

## CREATING A SAFE/SECURE/COMFORTABLE PLACE

### Step 1: Image (Actual or Imaginary place)

Ask the client to find a place with positive associations, where s/he feels safe, comfortable, peaceful or calm. (Avoid images containing close family members as they usually have both positive and negative associations). If the client finds it difficult to imagine a peaceful and safe place, spend more time on developing one, if necessary creating an imaginary one. Identify an image that the client can easily evoke and which creates a personal feeling of calm and safety. The clinician writes down details of the image in order to be able to remind the client later.

Image .....

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### Step 2: Emotions and Sensations

Ask the client to focus on the image, to feel the positive emotions and to identify the location of the pleasing physical sensation.

Positive emotion .....

.....

Location of physical sensation .....

.....

### Step 3: Enhancement

Use soothing, supportive tones to enhance the image and affect. Enhance sensations by asking for any sounds and/or pleasant smells associated with the image and affect.

Sensations .....

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### Step 4: Eye Movements (EMs)

Enhance the positive response by including a short and slow set of eye movements (6-12 EMs).

Read this: *"Bring up the image of that place that feels safe and calm. Concentrate on where you feel the pleasant sensations in your body and allow yourself to enjoy them. As you notice those sensations follow my fingers with your eyes."*

At the end of the set ask the client: *"How do you feel now?"* If the client feels safe and relaxed, do further sets of 6 – 12 **SLOW** EMs. Continue to do short sets of EMs as long as the positive affect enhances. If the client's positive emotions have not increased, try alternative directions of eye movements until improvement reported.

**Step 5: Cue word**

The client is then asked to identify a single word or phrase that fits the picture (for example: *"relax", "safe", "beach," "in control"*). The client is then asked to repeat Step 4, but this time, while repeating to him/herself the "cue word". This procedure is repeated 4 to 6 times with eye movements.

Cue word.....  
.....

**Step 6: Self- cueing**

The client is then instructed to repeat the procedure on his/her own, bringing up the image and the cue word, and experiencing the positive feelings (emotionally and physically) without any eye movements.

Self cueing achieved?.....  
.....

**NB:** If at any time during this process the client experiences negative emotion, discard this memory and find another.

***Steps 7 & 8 are only used once the client has demonstrated that s/he can go to the safe place with ease. The next two steps are important as they test the client's readiness to proceed. If your client is unable to complete these final steps, it indicates that you need to spend more time with preparation.***

**Step 7: Cueing with disturbance**

Ask the client to bring up a minor concern or problem and notice the accompanying negative feelings. The client is guided through the safe place exercise until s/he can reconnect with positive feelings and cueing with disturbance is achieved. (Do not use EMs at this stage)

Cueing achieved? .....

**Step 8: Self-cueing with disturbance**

The client brings up another minor disturbance or concern and reconnects with the positive image and cue word, this time without the clinician's assistance, until the client can re-experience the positive affect of the safe place.

Self-cueing independently achieved? .....