

STUDENT SAFETY: *Surviving Mental/Emotional 'Flooding'.*

Elsewhere I have summarised the task of mental / emotional health as "the mind having immediate access to the right reassurance at the critical moment." In this definition, each reassuring word is critical. 'Flooding' is a term I use to describe the times when too many thoughts and feelings are occurring all at once, as in stage-fright, exam or classroom mind-blanks. Like too many sheep coming down the drafting-race at one time, or all the customers waiting at the counter clamouring for attention, rather than an orderly queuing, the mind can't process or sequence the thoughts and overloads. This causes learning blockages, mind blanking, panic, tears, short-term memory loss, nothing to say when something is needed, and automatic fear of authority figures. Remember your first driving lesson? (See also 'Beating the "Dumb" Lie').

Unless there is organic damage of the brain brought about by concussion or accident, I first suspect that the client has had a traumatic experience of humiliation / overload as a child, probably in a classroom or under an impatient parent / tutor and *the inner child never forgets*. Consequently, when an echo is triggered, the mind goes into an alarm response, and predicts the feelings of being mocked, ridiculed or humiliated, or the soon-to-come wrath of the questioner, rather than concentrating on the question or task *at hand*. So mental control is lost as the adult mind regresses to the childhood response and the person 'loses it'.

TREATMENT

The treatment is to locate the particular reassurances (truth-coaches) that can hold the mind steady when under pressure. These should be memorised and 'hung on to' when the mind seeks to free-fall into old reactions. First get in touch with the feeling of anxiety, and then try the following insights out, to see if any fit:-

- "These people are not the same ones who mocked and ridiculed me as a child."
- "It's not dreadful to be ridiculed or laughed at, or disagreed with in public, just uncomfortable."
- "Failure is O.K., it isn't fatal any longer."
- "Focus on the question, not the person asking the question."
- "My ideas are not the same as my personal value. Correction isn't insulting in itself."
- "It's not fatal to be wrong occasionally, it's just human."
- "Nothing terrible will happen if I forget something, or my mind blanks out."
- "This terrible feeling is just an echo from a former time - exaggerating the danger."
- "That was then, this is now. I won't confuse the two experiences."
- "I don't have to be an intellectual, I just have to persist at this."
- "I take my worth and value out of these peoples hands."
- "This pounding heart is just an over-active adrenaline gland, and nothing more."
- "Just being the centre of attention isn't automatically humiliating."
- "I need to oppose my shyness, in order to break its hold. I will not indulge timidity any longer."

EMERGENCY TRUTH-COACHES FOR URGENT ECHOES*

- "These feelings (of being ignored, insulted, dominated etc) are just echoes from my past and *are actually lying to me*, i.e. they are not about reality, but my interpretation of it, and are therefore not to be trusted."
- "This Lecturer / Counsellor / Pastor is not my father, nor my old teacher - these feelings are not even about him, he's just doing something that is reminding me of that trauma."
- "This feeling is real (and really horrible), but it's not about what's happening to me today, it's only an echo."
- "It may be easier (in the short term) to take offence rather than correction, but the long term pain is greater."
- "This situation is an opportunity to deal to 'my stuff' - to challenge my usual habitual misinterpretations."
- "I refuse to go on being so 'precious', or to keep taking offence where none was intended."
- "Until I can contradict my feelings, I won't have mental health, nor will these feelings submit to me."
- "All conflict is not necessarily negative, it's how it's handled which determines that."

"When students disagree, this is not Mum and Dad fighting. Disagreement is not dangerous to me now."

"The teacher has done everything in his power to help me. Why would he want to belittle me now?"

"Unlike my previous authority figures, this teacher welcomes a private challenge to his judgements / reasons. I will not project defensiveness on to him, or second-guess his reaction."

"If I set myself up for a knock-back, I shouldn't complain or take offence when I get it."

****' Echoes' - Feelings memories which have become disconnected from their source.***

