DROPPING ANCHOR: SCRIPT FOR THERAPISTS

This is a script for therapists to use with clients. You should allow a good ten seconds between instructions. Give your voice a kind and calming quality.

- You’re obviously experiencing a lot of emotional pain right now and I really want to help you handle it. So please follow my instructions struggling with this - and I want to help you handle it. So please follow my instructions.

- Push your feet hard into the floor.

- Sit forward in your chair, and straighten your back.

- Press your fingertips together, move your elbows, move your shoulders. Feel your arms moving, all the way from your fingers to shoulder blades.

- So notice, there’s a lot of pain here that you’re struggling with and... there’s also a body around that pain – a body that you can move and control. Just notice your whole body now – hands, feet, back. … Have a stretch. … Press your feet down.

- Now also look around the room and notice 5 things you can see.

- And also notice 3 or 4 things you can hear.

- And also notice you and I, working here together, as a team.

- So notice, there’s something very painful here that you’re struggling with and...

- Also notice your body in the chair ... move it... have a stretch... take control of your arms and legs.

- And also notice the room around you.

- And there’s you and I here, working together as a team.
The therapist ends the exercise by asking questions such as:

• Do you notice any difference now? Are you less caught up in the emotional storm (or ‘these difficult thoughts and feelings’)? Are you less ‘swept away’ or ‘pushed around’ by it/them?

• Is it easier for you to engage with me, to be present, to focus?

• Do you have more control over your actions - over your arms and legs and mouth?

Note: the therapist does NOT ask if the storm/emotional pain has reduced or gone away - because this is not the purpose of the exercise.
MINDFULNESS VERSUS DISTRACTION

Notice how the therapist keeps referring to the pain that is present. The formula is:

- Notice your pain/feelings/emotional storm
- And notice A, and B, and C
- Notice your pain/feelings/emotional storm
- And notice D, E, F
- Notice there is something very painful here, **and** A,B,C,D,E, F

If the therapists fail to keep acknowledging the presence of the pain/feelings/emotional storm, this will almost certainly turn into a distraction technique rather than a mindfulness technique.
DROPPING ANCHOR
NOTES FOR THERAPISTS

• Indication: if and when the client is so fused (overwhelmed) that he is unable to effectively engage/participate in the session.

• If the client is in pain, but she is still able to be present, engage, participate in the session, then it’s not necessary (although it can still be very helpful).

• NB: If the therapist uses ‘dropping anchor’ to try to stop the client crying, to distract her from pain, to reduce his anxiety etc, this is a misuse. The aim of dropping anchor is to help the client be present regain control of her actions, engage in and focus on what he is doing. It is not a method to distract from pain!

• Modify the script – use anything present (other than the ‘storm’ itself) – e.g. a glass of water, stretching arms out, slowing breathing, the sound of the air conditioner, etc.

• It goes for as long as needed, until the client is grounded, centered, engaged. You can repeat as often as needed.

• If your client is ready and able to talk, identify the elements of the storm first – i.e, ask the client what thoughts, feeling, emotions, memories are present. But if your client is too overwhelmed to speak, just go into the exercise.

• Debrief it afterwards
DEBRIEFING A ‘DROPPING ANCHOR’ EXERCISE

The therapist asks the client:

• Do you notice any difference now? Are you less caught up in the emotional storm (or ‘difficult thoughts and feelings’)?

• Are you less swept away or pushed around?

• Is it easier for you to engage with me, to be present, to focus?

• Do you have more control over your actions? Over your arms and legs and mouth?

• How could this little exercise that we’ve just done be helpful outside the room?

• Would you be willing to practice this?