

Imagery Instructions: Schema Couples Therapy

Silent joint imagery for the assessment of frustrated core needs, EMS's and coping patterns.

1. Place yourself in a comfortable position. Relax your shoulders and take a few deep breaths. Let your body fully relax.
2. Now, float back in memory to a safe place. It might be a real place, or a place that you create yourself. It can be indoors or outdoors. Just make sure to have your safe place set up in a way that makes you feel calm and comfortable. If anything is disturbing you right now in this place, then just take it out. In this place everything is arranged the way you want it to be. If you want to have music or things like a bed, pillow or a blanket just bring it in with you into the image. Enjoy being calm and relaxed in your own safe place.
3. Now I want you to erase the image of the safe place and float back to a memory of a recent emotionally distressing conflict situation with your partner. It can be a month, or week ago, or just the other day. If there are several images coming up, just grab hold of the situation that feels most vivid right now.
4. What is going on in this situation? Where are you at? What are your feelings right now in this situation... what are your thoughts... what are you trying to do?
5. Look at your partner. What is she/he pre-occupied with... what do you think is going on within her/him... what is she/he trying to achieve behaving this way towards you?
6. Now I want you to focus on your feelings, right now in this situation... what would you need right now – in the best of worlds – that your partner would do and/or say that would make your current distress subside and make you feel relaxed and content. Even if you might not think it would ever happen... but what would you emotionally need from your partner right now in this situation? Maybe that your partner was more caring, loving... more in-tuned to your feelings and perspectives... less angry, critical and judgemental...
7. Now, if it feels safe, say out loud to your partner what you wish that she/he would do right now in order for your distressing emotions to subside.
8. Look at your partner, how does she/he react?
9. (If you don't feel safe expressing what you need from your partner right now in this situation, what are you afraid would happen, how would that make you feel and how would that most likely make you respond?).
10. Now I want you to keep focusing on the distressed emotions that you are experiencing in this situation, but erase the image of you and your partner and float back to an early distressing memory together with one of your parents (or another significant person you knew as a child).
11. Don't try to think of a childhood situation, just let it come to you. If there are several memories floating by, then grab hold of the upsetting childhood memory that feels most vivid right now.

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12. What is going on in this situation? Where are you at? What are your feelings right now in this situation... what are your thoughts... what are you trying to achieve?
13. Look at your parent what is she/he pre-occupied with... what do you think is going on within her/him... what is she/he trying to achieve behaving this way towards you?
14. Now I want you to focus on your feelings right now in this situation... what would you need right now – in the best of worlds – what would your parent do and/or say that would make your distress subside and make you feel relaxed and content. Even if you might not think it would ever happen... but what would you emotionally need from your parent right now in this situation? Maybe that your parent was more caring, loving... more attuned to your feelings and perspective... less angry, critical and judgemental...
15. Now, if it feels safe, say out loud to your parent what you wish that she/he would do right now in order for your distressing emotions to subside.
16. Look at your parent, how does she/he react?
17. (If you don't feel safe expressing what you need from your parent right now in this situation, what are you afraid would happen, how would that make you feel and how would that make you respond?).
18. Now I want you to leave the upsetting childhood situation and picture yourself coming back to your safe place, where you were a little while ago, at the beginning of this exercise. Look around in your safe place and see that all is like before. Feel how a comforting warm sensation spreads in your body, and how your breathing is effortless and calm. Just enjoy being back at your own safe place, that you can come back to whenever you feel distressed.
19. Now I will count backwards from 3 and then you can open your eyes again, 3,2,1...