

Chapter 20

Dip Your Toe In Grounding for Flashbacks Script

This resource is taught to clients who have frequent flashbacks, and it is taught immediately after the Dip Your Toe In Sensory Grounding resource.

This exercise involves using a photo to help you stop a flashback once it starts. Can you find a photo on the internet (or in a magazine) that is colorful and also feels relaxing? For instance, if it is an ocean scene, I might invite you to notice all the colors of blue in the ocean as they move from dark blue to white as the waves are on the beach. Are all parts of you willing to try this with me? [Allow them to try to find one that works.]

Can you describe the photo for me? Are there any color shifts in the photo that you can notice deeply (for instance, shifts in the blue of the ocean that I just described)? Can you notice deeply the changes and shifts in colors, as though you are trying to see every version of that color? [pause] I am asking you to try this to saturate the color-perceiving parts of your brain in order to push aside any visual elements of the flashback.

As soon as you notice that you are having a flashback, I'd like you to stare deeply at this photo. Can you find a place to store it where you can access it quickly? Try to notice every shift of the color you have identified in it. Try to notice the colors in the photo until the only thing you see is the photo. We use the photo as a kind of bridge to help your brain focus first on a visual object that is in your hand. When the only thing that you see is the colors in the photo, put the photo down and do the sensory grounding that we just explored.

Look around your current room and notice whatever you see and notice the color attached to the object. Say things out loud, like

“those are my shoes” to help anchor you in your current room and the present time.

Touch a piece of furniture near you and notice its temperature from the perspective of warmer, cooler, or the same temperature as your hand.

Notice whatever you hear in order of loudest first.

Find something to smell and notice that.

Find (or go get) something to taste and notice that.

Make at least a small change to your immediate environment. For instance, if you had been sitting, move. If you had been standing, sit for a moment.

Notes:

- Normalize any difficulties. Expect that it may not work at all the first few times the client tries it. Keep trying it.
- The goal of this resource is to stop a flashback once it starts. It will not stop them from happening but can dramatically shorten the activation when they occur.
- It may not be accompanied by an immediate relaxation response.
- Encourage the client to do grounding often when needed, but have the client practice it between sessions for several days at baseline levels of stress so that it is rugged enough to be used when really needed.
- As with all of the Dip Your Toe In resources, there is no left-right stimulation utilized we add it just prior to going to the processing phases.