

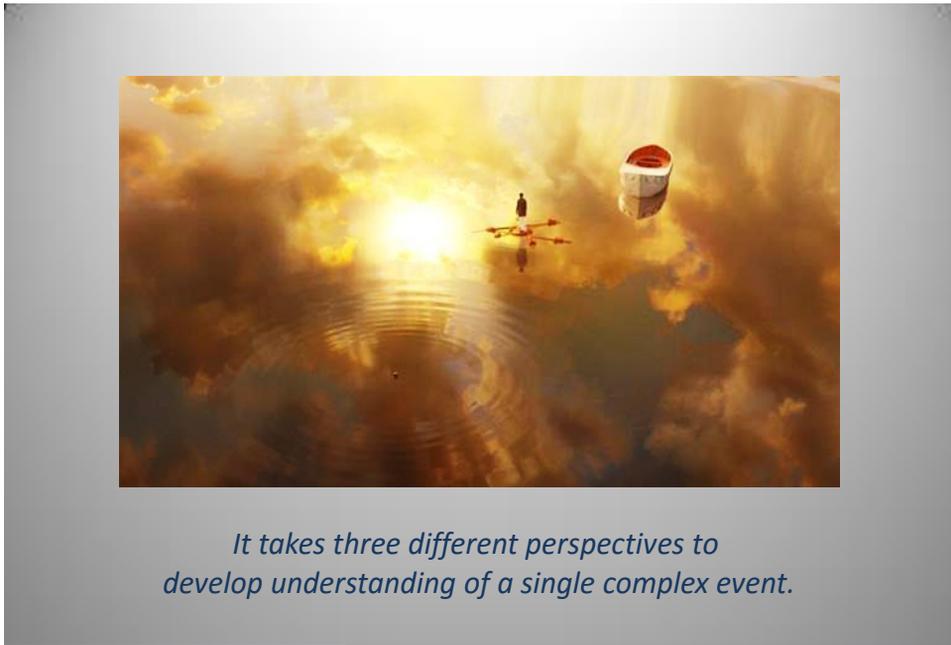
Transforming Trauma to Resiliency & Hope

Mastering the Past, Present, & Future

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June 2016



It takes three different perspectives to develop understanding of a single complex event.

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To a patient, *“You can find yourself ranging into the past, the present, or the future as your unconscious selects the most appropriate means of dealing with that.”*

Erickson, 1979

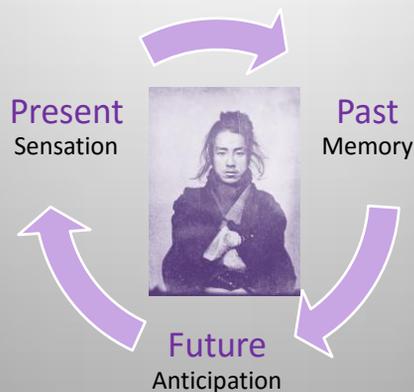


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3-Point Circular Model



Therapists should be prepared to work in all 3 dimensions of temporal reality.



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Discovery Recovery across a Lifetime

- Trauma resolution is not a linear process, it spirals. A person will continue to reference the past as she prepares for the future. Seemingly “resolved” matters are reprocessed for greater preparation for future challenges.
- This is an essential cycle. The suffering from our past yields new insight each time the conditions of the present change. The stronger we become emotionally, the more likely we are to “push the envelop,” to expect more of life & of ourselves.
- This therapy is not a singular event, it is a process. An understanding of this process is important for any one who has ever suffered in life.



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Present: Sense of Safety

- We do not stop, to make meaning of what has happened to us, until safety is certain (i.e., escape has priority over reflection)
- Safe relationships (secure attachment) promote emotional change, learning, and physical relaxation/release of tension
 - “Who could hold you and make you feel better?”
 - “Who showed you love, at any point in your life?”
(priming for positive transference)



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Past: Activating Memory

- It is a mistake to say, “we cannot change the past.” The emotional value and personal meaning of all past events are in a constant state of review and revision (either intentionally or unintentionally).
- It is with careful *conscious review* of the past that a more coherent autobiographical narrative is formed, which is needed in order to solidify attitudes, stabilize emotions, make decisions, and plan for the future.



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Future: Creating Hope

- Our future is defined, in great part, by what we imagine to be possible. It is this fantasy, of what could be, that gives us our drive and ambition.
- *Neuroplasticity*: If after a trauma a person feels that some ability is lost, she will no longer aim to use it, resulting in cortical changes, creating the illusion of permanent disability (i.e., the aim is changed).
- *Thriving* is continually seeking out challenges, discovering new skills, greater resiliency, and an increased appetite for problem solving.



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Growing the Mind

- Blindspot: We do not see something unless we direct attention to it.
- Repression: We do not remember something unless we are willing to accept it.
- Denial: We do not know something unless we are ready to believe it.
- Progress: This therapy is aimed a increasing understanding of one's experiences with new growth in problem solving abilities.



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Safe



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Present

“There is a need in human living to reexperience painful things within the context of a safe environment.”

Milton Erickson, 1964



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PRESENT-SAFETY

Creating a Sense of Safety

- The experience of safety should always precede attempts to engineer change.
- Those who have been traumatized often feel isolated, the world seems cruel & uncaring (there is a blindness to other's acts of kindness).
- Empower the client by establishing his/her right to felt safety. Sometimes there is a desire to hold onto a pillow, stuffed animal, wrap in a blanket or sit at a desk while revisiting terrifying events.



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Validation

Validation: Acknowledging subjective experience as an indisputable reality... something that can be accepted and utilized.

- It is a mistake to suggest to traumatized clients that they should not trust their own perception. This will only create dismay and panic.
 - Erickson (1976), “If you are uncertain about yourself, you can’t be certain about anything [or anyone] else.”
- For the human body, there is no difference between real vs. imagined danger. People can die of fear.



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Reframing

Reframing: Introducing new context to help reinterpret the meaning of some event.

- Avoid any critical remarks about client’s thoughts or behavior. Operate from the principle of charity (i.e., “All behaviors are intended to serve some positive purpose.”)
 - “What choices can you be proud of given the limited number of options at the time?”
- Avoid negative statements about friends, family, or romantic interests, even if they have been abusive.
 - “What do you think he did right and what did he do wrong?”



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Positive Inner Labeling

Positive Inner Labeling: Framing others' behavior with positive character traits.

- Protect the client's ego, with every remark,
 - *"You seem to be someone who cares. Tell me about the good you were trying to achieve?"*
 - *"What have you learned?"*
- The label must be attached to some behavior, preferably one that has just occurred.
 - *"You have been open and honest. That takes courage."*



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Partitioning

Partitioning: Breaking an overwhelming reality down into smaller, more easily digested parts.

- Partition Recall
 - Erickson (1980), "...sometimes the best way to dig out those repressions, those horrible memories, is to have them bring out the emotion, or the intellectual part, or the motoric part." [in piecemeal fashion]
 - *"Just recall the part you feel ready to deal with."*
- Partition Self-disclosure
 - Erickson (1977), "There is a tremendous need for protecting patients in ordinary psychotherapy. How often is resistance the result of the therapist intruding upon intimate memories, intimate ideas?"
 - *"Do not tell me more than you are ready to disclose."*



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Imagined Threat

Client: *panic + accuse*

Therapist-Amateur: *contradict + defend*

- **C:** "You were smiling at me when I described my ordeal."
- **T:** "I was not smiling. You have misread my face."
- **C:** "You don't know how bad this is for me!"
- **T:** "I have worked for many years with people in your situation. I have a good understanding of this problem."



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4-Square Strategy

- **C:** "You were smiling at me when I described my ordeal."
- **T:** "Yes, I did smile. There is a lot to admire about your survival skills. Even so, we need to pace the therapy so that you only recall as much suffering as you can safely tolerate."
- **C:** "You don't know how bad this is for me!"
- **T:** "Yes, there is no way I can know exactly how you feel. I do know that it takes a courageous person to come and do this type of therapy. As you tell me more about how you feel, I may interrupt and ask questions, so that I can really seek to understand." (Questions are used to slow down and break a part the narrative)



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PRESENT-SAFETY

4-Square Strategy

Safety

Validation Reframing

Positive Label Partitioning

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Breakaway Groups

Protective Parent Exercise

validate + reframe with positive inner labeling + partitioning

- Gather together with 5 individuals in each group, 2 will work, three will help advise.
- One person will be the “child,” this person will describe something he/she is too nervous to do (act fearful).
- The “parent” will tell the emotional child that this must be done. The parent will use all 4 tactics to create safety.
- The “observers” are there to help the parent, make suggestions for what to say, or how to use all four tactics.

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Why do this?



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Past

“Most of us try to avoid thoughts and memories that bring tears, yet they frequently deal with the most important things.”

Milton Erickson, 1979



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Hypnosis & Memory Recovery

- **Recalling traumatic events from childhood will not automatically resolve one's difficulties**
- Some clients become increasingly depressed or traumatized when confronted with events for which they are not prepared to cope
- Hypnosis will increase memory recall, but it also increases the recall of false memories, which are then held with greater confidence than misinformation implanted w/o hypnosis
- Highly suggestible individuals are more likely to recover false memories



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Unlike the traditional catharsis model, memory retrieval in Ericksonian therapy is not aimed at obtaining insight as much as the process of reorienting the client to the meaning of one's past and its value relative to the future.



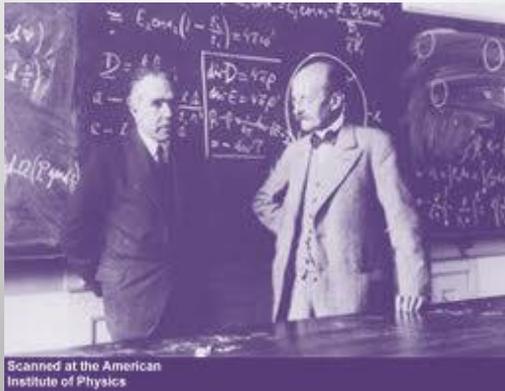
"THE OBJECTIVE OBSERVER THAT SEES AND DESCRIBES CURRENT REALITIES CAN ALSO ALTER AND CHANGE EARLIER CHILDHOOD REALITIES."
 ERICKSON, 1979



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“WHEN YOU CHANGE THE WAY YOU LOOK AT THINGS, THE THINGS YOU LOOK AT CHANGE.”

Max-Planck—Father of Quantum Physics



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Memory Reconsolidation

Under certain conditions, protein chains destabilize, physically altering long-term memory (ranging from updating to full retrograde amnesia)

- C1: Conscious retrieval of LT memory
- C2: New emotional context (activation of the amygdala)
- C3: Novel information is provided, with high relevancy to the existing memory



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Why Reconsolidation Matters

It is the avoidance of traumatic memory that prevents the emotional realization of a new, less catastrophic reality. If the memory becomes conscious only under conditions of panic, then it is reconsolidated with even greater disturbance. Recall needs to occur within the context of a safe environment in which novel information is provided.



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Types of Memory

- Visual: Internal images that have become emotionally charged
- Somatic: Physical energy trapped in the central nervous system (CNS), resulting in chronic hypertension
- Autobiographical: The attitudes & beliefs about self and others based on past experience



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Try to Forget this Image



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PAST-NEW MEMORY

Image Replacement

Image replacement: The use of imagination to create desirable substitute images for memory reconstruction.

- Relevancy: It is easier to transform the memory of an image if the replacement is very similar
- Halo Effect: Find an image that has strong positive attitudes and merge this into the existing memory
- Emotional Effect: Select an image that provokes any emotion that is incompatible with fear, such as humor or curiosity

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Adding Movement

Movement: The use of imagination to create a resource for movement that was missing from the original memory, such as: a safe place to run, a weapon to grab, a friend, or a child to protect.

- When we feel trapped, or that we must freeze, the muscles & body contract. The mere passing of time does not signal release. There must be a reason to move.
- Pascual-Leone (2005): The exercise of imagination is a means of reorganizing brain structure & CNS activity.
- Self-determination is essentially a creative process, thus it goes hand-in-hand with the intentional use of imagination.



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New Conclusion

New Conclusion: The use of imagination to create an ending for the memory that depicts survival, strength, and growth.

- The autobiographical narrative is the story of our life, it enables us to organize our feelings about self & the outside world.
- With trauma, the narrative is incoherent. It is a moment with no beginning or end. There is no heroic action or meaningful conclusion.
- It is the ending that defines the quality of a story, and of defining moments in our lives.



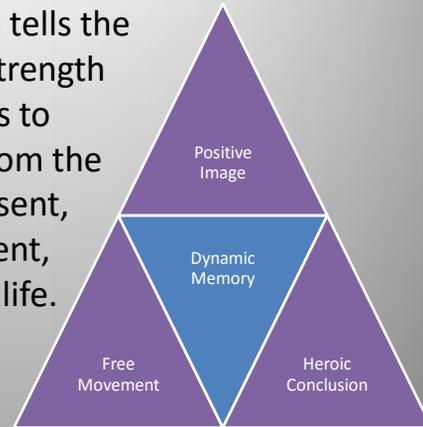
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Memory Sculpting

- It is not what the person tells the therapist that matters, strength comes from a willingness to reengage the past but from the vantage point of the present, as a self-determining agent, the author of one's own life.



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Breakaway Groups

Memory Sculpting Exercise

Image Replacement + Adding Movement + New Conclusion

- Gather in pairs. Decide who will be the “client” this person will describe a disappointing moment in life.
- The “**artist**” will help identify the most salient image from the memory and transform it into something that elicits a desirable emotion. Next, add another character or element that provides a reason to act boldly. Follow the initial storyline but then imagine a more desirable resolution (i.e., create a new, highly desirable ending).
- Work on sculpting a new memory for 15 minutes, then switch roles, for a combined 30 minutes of practice



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Anticipation



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Future

“Whenever you see patients, you really ought to consider, ‘What type of orientation do they have?’ Are they actually looking forward to something in the future, and really looking forward?”

Milton Erickson, 1980



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Post Traumatic Growth (PTG)

Positive Psychology Movement: Absence of Symptoms is Not Enough

It is possible to experience PTG, especially when:

- as a result of suffering, there is greater strength, courage, and resiliency
- when very serious threats result in greater motivation and sense of purpose
- when an ongoing struggle is matched with unyielding hope and increased determination
- when sadness and loss produce a deeper knowledge of self and closer connection to others



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Hope, Resiliency & Purpose

- It is the perception of inescapable threat, unending struggle, constant suffering, and pointless loss that will eventually break the mind & body.
- People who are sufficiently equipped with hope, resiliency, & purpose do not become traumatized. Such individuals remain steadfastly oriented toward a positive future.



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Utilizing Life Experience

- Jamie Pennebaker (1997): *“Write about the most upsetting or traumatic experience of your entire life,”* 15 minutes, 4 consecutive days: 1 year later, there are fewer trips to the doctor or hospital compared to those who “vented” or expressed emotions.
- Journaling alone does not produce benefit.
- **In order to produce benefit, the person must make sense of what occurred, draw lessons from it, and establish new goals (i.e., PTG).**



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Suggesting the Future

- People need emotional goals to work toward. But when the goal is in the past (e.g., “I want to forget what happened”), they remain stuck. In order to be of value, goals need to be shifted to the future.
- Suggestion is used to help clients make sense of what has occurred and create future plans by addressing the need for meaning, a sense of destiny, and legacy.



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Help Create Meaning

FUTURE-HOPE

Create Meaning: Identifying a greater cause that is advanced by the suffering or hardship that has occurred.

- Traumatic memories are fragmented, there is not a sequential narrative that has relevance to the future. Rumination is substituted for narrative coherence and future orientation.
- As the story develops, its elements must fit within the existing ego-structure. This is usually a matter of terminology, using words that fit with the values and moral code of the individual.
 - Viktor Frankl, *“What would have happened if your wife had out-lived you?”*



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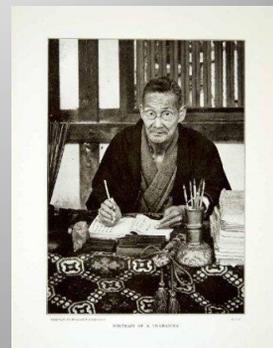
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We All Need A Destiny

FUTURE-HOPE

Destiny: A reason to expect certain positive events in the future.

- Ego appeal: “You have an unusually strong ____, that will be very useful in the future.”
- Logical appeal: “Because you were able to ____, you will be able to ____ in the future.”
- Prophetic appeal: “You did not die. You must have been saved for a reason.”



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Legacy

FUTURE-HOPE

Legacy: Enduring proof of one's existence, it is the idea that one's life somehow mattered.

- There is a strong human need not only to belong but also to be a vital contributing member to a social collective
 - “What can you do to ensure that others do not suffer as you have?”
 - “What good can you make come out of this tragedy?”



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Breakaway Groups

Fortune Telling Exercise

suggest meaning + suggest destiny + suggest legacy

- In pairs, take turns pretending to be something like a tengen-jutsu fortune teller, who is making meaningful predictions. Use permissive suggestion without many specifics.
 - Meaning: “This happened so that ... [some personal value]”
 - Destiny: “What this means about your future is ...”
 - Legacy: “This is how you can make a lasting contribution ...”

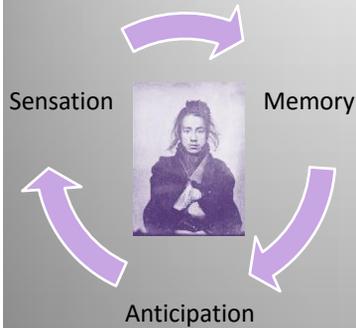


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Three Core Tasks



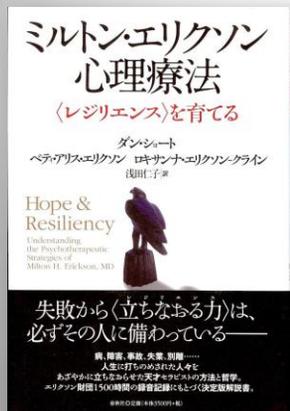
- 1. Sensation:** Create a physical sense of safety, interact as a caring protector
- 2. Memory:** Use new emotional experiences and fantasy to alter traumatic memories
- 3. Anticipation:** Use the negative event as a catalyst for growth, learning, and increased ambition for the future



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