

Brief Instructions for the Flash Technique – Phil Manfield, PhD & Lewis Engel, PhD, 2017

Use Flash Technique with clients who are defended, avoidant, major intellectualizers, moderately dissociative, or afraid to feel the intensity of the affect associated with a specific memory.

An appropriate target for Flash Technique: something that is moderately disturbing (SUD \geq 6). Avoid a memory where the disturbance is related to earlier memories.

Examples: anything referenced in the Adverse Childhood Events scale; incident involving major shame, guilt, fear, sadness, sibling relationship rupture, or separation; relationship loss or rejection (if no feeder); loss/death, person or animal; betrayal, helplessness; loving as child; loss of friends, new school/house; getting lost; changing jobs, separation from colleagues; assaults or violence (witnessing or experiencing); hospitalizations, injuries or anything involving intense pain; natural or man-made disaster; nightmares; a failure; scene from movie; legal conflict

SCRIPT

Before we start, I'd like you to think of a disturbing /upsetting memory or image from your life, one that still bothers you now. Please choose a memory that has a disturbance level of at least 6 on a zero – 10 scale, where 0 is nothing or neutral and 10 is the worst you can imagine. If you can't think of a memory, try a scene from a movie is disturbing. Once you've done that, I do NOT want you to continue to think about it, or tell me about it just yet. Instead, I'd like you to find a positive, engaging focus (PEF). It may be a person, special place, enjoyable activities, favorite music, or imagined experiences. We want it to be strong enough to hold your attention so you don't think of disturbing things.

Focus on that positive experience and tap back and forth on your thighs as I tap on mine. [Tap back and forth 4 times.] Was it easy for you to stay connected to your positive focus?

[If so,] We'll be doing the same thing again, but this time, I'll say "flash" and I want you to quickly blink your eyes once.

[You may demonstrate. Once s/he has done it, check to see if that was easy to do without accessing any disturbance. If so...]

This time, I'd like you to rapidly blink three times each time I say "flash." [You may demonstrate. Once s/he has done it, do five of these triple flashes.]

Do you notice any change in the memory? [After feedback, do a second and third set of five triple blinks. If the disturbance isn't dripping, check to see if there is no intrusion from the disturbing memory during the flashes. If so, have the client put it in the container and continue flashing until the SUD is 0 or \geq 3 and not dropping by at least two points after a set of 5 triples (in this case move on to Phase 3 of EMDR)]

TROUBLESHOOTING

- If SUD doesn't drop and there's no apparent reason, try *Pretend this blank piece of paper has your disturbing memory on the underside. Before each triple blink, glance rapidly at the piece of paper.* If that doesn't cause a shift, move to Phases 3-6.
- If client doesn't think it's working, they're probably accessing the memory to evaluate. This prevents Flash from working.
- If the client isn't "rehearsing," instruct the client to trust that the brain will go where it needs to.
- Make sure the client isn't talking.
- Client may need help identifying a "positive engaging focus" (PEF).