Brain-Based Therapies and Practical Neuroscience: Attachment and Emotional Regulation

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Brain-based therapies:

1) reduce primitive brain functions that have become hyper-aroused and increase activity in the higher regions of the brain that provide more optimal functioning.

2) discriminate between what is therapeutic and what is not.

3) employs only interventions consistent with a neurodevelopment understanding of neuroplasticity

4) relies on the alliance between client and therapist at all times

5) activates moderate states of arousal; change cannot happen if the 'state' does not change. States become traits.

6) offer a co-constructed new narrative for clients as we work to reconsolidate memories

7) teaches clients about their brains in order to boost their confidence in the therapy experience

8) teaches clients that each time they recall a memory they change it by the context, mood and vantage point of the present moment. Memories absolutely

change in response to new experiences. That is what therapy offers; the new, safe experience.

9) teaches clients that the stress thermostat in their brain may need to be reset. We can do that together by deciding that troubling feelings might represent excitement for a new challenge instead of fear about danger. This will require safety with the therapist and repetition.

10)teaches that sensations for our own bodies should not be the solo cause for alarm. As we work to reset the stress thermostat we require brain/body in order to determine true danger.

11)teaches that although flashbacks may seem to appear out of nowhere, they may be triggered by the same body sensations that you felt during or right after the trauma event(s). Our work will help the client tolerate those body sensations as they learn to engage higher level processing of the brain. Regaining Emotional Regulation

12) teaches simple, brain based techniques for therapist/client alike:

Slow and Low, Stop/Drop/Roll, Breathing,

Mindfulness, Compassion, Gratitude, Forgiveness, Acceptance, Alliance

What we can say to our clients:

1: The more advanced part of your brain can neutralize the fear/anxiety caused by the more primitive part of your brain. This is what we will teach you in therapy.

2: Your brain is not hardwired; It is soft wired and we can change it! so that you no longer suffer from extreme anxiety and fear. This is what we will teach you in therapy.

3: You may feel like this change is too hard, and you are not ready to trust me. That is ok. You do not have to feel ready in order for your brain to change, you just have to do it. Don't wait to feel ready.

4: Rewiring the brain to change bad habits/thoughts/feelings in to good ones requires that we endure the confusing experience of feeling worse before we feel better. To feel better on a regular basis we must ride through the brief period of feeling worse.

5: Emotional Regulation requires Attachment, cognitive capacity, affect regulation, felt sense of safety, mental and physical health. Together we work toward each of these. You are not alone.