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Anniversary Reactions

**Resources for Turning our reactions into
responding**



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We will discuss

- What is the recipe for an Anniversary Reaction?
- Can we change the recipe?
- How can we assist others in reducing the reaction?

We as helping professionals may have heard this term used in work with others. We may even have experienced anniversary reactions in our own life. But what are the elements, the ingredients that make up an anniversary reaction?

Memory of the Traumatic Event—

We as humans have the ability to remember. We can remember in such a way that we can re-experience or re-live an event. This has both positives and minuses.



Time Trigger—

We all have reactions to a certain associations. It may be a person, a place, a smell, picture, or sound that can trigger us. Anniversary reactions are set off by time. When the date on the calendar or season comes, so does the reaction.

A Reaction—

This is the effect, emotionally, physically or mentally that the person experiences from the trigger. A reaction is a Re-Action.

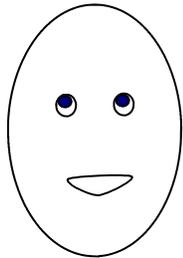
List of Possible Resources

To have a person access a “resource state,” is when you have person step into the state by thinking about it.

Here are some possible resources. It is important to really have the person try to think of what they need. NLP presupposes that the person knows their reality better than anyone else, and that deep down they know what they need to “fix” it.

- Courage Love Safety Okayness
- Truth Flexibility Understanding Peace
- Sense of Humor Comfort Friends Family
- Perspective Time Strength Patience
- Adulthood Creativity Time Patience
- Tenacity Tenderness Endurance
- Flexibility Maturity _____ _____
- _____ _____

Eye Accessing Cues



Visual Processing—eyes look up or straight ahead and defocused. It looks like they are seeing something inside their head.

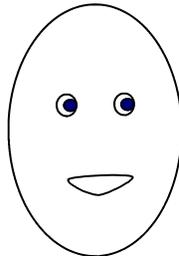
Looking **up and left** means they are seeing something in their **past**.

Looking **up and right** means they are seeing something in their **future**.

Processing Sound—eyes look horizontal. They tilt their head often and have a melodic kind of voice.

Looking **horizontal and left** means they are hearing something from their **past**.

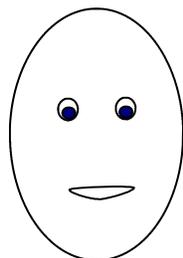
Looking **horizontal and right** means they are constructing a sound in their **future**.



Processing Feeling—eyes look down. Hands and gestures are near gut.

Looking **down and left** means they are processing **self-talk**.

Looking **down in general** means they are feeling an emotion, comfortable or uncomfortable.



Let us look a little deeper in how it works by looking at a positive anniversary reaction. At least positive for most of us—Christmas!

The word itself may trigger a response. Let us create a mild response by looking at memory.

- **Visual Memory**
- **Auditory Memory**
- **Kinesthetic Memory**
- **Olfactory Memory**
- **Gustatory Memory**

9-11

What were we doing on 9-11-01?

How did you feel?

How did you process it?

What were we doing on 9-11-02?

How did you feel?

How did you commemorate it?



Ceremonies for Healing

Add Structure to the Pain

People feel helpless during anniversary reactions. Use the day for a commemoration. Help them plan it. Help them plan what they want to feel as much as is possible. Do they want to feel sad? Do they want to feel comfort? Do they want to remember?

Help them see that a year later there is a difference

More often than not, things are a bit better the second year. Sometime, there is more pain in that the shock has worn off. Prepare them for emotional expression. Let them know that they can have a definite starting time and a definite ending time for processing.

Use Creativity for Processing

Journaling. A hike. A trip. A planned conversation. A monument. Art therapy. A trip to the cemetery. Being alone. Being with someone. Balloons. Yearly rituals. Light a candle. Write a story. Photographs. A memory book.

Be Sensitive

It is important to be sensitive to what the person you are working with **needs** and what they **want**. Techniques are offered as a tool to assist the person in working through the anniversary reaction. It is not to push them through a process.

Let them Grieve

It is important to let a person grieve. The tools you offer are to help the person get “unstuck.” We want to intervene when there are spiraling situations where the person’s grief appears unproductive.

Let them be in the Driver’s Seat

Anniversary reaction make the person feel out of control. Help see the choices that they do have.

Guide them to Access their own Resources

There is something powerful about letting the person or student access their own resources. You can offer a menu.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is set of principles and techniques that help us gain more choice and awareness in our lives by looking at:

Neurology: our brain, our physiology, our body position and movement

Linguistics: our speech, our thoughts and how we think

Programming: our programs of behavior and thought patterns

NLP was discovered by John Grinder, a linguistics professor, and Richard Bandler, a computer scientist at the University of California—Berkeley in the mid-1970’s.

Some presuppositions:

The map is not the territory.

Sensory information is the highest form of communication.

A “reality,” that is, how we experience the world is affected by these three components.

Generalization

Deletion

Distortion

Sometimes Generalization, Deletion and Distortion is helpful, but sometimes it is not.

Re-imprinting is a technique that helps a person get unstuck from the pain by bringing in resources.

An anniversary reaction is a “stuck-stuck” where we feel resourceless.

1. Establish Rapport with the person.
2. Identify a stuck state or an anticipated anniversary reaction. (or past traumatic event)
3. Calibrate the person’s physiological response.
Notice: eye movements, breathing shifts, gestures, posture
4. Break state.
5. Ask the person what resource they think that they might need. (peace, love, forgiveness, courage, etc.,)
6. Have the person imagine or step into a past memory where that resource was present. Calibrate state.
7. Have the person imagine bringing this resource to their self.
8. Then have the person step into the anticipated anniversary reaction bringing the resource with them. (or original traumatic event.)
9. Future Pace.