence in your life and let it help you remain in the present

Items to use for grounding yourself:

<u>Sight</u>	<u>Sound</u>	<u>Smell</u>	<u>Taste</u>	<u>Touch</u>
watch or clock	soothing music	scented candle	peppermint	lotion
photograph	nature sounds	potpourri	cinnamon	a stone
outdoors	familiar sounds	scented lotion	lemon	ice cube
driver's license	your voice	essential oils	chewing gum	pets

Grounding Worksheet 6

Use this sheet to keep track of how focused or grounded you are for a whole week. Put a number from 1-10 in each box for each hour. Indicate how grounded you are. A 1, 2 or 3 would show that you aren't very grounded; 4, 5, or 6 would show moderately grounded; and 7, 8, 9 or 10 would indicate mostly grounded.

Not grounded 1-----5-----10 Very grounded

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8:00am							
9:00am							
10:00am							
11:00am							
12:00pm							
1:00pm							
2:00pm							
3:00pm							
4:00pm							
5:00pm							
6:00pm							
7:00pm							
8:00pm							
9:00pm							
10:00pm							

Do you notice any patterns (days of the week, times of day) to your dissociative adaptations? If so, what are they?

Are these patterns meaningful to you? Do they relate to past experiences? How so?

Do the patterns relate to present day stressors? How so?

Tool: Imagery

Objectives: To reduce the frequency and intensity of unpleasant or frightening imagery and increase the use and effectiveness of positive, soothing, and helpful imagery.

Concepts:

Imagery is the process of using your imaginations. You can use your imagination to soothe yourself, solve a problem, or visualize a goal. However, your imaginations can also frighten and confuse you. Traumatic stress responses and dissociative experiences often emerge through imagery that is unconsciously driven. In other words, you may not have control over it yet. You might sometimes scare yourself by imagining threats, negative outcomes, or other frightening things. When your imagination scares you, you may think that someone dangerous (from the past) is around. It is possible to even “see” that person. When people are under a great deal of stress, imaginations can act as movie projectors making them see scary or traumatic things that aren’t happening in the present. With PTSD, a person’s memory can call to mind frightening thoughts, pictures, sounds, tastes, smells and/or physical experiences from the past without even meaning to do so. These flashbacks are coming from the mind, so you need to use your mind - your imagination - to fight them and get them under control.

Safe Places are images or visualizations that are soothing or comforting. Safe place images can make you feel safer, more secure. Safe Places can be real or imaginary.

Imagery Worksheet 1

Recall a time or place where you felt loved, comfortable, secure or confident.

Where were you? (Inside? Outside? At home? On vacation?)

What were you doing? What was going on?

Who was there? (Friends? Family? Pets?)

What good feelings were you having that day? (Excitement? Satisfaction? Joy? Awe?)

Focus on those feelings for a moment. Imagine that you have a volume dial inside. Turn the feelings up a little as you slowly breathe deeply. Focus on every detail of the image of that day. Hold those feelings for a few minutes more. Then, when you are ready, use the dial to turn them down. Allow the feelings to fade naturally. Try not to shut them off.

Use the line below to say something about the day that you pictured.

When you are stressed, anxious, or frightened, the ability to create space within yourself can help you “take a break” from life’s struggles. This can be done with imagery. Why else would people hang scenic pictures at home, stack trophies on shelves and keep calendars of beaches by desks? These things bring to mind pleasant imagery in the middle of a hard day and allow people to imagine, to picture, how they would feel if they were at the beach instead of a knee deep in paper work. This can provide very real relief. This kind of imagery can reduce stress and tension in anyone.

For example, maybe you would like a tree house or a field full of wild flowers all to yourself. Then, when you are having a hard time you could think about the tree house or the field and allow yourself to imagine every detail about how that place would soothe and protect you. Pretty soon you may find that you feel a little better because you took “time out” to think about and “visit” your safe place. Safe Places allows you to take a break when you need one, no matter where you are or what you are doing.

Work to create safe places that will be useful to you no matter what your state of mind. You may need several different kinds of safe or protective places. Don’t forget to attend all parts of yourself as well as all feelings inside. For example, you may want to use different safe places depending on how you feel. Be specific. Would there be plants or animals? Is it inside or outside? Is it real or imaginary? Is your safe/protected place warm or cool? What would you have there? Toys or food? Draw or make a collage (pictures cut from magazines and glued onto a larger paper) of your safe places. Invite all parts of your mind to participate.

Remember that some places are unsafe and are not valid safe places such as: bars or other scary, potentially abusive environments. Beware of places with mostly good connotations where

a trauma did occur. You may need different safe places for different times depending on your mood.

Take some time now to create a safe place or two (or more!) using the following worksheets.

Establishing a Safe Place



Everyone needs a place where they can feel safe. This might be a country retreat, an ocean beach, a peaceful garden, or a cozy room. But these types of places are not always available to people when they need them most. A mental haven, accessible through guided imagery, can be available to you whenever you need it. Having an inner safe place has proven effective in helping people cope with stress and increasing their sense of safety and comfort.

The use of an imaginary safe place is especially helpful for people who have experienced trauma. When fear, panic, or self-destructive thoughts become overwhelming, you can use your imagination to go to a restful inner sanctuary—a personal haven from the aftereffects of trauma and other life stresses—to regain a sense of safety, to restore strength, and to achieve a renewal of spirit.

This art experience helps you to create a drawing of an imaginary safe place that you can use as a tool to manage overwhelming stress.

Estimated Completion Time 45 - 60 minutes

Art Materials:

- one sheet of 18" x 24" white drawing paper
- oil pastels, colored pencils, or acrylic paints (brushes, palette, and water)

Getting Started

1. List all the places, both real and imaginary, that have felt relatively secure and safe to you during the course of your life. (If you have never had an experience of a safe place, don't be discouraged. Try to imagine what such a place would be like.)

2. Take your time and allow yourself to begin to see, in your imagination, a place that feels safe to you. It can be real or imaginary, or have elements of both. You are in control of this visualization: If anything appears that makes you uneasy, you can replace it with something comforting. This safe place can be located anywhere: in a room, house, building, boat, or outdoor setting. This environment may be based on one or more of the safe places you listed above or you may want to create an entirely new safe place. Write some preliminary notes describing a safe place suitable for you.

3. List the features that you want to include in your safe place. These might be elements that are comfortable (pillows, blankets, furniture), familiar (meaningful items from among your possessions), or pleasurable (flowers, music, books).

Artmaking Guidelines

1. Draw your safe place using the art materials you have chosen. There are many ways to represent your safe place, from different points of view including aerial or side views, to a simple diagram or a more elaborate illustration.

2. Make a "security check" of your safe place and add any features that will enhance your sense of safety and comfort. For example, if your safe place is a room, you may want to add a door that can be closed or a window with a beautiful view.

Establish
a Safe Pl

MANAGING TRAUMA
THROUGH ART
© SIDRAN PRESS, 1995

Written Reflections

1. Imagine standing in your safe place. What do you see to the left and right of you, behind and in front of you, above and below you? (You may want to make a series of sketches representing each of these different viewpoints.)

2. List each of the visual features in your safe place picture.

3. Describe the significance and purpose of each feature.

Establishing
a Safe Place

MANAGING TRAUMATIC STRESS
THROUGH ART
© SIDRAM PRESS, 1995

4. Place your picture a few feet away and imagine it on a large screen. First, observe the picture in its entirety; next, carefully study its details. List the circumstances in which it might be helpful to use your imaginary safe place. For example, you can visualize your safe place for brief moments when you are in public and for longer periods of time when you are by yourself.

5. Create a step-by-step plan that will enable you to mentally get to your imaginary safe place. This plan might begin with a phrase such as "going to my safe place" or it might begin with the image of a flight of stairs that can take you to your safe place.

Note Practice visualizing the image so that you can see all details clearly even when your eyes are closed. Find a place where you can hang your safe place artwork and look at it regularly until you can consciously use it in your daily life. You may want to create an actual safe place in your living space. This could be a room or area of a room that is filled with objects that are comforting to you and help you to gain a sense of safety.

Establish
a Safe Pl

MANAGING TRAUMATI
THROUGH ART
© SORAN PRESS, 1995