

ASCENDING STRATEGIES PART 1

SESSION 5 OVERVIEW:

The ascending pain pathway depends upon sensory strategies, such as touch or temperature. Regular use can help derive more benefit from descending pathways as they reduce pain and distress. Touch is essential for physical and emotional development. It allows development of our ability to self soothe during infancy. In chronic pain, there is a struggle to self soothe and need external help to restore calmness and reduce tension. Healing touch is sustained, attuned, touch from a trusted person, directly to the bodily location of hurt. It is a therapeutic form of sensory communication that utilizes the power of touch to stimulate decreased pain and distress. However, being touched is not enough on its own. The recipient must be open to noticing and responding to the effects of touch, while the person providing the healing touch must be attuned to the recipient's emotional state. Being in tune with one another results in an unspoken understanding and automatically calms us. If you lack, or have a poor relationship with physical touch due to, for example, abuse, little touch during childhood, or any kind of inappropriate touching, you will have to expose yourself to touch and attend to how it feels in your body. It may be beneficial to begin with an inanimate object such as a cushion or teddy bear, then a pet (if applicable), and slowly progress to someone you trust.

AT HOME PRACTICE:

Session 5 Assigned Exercises:

- Skin (Sensory Healing)
- Healing Touch (Sensory Healing)



Skin helps you to learn how to trust that the outer layer of your body will receive sensory input from the outside world in a safe and soothing way. It is a very helpful exercise for those who are anxious about being touched or their ability to respond to touch. Practice Skin daily until you feel comfortable with touch. Progress onto Healing Touch daily. This involves locating the part of the body where you feel pain and having a safe person apply pressure to the location. Listen to the corresponding tracks on the Overcoming Pain App with your non-noise cancelling earbuds!

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Reference: Grant, M. (2020). *The New Change Your Brain Change Your Pain: A trauma-informed approach*. Trauma and Pain Management Services Pty Ltd.