

## Facing flashbacks: print out 'n' keep ideas for taking back control

### **Getting Grounded :**

If you are experiencing a flashback these grounding ideas may help you to return from the flashback to the present.

**Feet First:** Put your feet on the floor firmly – stamp if you like – reminding yourself of the here and now.

**Breath Deep:** Be aware of your breathing. When we are fearful we can start to breath very quickly. Take a few minutes to just breath in and out slowly – count if that helps e.g. four counts in and six counts out.

**Into Today:** Use your senses to bring you into the present.

**Look:** Take in the shapes, colours, people that are around you.

**Listen:** To noises e.g. music, birds, television, talking going on.

**Feel:** Touch and feel your hands, arms, legs – furniture – all reminding you of where you are now.

**Remind Yourself:** This is just a memory – this is not actually happening. The worst is over and focus on who you are now. If it helps talk to the frightened “child” part of you and assure him or her that you (your healthy adult self) can take care of him/her now.

**Hold Tight:** In a strong flashback it is easy to loose perspective and even not know where you end and the rest of the world begins. Holding a blanket round yourself or hugging a pillow can help.

**Take Time:** Don't push yourself to do things after a flashback – be kind to yourself and look after yourself. If you can, do something you find comforting e.g. having a hot drink.

**Get Support:** If you feel you would like to. Let your friends know what you are going through and let them help you by talking to you, touching you – whatever helps to remind you of who you are now.

**Write It:** Flashbacks feel frightening because they can seem to come out of nowhere. Write down the flashback when you feel ready and what happened directly beforehand. This will help you identify the “trigger” and will help you gain understanding of where the memory came from.

**Share it:** Consider joining a self help group or finding a good therapist to help you through this time.

Although flashbacks are frightening they mean that the memories are coming up for a reason. Often this is that you are ready to talk through the memory and it is another step towards growth and healing. As we continue to progress and talk about our memories, suffering and trauma – the flashbacks get less and less – and the painful memories no longer dominate us but rather we call the shots and control them.

### **Sources:**

“Helping people with PTSD deal with flashbacks” The Nursing Times Vol 98 5 Page 40 January 2002

“Garlands For Ashes” Programme Course notes written by Karen Pitt: 1994

Worcester Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre website [www.wrsasc.org.uk](http://www.wrsasc.org.uk)

The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders World Health Organization, Geneva, 1992

This article was originally printed in the Trauma And Abuse Group [www.tag-uk.net](http://www.tag-uk.net) " [www.tag-uk.net](http://www.tag-uk.net) September 2010 Newsletter