

Imagery Exercise Script for Discovering Unmet Need (s)

- Close your eyes or drop your gaze
- Get comfortable in your chair
- Take a nice breath in, clear your mind, a clear canvas

Imagine a place in your mind you can recall or imagine. If there isn't one that comes to mind, a place that makes you feel comfortable, safe, soothed, peaceful, at ease in the world. Spot under a tree, vacation spot, curled up in a chair with a blanket, floating on a cloud. Ideas if you don't have one. See if you can call up that image as vividly as you can.

Notice what you see around you in this soothing, peaceful place. What's around you, where are you, the colors, notice the sounds in this place where you are, any sounds, smell, taste in your mouth, feeling, maybe the texture of something you're sitting on or stepping on, feel of the wind against your face if you're outside in the sunshine or the rain, any feelings or body sensations. Just let yourself lavish in that for a moment, just take it in. Enjoy the comfort and peace in this safe little place that you just drew in your mind.

Slide that image over to the side, keep the door open in case you want to go back there. On that blank canvas in front of you with your eyes closed, see if you can call up an image of yourself in the last conflict with your spouse (or parent, friend, etc.) where you felt very distressed. See if you can zoom in on an interaction with this person where you feel like your button is getting pushed, it feels uncomfortable, it feels stuck. Just watch it for a moment, notice what's happening, pay attention to the look on the other's face, what are they saying or thinking about you behind that look on their face. What are you saying, what are you thinking, what are you thinking about yourself, as you look at yourself through in this image, what does this image mean about you?

Don't judge it, just notice it, try to let the feeling come up automatically. What emotions are you having in this event, look around and see, is there sadness, anger, fear, is there any shame or embarrassment? Do you just feel stuck, powerless? Look in your body, what do you notice, where do you feel it? Where do you feel those thoughts and emotions? Anything going on in your body, your necks, your shoulders, your facial muscles. And you might even know what you want to say or do in this session, but it just doesn't seem to come out, it gets stuck. Now wipe out the picture of your spouse (parent, friend, etc) , but hold onto your emotions, your thoughts about yourself, the feelings you're having, the feelings in your body.

And just let yourself with all those feelings just drop back in time, like you're dropping back, back, back through your own time tunnel and let the feelings and thoughts and sensations escort you back. Maybe someplace to an earlier time in your life, a memory may pop or it may not. But just see if you can get at least an image of a little you, just a picture of a little you. Perhaps, a completely different context of course, but maybe the same feelings or thoughts of yourself or sensations or something close to this.

Zoom in again on the face of little you, that little boy or girl, in that once upon a time. If you get up close enough, see if you can figure out what does that little-you need? Ask that little you, what do they need? Do they need a hug, holding, comfort, reassurance, praise, someone to play with them, someone to just notice you, want to be with you, protect you, guide you? What does that little you need in this image?

And now I'm going to ask you to bring in one of your primary caretakers, your parents or other guardians in your life. Bring that adult into the image, perhaps the one that would have made it the most difficult to get that need met. But just for the sake of experiment, and remember it's the imagination. So there's the grown up in the image, one of your caregivers and then there's little you. What happens when the grown up becomes aware of what that little-you needs? Even though you wouldn't have asked for it perhaps from this person, but in the imagination.

What happens when you ask for that holding, that hug, that praise, that reassurance, or comfort or someone to care about who you are, someone who wants to play with you, engage with you, sit with you, protect you. Notice the look on the adult's face, what do they say or do? What are they thinking about you? Do they make it easy?

And now wipe out the image of the adult, caretaker, parent. And bring in an image of yourself as an adult, so there's little you and there's grown up you. Just the two of you now in the image together. That little version of yourself and your here and now grown up self. And see to the best of your ability, see if you can give that little you what he or she needs. If you can give them that emotional attention, physical affection, playfulness, protection, praise, reassurance.

To the best of your ability, see if you can give that little you what you need and notice the feeling on the receiving side, on the getting, and the feeling on the giving side. See if you can notice what it feels like both giving this to yourself as well as taking it in. What is it like as you take it in? And now take your little self, and if it's appropriate, you could let them hang out in your safe place. If not, you can just tuck them into your lap, keep them with you, keep them secure.

But go back into the distressed conversation now that you started with, with the difficult spouse (parent, friend, etc) as your grown up, adult self. Your little self is not responsible for this difficult conversation. Just your adult, capable, grown up you. Your wise and healthy self. Go back into the image with that difficult conversation and try it again from this posture and don't worry about the result with your partner. They may be very difficult, it may not do magic right this very moment, but notice you. Notice what's different about you as you attempt to address whatever the problem is in the room at this moment. Notice you, what you feel inside, even if it's still frustrating, what's different about you? If you start to feel triggered again, go back to your little self and make sure they're secure and safe.

I'm going to start to count from 5 to 0, slowly, so we can begin to exit this imagery exercise. So on 5, let the image start to fade. 4, fading even more, getting to see that soft blank canvas. 3, start to picture the room you're coming back to, feel your feet on the floor. 2, Nice deep breath in. And 1, nice deep exhale and on 0, slowly open your eyes, adjust to the light.