Mind-Body Bridging for Professional Self-Care: Preventing and Treating Secondary Trauma

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Overview

• In this workshop domestic violence professionals will learn a few of the basic evidence-based Mind-Body Bridging (MBB) skills and practices for professional self-care to prevent and treat secondary trauma.

• MBB skills provide space for personal safety, voice and choice, while empowering professionals to alleviate psychological distress, and to strengthen and increase psychological flexibility, enhance resilience, and improve productivity and well-being.
Objective 1: Utilize Mind-Body Bridging (MBB) skills and practice for professional self-care to prevent and treat secondary trauma.

Objective 2: Apply MBB skills during and after traumatic or stressful life events to achieve and maintain optimal functioning.

Objective 3: Utilize MBB skills to provide space for personal safety, voice and choice, to empower the professional to alleviate psychological distress, and to strengthen and increase psychological flexibility, resilience, productivity, and well-being.
Mind-Body Bridging
All I-System Interventions (i.e., I-System Analysis, Mind-Body Bridging Therapy, Resilient Mind, Productive Mind) are informed by the I-System Model, which is based on the hypothesis that an overactive I-System is a common psychological mechanism underlying many emotional and behavioral disorders (Block, 2018).
• Mind-body bridging (MBB) is a psychological intervention that applies metacognitive and awareness-based strategies to increase psychological flexibility and resilience.

• MBB practice consists of various skills for cultivating present-focused awareness of one’s body, thoughts, and emotions, and developing an understanding of the psychological mechanisms behind maladaptive mind-body states and behavior.
• MBB skills helps one to recognize and rest an overactive I-System, thereby removing the hindrance to the innate resilience of the ‘true self’ (natural functioning).

• In a state of natural functioning adaptive skills and resilience emerge (Du Plessis, Webb & Tollefson, 2019).
• Karen Horney (1950) described alienation from the ‘real’ or ‘true self’ as the origin of most psychic distress and described the “real self” as “the ‘original’ force toward individual growth and fulfillment” (p. 158).

• According to Horney (1950), this real self is an “intrinsic potentiality” or “central inner force, common to all human beings” that is the core source of development (p. 17).
• MBB Skills focuses on unleashing the inherent resilience of the true self.

• MBB practice, therefore, aims at restoring the “motivational force or tendency” of the true self, and thereby unleashing its inherent resilience and “health-promoting force” (Ryan and Deci, 2017, p. 62).
Mind-Body Mapping
Your body:  □ TENSE  □ RELAXED  Location of body tension:  ____________________________

Your mind:  □ CLEAR  □ CLUTTERED

How do you act in this state?  ________________________________________________
EXAMPLE OF SITUATION MAP

They should just throw him in jail

He's never going to get it

Worried he might kill her

This is so stressful

Can't sleep

My client relapsed and beat his partner

I feel responsible

If I only was a better therapist

Am I really doing any good

Exhausted

Makes me feel incompetent

Frustrated

Your body: ☒ TENSE  ☐ RELAXED  Location of body tension: Jaws, Shoulders, back

Your mind: ☐ CLEAR  ☒ CLUTTERED

How do client act in this state? Angry, isolate, loss of motivation
Your body:  □ TENSE  □ RELAXED  Location of body tension: ____________________________
Your mind:  □ CLEAR  □ CLUTTERED
How do you act in this state? ____________________________________________________
Natural Functioning

**Body-based processing**
SMN: Somatosensory-motor network
Aud: Auditory
Vis: Visual

**Psychosocial Salience Processing**
DMN: Default-mode network
CON: Cingulate-operculum network
SN: Salience Network

**Central Executive Functioning**
FPN: Frontoparietal network
DAN: Dorsal attention network
VAN: Ventral attention network
I-System Functioning

- **Body-based processing**
  - SMN: Somatosensory-motor network
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- **Psychosocial Salience Processing**
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Mapping Negative Thoughts and Storylines
EXAMPLE OF NEGATIVE SELF TALK MAP

I am feeling incompetent

There is no hope for him

I am not good enough

I am afraid he is going to kill her

I am worn out

I just don't know enough

He will never get it

He is too reckless

I am ... and/or my client is...

Your body: □ TENSE  □ RELAXED  Location of body tension: Tension in neck

Your mind: □ CLEAR  □ CLUTTERED

How do you act in this state? Overeat and isolate myself

How active is your I-System?
Depressor/Fixer Subsystems

The I-System has two psychobiological subsystems:

- the **depressor** which gives rise to the experience of **narcissistic mortification/shame**,  
- and the **fixer** which gives rise to **energizing/euphoric narcissistic fantasy**.
Depressor/Fixer Storylines

- **Depressor storylines** are the thoughts generated by the depressor which revolve around the beliefs of not being ‘good enough’ and being ‘damaged’. Consequently, depressor storylines will point to what needs to be improved or ‘fixed’.

- **Fixer storylines** are elaborate ‘schemas’ and ‘action plans’ regarding how this ‘improvement’ or ‘damage repair’ will happen. **Fixer behavior** is the implementation of these schemas or plans.
Depressor generates negative thought

Storylines are created

Fixer behavior

Fixer thought

Mind clutter and body tension

Sense of discomfort and damage
EXAMPLE OF NEGATIVE SELF TALK MAP

I am feeling incompetent

I am afraid he is going to kill her

I am not good enough

There is no hope for him

I am worn out

I just don't know enough

He will never get it

He is too reckless

I am ... and/or my client is...

I will just take another job

Ask the judge for more jail time

Your body: 🔴 TENSE  🔵 RELAXED  Location of body tension: Tension in neck

Your mind: □ CLEAR  🔴 CLUTTERED

How do you act in this state? Overeat and isolate myself

How active is your I-System?

Scope: 1-10

Value: 5
Recognize and Defuse Your Depressor

• The first step is to **Recognize** that your Depressor has generated a negative thought and spun it into a story.

• The Depressor has generated negative thoughts due to a **Requirement** being unmet.
• When you become aware that a negative thought is generated by your Depressor and you label them as “Depressor thoughts”, you defuse the Depressor.

• These thoughts become less powerful, preventing them from cluttering your mind and creating body tension.
• **Labeling a Depressor Thought** is a MBB skill used to defuse the activity of the Depressor.

• This can be done by saying: *I’m having a thought that ______; it’s just a Depressor thought.* We don’t blow off or neglect the content of the thought, we are just preventing the Depressor from spinning the negative thought into a story.
Recognizing Storylines

• The Depressor generates a negative thought and spins it into a **Storyline**. Storylines may play in our minds many times throughout the day, creating mental lapses, errors, misperceptions, misjudgments, procrastination, body tension, etc. Storylines pull you away from what you are doing in the moment.

• All it takes to **Interrupt the Storyline** is to recognize that you are storytelling, use Bridging Awareness skills to rest your I-System, and return to what you were doing.
Interrupting Storylines

• All it takes to Interrupt the Storyline is to recognize that you are storytelling, use **Bridging Awareness** skills to rest your I-System, and return to what you were doing.
In **I-System Functioning** the Central Control has significant I-System activity that impairs its ability to optimally maintain system functioning and results in dysfunction in that system and other systems.

In **Natural Functioning** the Central Control has limited I-System activity (limited active Requirements in the representational world) and functions to keep the system within its optimal parameters.
Secondary Trauma Mapping
SECONDARY TRAUMA MAP

Traumatic Situation: ________________________________

Your body:  TENSE  RELAXED  Location of body tension: ____________________
Your mind:  CLEAR  CLUTTERED

How do you act in this state? ________________________________

How active is your I-System? ____________________________

Scale: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
EXAMPLE OF SECONDARY TRAUMA MAP

Traumatic situation: My client got beat and ended up in the hospital

Can't she see he will never change

I should of never taught her to be assertive

So frustrating

My client should have been protected

I feel so responsible

He should of never let out of jail

I am afraid he is going to kill her

Your body: ☑ TENSE ☐ RELAXED Location of body tension: Pain in my head

Your mind: ☑ CLEAR ☑ CLUTTERED

How do you act in this state? Argue and shout

How active is your I-System?
Do you attribute your ongoing distress to the traumatic situation?
• In the heat of the moment during a troubling experience it is part of Natural Functioning to experience distress or pain. However, your I-System can **additional distress** to an already distressing situation.

• The human experience includes various degrees of suffering, distress and trauma. This is unavoidable. However, a significant portion of ongoing distress and suffering is due to the **Requirements** people have of how others and the world should be. The I-System can either cause ongoing and **unnecessary** distress and suffering to an already distressing situation.
The I-System becomes overactive when our sense of self or identity is threatened, which happens when certain ‘being-conditions’ (requirements) related to our identity are violated (Block, 2018; Du Plessis, Webb & Tollefson, 2018).

These **Requirements** can be understood as inflexible expectations we have of ourselves, others and the world.
In essence, I-System Requirements are dysfunctional mental rules about how we as individuals, others, events, and the world around me should be.
• From a psychodynamic perspective one of the central aims of the I-System is to maintain coherence of the self and to prevent fragmentation and annihilation of the self (Du Plessis, Webb & Tollefson, 2018).

• Heinz Kohut (1971, 1977) stated that the threat of fragmentation is ever-present as a potential - even in relatively healthy personalities - ever ready to invade the self when a self-object organization is about to be given up.
• There is a threat of fragmentation/annihilation of the self when an individual’s requirements (rules that maintain certain self-object organizations) are violated.

• Simply put, requirements are idealized standards of self, others, and the world that aim to maintain coherence of the idealized self, which at the same time cause an unrealistic and perfectionistic sense of identity.

• The I-System’s job is to counter-act perceived threats of fragmentation/annihilation of the self in effort to maintain bio-psychic homeostasis (Du Plessis, Webb & Tollefson, 2018).
By **Recognizing and Defusing your Requirement** about the external situation your ongoing distress will either melt away or be reduced and your Natural Functioning will dictate how you deal with the situation.
SECONDARY TRAUMA MAP WITH BRIDGING

Traumatic Situation: ________________________________

Your body:  □ TENSE  □ RELAXED  Location of body tension: __________________________
Your mind:  □ CLEAR  □ CLUTTERED
How do you act in this state? ________________________________
How active is your I-System?  1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Recognize and Defuse Requirements

• Each Requirement (Should/Must) has an inherent **logical fallacy**, because it imposes expectations on us, others, and the world that are not logically and factually correct, in short unrealistic.

• For example, the Requirement “People should be nice to me” implies that you can always expect people to be nice to you, which is obviously not an accurate view of reality.

• Whereas, “I would like people to be nice to me” expresses a **personal preference** that is not a logical fallacy. The logical version of this statement is then, “Sometimes people are nice to me and sometimes people are not nice to me. I prefer them to be nice”. This is sound logic because it is realistic.
• You can **Defuse a Requirement** by restating it as a personal preference, which has less power to activate the I-System.

• Defusing a Requirement allows you to deal with a troubling or distressing situation in Natural Functioning.

• It does not mean that you won’t be upset when a personal preference is violated, but it won’t be made worse by trying to deal with it with an active I-System.
No
Yes Violated
I-System Functioning

I-System Requirement

Defused
Natural Functioning

Thought
Event

Yes
No
Questions and Discussion
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