

Tamar's Journey from Profound Loneliness

"Tamar", as she chose to call herself for these transcripts, is a single woman in her mid 60s who has felt profound loneliness since her marriage ended 21 years ago. During the last five years of her marriage, her husband was profoundly hateful. She grew up as a child who was never liked by her parents and who experienced a cold, rejecting and hateful home life that left her believing at times she was less than human.

During her marriage and after, she had held an accounting position in a big business. Seven years ago she had a "breakdown" and has barely lived life since then. But with Narrative Therapy's careful exploration of exceptions to the problems, she has acknowledged quite a few marvelous moments and shifts. For example, she now has a respectful and loving relationship with her ex and is no longer terrified of his rage.

I began working with Tamar in July of 2012. I decided to accept her despite my busy schedule because she described the parts work she had been doing on her own for several years and she wanted to do more EMDR work. Her primary therapist had just retired and while that had been very fruitful, she did not know either EMDR or ego state therapy. I was also comfortable that she had another therapist, originally her DBT-focused therapist. Medicare doesn't bat an eyelash about this practice and I have had several very stressed clients for whom it has been a great gift. This woman also benefits hugely from groups and is currently in an ACT group, a writing group, and another group. I gave her the DES twice a month apart, with very different results. I consider her to have DDNOS. She has co-consciousness about her parts but can be easily overwhelmed by their emotions, which feed into her deep depression.

Our EMDR and Ego state therapy work together is creating profound shifts and she is imagining possibilities that she had rarely allowed at all. Her mind is now more often blank, instead of full of endless criticism. She commented at the end of an EMDR session, "I am in neutral and that's wonderful."

Because she has been so emotionally sensitive and so frequently lost in a vast hole of hopeless despair, I cannot process childhood traumas. She can drop into that hole at a moment's notice. I can use the INVERSE PROTOCOL, where current targets are processed while keeping the past out of the way. And even this work in the present has required Jim Knipe's Constant Installation of Present Orientation and Safety (CIPOS) and Catherine Fine's Tactical Integrationalism. Anabel Gonzales and Dolores Mosquera have developed a process very similar to Fine's that they call Tip of the Finger.

This transcript illustrates these processes.

In the transcript:

F – myself

T – Tamar

Tamar's Journey from Profound Loneliness

Session: October 31, 2012

We had successfully processed a major car accident in June with EMDR, which suddenly required Ego State Therapy for an 8-year-old part who popped out during the processing and said, "I'm a bad, bad person." This successful EMDR had been a transformational experience for her.

Reevaluation of our last session two weeks earlier: "I had a moment 10 days ago when I began to feel 25% better. I was getting out from under some huge burden of despair. Things seemed more possible – I could work more than 10 hours a week, I could buy a lap harp, get a dog. I could get through the rest of my life if I could just be this 25% better. I could be relaxed when I visit my son down South next month." *But a Dharma talk that included a comment that couples experience less physical and emotional pain had completely thrown her in a hole. She was triggered multiple times a day.*

F I suggest we use the Inverse Protocol to target one of these many triggers during the past week. Which is the trigger that captures the overall experience?

T An email from my ex who is going down south to see our son 2 weeks before I am. I feel completely alone.

NC: I am a complete failure as a person.

PC: I can imagine having a good life without a partner.

VoC: Absolutely a 1.

F And when you think of being 25% better? *[I need to take every effort to keep her connected to positive neural networks.]*

PC: I'm glad I'm alive is a 5.

Emotions: fear, sadness, anguish, self-hatred, confusion. A 7

Body: All over.

Jim Knipe's CIPOS is an EMDR technique where you use BLS to ground someone in a positive and safe experience for as long as it takes to feel strong, often several minutes, and then you put your toe in the trauma water for a few seconds without BLS. You continue this pendulation until you can go 20 seconds in the trauma – about the length of a set of 24 passes. Then you begin BLS during the trauma processing.

She thinks more clearly with constant BLS and she listens to ocean waves throughout this processing. This was an error on my part and may have made the CIPOS more challenging.

F First we need to create some distance from the email.

T I am an assistant dog trainer with a private organization and last week I did a perfect demonstration.

Tamar's Journey from Profound Loneliness

[She describes it in detail and she immerses herself in it and she is "very engaged.]

F Now for 10 seconds I want you to focus on the email. I am using the second hand on my watch and will not let you go longer.

...

Now come back to the perfect dog demo until you feel very engaged.

[Several minutes]

F Now I want you to process the email for 15 seconds.

...

Now come back to the perfect dog demo until you feel very engaged.

[Several minutes]

F Now I want you to think about the email for 20 seconds.

Now come back to the perfect dog demo until you feel very engaged.

[Two minutes]

T The email experience is less piercing. But 20 seconds was too long.

[We agree on 15 seconds.]

T The dog experience is more distant.

F See the moment when he follows your command.

T I see it. I don't feel it.

[Her chest tightness has dropped from a 6 to a 1.5.]

[She agrees to try the email again.]

F Tell me when your chest is a 3. But in any case I won't let you go for more than 30 seconds.

T My chest is a 3 but the sadness is getting too much.

F We are at a choice point. Shall we continue or shall we see if we can let off some of the sadness.

T Let's try the latter.

Tamar's Journey from Profound Loneliness

Reading Gonzalez and Mosquera has made Catherine Fine's article much more real to me. So I felt very comfortable using their metaphor of the Tip of the Finger for the process of letting off just a little bit of the pain held by the parts at a time and then checking in to see if it would be OK to let off just a little bit more.

F Does it feel like the sadness is being held by a part?

T Yes.

F How old?

T Many ages.

F May I speak to many ages?

[I am carefully following her language and saving myself time not cataloguing or mapping the system of parts.]

T Yes.

F Many ages, would it be OK to let off some of your sadness? Tamar the grownup has on ocean waves so you may hear it too.

[I am inviting them to be present as well as lost in the past.]

...

T There is an adult, a 7/8 year old, an infant, and a 3 or 4 year old. The sadness is connected to a person and letting go of the person makes the sadness worse.

F Remember, I am inviting you to let go of just a little bit of the sadness, not all of it. Can the adult part comfort the child parts, or can you, Tamar?

T It will be better if I do it.

[Remember, she is very experienced at doing parts work on her own through journaling. She has also confidently supported parts because she really knows she was a wonderful, attuned mother to her son.]

... [She comforts them while they let off a little more sadness.]

T They feel better, not as crazy.

F Would it be ok for them to let off a little bit more sadness.

T [checks inside] ... yes

...

Tamar's Journey from Profound Loneliness

They feel sad but not insane. They no longer feel tied in knots.

F Would it be ok for them to let off a little bit more sadness? If yes, tell me when they're done.

...

T They're done. SOME TERROR WENT AWAY.

F Would it be ok for them to let off a little bit more sadness? If yes, tell me when they're done.

[She closes her eyes for the first time. She has just been looking at her lap.]

T It didn't work.

We are at another choice point. I decide that some important level of sadness has been lifted and strikingly some terror lifted as well. This proves to be very significant. I suggest we come back to the target – the email. She decides she doesn't need to go to the dog mastery experience first.

F So focus on the email. You're in charge of how long you stay with it but I will not allow you to go longer than 30 seconds.

[22 seconds.]

T It's not as awful. I feel really sad.

F Shall we pendulate to the dog demo or continue?

T Continue.

F You have more energy reserves.

Tamar suddenly engages in some evaluation of our work today.

T This is graphically helpful. I've always known cognitively how old this sadness is. It is not a grown up experience. It is linked with terrors... I JUST FELT THE TERROR LIFT OUT AND SEPARATE FROM THE SADNESS. IT [TERROR? SADNESS?] IS SUCH AN ANCIENT FEELING.

Another very engaging thing happened last week.

[Tamar remembers another remarkable afternoon completely engaged on the computer exploring the possibility of getting a special mixed breed from a rescue group. "I was engaged for hours. I completed an application. I wasn't thinking or feeling. My head was empty. She went on for 10 minutes.]

Tamar's Journey from Profound Loneliness

F Let's stay in these positive moments. This huge experience just came back to you. Before you go on to the next sudden positive memory recall [*an imbedded suggestion.*], let's use your container for the email experience.

...

Now let's contain the dharma talk.

T Oh it was especially good.

[Smiles.] [*She has forgotten getting sunk?*]

F Now contain the other triggers

[*She had reported four or five a day for days*]

T Oh, I've forgotten them.

F Now please form the intention of containing future triggers.

[*What a great idea. I've never said this before!*]

[*Tamar suddenly recalls another mastery experience.*]

Evaluation of the session

F What was most powerful for you today?

T Seeing how complicated my [*ancient*] sadness is, and the other parts of it that bring me down.

The back and forth [*Jim Knipe's CIPOS*] diminished the email experience a lot.

It's a great illustration of different knowledges. I spend so much time coping with my symptoms that I haven't built a life. That would sure make such a different, if I could create a life designed by me. I haven't had the where with all to make a life for the past seven years since my breakdown.

Today and the session processing the car accident are the two best sessions we have had.