

Ellen Hutcheson

Developer and Practitioner of The Emotional Cleansing Process
Boothbay, Maine

This paper was written in anticipation of attending Stephen Porges' Integrated Listening Systems (ILS), Safe and Sound Protocol (SSP) "Gathering" on April 26-27, 2019. It describes the healing modality with which I use the SSP Device with my clients.

**CLEARING AND HEALING TRAUMA SAFELY
THROUGH THE EMOTIONAL CLEANSING PROCESS**

The Emotional Cleansing Process (ECP) is body-centered deep emotional release work. Clients relive, then clear and heal trauma that has its origin in childhood. This trauma includes pain that occurred after language development, as well as preverbal, birth, and pre-natal wounding. I came to this work through my personal inner work, healing, intuition, client session observations, and through mistakes I have made working with clients for the past 46 years.

Since it is my belief that everything one hears about the dangers of regressive work can be true, how do I proceed successfully and safely? In my work, I use a tool I stumbled upon intuitively years ago. I work from the premise that it is essential for clients to "connect the dots" back to the root cause of their trauma i.e., emotional and/or somatic pain or discomfort, for it to be released, thus de-energized from their bodies, their feelings, and their thought processes. However, it is essential that they do so safely without going into further collapse. In my experience of Primal Therapy, the primal "pool of pain" can be bottomless. I feel it is unproductive to visit and revisit the trauma in an attempt to resolve it without a means to clear and heal that pain, because reliving the trauma can be a repeated trigger with no resolution. Clients must safely explore their inner world on a deep level, feeling empowered as they do so.

Getting to the Root Cause

Most people I see are already reliving or collapsing into their trauma 24/7, be it in their relationship with themselves, family, friends, at work or elsewhere. They are experiencing depression, anxiety, self-destructive thoughts and behaviors, and the list goes on. Depression is a body sensation; underneath all depression is the feeling of anger. Unless the root cause, i.e., the old sources of the anger are felt and released, the depression continues endlessly no matter how much anger is expressed in present time, about present time people and circumstances. Anxiety is also a body sensation; underneath all anxiety is fear, old fear. Unless the old childhood sources of fear are felt, the fear persists into any and all present time relationships and situations. Hurt and unmet needs are underneath both.

The Tools Used in ECP to Interrupt the Cycle of Trauma

The tools that I offer clients to help interrupt their cycle of trauma, I have named the Clearing Tool and the Healing Tool or The Clearing/Healing Tool, since they co-exist. It is amazingly powerful, simple, and easy and has a profound and empowering impact on clients. It is a tool I use in every session and often multiple times during a session. It is a “take home” tool that can be used for the rest of one’s life.

A Safe Place to Work

The client and I work in a sound resistant room we lovingly call “the box”. It is a strong wooden structure, heavily padded on the inside with 4” foam, covered with rip stop nylon. It has a 6’ x 8’ footprint and is 4’ tall. It also has a fan to keep air moving throughout the session and is dimly lit by a nightlight. I keep pillows, blankets, plastic bats, boxing gloves, and tissues in the box for the clients to use during their sessions. It is felt by all to be a safe place where clients cannot be hurt or heard as they release their feelings. If someone is initially claustrophobic, this is often indicative of birth trauma, then we leave the box door open.

THE TOOLS

The Clearing Tool

When a client arrives for their initial session, the client is usually in a Sympathetic State (Porges' terminology) expressing various states of upset, anxiety, anger, or are in an immobilized or collapsed state of Dorsal Vagal (Porges' terminology). The very first thing we do together is learn and use the Clearing Tool. At my request the client picks an Ideal Protector which can be an animal, a mythical figure, a spiritual being, whomever or whatever the client selects. It has to be powerful with superhuman strength and must be an ally who is vigilant (versus client's chronic hyper vigilance) in protecting his/her adult/child/infant. Then, whether during a first session or subsequent sessions, the client as his/her own Ideal Protector uses the bat to scribe a line around him/herself. Next with tremendous power coming from 2nd and 3rd chakras, which often sounds like anger, he or she drives OUT whatever is disturbing, while slamming the bat against the box floor, sides or ceiling. Using the word OUT or GET OUT, the Ideal Protector drives out of the scribed circle the unwanted feeling (fear usually), memory, person, or event that has the client in distress when they entered the session. Variations on the "get out" message or theme emerges spontaneously. This is done loudly and repeatedly until the feeling and the energy clear. What usually follows is a spontaneous deep breath, posture change, a sigh of relief, and a feeling of satisfaction. In fact, we do not move from this spot until there is.

Setting the Boundary

Next, the Ideal Protector SETS A BOUNDARY with the bat declaring, STAY OUT repeatedly doing so back and forth along the line with great strength, power and certainty. Variations on the theme emerge spontaneously.... NO, YOU MAY NOT CROSS THIS LINE, NO, NO, NO! STAY OUT. Boundary setting is essential. A person was traumatized when their boundary was crossed and violated. This unwanted "trespassing" causes fear or terror and helplessness.

Declaring a Safe Space

After the boundary has been set, the Ideal Protector now has the power to create a safe space by proclaiming THIS IS HIS/HER SAFE SPACE!!! The Ideal Protector repeats this over and over until the space is a “felt space” that the client experiences both viscerally and emotionally. The client or wounded child is never initially requested to create the safe space for herself/himself; it is always done by the Ideal Protector for obvious reasons. Later, as the Ideal Protector is integrated into the client, it doesn’t matter who does the work.

Following the Ideal Protector’s intervention by establishing the safe space, the client is in a Ventral Vagal (Porges’ terminology) state of safety. Only then does the adult client/child claim that space with MINE! MINE! MINE! Over and over until satisfied, breathing deeply and relaxed. This is where the client intensely feels a sense of personal empowerment. The anger of the Ideal Protector is transformed into empowerment by the client/wounded child.

The Transition to Healing

The claiming of self in the safe space is a transition into the Healing Tool with the introduction of the imaginary Ideal Parent or Parents, as requested by the therapist with them declaring and repeating “YES, YOURS!”, which validates and supports the child’s claim of the safe space. Then comes spontaneous affirmations. The child expressing personal positive attributes to fill the safe space, might declare, for example, “I am free, I am loved, I am joyful, playful, creative” etc. These are then followed by validation from the client, as the Ideal Parent or Parents saying, “yes you are”, and the Ideal Parent repeats all the child’s affirmations. Lots of spontaneous events occur here. The parents often hold or rock the child, saying “you are loved”, etc.

The Steps in Brief

The Clearing/Healing Tool takes many forms unique to a particular session, but the format is important and remains the same.

The Ideal Protector does the initial work:

1. OUT! GET OUT! (Rids the scribed space of unwanted person/s, trauma, feeling)
2. STAY OUT! (Sets the boundary)
3. THIS IS HER/HIS SAFE SPACE (creates the safe space)

The Client/Child follows up with:

4. MINE!!!! The client, child repeats many times (Claims the space)
5. Fills the space with empowering affirmations about self, appropriate to the context of the session, "I am free, I am loved, I am joyful, playful, creative" etc.
6. The client validates his/her affirmations by assuming the role of Ideal Parent(s), with empowering affirmations like, "yes you are. You are loved." Thus, the child and Ideal parent are both in agreement.

The Deeper Work

Often, several sessions are needed to strengthen the Clearing Tool prior to going into the deeper work of reliving a client's trauma. Safety is paramount. I will not go into the trauma until it is clear to us both that the client has the strength/power within, via the Ideal Protector to safely proceed. The client must have the ability to clear the pain when revisited. I am unable to make it safe for anyone, and I say so. What I say is: "I cannot make it safe for you, but I can give you tools you can use to make it safe for yourself." Therein lies the power of the client to realize personal empowerment. I remove the SENSE OF MEANINGLESS EXTERNAL SAFETY, and help the client create a "FELT SENSE" OF MEANINGFUL INTERNAL SAFETY. My role is one of supportive, caring guide who dispenses tools. We are equal partners in this process.

Connecting to the Past

“Flooding”, feelings of “overwhelm”, feelings of “going crazy” or whatever the client names as the triggered visceral/emotional experience, can be and often is handled within minutes of using the Clearing Tool. It is important to re-assure the client that their feelings and body sensations, no matter how intense, are ALWAYS correct. What is incorrect is the placement of those feelings in reference to time, situation, and person(s). Therefore, connecting the feelings and body sensations to the root cause in the past is important, and must always be followed by the Ideal Protector’s presence there, to rid the “child” of the traumatizing/abusive offending person or persons and/or situation. This then creates a safe space. Until personal safety is re-established the pain prevails as does collapse and dissociate them.

A recent example is a client who was for the first time uncovering her 7-year old’s physical and sexual abuse, which prior to this session, had been unremembered and dissociated. Her child was thrashing, kicking, screaming in terror, crying hysterically, then “saw” and remembered the abuse, then “gave up” and cried, “just let me die” then went quiet (Dorsal Vagal state). In this moment she was in a collapsed state but not dissociated. Remembering the dissociated material was a positive; however, the remembering put her into collapse, which is not a helpful place in which to leave a client, but after a few moments, she engaged her Ideal Protector who raged at her father, which energetically matched the terror, and she retaliated with violently torturing and “killing” him, serving the purpose of killing his lifelong impact on her. When he was “dead” to her satisfaction, the Ideal Protector got rid of him using the Clearing/Healing tool. She then felt “calm, light, clear, free, and empowered” indicative of the Ventral Vagal state.

Preverbal Processing

Preverbal, birth, and prenatal wounding is processed in the same manner. The difference, however, is that body posturing, unwinding, re-enacting, and sounds, not words, are expressed. Because the limbic system was not yet fully developed, there were no words available at the time of the injury; therefore, the therapist can reassure the client with words like “body remembering”. Then, when the body has completed what it needs to do, the therapist might ask something like “if there were words, what would they be”, understanding there were none at the time. This connects language to the experience. The connection to language is important, because those feelings not translated, can and do run our lives. Again, following the emotional/physical release, the Ideal Protector enters to settle the score and rid the infant of the offending parties or circumstance. Safety is established and the client is relaxed, uplifted, and clear in Ventral Vagal state.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Practitioner Perceptions

A few words about my perceptions relating to the therapist/healer/human being working in this process or any healing process.

It is my perception that “professional distance” is just that, distance, and is not a positive contribution to a therapeutic relationship. I believe that strong, clear boundaries are important, so that neither therapist nor client is exchanging trauma. Co-dependent relationships do not work in therapy. I rarely need to remind my clients that, “You don’t need me for safety, you have the tools you need on board; you might simply require me to remind you to use those tools”.

I believe that we are most effective as therapists or healers when we have felt and processed our own pain and trauma to the depth that we have it; then we are comfortable, relaxed, and present with and for the depth of another’s pain. What a client experiences, although they may be unable to articulate it, is “my body knows

that your body knows”; that instinctive “knowing”, about where you are within yourself, comfortable and relaxed, adds to the feeling of safety.

I also believe that where there is love, there is healing, and where there is healing there is love. Through my lens, listening with our ears, eyes, and hearts, matters. I feel that working from one’s heart with unconditional love and non-judgmental kindness makes a positive difference in the therapeutic relationship and outcome. Actually, I just know, and I know that I know, this to be true. I am not embarrassed to say so.

I am drawn to express the words defining psychotherapy from The Course in Miracles, “Ideally psychotherapy is a series of holy encounters in which Brothers or Sisters meet to bless one another and to remember God.”

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