
Selecting a Single Memory

To complete the Written Exposure Therapy (WET) protocol, you'll need to pick one memory to work through over several writing sessions. Deciding on a single memory can feel daunting if you have multiple possible moments and memories to work with. Not only that, you'll need to be able to remember an adequate level of detail about the event itself. This resource is designed to help you select a highly distressing memory.

IDENTIFY

Draw a horizontal line across a sheet of paper. Mark 0 on the far left and your current age on the far right. This is your life timeline. Mark moments that have stood out to you using vertical lines, then use two or three words to note the event and your approximate age.

NARROW

Using a 1-10 scale for distress, rate each moment based on how distressing it makes you feel to consider it. For example, a 1/10 may be a happy or neutral memory, while a 5/10 might be something that brings up mild discomfort and is something you can think about but might not like to share with others. A 10/10 would be a memory that is so distressing that it feels like too much to even consider remembering that moment. Circle the ones that you rate between 6-10.

SELECT

For each of the moments that you circled, and especially for the ones rated in the 7 or 8 range, consider how much detail you remember. Of these memories, see if you can run

through a rough outline of who/what/when/where for at least 75% of the memory. If you cannot, cross that memory off the list.

FINALIZE

If you have multiple memories still circled at this point, then you can finalize which one to utilize. If you have done exposure and trauma work previously, or feel capable of managing whatever distress may come up, pick a memory that you rated higher. If you're nervous about what the process might entail and how you might feel, pick a lower rated memory. Either way, after the first two sessions, you'll have the chance to adjust if necessary, or to go back through the protocol again with another memory in the future.