

Safe Place Exercise

Purpose: Helping the “mind” and “body” feel safe.

What is it? The Safe Place 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.

Why use it? The Safe Place 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) Activate The Memory / Scene / Vision

- “Close your eyes (if safe to do so), or soften your gaze”.
- “Think of a place where you feel good, where you feel calm, relaxed and protected”.
- “It might be a place in your life right now, or a place you knew in your childhood”.
- “It might be an imaginary place”
- “Where is it?”
- “Imagine you are there right now”

(2) Activate The Senses

- “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?

Details,
Details,
Details!!!

(3) Deepen The Experience

- ”Take a few deep breaths and enjoy the experience”
- “Notice how this place makes you feel”
- “Know that you can access this Safe Place and feeling anytime you chose”
- “If this Safe Place had a name, or a title, what would it be?”

(4) Gently Test Strength of Safe Place

- “Bring to mind a minor upsetting memory, when you felt annoyed recently”.
- “Now go to [name of Safe Place]”
- “Notice the difference”

