Cultivating Inner Resources in Teens and Adults

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We are all Resource Full!

- Inner Resources -- refers to our reservoir of positive experiences & memories — e.g. loving & being loved, feeling safe, strong, comforted, competent, powerful, happy, joyful, peaceful, calm, successful, etc.

- Positive memories are stored in neurological networks & are therefore all potentially accessible — e.g. baking cookies with your grandmother as a child.

- Somatic Resources — another category.
The Brain: Built to Provide Reparative Resources!

- Webs of associations radiate from key life experiences. The strands that make up the webs can include images, emotions, body sensations, sounds, smells, tastes, & beliefs about self & others (Parnell, 2008).
- We can use our imagination to pull together strands from positive experiences to create new resources.
- Our brains are built to help us heal, especially once we clear blockages/traumas (Shapiro, 2012).
The mind’s negativity bias and unprocessed memories

- Past unpleasant/traumatic experiences can leave us with “unprocessed memories” that hold the original emotions, sensations, images, and negative beliefs.
- Unprocessed memories, meanings & feelings are sometimes unconsciously triggered by present experiences.
- Also, we often do not pay as much attention to positive experiences as we do to negative ones.
- We tend to focus on what is lacking rather than what is working well---negative interpretations are driven by the judgment of self and others.
Somatic Resources—
Begin with the Breath & Body!

- Earth Breath Meditation: Integration of nature and imagination (Exercise #1; Parnell, 2008).
- Body Sensations—Our negativity bias means that we are more likely to notice distress sensations & to ignore areas of relative calm.
- Cultivating Calm: Locating & expanding the calmest spot when distressed (Exercise #2; Handout #1). The Pendulation Principle.
- The Light Stream Technique (Shapiro, 2012)—similar to the Cultivating Calm exercise.
Resource Tapping to Strengthen Inner Resources

- Bilateral Stimulation from the EMDR treatment tradition—activates both brain hemispheres.
- EMDR= Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing (developed since 1987; for PTSD)
- Dual Attention Stimulus (DAS)- eyes, sound, tactile.
- Natural soothing rhythm via bilateral movement or posture—baby being rocked, walking, running, drumming, dancing; Tai Chi, Yoga, Brain Gym.
- Butterfly Hug—originally used with children after natural disasters; can also tap on thighs or knees. Tapping itself is a Somatic Resource.
Exercise #3; Parnell, 2008, p. 53-54

- One of the most common resources to develop early in therapy; can also be called the Calm or Peaceful Place.
- You can enhance feeling of safety by adding a protective barrier, force field, or guards.
- You can use a cue word as you tap in the safe/calm/peaceful place.
- In therapy, it is particularly important to strengthen the physical sensations of safety.
Resource Tapping Steps
(Parnell, 2008; Handout #2)

1. Bring to mind your resource memory, experience, image, figure, or body location/sensation.

2. Activate the sensory details of your resource (e.g. visual details, soothing words & voice, sounds, smells, tactile sensations, tastes, temperature).

3. Begin to slowly tap Left-Right, Left –Right 6-12 times. If the resource continues to strengthen and feel positive, you can continue to tap.

4. If negative feelings/memories come up, take a break from tapping & switch to another resource.

- In therapy, a Container image is developed if needed to hold past upsetting memories/traumas.
Relational Resources: Nurturing Figures (1)

- Real or imaginary figures from the present or past; people from past who were loving, safe, nurturing.
- People from your current life who are important resources for you, such as your spouse or friends.
- Figures from movies, TV, or books, historical figures, or people from popular culture can be used as nurturing resources—e.g. Mr. Rogers.
- Spiritual figures.
- Pets, power animals.
Relational Resources:
Nurturing Figures (2)

- Connect with your “nurturing adult self” by recalling times in your life when you cared for another, such as holding your child or petting cat.

- When tapping in a nurturing figure, imagine the figure in its nurturing aspect. This can include memories or images of the figure being nurturing.

- Imagine that the nurturing figures is standing near you & offering you what you need. Imagine that he or she knows exactly what to say to you, exactly what you need to hear (Korn & Leeds, 2002).
Protective Figures

- Protector figures can be real people or animals, or imaginary figures from books, movies, TV, or dreams—similar categories as nurturing figures.

- Many people choose animals as protectors. They can be pets or even power animals.

- When you tap in your protector figure, it is important to imagine the figure in its protective aspect. This can include memories or images of the figure being protective.
Relational Resources: Inner Wisdom Figures (1)

Exercise #4: Inner Wisdom Figure in Safe Place (Parnell, 2008)

- Fairies, wise men & women, grandparents, elves, wizards, religious figures, animals, Native American elders, goddesses, an older version of the person represented as white or golden light, their own wise voice without any image (Parnell, 2008).

- Ask for any advice he or she has to give you. It is also important that you accept the advice your inner wisdom figure offers you, as long as it is compassionate. You then tap again, as long as the information & associations remain positive (Parnell, 2008).
Relational Resources:  
**Inner Wisdom Figures (2)**

- You may require a different inner wisdom figure for different problems in your life or at different times in your life.

- Optimal Future Self-- Very Teen Friendly intervention—Connecting with the Teen’s “Inner Adult” (Picture Yourself 5 years from now as who you hope to become/grow into… (Napier, 1999—see references for website)
The Healing Circle
(Schmidt, 2009)

- The Developmental Needs Meeting Strategy—an Ego State therapy that includes the development of Nurturing Adult Self, Protective Adult Self, & Spiritual Core Self.

- The Healing Circle—a wounded inner part is surrounded by the Nurturing Adult Self, Protective Adult Self, and Spiritual Core Self.

- Healing or Helping Circles can be used with other combinations of Relational Resources—e.g. different protectors, nurturers, wisdom figures etc. (Parnell, 2008).
Metaphors & Symbolic Resources

- Resource Development & Installation (R.D.I.)—EMDR protocol with research support (Korn & Leeds, 2002)

- Images/symbols/metaphors that help you to feel ____________ [e.g., strong, soothed, loved, connected, protected, peaceful, contained, peaceful, etc.]. Images/symbols from art, dreams, daydreams, guided imagery, poetry, movies, books, video games [e.g. the sentient tree in Avatar; a golden shield; Gandalf’s staff in L.O.R.; the Hunger Games’ Mocking Jay pin; Harry Potter’s invisibility cloak; Star Wars’ “The Force”].

- Imagine touching this resource or holding it your hands and absorbing the qualities you need to feel ____________.
The Ultimate Resource: Core Self

- Developed in many therapy & meditation traditions.

- “There is an abiding presence that is never touched by what happens to us. Like the sun obscured by clouds, it remains shining in the background. Upsetting life events & our interpretations of these events are like the clouds that obstruct the experience of our wholeness, our true nature. Like sunlight breaking through the clouds, every once in a while we get a glimpse of our true nature” (Parnell, 2008, p. 21).

- Core Self Breath Meditation—Exercise #5.
Self often gets obscured & hidden by the distress & conflicts produced by inner parts. Psychotherapeutic improvement occurs as the Self separates from parts, interacts with them in a compassionate manner, and helps them heal or get along more harmoniously.

**The 8 C’s of Self** (Handout #3)

1. Compassionate  
2. Creative  
3. Curious  
4. Calm  
5. Clear  
6. Courageous  
7. Connected  
8. Confident
Three Components of and Gateways to Self-compassion
(Neff, 2011; p.41)

1. **Self-kindness**— being gentle & compassionate toward ourselves rather than critical & judgmental.

2. **Recognition of our common humanity**— feeling connected with others rather than feeling isolated and alienated; acknowledging that we all suffer/struggle.

3. **Mindfulness**— holding our experience in balanced awareness, rather than ignoring or exaggerating pain.

The Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2011); measures these 3 dimensions; the SCS short form is included in the handouts.
Mindfulness: Consciousness
As a Path to Compassion

- Analogy of watching a red cardinal flying across a clear blue sky. The bird represents a particular thought or emotion, and the sky represents mindfulness (Neff, 2011, p.88). Negative thoughts & emotions are “... given less weight--- they are observed, but not necessarily believed (Neff, 2011, p. 112).

- Instead of replacing negative feelings with positive ones, new positive emotions are generated by accepting negative ones.

- Dual Awareness: The positive emotions of care and connectedness are felt alongside our painful feelings. “When we have compassion for ourselves, sunshine and shadow are both experienced simultaneously” (Neff, 2011, p. 117-118).
Self-compassion and Teens (1)  
(Neff, 2011; p. 217-218)

- Teens’ increased perspective-taking ability intensifies self-evaluation and social comparison. “What do other people think of me?” or “Am I as good as everyone else?”

- “The personal fable” common for teens-- a cognitive fallacy that their experiences are unique and that others cannot possibly understand what they are going through.

- Teens have a hard time understanding the shared human experience, as they haven’t had enough close relationships to realize that their own thoughts & feelings aren’t unique.
Research shows that teens who most believe in the personal fable tend to be less self-compassionate, because they don’t recognize that their difficulties and failings are a normal part of being human.

By explaining that **self-compassion is a way to feel good about yourself that doesn’t require feeling superior to others**, you can help teens more easily understand why self-compassion is a healthier way to relate to themselves.
Research shows that self-esteem is more strongly influenced by the perceived judgments of strangers than close friends and family…. We tend to give more weight to what nameless, faceless “other people” think of us—coworkers, neighbors, other kids at school, and so on, who are supposedly more objective (p. 139).

Typically, people with high and low self-esteem are equally liked by others. Those with low self-esteem greatly underestimate how much others actually approve of them, while those with high self-esteem greatly overestimate others’ approval (p. 140).
Self-compassion vs. Self-esteem (2)
(Neff, 2011; p. 152-153)

- Self-compassion does not try to capture and define the worth or essence of who we are. It is not a thought or a label, a judgment or an evaluation.

- Our successes and failures come and go—they neither define us nor do they determine our worthiness.

- Self-compassion steps in precisely where self-esteem lets us down—whenever we fail or feel inadequate.

- Self-compassion offers same advantages as high self-esteem, with no discernible downsides…. it offers clear advantages, especially when things go wrong or we fail.
Directing Loving-Kindness Toward Our Suffering: Hand on Heart Meditation (Exercise #6; Handout #4; Neff, 2011, p. 203)

1. Get in touch with the source of your distress & sense the emotions and sensations in your body.
2. Place your hand on your heart, & set your intention to offer yourself kindness, understanding, & compassion for the distress you are experiencing.
3. Now repeat the following phrases to yourself, softly and gently: 
   
   May I be safe.
   May I be peaceful.
   May I be kind to myself.
   May I accept myself as I am.

Alternative last phrase: May I accept my life as it is.
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