

# **“The Healing Power of “Resource Connection” envelope in the Standard EMDR Protocol**

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*In the opera “The Magic Flute” Tamino and Pamina march anxiously through hell arm in arm with the magic flute which helps them to overcome the traumatic journey. In order for us to be able to negotiate the Hell of our fears, we need the tune of the magic flute within us – the connection to our inner resources and strengths. Without such a connection we can hardly dare to set out on this journey. If we make this voyage successfully and do not forget the magic flute within us we will reach the journey’s end transformed and able to face our fears again and again.*

This paper presents a procedure of Resource Connection (RC) as part of the standard protocol to be used alongside or instead of the Safe Place. The Safe Place and other relaxation techniques are used mainly for maintaining stability during and between sessions. (Shapiro 1999) The RC envelope aims at revealing and strengthening a healing resource sequence which is unique to the client, precisely matching her need or problem. The accessibility of these resources allows their utilization both during the session and in the client’s everyday life. The RC concept is consistent with the self healing aspect of the EMDR model. (Shapiro,1995)

This work is inspired by three conceptual frameworks:

1. The assumption of an unconscious connection to resources as a source of healing,(Erickson & Rossi 1976).
2. Narrative Therapy of White and Epston (1990) and de Shazer’s Focused Solution Therapy (1985) which emphasize a consistent and constant search and validation of resources. The resources are not accessible to the client who is trapped in a dysfunctional “life-story”, although some of them are part of her behavioral repertoire.
3. The Jungian assumption of a need to reach a balance between the polar opposites of the psyche (Jung 1963).

In my model the dialectical connection between the poles of the Problem and the Healing Force, of which resources are an expression, is fundamental to acquiring a new balance. Making the poles accessible for processing is one of the main therapeutic tasks. (Laub 2001). Just as in the basic protocol the problem becomes accessible by inquiring about the sensory, cognitive, emotional and somatic aspects, RC encourages this kind of compact focusing on the resources so that they will be more available for generating solutions to the problem.

The standard EMDR protocol can be seen to contain a number of resource connection procedures:

- 1.Safe Place (SP) which is a connection to a safety resource.(Lazarov et al 1997)
2. Positive Cognition (PC) which is a connection to a future resource of positive and realistic belief in oneself.
- 3.Cognitive Interweave (CI) is a strategy designed to stimulate resources which are often present and linking them to the dysfunctional material in order to facilitate the processing of the “information package” from a new perspective (Leeds-handbook ) This intervention is

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multidimensional rather than merely cognitive (Hartung 2000). An expanded conceptualization of CI is called: Therapeutic Interweave ( Gilson & Kaplan 2000). Leeds' procedure of Resource Development Installation (RDI) is a significant contribution to the use of resources in EMDR. It is adapted for people with early deprivations who have not developed the ability for affect regulation and self - soothing. They cannot stand high levels of emotional distress. Therefore exposure to traumatic events as used in the standard protocol may cause them retraumatization. (1997 ,1999) Leeds' procedure is executed in the preparatory stage and may take a long time before the client is ready for trauma processing. Since the introduction of RDI varied modes of resource utilization have been suggested, (Parnell 1999) and various resource- protocols were developed. (Schmidt 1999, Omaha 2000). Greenwald, in his book on EMDR use with children and adolescents, suggests many varieties of resource installation such as: Past Successes and Good Feelings, Future Movies, Choices have Consequences, etc. He uses them before the processing, in the middle of processing (if the process is blocked) and at the end. (Greenwald 1999) In the addiction protocol a Resource State is built at the beginning of therapy followed by a Positive State, which defines the client's goal. Vogelmann-Sine, Sine, Smyth, Popky 1988) Phillips similarly begins therapy with a Positive Target Image - a situation without the problem. The use of resource interweaves is rich and varied. (Phillips 2000, Kaplan & Gilson 2000) In the following sections I would like to present the procedure of RC, emphasize main aspects of RC and finally present some examples.

## **The Procedure**

The procedure aims to provide an envelope\* of containment throughout processing. This envelope consists of three types of resources:

1. Past Resource Connection (PRC) opens the therapeutic process.
2. Present Resource Connection (Pr.RC) refers to resources which emerge during processing. One resource, either present or past, is chosen by the client to be installed and anchored at the end of the session. (The regular installation is done afterwards)
3. Future Resource (FRC) of imagining the desired situation. This resource connection is not a standard part of the procedure. It is applied upon clinical judgment of the therapist.

### **1. Past Resource Connection - PRC**

This refers to a RC carried out in the beginning of therapy after identification of the issue and before specifying the Picture. The therapist says: "Before we start I would like you to recall a memory in which you felt good with your self... a time or a situation in which you felt really well and whole... it can be an early memory or a more recent one... It could be a memory of few moments or an extended period of feeling well... What is the first thing that comes to mind? After the client relates the memory to the therapist she is asked to close her eyes and enter it anew. " Take all the time necessary to relive the memory with all your senses... notice what you hear, smell and see... allow your feelings, sensations and thoughts to emerge ... breathe into it... let yourself be there for a few moments." The therapist gives a short bilateral stimulation of about 14 tapping sets. Alternatively the client is allowed to determine the duration of bilateral stimulation while being reminded that the tapping will cease when she opens her eyes. After inquiring about all the components of the experience (sensual, cognitive, emotional and somatic) the therapist asks the client to return to the memory for a second time giving it a name (cue word or cue sentence) so that she will be able to recall it easily when she feels a need to strengthen

\* I am grateful to my friend and colleague Eva Eshkol for suggesting the concept of containment envelope.

herself. The therapist installs the image with a short bilateral stimulation .In case the client cannot recall any memory she is encouraged to find an imagined picture.

## 2. Present Resource Connection - Pr.RC

As a result of the processing a positive image, or several images, which contain resources often emerge. It may happen spontaneously or be induced by the intervention of the therapist via CI (see example no. 2,6). Sometimes it is accompanied by a positive spontaneous sentence (power sentence). If not - the therapist can ask the client to supplement the image with a cue word or a phrase as described above. Asking the client to bring up a picture matching the final PC is another way to obtain a Pr.RC. (“when you repeat the sentence...notice the feelings and sensations in your body and see if any picture emerges”). If no picture emerges the PC can still be installed via the accompanying sensations and emotions coming along with it. The Pr.RC can emerge even if the SUDs does not drop all the way down and the session is incomplete. To conclude the session, (complete or incomplete) the therapist asks the client to choose from among all the resources, one which suits her best, installs and anchors it ( according to NLP technique – Bandler & Grinder 1979, pp.82-103). This anchoring is an association of the resource with a body posture chosen by the client (somatic cue). In conclusion the therapist emphasizes that the resources have now become accessible and encourages the client to connect to them in times of need and recharge her batteries.

## 3. Future Resource Connection - FRC

The FRC is a future template of the desired situation. It often emerges spontaneously or else can be elicited by the therapist. The therapist may also suggest supplementing the image with previous resources. The installation of FRC follows that of Pr.RC. Greenwald uses a similar procedure which is called “future movies” and reinforces the last picture in the film. (1999)

# Main aspects of RC

## 1. The use of RC in the standard protocol

The RC envelope is suggested as part of the standard protocol. It differs from RDI which is a protocol in its own right designed for clients experiencing difficulty connecting to resources. My assumption is that resource connection is an essential aspect of the healing process for every client. The resource is like a transitional object ( Winnicott 1971) which represents a concrete feeling of self esteem and inner strength in a symbolic form. The RC also allows an envelope of containment of the therapeutic process by connecting the client to her resources at the beginning of therapy, and terminating the session by harvesting the resources which came up in the process. At the beginning of the treatment, similar to the PC, it is a reminder to the client of a situation without the problem. In de Shazer’s work he calls this an Exception (1997), and in White & Epston’s work it is called a Unique Outcome (1990). In EMDR it is called a Positive Target Image. The PRC which opens the therapeutic journey reminds the client of some useful provisions she possesses. At the end of an incomplete session it will connect the client with an authentic resource which can help her finish the session with a feeling of self worth and a possibility of a solution to the problem. In a complete session the closing resource/s actually are an additional installation to the regular one. Since RC is an integral part of the protocol specific resources connected to the working through of the trauma tend to come up: concrete, abstract, metaphoric, corrective and spiritual.

## 2. An indirect approach to the unconscious for a solution

Unlike the SP procedure, in PRC the therapist asks the client to bring up a positive memory of herself at her best without directing her to a specific resource. This also differs from RDI in which the client is asked to find a resource that fits a specific problem. (Leeds 1997, Greenwald 1999, Lawrence 1999, Wildwind 1998) The above mentioned procedures elicit both conscious and unconscious processes, whereas the PRC goes directly to the “unconscious library” for a most fitting solution. Thereby it circumvents the conscious mind similar to Rossi’s approach of mind-body therapy (1996). The PRC often holds within it the core of the solution to the problem,. This connection is sometimes hidden and clarifies itself at the end of the processing. When such a situation occurs (example 1.) it further illustrates the amazing unconscious match between the problem and the resources. Likewise the present resources (Pr.RC ) are unconscious solutions.

## 3. The creation of a dynamic sequence of resources

The RC is similar to creating a necklace bead by bead in an integrative sequence. Each new session can bring up new resources, which will be added to the repertoire of resources already acquired. This sequence is a most valuable contribution to the narrative change of the “life story” (White & Epston 1990), or the “ life script”,(Laub & Keini 1993).

### Example 1

This example demonstrate an unconscious matching between the specific resource (empathy) and the underlying distress (alienation and loneliness) This match was initially concealed from both client and therapist. Therefore the connection of the PRC and the presenting problem (avoiding coping at work) was revealed only at the end of therapy.

PRC = A nice quiet evening with an empathic girlfriend.

Picture = Raphael avoids coping with tasks at work.

NC = I am not in control, I do not appreciate myself.

PC = I am in control. I am connected to myself.

VOC=2

Emotions = Frustration, despair, fear of the future, of being cut off.

SUDs = 8

During processing Raphael faced his fears while some difficult memories of alienation and loneliness came up. The insight, which emerged towards the end of the session, was that it is preferable to confront the fear rather than to run away from it. A picture came up in which he was empathic to himself, accompanied by a strong feeling of self- acceptance.(Pr.RC) The new PC became: “I can accept myself”. Whilst checking which image he chooses to conclude the session, he preferred the Pr.RC. He thereby moves from the need of an external, supporting figure to an inner locus of control through which he was able to provide himself with the empathy he needed.

### Example 2

This example illustrates the use of metaphorical resources following CI interventions. These resources together with the PRC turned out to be efficient and accessible tools for the client.

Miriam is dealing with her destructive self-criticism mainly about her professional work. In the event she chose to work on how she felt helpless and overwhelmed in the face of self criticism which she described as a huge monster.

PRC = Participating in an art class in which she felt a creativity flow from within her stomach.

Picture = Sitting uncomfortably at a professional meeting.

NC = I'm worthless.

PC = I am "good enough".

VOC = 1

Emotions = Terrible anxiety, self-anger.

SUDs = 10

Sensations = restlessness, paralysis, distress and pressure in the chest.

During the process, Miriam worked on a traumatic experience from a very early age when she was forcibly separated from a warm and loving family who had hidden her during the war.

Describing the experience of the force exerted upon her against her will and the unavoidable submission which followed was for her identical to the feeling of relentless criticism. During processing Miriam felt stuck because of overwhelming feelings and I had to use a cognitive interweave asking an adult part of her to help the child. This intervention was insufficient and she was left in severe distress without significant change. I asked Miriam to seek more help for the little girl. She came up with a series of present resources : bathing in the sunshine, a halo of light which protects her from damaging impacts such as critical voices and a glass splinter which hits and hurts the criticizing monster. For closing she chose all resources while adding a new one: an old man appearing on her right side, touching her shoulder and telling her softly that she could rest from the effort of being successful. In the following sessions she related how joining up with three RC's helped her. Whenever she is confronting the monster she grabs the glass in her hand while repeating the installed sentence: "Beware of me, I will not let you attack me". The second helpful resource was the old man comforting her with the sentence: "It's O.K." The third was the PRC combined with the phrase: "let your guts guide you". These were the resources that the inner child needed so that the adult could actualize her own creativity.

### Example 3

This example illustrates two additional options: a corrective resource and fusion of resources.

A corrective resource is an imagined resource which satisfies an unfulfilled yearning or an unmet need. Fusion of resources refers to a spontaneous integration of two resources into one.

The issue in this session is the "inner critic" of Rachel, who torments her by lowering her value in comparison to others: "You can't make it, you are not smart enough, etc."

PRC= a memory of a play in which she was the main actor during her school years. In this role she felt esteemed by others: "I am speaking, I am acting, I am very good, I am in control."

Picture = As a little child the client is visiting with her mother, the nice house of her kindergarden teacher. This raised very strong inferiority feelings because of their own poor house.

NC = I have a defect, I am inferior.

PC = I am worthy.

VOC = 4

Emotions = humiliation, worthlessness.

SUDs =8

During processing Rachel returns to childhood and adolescent memories linked to inferiority feelings. She focuses on one particular memory of humiliation when she was framed by another child. The incident forced her to leave home and go to a boarding school. It is the first time she experiences this decision as a surrender and non-coping. At the same time she also sees how lonely she was since she didn't share her distress with her mother. Transferring to the boarding school was traumatic for her because unfortunately this was the very period at which she felt

accepted and successful (this was the time of the play at school). Towards the end of the session she recalls a memory of her sneaking into her mother's bed seeking her touch. She says, crying, that she needed her mother's support and an imaginary picture emerges spontaneously ( a corrective Pr.RC) in which her mother strengthens and supports her. The mother reminds her of her success in the play at school, and her social status and guides her in dealing with the child who framed her. The Past and the present resources merged into a whole, corrective and healing picture. I asked her which picture she would prefer to keep at the end of the session and she chose the PRC. She saw herself happy, full of confidence, enjoying the play and added: " I sneaked in another picture in which my mother tells me: "you are talented, you are smart and I am proud of you." She had returned to the corrective resource! I asked her for a sentence which matches the picture and she answered: "Accept yourself as you are and don't let any whip hurt you, or any arrow pierce you".

#### Example No.4

In this example I will present the utilization of resources that are intimately connected to the inner milieu of the client. In this case we are dealing with spiritual resources of a client who was in the process of becoming religious. During the processing the client draws on them spontaneously according to his needs.

Moshe, a 30 years old man is the youngest child in his family. At the time he came to treatment he had returned home after a period of living apart. He had left a job that demanded much driving because of anxiety attacks when driving outside his home town.. His conversion to religion seemed to answer his search for meaning and his dependency needs. In one of his sessions he told of a powerful spiritual experience of praying in nature. I installed this episode as a resource. A week later he told of his use of the prayer while driving to Jerusalem (a task he was assigned as part of therapy). To this prayer he repetitively added the sentence: " my confidence has come back to me".

PRC = Driving to Jerusalem together with the positive sentence. While connecting to his resource he noted a certain amount of tension because the car was not in good mechanical order. Right after that he reported another powerful spiritual experience while praying at the Wailing Wall. Although he was alone he felt utterly protected by a group of angels sent by God. Moshe has spontaneously replaced a not entirely positive resource with a much more powerful and satisfying one.

PRC= The prayer at the Wailing Wall.

Picture = a memory of an anxiety attack.

NC= I have no control.

PC= My confidence has come to me.

VOC = 5

Emotions = anxiety, confusion.

SUDs = 9

Sensations = dizziness, feeling choked.

In the processing Moshe spontaneously went back to the PRC reciting the words of the prayer. Towards the end of the session he recalled himself as a child visiting the Holy place with his parents. He remembered the feeling of safety he got from feeling his fathers' gun when carrying his bag. This present resource joins the two former ones of the prayer in the natural surrounding and the prayer at the Wailing Wall. To my question with which memory he would like to end he chooses the prayer at the Wailing Wall with a repeated sentence approaching God as a supportive and protective figure. Moshe also adds the PC to this picture. Thus he creates a chain of spiritual resources which give him protection and a concrete resource of coping with anxiety.

### Example no.5

This example shows the use of many metaphorical resources embedded in a creative healing fairy tale. The issue is Noga's femininity.

PRC = a memory of a holiday with her husband in which he brings her a necklace to the hairdresser and in the evening they go out to eat and drink in a restaurant. The name of the picture is: "courting".

Picture = Her husband is sitting opposite the computer late at night and Noga suspects that he may be having a conversation with another woman on the internet.

NC= I am not loved, I am not good enough.

PC= I am loved, I am good enough.

VOC = 5

Emotions = fear of abandonment, lack of security.

SUDs = 5

Sensations = accelerated heart beats, restlessness.

During the processing Noga expresses rage and a feeling of loss. In one of the pictures she sees a round silver box which reminds her of the mythological story of Psyche. She was very curious and asked Venus the Goddess of love if she could open the forbidden box. In the mythological story Psyche dies. Noga feels that what is in the box is what she needs in her relationship with her husband. In the box, wrapped in pink paper, Noga finds cotton wool and continues to look until she finds a small purple diamond. She wears it on her neck while Venus directs her to let it help her on her way. Noga follows the stream of light that the diamond emits, meets her husband and tells him what happened. She understands that they will have to discover together how the diamond will help them. The husband is sure that there is something inside the diamond and in fact they do find a tiny scroll inside and on it is written: "***Love is a flower that should be watered all the time.***" (this is a power sentence) The closing resource was an image of the couple with a baby (not yet born) within a large flower. The name of the picture is: "flower". She puts her hand on her stomach and says she has a good, clean, sweet feeling. She feels calm, alive and full of energy. At the end of the session Noga discovers the meaning of her resources. She defines the PRC as a good couple relationship. The first Pr.RC is a box that contains the feeling of self as a valued treasure with a quality of softness (cotton wool) in her femininity. The second Pr.RC is a picture of the family living in a love flower that has to be watered all the time and this connects her to the goal of her journey.

### Example 6

This example demonstrates three ways of strengthening and empowering of resources: a sequence of three progressively improving FRC, drawing of resources and anchoring them in different body parts.

The subject of the therapy was Nomi's difficulty in dealing with her husband's and her children's angry outbursts.

PRC = Usually her son's refusal to do his homework would have led to a heated argument. This time she was able to react calmly and he did his homework. She felt relaxed, quiet and sure of herself and said to her self: "I don't have to get into this". The name of the picture is: "Quiet".

Picture = A fight between her sons that led to a violent verbal intervention by her husband.

NC = I am helpless and without control.

PC = I have control and I react quietly.

VOC = 5

Emotions = anxiety, guilt, confusion and self-hatred.

SUDs = 9

Sensations = Tension in her stomach.

The childhood memories that came up in the processing involved issues of rejection, loneliness and self- disgust. Nomi felt at a dead end – “unable to swallow or to throw up”. With the help of several CI she extruded the black rejection and embraced and calmed the little girl. Her throat opened and closed several times and she said to the girl: ” I won’t leave you, you won’t leave me. There is a place to go. It is not a dead end”. She ends the session with a bright abstract picture accompanied by the sentence: I want to be an anchor for myself to give me safety instead of looking for it in others. I also want to find a compass that will show me the right direction”. This is a very powerful resource abounding with metaphors. I installed the resource and proceeded to FRC which was described as: “A much more safe, flowing and quiet place in which my body is relaxed and my head is light”. Nomi chose this resource as a final picture. She could feel the steadiness and weight of the anchor that grounds her and gives her safety and a sense of refuge and self- acceptance. The compass which points to the sky gives her direction in her thoughts and responses. The power sentence that was connected to this resource:” I come from a safe place and the direction is clear to me”. The two metaphorical resources of the anchor and the compass symbolize her feelings of safety (earth) and direction (sky) that were missing in her childhood. These are complementary healing resources that give Nomi the feeling of quiet she described in the PRC. In the next session I asked Nomi to imagine three gradually improving future situations with these resources. In each one there was another notch of disengagement and self -acceptance. In order to strengthen these resources even more I asked her to draw them. In her drawing the anchor kept growing. When I asked her to draw the desired future situation she blended the two resources into a circle with an emphasized center (her inner self?). I then strengthened the RC in a third way by asking her to close her eyes and imagine the resources in her body. She chose to put the circle in her chest, the heavy anchor in her legs and the compass in her head sensing its movement upward. Nomi starts to acquire internal equipment, symbolic as well as concrete which she can use when needed. She is not alone anymore.

Finally I hope that the music of the magic flute which was played in this article will arouse the curiosity of some readers and inspire them to use it in their own work.

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