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Working with 'Complicated' and Resistant Clients in an Online Environment

This document is transcribed from a webinar by Dr Jamie Marich. It gives examples of methods to help working with clients who may have dealt with trauma in an online setting which is transferable to a face to face setting too.

Trauma
- Trauma, by definition, is an unhealed wound and thus, it is about helping wounded people
- Trauma is different for everyone
- If the trauma is not treated properly, it takes longer to heal

Mindfulness
- The practise of coming back to, or returning to the present moment
- Helping the client in learning how to come back into the present moment

Dissociation
- To sever or to separate from the present moment, or aspects of self
- Seen when a person is zoning out or daydreaming (they're not really there)
- To be able to adapt and modify for the client and break things into small parts

Grounding
- Using all the available senses to return to the here and now…
    - *Visual*- naming the surroundings
    - *Auditory*- what can and cannot be heard
    - *Smell*- what can be smelt? What is their favourite smell?
    - *Taste*- have a drink and describe
    - *Touch*- touch clothes and object. Press feet into the ground or hands onto the surface
    What two helped the client the most? This can then be used as an anchor to focus on when the client starts to feel themselves not in the present moment.
- Saying the clients name during the session may be comforting for them and helps bring them back into the room.
- No one way to ground that is going to work with everyone and need to expert with the client to see what works best for them.

Containment
- Try making a visual or imaginative box with the client that holds memories.
- This box is not something to be created and never looked back at again.

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- Important that the client does not avoid this box as there's a difference between containing something and avoiding something

Breathing
- Don't go into deep breathing too quickly
- Count in breaths
- Ask the client what would make it easier for them (perhaps breathing with the client might make them feel more at ease)

Expressive Arts
- Colouring books/pages to colour while they speak to you
- Gush art- 'releasing' the anger out on the paper
- Clay to play/fidget with
- To shake out (in a safe way) and then get them to sit down and continue with the session again
- Everyone tends to enjoy music, make playlists to keep clients grounded and express themselves

Trauma-focused considerations in teaching skills
- Eyes stay open
- Breathe exercises start off short, minimising the time the room is silent and slowly increasing that silence time
- Explain to the client what mindfulness as they may have misconceptions about it (being in the present moment, not necessarily relaxing)
- Find different ways to be in the moment, there's no one or no right way

Stage-wise treatment
- *Precontemplation-* they may be unsure that they want to change, see you and want to get better. It is likely that it has been compulsory that they needed to get treatment
- *Contemplation-* they start to think that there may be a problem, but still unsure that they want to change
- *Preparation-* starting to see that they need to start making changes
- *Action-* when the person is willing to do what you are suggesting to help meet the goals that they have set for themselves
- *Maintenance-* ongoing with the gains and continuing to grow and challenge themselves as a person
- *Termination-* client is ready to leave therapy and develop a plan
- What can we do to help someone be prepared if they claim that they're not ready?

Motivational interviewing
- *Expressive empathy-* 'walk a mile in a person's shoes', but remember as a therapist when to step out of their shoes

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- *Develop discrepancy-* pointing out the clients' mixed messages… 'on one hand you say this, but on the other hand you say this' (you are not making the conclusions for them)
- *Roll with resistance-* going to be there in any change process. 'What's this really about?'. Pick your battles!
- *Support self-efficacy-* giving the clients what they need to arrive to their own conclusions