

DESCENDING STRATEGIES

SESSION 7 OVERVIEW:

Descending strategies, or mental strategies, are used to harness abilities such as attention, memory, learning, and imagination. These are all things we have or can develop. The advantages of mental strategies are their ability to neutralize stressful sensory-emotional patterns which maintain pain, and can largely be done without external help. Bilateral Stimulation (BLS), the defining treatment of EMDR, involves focusing on the distressing memory or feelings from which you want relief, in combination with visual or audio BLS. The bilateral nature of the audio tones makes them appear to be moving (creates an auditory illusion by their sounding alternately left and right). This results in a loss of where the sound is coming from and you continue to try and orient yourself (brain is on alert). The undefinable nature of the stimulus means that the brain can never identify the sound and file it away. As long as your brain is focusing on the BLS, it cannot focus on anything else, including your pain! After few seconds of attending to BLS, the alert part of your brain determines there is no danger, and the alertness is replaced by relaxation. From the BLS, you will notice a reduction in muscle tension and emotional distress, and a decrease in anxiety and worry.

AT HOME PRACTICE:

Session 7 Assigned Exercises:

- Anesthetic Mist
- Healing Light
- Developing Healing Resources
- Replacing a Feeling
- Letting Go Of The Pain
- Bilateral Stimulation
- Pain Off Switch



Sample one or more of the descending strategies listed above daily using 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.