

Safe Place – Change the Channel

Experiential Exercise for Children and Young People

Purpose: Helping the “mind” and “body” feel safe for children and young people.

What is it? The Safe Place Change the Channel Exercise is a technique to access a positive memory in order to induce a positive explicit and implicit memory state in their mind and in their body – to bring calm after feeling distressed; and then to assist children and young people to access this memory using the ‘change the channel’ metaphor.

Why use it? The Safe Place Change the Channel Exercise can be used as a psychoeducational tool to help understand the link between memories and the influence on their body in a positive way; to reduce affect intensity in therapy sessions; to end therapy sessions in a positive affective state; to use at home as needed.

Tips: Visualizations can be strengthened by involving all the senses in building a picture – more than just a visual picture – so following the full exercise to engage all senses is most helpful. Places and locations work better than choosing people. The more specific the ‘safe place’ the better.

Steps:

(1) Introduce the TV metaphor

- Bad memories and worry can be like watching a giant-screen TV in your head...one you feel like you can't get away from....but you can change the channel!



(2) Introduce the Change the Channel metaphor

- You already know how to change the channel on your TV at home. Now you are going to learn how to use your brain to change the channel in your mind and body.
- Start by choosing a memory – choose one of your special memories from a happy time, when you were having lots of fun, or when you succeeded at something that was hard.
- Maybe you remember going to the beach, playing with a pet, having a picnic, playing in the park, watching a favourite movie or show, reading a book..... You might even choose an imaginary place.

(3) Activate The Memory / Scene / Vision

- Choose a memory that makes you feel good inside and remember as many details as you can. Try to picture this memory like you were watching it on the giant-screen TV in your mind. This is your safe place!
 - What were you wearing?
 - How did the air smell?
 - What would you hear?
 - How could you feel?
 - What did you see?



(2) Activate The Senses

- Now that you've remembered the special memory, imagine yourself in that memory right now!
- "What do you see" – colours, shapes, what else?
- "What do you hear" – noise, silence, near, far?
- "What do you feel" – skin sensations, temperature etc?
- "What do you smell" – sea, flower, trees, earth etc?

Lots and
lots and lots
and lots of
details!!!

(3) Deepen The Experience

- "Take a few deep breaths and enjoy being there"
- "Notice how this place makes you feel in your body"
- "Know that you can change the channel to this Safe Place and feeling anytime you chose"
- "If this Safe Place had a name, what would you call it?"

(4) Practice Remembering the Special Memory

- When you practice remembering your special memory place, you build a stronger connection to that place.
 - "Bring to mind something a little frustrating, when you felt annoyed recently".
 - "Now go to [name of Safe Place]"
 - "Notice the difference in your mind, your body, and your heart"
- It takes practice and time, and then you will start to notice that it becomes easier to change the channel to this memory...and this will help your mind body and heart feel better.
- Try making a time each day to practice changing the channel to your special memory...and keeping the channel there for up to 5 minutes.
- Before practicing, you can help your body prepare by tightening and relaxing your muscles and breathing deeply 5 times.
- Remember to picture your special memory place in as much detail as you can.