



C – Connecting to a Comforting Presence

This practice offers a felt-sense of being connected to a comforting presence. It is adapted from Laurel Parnell’s script for resourcing and ‘tapping in’ nurturing and protective figures using bilateral stimulation (Parnell, 2008¹). The authors adapted the language to place more emphasis on comfort and support rather than nurturance to move the focus away from attachment relationships. The language is also adapted to allow the client to be supported, calmed, and comforted by a presence, such as nature, rather than a person, which can be tolerated well by clients who have experienced threat or betrayal in interpersonal relationships. Artmaking is used to create an external representation of this presence. Positive or neutral sensations are then enhanced using words and bilateral stimulation so that the Comforting Presence resource is held both externally, through the artwork, and in the body, through sensations—having both an internal and external focus can help clients stay within their window of tolerance during this activity. The client’s image can act as a reminder to practice connecting to this resource whenever it might be helpful for them.

Script for C

Introduction: *We will now explore the first letter of the COME BACK Tool, “C”:* *Connecting to a Comforting Presence. Have some paper and art materials ready. Check in:* *Where are you at now on your scale of presence?*

Choosing a presence: *You can begin by thinking of someone or something with a comforting, calming presence. This could be a presence in any form, perhaps the sense of something bigger and larger than you, like nature or a spiritual presence; perhaps an animal or a mythical creature; maybe someone you’ve known, someone from your community or family history, or even character or historical figure. Take a moment to really bring this comforting presence to mind. See if you can make this presence as vivid as possible, noticing anything about this presence that feels comforting to you, perhaps their size, energy, voice... anything that feels comforting.*

Art directive: *If you would like, you can represent this presence using color, symbols, lines, shapes, images, or words, or in any way you would like, on a piece of paper. [Therapist leaves time for the client to complete their image.]*

Noticing sensations: *Take a look at your image. Begin to notice how your body responds to this presence, and to the sense of being comforted. If it’s helpful, just breathe in that comfort, letting it move and expand in or around your body, wherever you would like it to go. If it’s*

¹ Parnell, L. (2008). *Tapping in: A Step-by-step guide to activating your healing resources through bilateral stimulation*. Sounds True.

helpful, you may like to notice if there are any sensations in your body that feel neutral or good in this presence.

Enhancing the resource: *Let in as much comfort as feels good for you right now. You may like to come up with a word or phrase to help you remember this comforting presence, such as: I am supported or I am cared for. Find the words that feel right to you. Feel free to add them to your image.*

Adding bilateral stimulation: *If you'd like, you can fold your arms across your chest and gently tap back and forth on your chest or arms, just a few times, as you say those words to yourself and notice any positive sensations in your body, maybe letting them deepen or expand.*

Applying the skill: *You can repeat this activity as many times as you like, using your image and those words to help your body remember this comforting presence so you can always carry it with you, wherever you go. You can also do this activity with any type of presence, such as a peaceful, grounding, ancestral, nurturing, loving, creative, or powerful presence. Choosing different resources can help you create a constellation of support to have around you, that is always present and available whenever you need it.*

Scale of presence reassessment: *Where are you at now on your Scale of Presence? Do you notice any shifts? What was helpful for you about this activity? Was there anything that wasn't helpful?*

Script from *EMDR and Creative Arts Therapies* (Davis et al, 2022)
Inviting the Body, Movement, and the Creative Arts into Telehealth:
A Culturally Responsive Model for Online EMDR.

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