**Why we all need a “container’ and how to use it!**

Whenever something distressing happens (a threat we’re not prepared to handle, i.e. trauma), our mind needs to review everything seen, heard, tasted, touched, smelled, experienced in any way, to identify what is dangerous so we can determine what we need to do to protect ourselves or others. That’s what’s happening when we go over and over something in our minds. If we can’t focus on it right away, our right hemisphere is made to hold all that sensory information until we can review it. When we do review it, we need to give it our full attention, or we won’t be able to learn what we need to learn from the experience. Our right hemisphere will hold whatever we need to review until we can thoroughly sort through the experience and determine what’s important to remember. When we’re little, it does it automatically. If there’s too much unresolved trauma in a person’s system, though, or the situation is perceived as life threatening, the right hemisphere becomes less and less willing to just stuff those experiences away. What usually happens then, is, we keep feeling upset, but we aren’t giving the issues our full attention, so we can’t process through (learn from) it. That’s when it helps to intentionally set aside distressing experience or concerns until we can give them our full attention and learn what we need to learn. Our built-in imagination can help us do that quickly by having a specific place or Container to hold them.

***Where can you put what still needs to be reviewed?*** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*(create an imaginary container in your mind to hold these things until a safer time to review ie) therapy)*

***Container Do’s and Don’ts:***

* Do practice using it when your distress is low.
* Don’t wait until there’s a very upsetting issue. You won’t think of using it if it’s not a habit.
* Do use it for vague uncomfortable feelings and when you don’t know why you’re upset.
* Don’t try to figure out what it is if you need to put it away (that’s reprocessing/learning).
* Do schedule a Review Time each day to focus on what you can process on your own or wait until therapy session.

***How to Use the Container***

Whenever you can’t give distressing feelings (physical or emotional) your full attention………or it doesn’t feel safe…………….or you don’t have time right then.

**Whatever still needs to be reviewed** (sorted through), **can go into***\_\_\_(container)*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**for now**”.

**When it feels like it’s all in, let your body relax** (just say*”\_\_\_(safe word or safe place)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”).*

Then go back to focusing on whatever needs your attention at the time.

**Additional Containment Techniques**

***Spiral Technique***

This is an imaginal exercise and that there are no right or wrong responses.

**“When you bring up the memory, how does it feel from 0-10”**

**“Where do you feel it in your body?”**

**“Concentrate on the feeling in your body. Now, let’s pretend that the feelings are energy. If the sensation was going in a spiral, what direction would it be moving in….. clockwise or counterclockwise?”**

**“Whatever direction is good – now with your mind, let’s change direction and move the spiral”**

**“Just notice what happens as it moves in the opposite directions.”**