

Ideas for coping with flashbacks

Historical Child Sexual Abuse



1. Tell yourself you are having a flash back and that this is okay and very normal in people who are traumatised as children (or as adults).
2. Remind yourself that the worst is over – it happened in the past, but is not happening now. The “child” inside you who was abused is giving you these memories to use in you healing and, however terrible you feel, you survived the awfulness then, which means you can survive and get through what you are remembering now.
3. Call on the “adult” part of yourself to tell your child that they are not alone, not in any danger now, and that you will help them get through this. Let your child self-know it’s okay to remember and to feel what they feel and that this will help her in healing from what had happened to them. However hard it is for you your child self is communicating in the only way they can.
4. Try some of these ways of “grounding” yourself and becoming more aware of the present:
 - a. Stamp your feet, grind them around on the floor to remind yourself where you are now.
 - b. Look around the room, noticing the colours, the people, the shapes of things.
 - c. Listen to the sounds around you: the traffic, the voices, the washing machine etc.
 - d. Feel your body, the boundary of your skin, your clothes, the chair or floor supporting you.
 - e. Have an elastic band to hand (or on your wrist) – you can “ping” it against your wrist and feel it on your skin – that feeling is in the now, the things you are re-experiencing were in the past.
5. Take care of your breathing, breathe deeply down to your diaphragm; put your hand there (just above your navel) and breathe so that your hand gets pushed up and down. You can also count to 5 – as you breathe out and in. When we get scared we breathe too quickly and

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- shallowly and our body begins to panic because we are not getting enough oxygen. This causes dizziness, shakiness, and more panic. Breathing slowly and deeply will stop the panic.
6. If you have lost a sense of where you are you end and the rest of the world begins, rub your body so you can feel the edges, the boundary of you. Wrap yourself in a blanket, feel it around you.
 7. Get support if you would like it. Let people close to you know about flashbacks so they can help you if you want them to. That might mean holding you, taking care of you, talking to you, helping you reconnect with the present to remember you are safe and cared for now.
 8. Flashbacks are powerful experiences which drain your energy. Take time to look after yourself when you have had a flashback. You could have a warm relaxing bath or a sleep, a warm drink, play some soothing music, or just take some quiet time for yourself. Your “inner” child and you deserve being taken care of, given all you went through in the past.
 9. When you feel ready, write down all you can remember about the flashback and how you got through it. This will help you remember about the flashback and how to get through it. This will help you remember information for your healing and to remind you that you did get through it.
 10. Remember you are not crazy – flashbacks are normal and you are healing.

Source: Bristol Crisis for Women - <http://www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/flash>

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