

**** Phase 4 of Awareness Integration Theory (AIT)****

Phase 4: Whether a client has issues of deep anxiety, sadness, fear, powerlessness, or one or more of the many other possible underlying issues preventing her from experiencing a fulfilling life, the primary goal of Phase Four of the Awareness Integration Therapy (AIT) is to identify and resolve these original impetuses for the client's current problematic beliefs, emotions, and behaviors. Consequently, not only is this phase a very important and pivotal one, it is also the major crux of the healing and integrative aspect of the AIT. The prior phases provide integration through the process of awareness of the cognitive dualities, while Phase Four allows emotional healing for the separated parts of the self and integrates those parts into the whole system. Phase Five constitutes the rebuilding of the key aspects of the self and the values that are willingly and freely chosen by the individual and anchoring these newly chosen ways of being.

Within Phase Four, which is the most complex of all the six phases of AIT, the overriding goal is to deepen the therapeutic process such that the therapist successfully guides the client toward discovering, acknowledging, and taking ownership of the emotional meanings that the individual has often unconsciously assigned to her major past experiences in terms of her thoughts, emotions, and body responses. Some of these meanings are akin to mental detritus they no longer serve the purpose for which they were developed in the past. For example, the child frightened of physical harm or abuse is validly fearful in the face of real threats. But when these fears extend into adulthood and get triggered and expressed in even non threatening environments, then they block the client from moving forward in life.

In the process of Phase Four, the therapist assists the client to identify, fully experience, and then clear the impact of the former and ongoing assignment of emotional meanings, and thus facilitate the client's liberation from the invisible memory chains that have kept the individual in a chronic state of fear, sadness, anxiety, or other multiple negative emotions that are maladaptive in her current life. As with removing and discarding the tangled debris from a building site before any new construction may occur, Phase Four also clears out unnecessary emotional baggage, providing an opportunity to prepare the client to create new workable, healthy, and efficient self-construction in Phase Five.

Phase Four also includes the concept of bridging or closing the gap between the troubled child state, which has gotten frozen in time, with the adult today. This state of bridging is toward integration of all parts of the self into a whole system without being compartmentalized or dissociated. The therapist bridges the two parts of the child and the adult by asking the child in the memory what her needs were that she did not get at the time of the incident. Then allows the client as an adult to imagine offering a hand to the child in the memory of the event and stating out loud to the child: I am you from your future, I am here to let you know that We are OK, and that we survived all of this. Don't worry. I am here to tell you that you are OK and will be OK; I am here to tell you that it is my responsibility to take care of you from here on and to fulfill your needs. Trust me and allow me to take care of you. Then guide the client to imagine holding the child image in his arms, caressing him with compassion, empathy and love. Allow the client to even hug himself and caress his shoulders and face to feel love. Guide the client to use words of affection out loud toward himself and the imagery of his child self. Guide client also to say I am grown up now. I am _____ (fill in the blank) years old and have many strengths and skills today. I am OK.