

Toolkit 2

Post intervention

Learning Unit 9

Peer support - having a supportive context is crucial to enhance resilience

5 - Reinforce your members' resources

5. Do you reinforce your members' resilience? No

If you answered "No": please train your members by organising a debriefing meeting.



Activities 5

Note: improving inner resilience is very important for your members. To improve it you can help them install good sensations and emotions, to maintain their arousal inside "the tolerance window" (Ogden, P., & Minton, K. (2000). Sensorimotor psychotherapy: One method for processing traumatic memory. *Traumatology*, 6(3), 149-173).

Train your team guiding the four elements exercise to improve their calmness and self-control. Follow the instructions of Isabel Fernandez, EMDR Europe and Associazione per l'EMDR in Italia president.

<https://youtu.be/4Lajrgtcbxw>



Activity 5

4 Elements Tool

Exercise of the 4 Elements for Stress Reduction (Earth - Air - Water - Fire)

Elan Shapiro - 2012

The exercise of the four elements is a stabilisation practice. It aims to bring the attention of the activated and stressed person to the here and now. To do this you help the person to bring attention to four elements the earth, air, water and fire.

Guidelines

1 - **Earth:** grounding exercise to increase security in the present/reality

Delivery: "Take a couple of minutes to 'land', to be here now. Put your feet on the ground, feel the chair that supports you. Look around and notice three new things".

Note: Do not ask this question if this draws attention to ongoing dangers. Attention must be directed to the outside towards a reality that reassures in the present.

2 - **Air:** breathing to center

Delivery: "Breathe deeply. At this stage you can do your favorite breathing exercise."

Or: "Do abdominal breathing through your nose counting for up to four seconds, then hold for two seconds and then exhale in four seconds. Take about a dozen deeper, slower breaths this way.

Note: Attention is directed inwards toward its center, the abdomen."

3 - **Water:** be calm and maintain control, activate relaxation responses.

Delivery: "Images of swallowing a glass of water. It can gently induce this sensation by producing more saliva in the mouth."

Note: Provide some element of psychoeducation about salivation. When you are anxious or stressed, your mouth often remains dry, because one of the alarm responses activated by the Sympathetic Nervous System is to suspend the functionality of the digestive system. This is why people who have had a difficult experience are offered a glass of water to restore the feeling of lubrication of the mucous membranes of the mouth. When we produce saliva, our mind can also better control our thoughts and our body. When attention is directed to producing saliva, one becomes calmer, more focused and with more control.



4 - **Fire:** Bring attention to something bright or warm.

Delivery: "Recall the image of his safe place (or some other resource, for example, once he felt good about himself). What do you feel and where do you feel it in the body? Breathe slowly and deeply through your nose."

Note: The focus is on the feelings of calm, confidence you feel in your body.

Additional explanations

1. Rationale. Internal and external triggers that trigger stress have a cumulative effect throughout the day.
2. We cope better with stress when our level of activation (arousal) is kept within the "tolerance window".
3. An antidote to stress triggers: frequent and random monitoring of the stress level together with simple stress reduction actions to keep stress levels within our "tolerance window".
4. Put on your wrist a Bracelet of the Four Elements (a colored silicone band) that brings to your attention how and how much you are activated. If necessary, do the Four Elements exercise. Alternatively: put a small sticker or label on your watch or mobile phone that reminds you of the exercise of the Four Elements.
5. The goal is to reduce your stress level by doing this at random times and at various initial levels of stress. By preventing your stress responses from accumulating, you will be better able to stay within your "tolerance window".

Tips

- The sequence of the Four Elements Earth-Air-Water-Fire aims to monitor the body, starting from the feet up to the stomach and chest, then to the throat and mouth, and finally to the head.
- Since each Exercise on the Element will be illustrated briefly, review the previous one (as you continue to feel the confidence now of your feet firmly on the ground, and you feel centered as you inhale and exhale and feel calm and in control in producing more and more saliva, then let the fire illuminate the way of your imagination to bring to mind the image of a place where you felt safe from a memory of a time when you felt good about yourself."
- The rubber band can be pulled (gently) and released to stop negative thoughts and to quickly take root in the present (thought stopping).

Resource: Shapiro, E. (2012). 4 elements exercises for stress reduction. (earth-air-water-fire).
<http://emdrresearchfoundation.org/toolkit/four-elements.pdf>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4StCjYm8nuo>



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Developed by Elan Shapiro with editing and bead tool by Sharon Meredith.

1. **EARTH** (Green Bead): Grounding for Safety in the Present

Hold your 4 elements chain in your hands. Take a minute to ground – to notice that you are here in this place, in this time. Place your feet on the ground and notice the connection of your feet to the ground. Notice the chair supporting you. Notice the feel of the four elements chain in your hand. Now use your senses to notice the sights and sounds in the room. Notice three new things ... What do you see... What do you hear...

2. **AIR** (Clear Bead): Breathing for Centering

Now that you are feeling grounded, draw your attention to your breath. When we are feeling stressed our breath is rapid and shallow. Simply noticing the breath helps us feel centered and supported. Notice your breath. You can imagine making a rectangle with your breath – breath in for the count of 4, hold for 2, out for 4, hold for 2. Alternately, you can imagine breathing in through one foot, all the way up your body. Hesitating slightly as you cross from one shoulder to the other and breathing all the way down the other side of your body. Hesitating slightly as you switch from one foot to the other. Breathing in through your foot and all the way up one side of your body. Continue breathing slowly, gently, and deeply for an additional ten breaths.

3. **WATER** (Blue Bead): Making Saliva to feel Calm, and in Control.

Notice if there is saliva in your mouth. When we are anxious or stressed, our mouth becomes dry. Part of the emergency/survival response is to shut off the digestive system. When we make saliva, we switch on the relaxation and nurturing response. When we make saliva, we can optimally manage our body and our thoughts. Make saliva to help manage breathing, heart rate, muscle tone, and warmth. You can chew gum or drink water. You can imagine eating your favourite meal, or something sour. You can use a tool from yoga and run your tongue around the inside and outside of your teeth. Draw your attention now to making more and more saliva, becoming calmer, relaxed, focused, and in control

4. **FIRE** (Red Bead) Light up the path to your imagination.

Use your imagination to take yourself to a calm, peaceful place...perhaps a place in nature or to a memory when you felt good. Notice with your senses what it is like to be there. Notice what you see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. Notice your thoughts, emotions, and the sensations in your body when you are there. Really soak in the sense of this place. Give yourself a butterfly hug. Tap briefly and slowly back and forth as you notice how everything about this place feels in your body.

Tips: The chain can be touched to ground quickly and to signal the beginning of the calming exercise. The sequence of the 4-Elements (Earth-Air-Water-Fire) is designed to follow the body up



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from 1) the feet to 2) the stomach and chest, 3) to the throat and mouth and 4) to the head. Practice using the 4-Elements technique often and at times when your stress is lower.

The more you practice, the more calming the effect will be. With practice, it will be easier for you to use this intervention in times that are more difficult. Each of the four element tools is helpful and can be done individually. Return to Grounding to complete this exercise.

Suggestions: Attach a 4-Elements chain to your key chain or carry one in your pocket. Whenever you notice it, take a quick reading of your current stress level from 0 to 10. Perform some brief self-calming /self-control exercises by using the 4 Elements tools. Then take a second stress level reading from 0-10. The (modest) goal is to reduce your stress level by 1 or 2 units each time.

Do this calming exercise at random times and at various initial stress levels. Practice will help prevent your stress responses from accumulating and enable you to better manage stress.

Reference

Shapiro, E. (2012). 4 elements exercises for stress reduction. (earth-air-water-fire). <http://emdrresearchfoundation.org/toolkit/four-elements.pdf>

Resource: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4StCjYm8nuo>



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