

Container Exercise

Purpose: To be able to compartmentalize disturbing memories until the person is ready to face them

Instructions: *I'd like you to design an imaginary container that could be used to store disturbing thoughts, feelings or memories until you determine you are ready to face them. This is not designed to permanently ignore powerful things that have happened to you. But it is designed to feel more control over when you chose to face and come to terms with those memories.*

Your container should have the following characteristics:

- *Strong enough to hold what you put in it*
- *Not something you use in your life for other purposes*
- *Something with a door/valve so that you can determine when you want to put something in or take it out*
- *Whatever feels right for you (you can change it if needed)*

Take a moment and tell me when you can picture your container. Help person clarify their container if needed

Now, I'd like you to take a moment to do your best to allow anything you would like to go into your container. You can place it in, pour it in, or let it be drawn into the container in any way your imagination wants to. Take some deep breaths as you do this exercise and I'll allow you some time to let as much go into the container as possible.

Wait about 20 seconds and say, **Are things going into the container?** Problem solve as needed to help. When things are going into the container say, **Take as long as you need to allow this to happen. Let me know when as much as possible is in the container or if you are having trouble with the exercise.**

When person has completed this say, **Now take a moment to be sure you have sealed up the container.**

I want you to notice how you feel now that you have been able to put as much as you did in that container. Compared to before, you might feel more relieved, more relaxed, more in control, or something else. Take some more time to appreciate that this is how you are able to feel now.

Consider that there may be a time and place to bring something out of the container to face it and come to terms with it. Until that time, know that you can use the container to manage. Is there a "cue" word you could use to remind you of your container?

(origin unknown, adapted by Mark Nickerson)