

■ CLINICAL Q&A ■

What Is an Effective Self-Soothing Technique That I Can Teach My Client to Use at Home When Stressed?

Editorial Note: The Clinical Q&A is a regular journal feature in which master clinicians answer a question posed by a reader who is requesting assistance with clinical challenges. In this issue's column, responses are written by two clinicians who are EMDR approved consultants: Farnsworth Lobenstine, a licensed independent clinical social worker from Amherst, Massachusetts, and Elan Shapiro, a psychologist in private practice from the Haifa area of Israel. Readers can send questions for future issues to journal@emdria.org.

Question: *What is an effective self-soothing technique that I can teach my client to use at home when stressed?*

ANSWER BY FARNSWORTH E. LOBENSTINE:

The Over-Energy Correction (OEC) is the single most calming technique I have ever learned and taught. It can also be very helpful for inducing restful sleep. In fact, I have done this so often for sleep that I cannot demonstrate it to my clients without yawning. So I just tell them why!

The OEC is similar to Cook's Hook-Up, which was developed by Wayne Cook in the 1970s. The OEC is taught by many yoga practitioners and clinicians using energy therapies. It is based on Chinese medicine and was developed to correct an over- or under-energy state by using the meridians of energy, or *chi*, in the body. I often teach it to clients in the first few sessions. Then I can encourage home use and we may use it before or after EMDR.

You can easily teach this exercise to your clients after practicing it a few times yourself. As you sit, hold your arms straight out in front of you, back of the hands together, fingers extended and thumbs down. Put one hand over the other, so that palms are now touching, and interlace your fingers. With hands clasped, bring them to rest over your heart. (If your right wrist was on top with hands clasped in front of you, the left wrist will be on top when they are resting on your chest.) Cross your ankles so that the same side is on top. If it is more comfortable to have the left wrist on top next to your chest, then put the left ankle over the right ankle. This setup phase is thought to center and contain the energy in the body. Now the really powerful part

begins. As you breathe in, put the tongue on the roof of your mouth. As you breathe out, let the tongue drop down to the bottom of your mouth, where it usually rests when you're not talking or eating. I remind my client, "As your chest rises, let your tongue rise. As the chest falls, let your tongue fall." We continue this for about two minutes.

So why is this so powerfully calming? As I have indicated, from a Chinese medicine perspective, the setup phase helps to center and contain the energy in the body. Slow, deep breathing is part of many meditation practices. The position of the tip of the tongue, touching the gums above and below the front teeth, activates the Governing and Central (or Conception) Vessels, which are just below the nose and just below the lower lip. The Governing Vessel, which ends below the nose, is understood to control the *yang* meridians that ground us to the earth, and the Central Vessel, which ends just below the lower lip, is understood to control the *yin* meridians that link us to the heavens. Consequently this exercise is a very relaxing, grounding, and balancing procedure because it coordinates all of the energy, or *chi*, in the body.