

## Tips to Cope with Overwhelming Emotions

### "The Container Exercise"

The "Container" resource is something you can use to put images of upsetting thoughts and experiences into. It's not meant to help you avoid or deny reality, but rather it is a tool for your brain so that you can pause and decide on the best thing for you to do or not do. This container can be any shape, color, size or material. It just needs to have a lid that snaps on, screws on, or locks on, etc.

1. What kind of container can you think of that can hold something upsetting, that is either happening in the moment or that keeps popping up in your mind?
  - What is your container made of?
  - What color is it?
  - What shape is it?
  - Are there words or designs on it?
  - Is it see-through or not?
  - Is it smooth or textured?
  - What kind of lid does it have?
2. Where can you put your container once it's full? Some people say a vault, a cupboard, a closet, drop it off a cliff, burn it, etc.
3. Some people find that having a special word helps to remind them to bring up their container in their mind. Would a special word be helpful to you or does it pop up by just thinking about your container? *If no word is needed then move on to step 4, if needed, do this –*
  - What would be a good cue word?
  - Say your word and bring up your container in mind.
  - How did that go? *Repeat as needed until it's easy for the client to bring it up.*
4. Let's practice using your container. Picture your favorite food. When I say your cue word, bring up your container, put the image of your food in it, close the lid and put your

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container in your storage place. Ready? If no cue-word, then just say "box" or whatever their container is since this is just to coach them through their first time.

5. How did it go? Does it feel like you put everything away?

*For the rest of the script, if no cue-word, disregard prompt.*

6. Now, do this same thing by yourself. Picture the food, say your cue-word, bring up your container, put the food inside, shut the lid and put the container in its storage place. Let me know when you're done.
7. How did it go? Does it feel all put away?
8. Now let's try something a bit more challenging. Think about something that happened over the last few days that led you to feel mad, sad, scared, etc. What comes to mind?
9. Run through the situation like you are watching a movie so you can remind yourself of what happened, the order it happened in and how your body feels as you bring it up now. Tell me when you're done.
10. Now, I want you to start the movie again, only this time when you get to a part where you first notice an upset, stop or pause on that picture, bring up your container using your cue-word and put the image in your container. Put the lid on it and then put it in your storage place. Let me know when you're done.
11. How did that go? Does it feel all put away?