

ASCENDING STRATEGIES PART 2

SESSION 6 OVERVIEW:

There are many other sensory stimulation strategies that can help alleviate pain. The use of essential oils, such as eucalyptus or peppermint, applying topically to the affected area can help alleviate pain. Additionally, essential oil aromatherapy uses smell to alleviate pain and stress, and aid in relaxation. Lavender is particularly effective for pain and inflammation. Phototherapy, or exposure to sunlight, in appropriate and measured timeframes has many health benefits such as enhanced mood and energy, and stimulation of vitamin D production. Recommended direct sun exposure is 60 minutes for those with darker skin, and 15 minutes for those with fair skin. Be sure to get direct sunlight on the face and arms prior to applying sunblock to produce sufficient vitamin D levels! Finally, listening to calming music or sounds in nature can be helpful for pain and stress. Music can stimulate positive emotions and greater social interconnectedness. It provides a competing stimulus in terms of attention, so fewer mental resources are left over to process pain. Regular stimulation of as many senses as possible can provide temporary relief from pain, stress, and feelings associated with helplessness.

AT HOME PRACTICE:

Session 6 Assigned Exercises:

- [Contralateral Stimulation \(Sensory Healing\)](#)
- [Head Hold \(Sensory Healing\)](#)
- [Sample from other sensory strategies above](#)



Contralateral stimulation is a strategy where pressure is applied to the exact location of your pain, but on the opposite side of the body. This can result in disrupting the brain activity that is maintaining your pain. This is best practiced by having someone you trust apply the touch. Head Hold is an exercise where you place one hand on the forehead, while the other is placed on the back of the head where the skull curves inward, just above the neck. Head Hold is great for relieving mental stress, having unstoppable thoughts, or feeling like your head is going to explode. Three to five minutes of this exercise is enough to induce feelings of profound relaxation. Choose one, the other, or both, and practice on a daily basis with the Overcoming Pain App and 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.