



BACK TO THE BODY

EXPERIENCING THE POWER SANDTRAY WITHOUT PHYSICAL PRESENCE OR MINIATURES

In times of stress, many people (ourselves and our clients) revert to previously learned coping skills - ones that worked in the past but are often not helpful now.

When we learned these, it was often learned implicitly, meaning that we learned by watching, doing, and then being reinforced for our actions, internally or externally.

Since the entire world is holding lots of stress in our bodies and within the system, we would expect to see some old coping skills arise throughout the world.

What these look like vary from client to client and they often do not realize what is happening until it is too late.

It's easier to see the obvious maladaptive coping skills such as drinking or using illegal substances, but what can be most detrimental to our client's and their systems (internally and externally) are those skills that are less apparent, such as the need to control others or obsessive information collecting.

What we're going to focus on here in this technique is to help clients

1. Feel their feelings in their bodies and then
2. see what comes up for what is going on how and how its connected to the past

First thing, instruct the client to sit comfortably in a chair or wherever is easiest to place their feet on the floor. We want to set in a way that would allow for grounding through the feet. Instruct the client to sit quietly for about 60-90 seconds (you are guiding them so you let them know when time is up).

During this quiet time, the client is to pay attention to any tightness that is coming up for them, or ill-ease occurring in their body. We are not wanting to fix it now, but to merely pay attention.

Then let the client know it is time to return to the world of now with the therapist.

Process with the client where they feel tightness in their body. During this time, it is helpful to allow the client to have different regulation tools available.

Prior to the telemedicine sessions, I instruct my clients to have beans, rice, sand or whatever is available in their home to use to regulate in the session. Again, I'm instructing the client to attune to their inner world, allowing the sand to be a way to help the feelings represent the emotions inside and then aid in the movement of these bodily-held emotions.



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Next, because we don't want to just leave these emotions in the body, we need to put words to what is happening or did happen.

Several of the prompts that I like to use include:

- Where did you first feel tightness or unease in your body? Did it shift? How?
- Can you think of a time when you felt this in your body previously? Tell me about that
- What color comes to mind when you focus on that place of unease? Breathe through that place
- Say words that come up when you pay attention to your body.

Heavy feelings such as shame, hurt, abuse-related emotions often arise if we sit with our feelings. These are bearable when we are in connection with our clients, even if we aren't able to be physically present with them.

Check in with your client several times after completing this technique to see what else is coming up. I also like to do this several times throughout the session, in an effort to help clients experience feeling their bodies while in the presence of a safe person.

Use this time to help clients go back to the body and use the body as a regulatory piece. Integration can be achieved even without miniatures because YOU are the most important part of the sandtray experience.