

Summing up: Steps towards a safe foothold in the present

In the previous videos, you have been presented with several different approaches that can be used to regulate your emotions and reactions and to stay within your window of tolerance, including mental and physical grounding, separating the past from the present, distraction, safe place, and establishing containers for distressing reactions and memories. The goal of using these techniques is to flatten your stress-curve, and avoid the devastating ‘peaks’ outside the window of tolerance. In other words, the goal is to get control over unhealthy feelings and behaviors following exposure to stress, ‘triggers’ - reminders of the traumas – that exceeds the capacity you have available there and then to cope with it.

In the videos, you are invited to:

1. Become familiar with how it feels and how the experience is for you, to be within your window of tolerance? How do you experience yourself when you are not ‘haunted’ too much by your past?
2. Register and evaluate your arousal level. On a scale of 1-10, how present and connected to the here and now do you feel? Ask yourself: ‘Where am I now regarding my window of tolerance?’ Do this evaluation several times during the day.
3. Notice and become familiar with the first warning signals indicating that you are “heading” towards a state of either hyper- or hypo- arousal outside your window of tolerance. What are the first warning signals when activation starts? If you are not aware of them (all), you may wish to start to explore them and be curious about them.
- Others have described their first warning signals as for example: the surroundings and other people seem unreal, foggy, or strange, problems with being connected to the here and now, feeling detached from the surroundings, one-self and others, family members and friends are experienced as strangers, ‘out-of-body’ experiences, changes in sensory perception, senses are distorted, amplified, minimized or lost (e.g., smell, taste, vision, hearing, sense of pain), numbing, dis-orientation, confusion, withdrawal from other people that are normally safe, an urge to hide, increased urge to self-harm, increase in ‘voice-hearing’, chaotic thoughts, anxiety, pain, increased sleep- or eating-problems, reduced self-care, excessive activity and work, switching between parts – among others. - Are you aware of some of your warning-signals? – If yes, which ones? It is common that people early in a trauma-treatment are not aware of their warning-signals. That is normal. With practice it is possible to learn. Furthermore, you are invited to:
4. Get to know your triggers. Which do you know of? And how do you usually respond following exposure to a trigger?
5. Build and develop effective regulatory skills, designed specifically for you. Various different approaches to containment and grounding have been presented in these videos, and many more exist. Choose the one or several of the regulatory skills that work best for you, so that they fit your needs. Try the skills out in different ways and

settings in order to find out what, is right for you!! Create your own “tool-box” that includes all of your skills and strategies that are effective for you.

6. Develop your personal safety plan, that is, to make a list of the strategies and techniques that you have built, and in what situations they are helpful. This plan may include techniques to use on ordinary days, as well as strategies and techniques to use in pre-crises and crises. What works and in which situations?
7. Use the principle of EARLY intervention to stop unhealthy or unwanted actions. As soon as you sense the first warning signals. Take action and use regulatory strategies that you have practiced and learned in “peacetime”
8. When using a skill: assess the level before and after using the technique to assess if it is helpful and effective? To say that a skill is helpful, it should take you at least one point in the right direction. If this did not happen, what adjustments can you make? - or should you use some other technique for coping with the situation?
9. On a daily basis, to evaluate your mental capacity while also considering the amount of stress you are exposed to: Are you exposed to more stress than usual? Are you experiencing any current additional stress-factors? Are you more tired than you usually are? Do you have any medical conditions?
10. Pay attention to three basic principles important for effective learning: motivation, focus while practicing, and repetition.

Last but not least: remember to give yourself recognition for any step in the right direction!

The brain can heal! It is ‘willing’ to learn new habits when needed. Keep trying and move on with little steps. Remember that ‘Slow is faster!’

We can create our own motto for the process of healing from trauma: ‘Stay safe - Stay within your window of tolerance!’

Without doubt, this will lead to mastery of your newfound skills and competence, as well as a safe foothold in the present!

I wish you all good luck!

Thank you!

|
|