

SEVERE TRAUMA & STRESS RECOVERY WORKSHOPS

12. A COUPLE OF QUICK TECHNIQUES

1. “THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW!”

This technique is very powerful for arresting a trigger in its tracks. It ensures the locus of control remains with the service user and not with the trigger, which could easily lead into a flashback.

The secret is to practice saying, “**That was then, This is NOW!**” on a regular basis, so that it is ready to use, in an instant. Service users should be encouraged to slow down their pace of speech, lower their voice-tone somewhat, and say the sentence *forcefully*, with the emphasis on the “NOWWWW...!”

With this technique held in readiness - triggers – which are highly unpredictable – need not be feared; instead, they may be *welcomed*.

One service user who had had several traumatic experiences over a number of years, reported that, on average, he encounters one trigger roughly every 2 weeks; but that this is not a problem, as by using this technique for just a few seconds on each and every occasion, he continues to live life to the full, regardless.

2. “PARK IT... AND MOVE ON...”

A powerful instruction to the mind, for dealing with intrusive thoughts, this technique is a simple statement which acknowledges that the incident occurred, without attempting to bury it in any way.

As a car parking metaphor, it is helpful because the service user can conjure up a picture of parking an old car anywhere they choose (a lay-by, car park, road-side, etc.), and then walking away from it – and onward, along their life-journey.

They may choose to return to the car, from time to time, either to take a fresh look at it; maybe sit inside for a while; or, drive it around a little. In either case, they can park it again, lock it up, move on, returning to their walk along their life-journey.

This metaphor is powerful in another way, as what becomes of cars when they are left parked-up and neglected for a long period of time? They become dusty, covered in cobwebs, the tyres deflate, and brakes & clutch plates become seized. Eventually they become a rusty heap, fit for nothing and certainly, after many years, not something the person would want to revisit anyway. By this time, a great distance has been covered between the ‘parked’ car and their journey along the path of life. What happens is that, although the car is an important part of the service user’s life, its potential to affect them in the present weakens further and further. It begins to become but a distant memory.

It is helpful for service users to be encouraged to practice saying the command: “**Park it...and move on**”, a few times in the session, before setting it as a between-session task. Saying it between 10-12 times/week, when intrusive thoughts occur, for a number of weeks, seems to be about right for bedding in this technique effectively.

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