

Emotional Healing with Power Therapies: Brainspotting, Freespotting etc.

Talk/Video Transcript

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Healing experiences, Brainspotting and related therapies, recommendations, studies, how power therapies work, Brainspotting simplified, Freespotting, and more.

Heal emotional traumas, issues and pain rapidly, without talking about them, with Brainspotting/Freespotting. Workshop by Fiona De Vos.

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Painful experiences, depression, search, Brainspotting experiences

Raise your hand if you've never had any painful experiences in life. 😊

Raise your hand if you've had painful experiences in life and you feel that these experiences still affect you in some way.

Like everyone, I've also had my share of painful experiences in life. My mom's hospitalization and death, growing up without my

dad, relationship problems, health problems, and so on. There were times when I got so depressed, and times when the pain I felt was so intense I thought the only way out was suicide.

And like perhaps many of you, I've done a lot of searching and tried so many things to be able to deal with the negative effects of these painful experiences. I tried:

- journaling, introspection, talk therapy, talking to a friend,
- Emotional Freedom Technique, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, inner child work,
- fasting, hiking, acupuncture,
- supplements, herbs, mindfulness, meditation, and so on.

Some of these things helped by making me feel good. But then something would trigger me again or bother me and make me feel so angry, nervous, irritated or fearful. And then I'd wonder whether the things I did were actually effective or only provided temporary relief.

But I kept searching anyway. Last year, I stumbled upon Brainspotting, a technique developed by Dr. David Grand, a psychotherapist based in New York. After reading a bit about it, I went to a Brainspotting therapist in New York. Later, I also learned to do it on my own.

I was amazed with the results. Brainspotting was so effective and it worked very fast. Things, people and situations that used to trigger me stopped triggering me. Also, the stress, irritability and nervousness that I used to feel a lot subsided, making me feel much calmer and more relaxed.

At first I released and healed my big traumas. Abandonment issues, the deaths of my mom and other loved ones, my parents'

separation, a serious illness, and so on. And when those got cleared, I was able to release and heal my smaller traumas. Hurtful comments from family, friends and classmates, being disrespected, being humiliated, being hit with a belt when I was a kid, being punched, feelings of not being good enough, and so on.

Because Brainspotting helped me so much, I wanted to learn more about it and share it with others.

So I did a lot of research and experimenting. On myself, my husband, family and friends. I took a Brainspotting course, read Dr. David Grand's book about it, and watched as many videos and read as much material as I could get ahold of.

Power therapies: advantages, recommendations, studies

So I did research on Brainspotting, and I learned that it's one of a number of so-called power therapies, which have emerged in recent years. Why are they called power therapies?

- Because they provide **deep, rapid emotional healing**. Traumas and issues can now be released and healed in days, hours, even minutes. That's in contrast to years or a lifetime of talk therapy.
- Also, in these therapies, there's **no need to talk**. About embarrassing or painful memories or issues, or about anything else for that matter.

Apart from Brainspotting, two other examples of these power therapies are **EMDR** or Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, and **Progressive Counting**.

Has anyone heard of EMDR or Progressive Counting?

EMDR is the oldest of the three therapies and the most researched. It's recommended by the World Health Organization, the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the US Department of Defense, the US Department of Veterans Affairs, the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research, and the UK National Institute for Clinical Excellence.

How effective are these power therapies?

In a study by the World Health Organization, 93% of earthquake survivors were completely healed of trauma after only 5 EMDR sessions. In another study by the WHO, 90% of rape victims were completely healed of trauma after only 3 EMDR sessions.

As for Brainspotting, after the Sandy Hook shooting in the United States, 945 survivors were surveyed to compare 16 trauma treatment methods, including EMDR, talk therapy, music therapy, art therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, acupuncture, and so on. Brainspotting was found to be the most effective.

In Spain, a study compared EMDR, Brainspotting and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for treating Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Again, Brainspotting was found to be the most effective, followed by EMDR, and then CBT.

As for Progressive Counting, a study has shown that it is just as effective as EMDR, but works faster and is easier to learn and do.

So the conclusions of these studies are:

- The power therapies are more effective and work much faster than talk therapy, music therapy, art therapy, CBT, and so on.
- Among the power therapies:
 - EMDR is the oldest and most researched, but
 - Brainspotting is more effective than EMDR, and
 - Progressive Counting works faster and is easier to do than EMDR.

Why we have trauma, how to release trauma, how power therapies work

So what do EMDR, Brainspotting and Progressive Counting have in common? Why are they so effective and why do they work so fast?

To answer these questions, we first have to look at why we have trauma and how we can release it.

When we have a painful or distressing experience, ideally, we respond by **allowing ourselves to feel our emotions fully**. To grieve a loss, feel the pain, and process the experience fully so that we can release the negative emotions.

But there are times when we are not able to do that. Sometimes the experience can be so intense that we are **overwhelmed** by it. Sometimes we **judge our emotions** as wrong or bad. We **suppress them**, just like when we were kids and our parents told us to stop crying. Or we **deny our emotions** because we're ashamed of them, or simply don't know how to deal with them.

We say to ourselves, I'm not sad, I'm not envious, I shouldn't be angry, and so on.

Because of these things—overwhelm, and judging, suppressing and denying our emotions—we are not able to fully process our experience, and trauma is then lodged in our bodies.

So how can we release trauma? The 13th-century poet Rumi wrote, **the cure for pain is in the pain**. We release trauma by revisiting the painful memory, but this time, without getting overwhelmed, and without judging, suppressing or denying our emotions.

To **prevent overwhelm**, we can **focus or concentrate on an external object**. This is our anchor, something stable we can hold on to while processing. In the case of EMDR, the external object is a moving finger. In Brainspotting, it's a fixed or non-moving finger or pointer. In Progressive Counting, it's someone counting out loud.

And instead of judging, suppressing or denying our emotions, we allow ourselves to totally feel them.

By revisiting our painful memories while focusing on an external object, and allowing ourselves to feel our emotions without judging them, we are able to finish processing what was left unprocessed before, release our painful memories and emotions, and finally heal ourselves.

How to do Brainspotting, Self-Brainspotting steps

Of the three therapies—EMDR, Brainspotting and Progressive Counting—which one do you think is the easiest? As for me, I find Brainspotting the easiest to do. You don't need a moving finger, whether yours or anyone else's. And you don't need anyone to count for you.

So how do we do Brainspotting? There are many variations, but the simplest, which in my experience is also the most effective and efficient, works this way.

1. Think of something that's bothering you. If necessary, intensify your emotions by imagining the details of the experience.
2. Notice where you feel tension in your body. For example, your chest or your belly.
3. Look for a spot in space where you feel the tension the most. So you can go left–middle–right, up–eye level–down, and so on.
4. Keep looking at the spot and just observe whatever comes up—memories, thoughts and feelings—without judging.

A variation of this process is, instead of looking for the tensest spot, you look for the calmest spot, or the spot where you feel calmest.

It's simple, isn't it? However, in my experience, we can simplify it even more.

Brainspotting simplified, Freespotting

If Brainspotting works on both the tensest spot and the calmest spot, then it should also work on any spot in between.

After all, it's not about the location of the spot but about **focusing on an external object**.

A German study compared the effectiveness of three trauma therapies. First, focusing on traumatic memory while focusing on a moving finger, that is, EMDR. Second, focusing on trauma while focusing on a non-moving finger, which is like Brainspotting but without looking for the tensest or calmest spot. And third, focusing only on trauma. The result? Focusing on trauma while focusing on a moving or non-moving finger was much more effective than focusing only on the trauma. Whether the finger moves or not doesn't matter.

Now I haven't found a study comparing focusing on the tensest spot and focusing on any spot. But the study I just mentioned proves that focusing on any spot works.

The advantages of picking any spot are:

- There's no need to look for the tensest or the calmest spot. So there's no hesitating, no doubting whether it's the right spot, or worrying that it won't work if you don't find the right spot.
- There's no need for a pointer or a long stick. You can look at a finger, pen, spot on the wall, corner of a light switch, and so on. It's not tiring for your arm.
- It's easier to do anywhere and anytime. Whenever you feel bad, you can allow yourself to totally feel what you're feeling while staring at any spot. For example, if you're feeling stressed at work, you can stare at a spot on the wall, or go to the bathroom and stare at a corner of a bathroom tile.

So the simplified steps, in brief, are:

1. **Think of something that's bothering you. Intensify your emotions if necessary.**
2. **Stare at a spot and allow memories, thoughts and feelings to come up without judging.**

I call this stripped-down version of Brainspotting Freespotting. Free because:

- We're **free to choose any spot.**
- It's **free of charge.**
- FREE can also stand for **Focusing while Releasing Emotions Etc**, where Etc stands for painful memories, negative beliefs, negative energies, even entities or spirits if you believe they exist.
- And of course, free stands for the freedom we'll enjoy when we heal ourselves. The **freedom to be who we're meant to be and to live the life we're meant to live.**

Freespotting session

So now, let's do it. We'll do Freespotting all together. I will first guide you through the steps and then you can process on your own for about 30 minutes.

Before anything else, I'd like to ask everyone to please not look around during the Freespotting session. Even though we're in a shared space, we can do our best to respect each other's privacy.

I usually start with a short prayer. Feel free to do the same, or to meditate, or have a moment of silence.

So we will now start. **Step 1. Think of something that's bothering you.** It could be a painful or uncomfortable or embarrassing memory, experience or situation. It could be an annoying person. Or negative beliefs like I'm not good enough, nobody loves me, or they don't respect me. Or it could be a life-threatening situation like a car accident.

If your emotions are not intense enough, imagine the details of the experience. What happened? What did you see, hear or feel? What did someone do to you? What did someone say to you? How did you feel the moment you knew something bad was about to happen?

Step 2. Stare at a spot—for example, the tip of your finger or pen—and **allow memories, thoughts and feelings to come up without judging.** Avoid judging yourself or your thoughts and feelings as bad or wrong. **Allow yourself to totally feel your emotions.** Don't suppress or deny them. It's OK to feel whatever you're feeling.

Other memories, thoughts and feelings may come up. Just remember to **keep focusing on the spot.**

When your emotions are no longer intense and no other memories or thoughts come up, you can stop. Or, if you want to process more memories, repeat Steps 1 and 2. Think of other things that are bothering you, intensify your emotions if necessary, keep staring at the spot, and allow memories, thoughts and feelings to come up without judging.

[30-minute processing]

Now that the 30 minutes are over, let's close our eyes. Relax. And ask to feel the deepest, purest divine love.

Freespotting with kids, people changing, collective trauma

I'd like to share a few more things about Brainspotting and Freespotting.

First, they work on kids. It may be harder for them to sit still but processing time with them is shorter, and usually more fun.

Second, I and some other people have observed that when you do Brainspotting or Freespotting on a person, say someone who pushes your buttons, this person's behavior towards you changes. I guess this shows that we really are connected, in ways we may not be aware of.

And third, Brainspotting and Freespotting can be used to heal not only individual traumas, but also family traumas, generational traumas, as well as social, cultural, national and world traumas.

As we go deeper in this work, we can also process, release and heal our parents', grandparents' and other ancestors' traumas, traumas caused by wars, our colonial past, racism, ethnic rivalries, and so on. For example, in the Philippines, many of us feel inferior to Westerners due at least in part to our colonial past. Such cultural or national trauma can also be released and healed.

Also, in many areas of the world where there are long-standing conflicts, children are vicariously traumatized when they hear about their ancestors being killed or abused. And when they grow up, they pass on the stories and traumas to the next generation. There can be no true conflict resolution without trauma resolution.

I believe that Freespotting, Brainspotting and the other power therapies can help bring global healing and world peace.

As we heal ourselves, we help others heal. As we heal ourselves, we help the world heal.

[Q&A, discussion]

Thank you ♥

Love Joy Peace