

Individual Therapy Techniques



Free association

This technique delves into unconscious processes and childhood experiences to understand and address current psychological issues. It involves exploring deep-seated emotions and conflicts to promote insight and healing.

How it works: The client verbalizes their thoughts, feelings, and memories as they arise, regardless of how trivial, irrational, or embarrassing they may seem.



Cognitive restructuring

Cognitive restructuring is a technique that practitioners can utilize with their clients in session to identify negative and inaccurate thoughts. They work together to replace them with alternative thoughts and beliefs that are more realistic and supportive.

How it works: The therapist helps the client notice automatic negative thoughts (e.g., "I'm worthless") and then works to identify cognitive distortions (e.g., catastrophizing, black-and-white thinking). Together, the therapist and client reframe those thoughts with healthier, more rational alternatives (e.g., "I have made mistakes, but I am not worthless").



5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique

Mindfulness-based therapy combines mindfulness practices with therapeutic techniques to help individuals become more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the present moment.

How it works: The client is asked to engage in a systematic exploration of their environment by noticing the following:

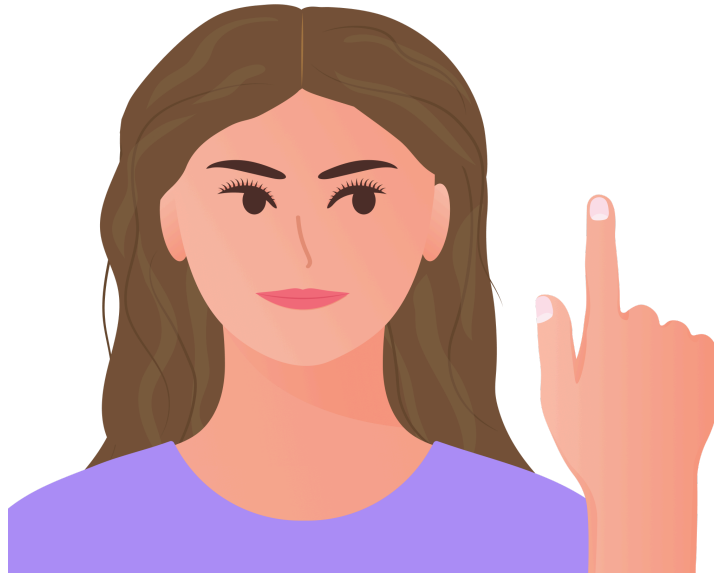
- 5 things they can see
- 4 things they can feel
- 3 things they can smell
- 2 things they can hear
- 1 thing they can taste



Graded exposure

Exposure therapy is a psychological treatment that was developed to help people confront their fears. When people are fearful of something, they tend to avoid the feared objects, activities, or situations.

How it works: For a client with a fear of flying, a therapist might start by having them look at pictures of airplanes, then gradually progress to watching videos, visiting an airport, and eventually taking short flights.



Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy is a structured therapy that encourages patients to focus on their specific trauma memory while simultaneously experiencing bilateral stimulation (typically eye movements), which is associated with a reduction in the vividness and emotion associated with the trauma memories.

How it works: A client with PTSD might work with the therapist to recall a traumatic event while following the therapist's hand moving back and forth.

References

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American Psychological Association. (2019, October 30). *Mindfulness meditation: A research-proven way to reduce stress.* <https://www.apa.org/topics/mindfulness/meditation>

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