

Relaxation through exhaling and using a calming word

Body mind Exercise

"This relaxation technique is based on focusing on breathing, chiefly on exhaling. This is usually relaxing and can be used by you as a tool at a time of need. Focus on your normal breathing pace. Take note: When you inhale your chest rises and when you exhale your chest comes down. Follow your breathing without exerting an effort."

- 1."Try to inhale as much air as you can. Try to completely empty your lungs. When you get to the end of the exhalation, stop and count to three and then let the "body's intelligence" inhale as much air as the body needs."
- 2."Repeat the first two stages three times."
- 3."Now think of a word that means restfulness, calmness or relaxation. Say the word in your heart while exhaling. Exhale, let the air out, woou, and say the word, for instance, calmnessssssssssss.... "
- 4."Practice this a few times and resume a normal breathing rate."

Creative Methods in Crisis Interventions¹

A SAFE / PLEASANT PLACE

One of the most important things to do when treating a client suffering from emotional trauma is to create a safe / pleasant, secure under control atmosphere, together with experiencing safety, and control.

In every therapeutic process it is important to create the feeling of safety as part of the therapy relationship. However, in order to help a client who suffers from sudden acute anxiety, it is especially important to actively "teach" him how to create a safe/ pleasant place and to enhance the feeling of control of the level of anxiety.*

External anchoring in an image or photo or a card, enables the client to reduce subjective anxiety by "anchoring" in a calming image. The therapist uses the card as a concrete tool which is, after few rehearsals (in a learning process) associated with the ability to lessen frightening arousal. We call the state of being overwhelmed or over-frightened arousal, "boiling."

Ways to Create a Safe/ Pleasant Place

In this section we will describe a number of alternatives for creating a safe/ pleasant place and how to anchor it.

A safe place using guided imagery – Ask the client to choose a real or imaginary place, out in nature (seashore, garden etc) or inside (for example, at home or in a castle). It is important to find out the details prior to embarking on a comprehensive description in guided imagery: a portrayal of the place, the colors, the weather, and

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the sounds. What is your place in this space? What is pleasant to you there? Are you by yourself or with others? Special scents? After establishing the details, it is possible to give an extensive description to the client (with closed or open eyes), and to re-examine whether this is indeed a view that enables him to feel safe/ pleasant. In the next stage, while relaxing, the entire picture is described in detail and it is anchored in the body (see section on anchoring in the body).

A Safe/Pleasant Place through Cards with an Extension in Drawing, using Focusing

- The client is asked to choose one card from a number of cards the therapist has spread before him. These cards describe pleasant, safe, quiet, or neutral places. Under no circumstances should cards that describe horror scenes be displayed.
- The client puts the card he chose on a white sheet of paper, placing it anywhere. He is asked to extend the background around the card, with lines, colors and shapes (not necessarily to draw!).
- The client is asked to look at the card and the space around it and try to find the place that gives the clearest feeling of calm and/or safety and/ or quiet.
- The therapist asks the client to concentrate on a regular breathing rate whilst focusing on that special place. Then he is asked to try to "photograph" and memorize the image in an attempt to preserve it in his memory. The client is instructed to shut his eyes, and see if he can "see" the image in his mind's eye...
- If the image is changed with another pleasant picture, it is possible then to remain with the new picture. If it "gets lost" or if an unpleasant picture surfaces, then it is possible to open one's eyes and to resume focusing on the safe place you have traced in your image, at the same time paying attention to normal breathing. When the feeling of anxiety has eased, try to close your eyes again and continue to focus on the safe/pleasant image.
- One can continue the entire process with open eyes.

At the end of the process - eyes should be opened very slowly, and the client should look at the image at the place that was identified as "pleasantest and safest;" then he should be asked if he would like to change the picture or add anything to it. At this point the client is encouraged to change the picture or add color or details so that the 'space' will be just right for him or if he so wish, to start all over again and create new surroundings.

There may be situations where the client will ask for more than one card. This is permissible. In such instances, it is best to encourage him to create a joint space for both cards.

In some situations, after opening his eyes, the client will ask to remove part of the card. The therapist can assist him either by concealing the unwanted part, or photocopying the card and cutting out the undesired segment.

Of course it is possible to create a safe place using postcards or photographs cut out of magazines.

Anchoring in the Body

When the pleasant picture exists, it is important to anchor the feeling associated with it in the body. This is done through the following instruction: "whilst holding the image of the safe/pleasant place in your mind's eye, try to locate in your body how you know that the image you chose and focus on represents a pleasant, safe, calm place. Where do you feel or sense it in your body? What is its size, shape and color/ texture/ temperature? If you have an answer to one or more of these questions, and if you can, place your hand on the place in your body where you feel the pleasant sensation." This is called sensation anchoring.

The principle of *anchoring in the body* is important because the client can use the safe place during therapy sessions when he is overwhelmed, frightened or anxious to reduce his tension to a manageable level and outside therapy, to rehearse relaxation or to control unpleasant sensations or anxiety.

Steps in Locating a Safe Place in the Body

There are clients who have difficulties locating the safe place in their bodies (focus and anchor). They can practice tracing it by carrying out one of the following exercises:

- **Smiling** - "With eyes shut, imagine that a person you really like enters the room, whose mere entrance makes you smile from ear to ear. Be aware of the feeling or sensation this image causes and focus on it. Ask yourself where in your body do you know that this person really makes you smile?" (From this point resume the regular anchoring process.)
- As an alternative you can ask the client to imagine a photograph of a baby or a pet animal sitting on his lap.
- Ask the client to focus on the picture of the memory and when it is clear in his head, to take a deep breath. Now instruct him to locate in his body where it feels good to hold the baby or the pet.

When the client imagines this, continue *anchoring in the body*.

The act of anchoring is carried out by locating the sensation and asking the following questions:

What is the location in the body?

Does this sensation have a shape?

Does this sensation have a color?

Does this sensation have a temperature?

Does this sensation have a texture?

Does this sensation have a size?

Does this sensation have movement?

