

## Emotional Repetition and Attention Remodeling

The therapist often picks up on phrases or sentences that the client repeatedly uses to describe themselves in negative and unhelpful ways (Dimaggio, Ottavi, Popolo & Salvatore, 2020).

Techniques that utilize such phrases can reduce the emotional intensity of frequently encountered situations and help the client from feeling overwhelmed (Dimaggio et al., 2020).

Use the following worksheet to capture common phrases and learn how to desensitize negative feelings encountered under challenging situations.

Phrases used	Typical context/usage

- Choose several of the most common phrases and discuss how and when they are used.
- Remind the client that they are judging themselves harshly and self-appraisal is most likely not warranted.
- The therapist then repeats the phrases slowly and deliberately several times. For example:  
*You are worthless, you do everything wrong.*
- The client may feel distress and a degree of humiliation. While you wish to desensitize them from such phrases, take care not to push them too far.

Then, ask the client to:

- Close their eyes.
- Picture a scene that typically causes them negative thoughts.
- Select the *frame* (single image) that most represents the overall memory with the strongest emotional intensity.
- Hold that image.
- Let their hands drop to their sides and pay attention to any sensations they experience in the room (for example, tingling feet, cool air on the face, etc.)
- After several moments, ask them to divide their attention between the distressing scene in their head and the environment they are in now – the sounds, smells, any other sensations.
- Hold this split attention.
- Describe how they feel now regarding the intensity of the negative emotion.

Typically, after repeating the phrases and then practicing attention remodelling the client reports a decrease or disappearance in the negative feelings (Dimaggio et al., 2020).

## Reference

- Dimaggio, G., Ottavi, P., Popolo, R., & Salvatore, G. (2020). *Metacognitive interpersonal therapy: Body, imagery and change*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

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