

Exercise: Container

Sometimes it is helpful to be able to set aside the current stressors in our life so we can attend to them later when we have more time and space to give them our focused attention. This exercise helps create a way for you to temporarily contain anything that may be bothering you.

Exercise

If it feels comfortable to you, please close your eyes and clear your mind to be present with me here and now.

Whenever something distressing happens, our mind wants to review everything it experienced to identify what is dangerous so we can determine what we need to do to protect ourselves and others in the future. That's what is happening when we go over and over something in our minds. It can be helpful to intentionally set aside distressing experiences or concerns until we can give them our full attention and learn what we need to learn.

Pause (just a few seconds)

I invite you now to bring to mind a container, where whatever unwanted material that is presently bothering you can be stored until you can give it your full attention. Notice, what is your container made of? What color is it? Notice, what it would feel like if you touched it? Just notice whatever comes to mind.

Administer 5-7 sets of BLS

What did you notice about the container?

(Client Response) **Notice That.** (Administer 5-7 passes of BLS)

Did anything new come up?

(Client Response) **Notice That.** (Administer 5-7 passes of BLS)

It's important that this container has some way of being secured so that what's in there is kept safe and. Sometimes this could be a lock or a closable lid, anything that would ensure that the contents of the container remain inside.

What comes to mind?

(Client Response) **Notice That.** (Administer 5-7 passes of BLS)

Did anything new come up?

(Client Response) **Notice That.** (Administer 5-7 passes of BLS)

This container may have the ability to transform to be whatever you need it to be at this time. It can get as big as you need it to be. It has room for everything that you need to put inside. Now as you focus on your container, just invite everything that needs to be reviewed to float in. Whether it's a thought, a feeling, or a body sensation, anything at all. You don't need to keep track of what is going in. Just notice as it flows out of you and into that container in whatever form it takes.

Pause (just a few seconds)

Once you feel like everything that needs to go inside is in, watch as your container begins to close and is then put away in a good place for safekeeping. It may shrink down to a small size and float to the deepest place in your mind where it can rest until you want to access it later at a time that it might be helpful to you.

Do you feel like the container is closed and put away?

(Client Response)

Notice in your body how it feels to have this container holding what it needs to.

(Administer 5-7 slow passes of BLS)

Take one deep breath and release any remaining bits of tension in your body. When you feel ready bring your awareness back to this present moment. Deepen your breathing. Move your hands and feet and welcome your body back gently, ready to go about your day.

References

Shapiro, F. (2018). *Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy: Basic principles, protocols and procedures* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.

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