

TOUCHSTONE WITH EXPOSURE EXERCISE

OVERVIEW

The following exercise is to be used in conjunction with our book, “*What Is PTSD? 3 Steps to Healing Trauma*” for best effect. Please visit www.WhatIsPTSD.com for additional resources.

GOAL

The *Touchstone with Exposure Exercise* is a process designed to encourage feelings of comfort, security, and safety and can be accessed at any time and any place once it is well established. The exposure part of this exercise allows you to focus on the safety established in *Section One: Finding Comfort*, while working through an unresolved memory.

So what is a Touch Stone? A Touch Stone is a way of physically reminding us to focus and rehearse a certain state of being. In the case of this exercise, the state will be a reminder of comfort and safety (or similarly reassuring feelings). We use a simple physical reminder or Touch Stone (i.e., small stone or other object) like a pebble that you can hold comfortably in your hand. You could also use a Touch Stone like a special ring, positive saying, favorite picture or even your or thumb and finger pressed in the OK symbol. Whatever you like that is easy to access is a good Touch Stone or physical reminder of the desired state.

For the purpose of this exercise, we suggest a Touch Stone that is a found rock or object that you can hold easily within your dominant hand (the hand you write with). Practice holding the Touch Stone in your dominant hand with a light, but consistent pressure with your eyes closed, so you will experience how it feels before you start the exercise. Throughout the following exercise, you will need to read the instructions and then take a few moments of reflection. Closing your eyes throughout for reflection will help keep you connected with your experience.

TIME OUT

Do not use this exercise if you are actively dissociating. As always, reflect on your inner state and notice if you need a break from the exercise to find your inner calm.

MATERIALS AND LAYOUT

Pen or pencil, Touch Stone (found rock or object that fits comfortably in your hand) a quiet space, time, and the form provided on the following pages.

PATH TO COMPLETE

Part 1: Positive Inner State

1. Identify a time/state when you felt a sense of inner calm, security, pleasure or contentment (i.e., at the beach on a sunny day):

2. Add details of the memory of this calm and safe state when you felt the best (i.e., at the cottage, quietly sitting on a chair with a book, hearing the crackle of the fireplace warming the room):

3. Close your eyes and re-experience this positive moment (10 – 15 seconds).

Behavior

4. Close your eyes and imagine you are watching a videotape of this experience.
5. Make a note of images that are played in your own mind. What did you see yourself doing?

6. What was the look on your face in this calm and safe moment? Make a note of this below:

Thoughts

7. Reflect again on this calm and safe moment and replay it in your mind. This time, notice the positive inner thoughts that go along with such moment.
8. Note below the positive internal thoughts that go along with this calm and safe moment.

Body Feelings

9. Return to the positive memory and, again, rehearse the best moment. Notice the feelings in your body that go along with this calm and safe memory. Make a note of what you feel in your body. What sensations go along with a positive memory?

Setting the Touch Stone

- 10. Return to the positive memory, recalling all the images, thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations that go along with it. Really let yourself experience it as deeply as possible.
- 11. Again, recall the positive memory of what you were doing at the time, your emotions, thoughts and bodily sensations. Let yourself be fully immersed in this memory and then write all additional details that you notice now:

- 12. Read through your description above, close your eyes and allow yourself to capture as much of this experience as you can, as if you were reliving it in this moment.

Connect the Touch Stone to the Positive Memory

- 13. When the positive memory and the sensations that go along with it feel as good as possible, gently squeeze the Touch Stone in your dominant hand for five seconds, putting all the positive, calm and safe feelings into the gentle but firm squeeze.
- 14. Bring your attention back to the present moment and the room you are sitting in.
- 15. Test the Touch Stone by holding it firmly, trying to recall as much of the Positive Memory as you can. Notice how much of the memory you can restore by focusing on the Touch Stone.

Part II: Exposure

- 16. Identify an item from your Event List or Triggers that you want to work on in this exercise. Reflect on the experience, your feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations at the time of the incident. Notice how ignitable the memory is right now. Rate it from 1-10 (1 is not at all disturbing and 10 is the worst feeling). SUD's = _____
- 17. Squeeze the Touch Stone in your hand for five seconds, putting all the positive emotions, thoughts and sensations associated with the resource state you have identified earlier into the squeeze.
- 18. Imagine yourself being fully present in your positive state. Feel it, see it, live it. Then relax your hand holding the Touch Stone.

19. Return your attention to the memory from the Event or Trigger list. Reflect again on the thoughts, sensations, behaviors, emotions associated with the unresolved memory. Notice the intensity of the memory and the feelings that go along with it.
20. Now, again, squeeze the Touch Stone in your hand for five seconds, putting all the positive emotions, thoughts and sensations associated with the resource state you have identified earlier into the squeeze.
21. Imagine yourself being fully present in your positive state. Feel it, see it, live it. Then relax your hand.
22. Test your SUD's level now as you reflect on the Trigger or Event. Write out the SUD's level here:

28. Return to the top of #16 of this exercise and follow through again until the SUD's rating is a five or less and the memory feels more integrated. Note that a lightening of emotions and increased body relaxation is a good indicator to end the exercise. If the memory does not resolve to lower than an SUD's of 5, then return to the *Step One: Finding Comfort Exercises* until you experience a greater sense of relaxation.
