

The Protocol

Here is an modified excerpt from my paper entitled : **A Ritual for Resolving...Implicit Memories and Emotional Disorders...Including Grief and Trauma**, *United States Association for Body Psychotherapy*, 2011, volume 10(2), 5-25. This protocol came to me during a period of intense anxiety, grief, and emotional pain over thirty years ago. It has helped hundreds of my patients who had been suffering for anywhere from 6 months to 20 years with grief, trauma or emotional distress. The protocol must be followed **EXACTLY AS WRITTEN** preferably with guidance from your therapist.

The Protocol

Start by getting on your sneakers. Pick **one specific** issue, moment or experience of trauma, emotion or grief. Find a place where you can express and experience your feelings, emotions, thoughts, images and sensations both **positive** and **negative** out loud, and in writing. The most difficult but essential part is finding the **positive**. If you have grief from the loss of a loved one, the positive might be visualizing, seeing the image of, the person in front of you as you saw them in their healthy happy state. The verbal expression must be authentic including both positive and negative experiences, with all the sounds associated with the experience. You must be willing to cry, sob, moan, scream, shout, yell, criticize, laugh, rejoice and belly laugh without restraint. As you are writing and vocalizing you must be attentive, mindfully of your level of distress. You do not want to retraumatize yourself. One way to do this is to keep a fairly regular monitoring of your stress level. I have suggested you use a SUDS level. Which can be explained as a level from 0-10 with 10 being unbearable distress, and 0 being no distress. When the SUDS gets to about a 7 or you reach an unacceptable level of distress, you immediately tear up the writing and put it in the garbage never to be looked at again. Then immediately go for a fast walk or jog, not a run for 20 minutes. Just enjoy being free and experiencing the world around you with mild to moderate exercise preferable out in nature. Do not consciously rehearse the distress. Your unconscious will do that for you. At the end of the exercise you will check your SUDS level. If it is a 0, you may be done and free from the problem. If more than 0, or if it seems still unresolved, you will want to find another time either the next day or next week to repeat the exercise. If at the end of the second treatment the SUDS is still not a 0, you will do it again on another day or week. I have never found anyone who has done it more than three times, but my original paper suggested it will be gone no later than the 5th time. Here is a summary of steps 1) Pick one specific issue and write the positive and negative; 2) Verbalize and feel it all both positive and negative, one at a time; 3) When SUDS is 7, tear up the paper; 4) Go for fast walk or jog ; 5) Recheck your SUDS; 6) Repeat if necessary.

Each time you repeat the whole protocol you will find yourself saying and feeling some of the same things and there may be a thought, that “this is not helping”. You must continue in the session and the protocol because what almost always happens is that one or more new positive or negative experiences, thoughts, emotions, sensations will emerge and they will get processed and resolved. It is like peeling off the layers of the emotion and trauma.

If you get to a third trial with the protocol and your stress level is not zero, call me. Almost always you have violated one of the instructions of the Protocol. I will help you.

The protocol although written over thirty years ago is consistent with current (2017) neuropsychological understanding of effective treatment for trauma, emotional distress and grief.

Peace Be With You,
Robert LoPresti, PhD
Clinical Psychologist

