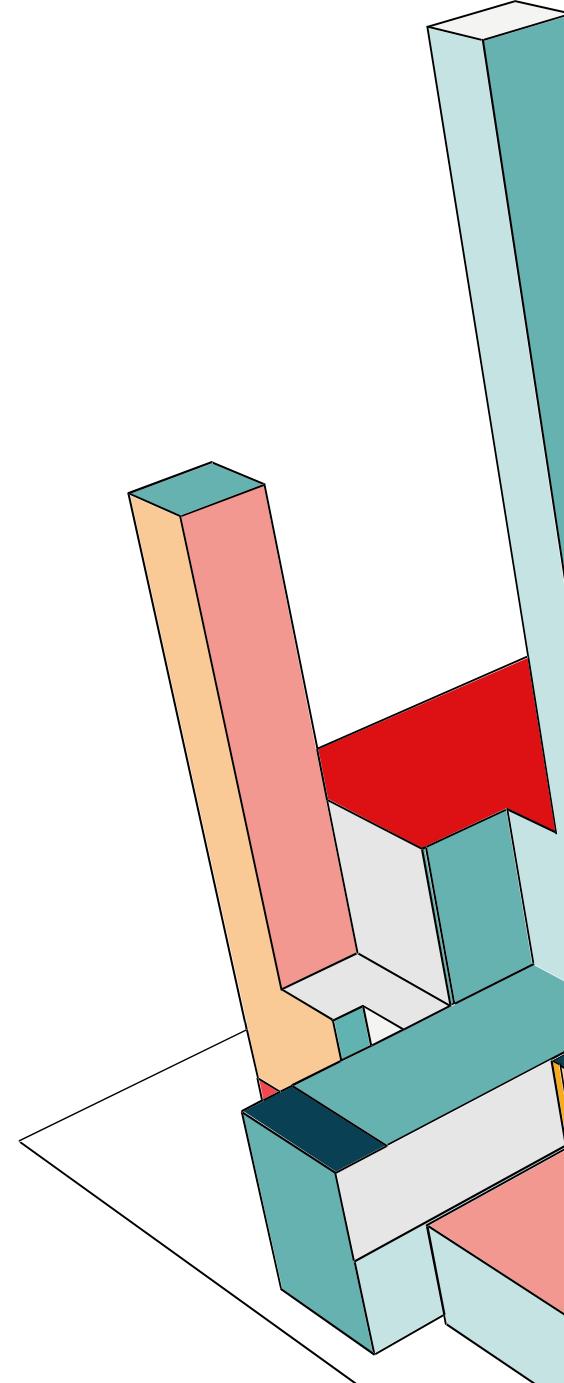


COMMON TRAUMA BELIEFS, AVOIDANCE, AND HOW TO TEST WITH IN VIVOS

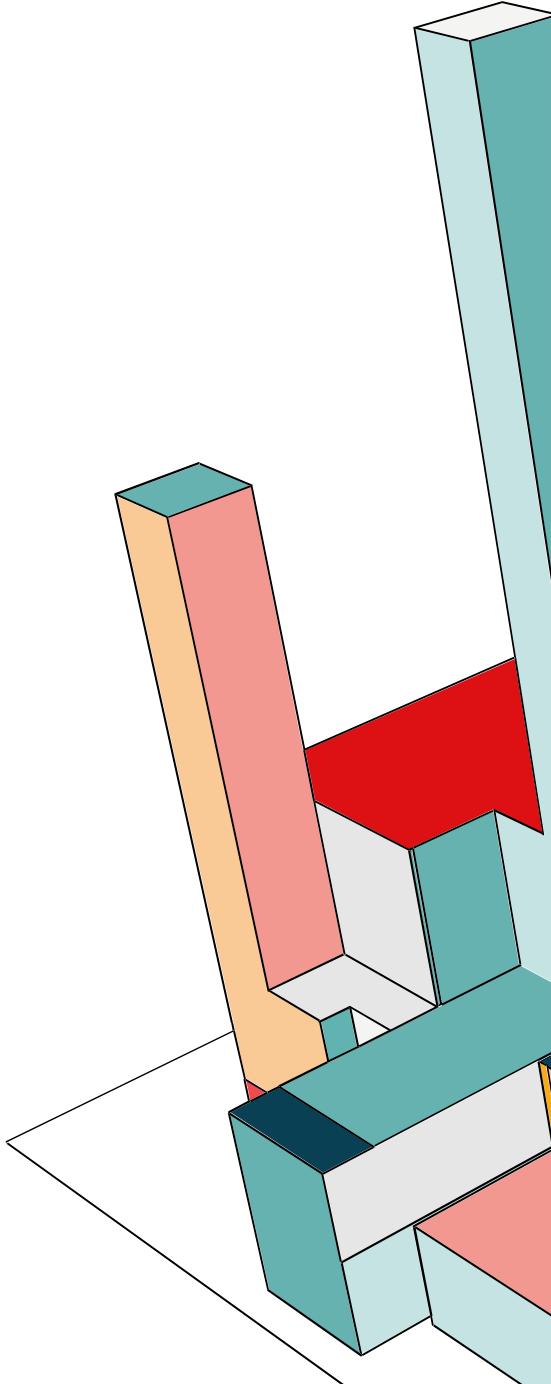
INGREDIENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE IN VIVO

- Identify the situation/behavior we want to change
- Identify current avoidance
- Identify specific beliefs fueling avoidance
- Design exposure to approach that situation testing the specific fear
 - *Often forgotten but most important*



WHY IDENTIFY BELIEFS WE ARE TESTING?

- Helps us plan more **specific, effective** in vivos
 - Ex) Grocery store: safe in a crowd vs. rejected if ask for help?
- Helps us **get creative and think broadly** in planning in vivos
 - Ex) Perfectionism at work >> test in emails to PHP
- Helps us **process, challenge, and shift** trauma beliefs
 - Breaks cycle of PTSD (avoidance and distress go down)
 - Improves self-esteem, relationships, and flexible living



IF I AM NOT PERFECT, I AM WORTHLESS

Common Avoidance Behaviors

- Avoid tasks with potential mistakes completely
- Perfectionism - spend excessive time on tasks, leave no tasks undone
- Self-punishment (e.g., self-harm, deprive self of fun, excessive self-criticism and rumination)

Potential In Vivos

- Approach tasks with potential for mistakes (e.g., answering work emails, do a crossword)
- Purposely make a mistake, leave things undone
- Be late or messy
- Purposely do enjoyable, unproductive, purely "self-care" activities

IF I AM VULNERABLE, PEOPLE WILL HURT ME

Common Avoidance Behaviors

- Avoid contact with others, either in public spaces, socially, or both
- Do not share personal/emotional information even with people you trust; wear a “mask”
- Keep social and/or sexual contact to people you don’t know well
- Irritability/anger/control in relationships to keep people “at arm’s length” and stay safe

Potential In Vivos

- Spend time in a public space (e.g., store, park)
- Exchange pleasantries with a stranger
- Reach out to a loved one
- Make plans to see a loved one
- Share neutral information about yourself
- Share more personal information about yourself
- Make eye contact, take off sunglasses, hood, etc.
- Emotional or physical intimacy with trusted person (e.g., hug, cuddling, holding hands)
- Gradually approach values-consistent social or sexual intimacy with trusted others
- Allow other person to pick conversation topic
- Use skills to manage irritability

I DO NOT DESERVE GOOD THINGS

Common Avoidance Behaviors

- Do not ask for help or assert your needs, opinions, preferences
- Avoid pleasurable or self-care activities
- Deflect compliments, make jokes at own expense
- “Self-sabotage” (e.g., pick a fight with a loved one, don’t turn in HW when things are going well)

Potential In Vivos

- Ask for help
- Focus on your PLEASE skills intentionally
- Treat yourself to something pleasurable, fun, or comforting
- Engage with healthcare (e.g., make dentist appt, take medicine)
- Accept and even seek out compliments
- Rephrase/redirect negative self-talk, judgments
- Purposefully engage with values-based activities and relationships
- Use skills to ride out avoidance urges while doing activities that bring up urges

I AM DISGUSTING, DIRTY, DAMAGED

Common Avoidance Behaviors

- Avoid, use substances, or dissociate during sexual intimacy
- Avoid seeing body
- Excessive washing/showering
- Body-punishing behaviors (e.g., self-harm, over/under eating, substances, poor hygiene)

Potential In Vivos

- Books, movies, TV shows with sexual intimacy
- Gradually approach sexual intimacy with self and others in values-consistent way
- Use skills to interrupt/limit safety behaviors
- Look in mirror
- Wear varying levels of values-consistent clothing that may expose body
- Use skills to ride out urges to clean after activities that bring up urge (e.g., sexual activity, using the toilet)
- Purposely avoid showering, get physically dirty
- Purposely engage in PLEASE skills
- Use skills to ride out urges while engaging in activities that trigger the urges

OTHER BELIEFS WE ARE TESTING?

Common Avoidance Behaviors

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Potential In Vivos

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If unsure, please bring to 1:1 to discuss!