

1. Mental grounding

For many individuals with a history of trauma it may be difficult to think of being present in the here and now, given that being present in the current moment may have been previously associated with danger. Thus, the brain has learned that being present as «danger» and will respond with defensive strategies, and tell you to avoid being present in the here and now. - This is a natural and expected response. The way to overcome trauma and the symptoms related to them is to gradually take back the agenda of the current moment, and therefore gradually be more and more present in the here and now

In this video, I invite you to try out different ways to ground yourself mentally, that is, cognitively and psychologically. I remind you that the ideas presented in this video are suggestions, that you are invited to try.

One is to re-orient to there here and now:

‘Today is... (*weekday, date, month, year*)

My name is.... I amyears old.

I am here with.....

I am adult – and safe where I am.

Another suggestion is to count backwards from 10 to zero: “10 – 9 – 8 -.....3 – 2- 1 – zero”. You may start from 20 or 30, if 10 is too easy for you, i.e., it does not require any focus and concentration.

Furthermore, you may attempt to discriminate between “feeling” and “knowing”:

‘I feel..... but I know.....’

Examples:

‘I feel unsafe, but I know I am safe.’

‘I feel as though this is happening now, but I know it is not happening now.’

‘I feel I am incompetent and do not succeed with anything, but I know I have managed and succeeded with(concrete examples, e.g., taking an exam, cooking a meal to my family, organizing an event, I have survived).’

If you have ‘parts’ (dissociated self-states, dissociative personality parts):

‘I feel as though I am many different people, but I know I am one person’

When you are triggered, use statements that remind you of the present and that the trauma is over:

‘I have been triggered. This is a memory. It is not happening now. I am safe.’

For you who have heard about the amygdala, you may say:

‘It is just my amygdala – my brain’s smoke-detector – giving a false alarm.

The memory will disappear in a little while’.

‘That was then – It is not happening now.’

‘I was hurt then – but I will not be hurt now.’

‘Everything feels dark and hopeless, but this feeling will disappear.

I have felt hopelessness and darkness before, and survived.

I will also survive this time.

It is also recommended that one learns skills in order to soothe oneself, while connecting to the here and now. Suggestions to soothe oneself while also connecting to the here and now are for example:

- Mention five (or 1-2-3) positive things in your life. Anything that you sense is good. Take some time to think of it. Children, grandchildren, a dog, a job, your home, an activity...?

- Remind yourself of some positive statements that are relevant for you – about you and your life, such as: ‘I know I am a good mother’, ‘I know I am a good listener’, ‘I know I am a good organiser’, ‘I know I am good at keeping an appointment or deal’.
- You may think of your favorite: colour, animal, food, book, TV-program, activity, place to be....
- Repeat statements that represent mastery, coping, and competence: ‘I will manage’, ‘I know this feeling will disappear’
- If relevant, use spiritual and existential resources.

I suggest that you take time to practice the skills during times of the day where you experience lower levels of distress. Have a plan for the day where you include some time to practice these new skills.

It is likely that such reminders of the here and now and skills are difficult to remember in times of distress. Therefore a suggestion is to write them down in moments with less distress, to have them available and within easy reach when things start to be difficult.

Also remember, that it is easier to stop the development of difficult feelings and thoughts if you start to act early with the skills that you have learned.

I wish you all good luck!

Thank you!

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