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3-4-5 Program Course

Muscle-Building Activity #3: Flood the Zone

This is a great way to get rid of painful emotional flashbacks.

It is vitally important to do. Emotional flashbacks (also known as “*dysregulation*” or “*mental hi-jacking*”) is an extremely common affliction for abuse survivors.

This is a great strategy for handling a flashback. First, you must become aware of when this is happening to you. Read “*Understanding Dysregulation aka Emotional Flashbacks*” to get a good handle on how this works. **It is the central problem for most child abuse survivors.**

Nutshell:

1. Our trauma memories live in the brain
2. We often get triggered by criticism or a negative comment;
3. our brains then react badly due to painful memories.
4. We are flooded with emotions that feel just like the ones we felt as abused children.
5. Our thinking goes out of sync. We get confused; our thinking may get “glitchy”.
6. We may feel physical symptoms (sweating, nausea), or have a desire to run away.
7. We can CROWD OUT those thoughts by quickly reciting other, better thoughts.
8. If we keep it up for months, our actual under-lying beliefs may start to change and pain eases.

Since anxiety and trauma live in the central nervous system (brain), we must devise specialized strategies to overcome the physiological effects that are a result of abuse.

Becoming aware of how it works and what to do about it is a major step in recovery.

You must be able to know how to detect the fact that your thinking is dysregulated (you've been triggered and are now having an emotional flashback). Having a specific strategy to fight off the dysregulation is key. One very powerful strategy is to make a list of your accomplishments and good qualities and begin reciting them to yourself the moment you detect you're out of sync.

Everyone has survived something, everyone has accomplished something, everyone has at least some good qualities.

1. Learn to recognize the on-set of a flashback.
2. Make a list of your good qualities and/or accomplishments.
3. FLOOD THE ZONE of your brain by quickly reciting your list.

Say positive things about yourself *quickly* and stop the hi-jacking.

You can PRE-EMPT the flashback – stop it in its tracks and keep control of your thinking. **Even if it goes on for hours or days, keep reciting the list to yourself.** Also use your affirmations.

What to do:

Make the list and be prepared to notice your feelings and reactions. Be ready to read the list to yourself the moment you think you're getting dysregulated. The moment you sense the old confusion – read the list. The second you recognize the old horrible feelings, say the list and stop the hi-jacking.

Flood the zone (of your brain) by saying the positive things about yourself that will fight off

the old bad beliefs and feelings. (Use affirmations, too.) Keep it up even if it goes on for weeks.

Write the list of things you will say to yourself to flood the zone. This list is how you will crowd out the repetitive negative thoughts you have now:

These are my good qualities and things I have accomplished:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15

- Keep this list with you.
- Take it out and read it at the on set of a flashback.
- Put it on a small card and use it to flood the zone the second you feel triggered.