

Resourcing Exercises: Development and Installation of Imaginal Resources

In her latest book, *Tapping In* (Parnell, 2008), Laurel Parnell writes, “In the early days of EMDR we discovered that bilateral stimulation could also be used in a focused way to activate and strengthen certain resources within our clients...We found that directing clients to focus on a (imaginal) safe place and then adding short sets of bilateral stimulation worked even better than imagery alone to calm them and provide them with a sense of control over their distress. This practice, called ‘installing a safe place’ helped traumatized people feel safer and was used by therapists prior to beginning emdr sessions.”

Resourcing has proven successful for many clients. Clinicians may facilitate the development and installation of many different kinds of resources to help strengthen egos and stabilize clients. Although resource installation has become a mainstay prior to an individual EMDR session, Parnell and others have begun using this technique as a stand-alone procedure. In contrast to emdr for trauma processing, resourcing work is kept focused exclusively on the development of positive, healing resources followed by a short set of alternating bilateral stimulation (Parnell, 2008).

The Process: During the resourcing process, you will be directed in a multi-sensory guided imagery exercise, for the deliberate enhancement and awareness of your sensory, somatic and affective experience of whatever resource is to be installed. To accomplish this, your therapist will ask you explicit questions. For example:

- “What do you see now?”
- “What about when you look all around?”
- “Are there any sounds?”
- “Are there any smells?”
- “What is the temperature?”
- “What makes this place so comfortable?”
- “What do you like about it?”
- “When you look around again, while experiencing all of the sights, sounds and smells, how do you feel?”
- “Where do you feel that in your body?”

Once your resource is located and being vividly experienced, your therapist will then ask you for a word or phrase that captures your feeling state (e.g. relax, calm, strong and solid, the beach, chill...) When you have the imagery and the word, your therapist will direct you to “breathe into that”, while applying alternating bilateral tactile stimulation (Turning on the Theratapper or directing you to begin tapping on knees for about ten seconds or two full breaths). Your therapist will continuously monitor your affect. If your positive resource begins to turn negative i.e., becomes contaminated with any negative associations, you will be instructed to “let that one go” and choose another resource.

The Theory: The alternating bilateral stimulation is applied to strengthen the associations between your anchor word, sights, sounds, smells, tactile sensations, visceral responses and the feeling state. ("The general idea is an old one, that any two cells or systems of cells that are repeatedly active at the same time will tend to become 'associated', so that activity in one facilitates activity in the other... The theory is commonly evoked to explain some types of associative learning in which simultaneous activation of cells leads to pronounced increases in synaptic strength. Such learning is known as Hebbian learning- often summarized as "neurons that fire together, wire together." {Hebb, 1949})

Example of Resourcing Procedure: Safe Place

1. Close your eyes or find a spot on which to focus.
2. Pay attention to your breath, finding a quiet place within.
3. Breathe deeply. Attempt to make the exhalation longer than the inhalation, relaxing and releasing with each breath.
4. Bring to mind the resource of a Safe/Comfortable Place. Imagining it as fully as possible. Notice everything that you are seeing, hearing, smelling, touching. Notice what sensations you feel on your skin. What do you feel in your body when you are here in this place? Take all the time you need.
5. Tell your therapist when it feels as though you are really there.
6. If it is positive, your therapist will apply a short set of abts (ten seconds or two breaths is fine).
7. Your therapist will check in again and again.
8. If the resource is strengthening and remains positive, your therapist will continue to add alternating bilateral stimulation. (Remember, it is important that the resource feel completely positive.)
9. If a distressing thought, feeling or memory arises; you will be directed to deposit it into your imaginal container.

Example of Resourcing Procedure: Container:

1. Close your eyes or find a spot on which to focus.
2. Pay attention to your breath, finding a quiet place within.
3. Breathe deeply. Attempt to make the exhalation longer than the inhalation, relaxing and releasing with each breath.
4. Bring up an image of a container-one that is big enough to hold each and every disturbing thing-but, discourage the client from focusing on any particular thing or image.
5. Make the container as real as possible; so that you may put in or take out whatever you want any time that you want.
6. Your container should be labeled with something to the effect that it should only be only when it would be in the service of your healing.
7. At no time should you or any part of you be placed in the container.

8. Now, imagine placing any and all of the distressing or disturbing material into the container and sealing it tightly.
9. You should feel as though you can contain your own uncomfortable affect.
10. Notice the feelings of agency and control over the traumatic material that is being, or not being worked on at this time.