Four Blinks Version of Flash (Detailed Version)

A rapid traumatic memory reconsolidation script (version 2.0).

Developed by Thomas Zimmerman, Ms.Ed., LPCC
Modified from assorted Flash technique approaches.
www.EmdrCleveland.com
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www.FourBlinks.com

Description: Memory reconsolidation in this approach appears to work by very briefly bringing a wounding memory into consciousness and then immediately pushing it out of direct awareness using a containering and distancing exercise. While the bad memory is in working memory but not in direct awareness, we focus on a positive scene and periodically visually disrupt our concentration on that positive scene using a series of guided and rapid blinks (several rapid blinks once every five seconds for a duration of 30 seconds). The therapist verifies that the positive scene is in focus and is not intersecting with the negative memory in any way. The memory is briefly reactivated and the calm scene with blinks repeats. Over the course of 10-30 minutes, this cycle of blinking in the calm scene and periodically reevaluating the changes in the memory can help move the memory from hot and activated memory space into more normal and less activated memory storage. By the end of the process, the memory typically: feels like it happened when it did, does not cause somatic activation, elicits more positive cognitions about the self or the experience, and no longer appears as intrusive symptoms (flashbacks, trauma-related dreams, etc.). This technique allows client to effectively process memories without having to activate the memory significantly, with minimal preparatory resourcing, with minimal client distress, and with minimal client exhaustion.

This script is different than other similar scripts because:

- It contains detailed descriptions of each part of the process
- Encourages extremely broad ranges of calm scenes or calm focus
    - Can be imagined by the client.
    - Can be in the form of a relaxing video viewed on a computer, television, or laptop.
    - Can be an actual process that the client is actively engaged in (like watching trees through a window, petting an actual dog, rocking an actual baby, or watching fish in an actual aquarium).
- This script does not include extraneous variables such as bilateral stimulation, deep breathing between steps, or other interventions or stimuli.
- This script is not copyright. It can be used, shared, modified, and used for trainings without permission.

[The Flash technique was developed by Philip Manfield. You can get formally trained in the Flash technique at: http://FlashTechnique.com]

Step One: Develop a Container (Client Can Reuse Between Memories and Sessions)

- Except for very brief periods, the memory that we are working on will stay in a container and out of direct focus. It is helpful to develop and visualize the container that will hold the memory. It can be a file folder, a box, a book, a chest, or anything that works for the client. The container is then "pushed or sent" some distance away from the client to help get it out of direct focus and awareness.
- It is helpful to confirm that the container works by imagining putting something neutral in it when you are developing it, like an imaginary business card. This allows us to test and troubleshoot the container safely.   "See the business card go in the container… does it feel like the business card is in the container? Yes. See the container go into another room or as far away as you need to send it." Or, "see the container go through the walls and out into the air as far as you need send it to get it out of awareness, like a balloon getting smaller and smaller." Or, "see it go out the doors and out into the yard (or porch)."
- Problems with the memory not staying in the container are often solved by "seeing" the memory (visuals, etc,) going into the container, remaking the container larger or more rugged, or by pushing it even farther away (again, best to troubleshoot by testing it with something neutral).

Script: ***We are going to work one memory at a time and we are going to do this by not thinking about it or feeling anything about it. We want to develop a container or a box that will hold the memory and keep it out of direct awareness. What kind of container might be helpful? It can be a file box, a safe, pottery with a lid, or anything that is able to hold something for just a little while.***

[Have the client visualize to container… ***What color is it? What is it made of? How does it close?***

Can you imagine a blank skip of paper or a business card going into this container? [pause] Can you see the container close? [pause] Can you imagine pushing that container out into another part of the house, out into the neighborhood, or up through the ceiling into the sky, or as far away as you need to send it… Does it feel like that container and its contents are far enough away for it to be out of your focus for just right now?

- The vast majority of clients are able to visualize a container.

Make a note of the type of the container and where the client is choosing to send it, so you can guide the client to do this consistently when needed in the process. For example: Wooden crate -> slides it into an imaginary elevator and push "down" button and sees the elevator doors close.

Container Description: How Client is Distancing the Container:

_____   _____

Step Two: Develop a Calm Scene (Client Can Reuse Between Memories and Sessions)

All "work" in this technique is done while the client is experiencing a calming and relaxing scene (the experience can be imaginary, in the form of a video or picture, or can be a process that the client is actively doing, like petting a dog or rocking a baby). The therapist will eventually guide the client to make a series of rapid blinks while experiencing the calm scene. The scene can be anything relaxing (yes, relaxing is subjective), but it needs to be compelling enough to catch the client's attention. The following are just some of the examples of calming or relaxing scenes or processes:

- **beach scenes**: notice the water, the waves, notice what you smell, hear, and notice the experience of the sun on your skin.
- **fishing**: getting out of the car at your favorite fishing spot, gathering your gear, setting up, casting, noticing the water, noticing what you hear, etc.
- **walking on your favorite stretch of trail**: noticing your feet on the trail, noticing the scenery, noticing what you hear, what you see, etc.
- **the detailed process of baking or preparing your favorite food:** getting out the ingredients, mixing them, stirring them, smelling it in the oven, taking it out of the pan, etc. Avoid calm scenes involving food with people who have complicated relationships with food or eating.
- **the experience of rocking a sleeping baby or grandbaby**: notice how the weight of the baby feels on your shoulder, notice what you smell, notice the sensation of rocking. Check the appropriateness of the baby in this exercise to verify that the baby isn't involved in legal or custody disputes and the relationship between the client and the baby isn't complicated.
- **imagine a calming scene in your favorite video game:** notice what you see as you move around there, allow the whole display to load, and just move through the game as you would if you were playing it. Yes, you can even use video games that from the therapist perspective doesn't feel "relaxing," as long as it is calming and compelling from the client's perspective.
- **cleaning processes:** some people are relaxed by imagining cleaning, wiping down cabinets, vacuuming. Notice the process, how the sponge or rag feels, how the cleaner smells, what the cleaned surface looks like. It is okay in this process to leverage a coping strategy that the client may use excessively or compulsively as long as the process is calming and compelling from the client's perspective.
- **mowing**: some people are relaxed by the process of mowing, gardening, or other outside tasks. Notice the uncut grass and notice the cut grass coming out of the mower. What do you hear? What do you see? How does the mower feel? What do you smell? How does the sun against your skin feel as you mow?
- **looking out of a window:** the calm place can be an actual place in the client's current environment. The client can watch the trees outside or notice a back yard from an interior window.

- looking at a relaxing photo in the therapy room. If the therapist has a calm or relaxing scene on a computer screen or on the wall, that can be the calm scene that the client notices deeply. Videos do seem to work better.
- **watching a relaxing video**: the calm place does not need to be imaginary. The client can simply focus deeply on a relaxing video from YouTube. It is usually better if the perspective of the video doesn't change: for example, a fixed position on a beach that is observing waves come in is better than a moving camera that is traveling across the beach.

Verify that the client can "go into and load up the senses of the calm place" before proceeding. Again, the calm place needs to be compelling and engaging.

Description of Client's Calm Place: _____

Step Three: Quickly Identify the Memory and Immediately Put It In the Container

This step requires a little caution. We need to identify the memory that the client wants to work on without activating it. This is kind of like using the cursor to point to the file on the computer desktop that we want to use, but we don't double click it or think about what is in it. Encourage the client not to talk about it… not even for a few moments.   It's important that the memory be an actual and individual memory and not a thought, a negative cognition, a general presenting issue (weight or identity issues), or a large cluster of memories. It is also important to instruct the client that we are working on only one memory at a time and that if other memories want to come, we will need to container them in a large overflow vault or put them on a shelf for the moment.

Once we identify a memory, we instruct the client to see that memory immediately go into the container and push it out of awareness. When you are ready to work on a memory, here are some script examples for this part of the process depending on the circumstances:

- **[Memory Identified in Prior Session, Container is a Box**.] *Now that we have our container and our calm place, we need to select the memory that you want to work on. The memory that we work on needs to be a single incident and we don't want it to connect with any other memories. Is that memory that we discussed at the end of last session still the one that you want to work on, or is there another one? … Good. Now, see that memory go into your box and see the lid go on it. Push that container out of your vision until it is far enough away to be out of your awareness. See that box get farther and farther away on a wall or ceiling, like a helium balloon five minutes after you release it. Let me know when that memory is out of direct awareness.*
- **[Memory Identified in Prior Session, Container is a Box that Goes into An Imaginary Elevator Built into the Wall in Front of You.]** *Now that we have our container and our calm place, we need to select the memory that you want to work on. The memory that we work on needs to*

be a single incident and we don't want it to connect with any other memories. Is that memory that we discussed at the end of last session still the one that you want to work on, or is there another one? … Good. Now, see that memory go into your box and see the lid go on it. Slide the box into your elevator, push the down button and see the elevator door close. Let me know when that memory is out of direct awareness.

- **[Memory Visualized as a File on a Computer Desktop (for technologically oriented clients)]** *Imagine that the memory we are going to work on today is like a file on a computer desktop. We are not going to open the file. Imagine that you create a new folder on the desktop and name it "Bye For Now." Now, click on the bad memory and drag it into the "Bye For Now" folder without opening it. Did you see the file move into the folder? Good.*

- **[Selecting a Memory Without Talking Much About It and Containering It in a Large Book]. We have talked about using blink therapy to cool off a difficult memory. Do you have a specific bad memory that would be helpful to work on today. It can be recent or old, but it should be an individual memory and we won't let other memories connect to it, even if they want to. Without telling me much about it, can you let me know when you have a memory that you would like to work on. … Good. See that memory just fold up and go into your big book. See that book close and see it go on a bookshelf in a whole other part of the house. Does it feel like that memory is with the book?**

If the memory feels like it is out of awareness, go to Step Four. If it keeps seeping into awareness, make the container stronger, put whatever is seeping (visuals, body sensation, sounds, emotion, etc) into the container and push the container even farther away.

Brief Notes About Memory: _____

Step Four: Notice the Calm Scene with Multiple Rounds of Multiple Blinks

This is the step where we will spend most of our time.

When you arrive at Step Four for the first time in a memory, say:

[First time in Step Four give instruction]: **Bring up the positive scene and let me know when you are there. I will say blink every five seconds and when I do, you just blink your eyes several times quickly. After blinking, go right back into the scene. We will do this for about 30 seconds at a time.** [Give the client a moment to load the positive scene].

After the first time in Step Four say one of the following:

- **"Return to your calm scene, let me know when you are there."**
- **"Load up your scene and just notice the details of it."**
- **"Notice the details of your calm scene."**

While the client is in the calm scene, the therapist says "Blink" every five seconds for a total of five times (about 30 seconds for the whole set). Verify that the client is blinking several times.

When you have said "Blink" five times at five seconds apart, ask the client:

"Good. We you able to keep finding your way back into positive scene?"

If the client struggled to stay in the scene, normalize that. It is not necessary to be in the calm scene 100% of the time. If the client is struggling to return to the calm scene during blinks, consider switching to a more compelling scene or to a compelling video that the client can watch.

If part of the trauma memory came in, return to the container to strengthen it and push the bad memory even farther away.

Suggestion: Since memories rarely start to lose much distress in the first few rounds of Step Four, it is okay to simply do several rounds of Step Four only before checking the memory in Step Five. Doing several rounds of Step Four before checking the bad memory can take several units of distress away from the memory and make it easier to recontainer when you have the client evaluate changes to the distressing memory.

If the client reports that he was able to be mostly in the scene, go to Step Five. Most of the work will occur in a cycle between Steps Four and Five.

Step Five: Evaluate Memory, Recontainer It, and Return to Step Four Until SUDS is a Zero

Whatever the client says (and encourage them not to talk much) direct the distressing "slice" of the memory into the container and push the container out of awareness.

In order to lightly activate the memory and container it, you might say one of the following:

- *"Very quickly, like opening and closing a door, check the bad memory and immediately put whatever is distressing in this moment into the container. Do not look at more than a tiny piece of the memory. See it go into your container and push the container out of your awareness or focus.*
- **"See whatever it is that still makes that memory distressing (visuals, sounds, body sensations, thoughts)… see that go into your container, see the lid go on, and push the container out of your awareness for just a moment…. let me know when the distress connected with the memory is in the container and out of your direct awareness."**
- **"Check the memory in this moment and the instant that you find something, immediately container it and push the container far away from you."**

When the client indicates that the distressing parts of the memory are containered and sent out of awareness, go back to Step Four and cycle between Steps Four and Five until the distress is a zero or as low as it will go. Low as it will go, means that you continually identify the part of the memory is distressing right now and you have containered that part specifically and the distress is still not falling after multiple rounds between Steps Four and Five. [If the memories of your clients do not consistently drop to zero, check the troubleshooting videos on FourBlinks.com.]

If the distress is a zero, go to Step Six.

Step Six: If the SUDs is a Zero, Flip Through the Scenes of the Memory and Look for Points of Distress (When Any Distress Appears Anywhere in Any Part of It, Immediately Container It and Do More Steps Four-Five)

When the client reports that the distress is a zero, say something like one of the following:

- *"Now just flip through the scenes of the memory looking for any left-over pieces of distress, even if it's a tiny bit. Let me know when you find it."*
- *Now that the distress is a zero from this overall view, let's walk through the memory slowly and immediately container anytime you find any piece of distress."*

If there is any distress:

"See whatever it is that still makes that memory distressing go into your container, see the lid go on, and push the container out of your awareness for just a moment…. let me know when that is in your container and out of your focus."

When the client indicates that the memory is containered, return to Step Four and Five until the SUDs is again a zero.

Sometimes the distress that comes at this stage may be in the form of thoughts, for example, "It's just upsetting that it happened." We put that in the container and it is likely to decrease in a few rounds of blinks.

If the client is able to play all parts of the memory and there is no distress on any channel, then the memory is resolved. Check in with it next session to verify that all parts of the memory remain resolved.

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Step One: **Develop a Container**:

Step Two: **Develop a Calm Scene**:

Step Three: **Identify and Container the Memory**

Quickly identify the memory. Do not talk about it more than a few moments. Immediately put the memory in the container and push it out of awareness.

See the memory go into the container. See the lid go on. Push the container as far away as needed to get it out of awareness.

Step Four: **Blink in the Calm Scene**

Use one of the following:

- **"Return to your calm scene, let me know when you are there."**
- **"Load up your scene and just notice the details of it."**
- **"Notice the details of your calm scene."**

While the client is in the calm scene, the therapist says "Blink" every five seconds for a total of five times (about 30 seconds for the whole set). Verify that the client is blinking several times and say something like one of the following *"Good, just notice the scene"* or *"Just see the positive scene."*

When you have said "Blink" five times at five seconds apart, ask the client:

"Good. We you able to stay in the positive scene?"

If so, go to Step Five. If the memory intruded, strengthen the container and push the memory farther away. If the calm scene isn't relaxing or engaging, try to change it.

Step Five: **Evaluate the Memory and Recontainer**

Use one of the following:

- *"Very quickly, like opening and closing a door, check the bad memory and immediately put whatever is distressing in this moment into the container. Do not look at more*

than a tiny piece of the memory. See it go into your container and push the container out of your awareness or focus.

- **"See whatever it is that still makes that memory distressing (visuals, sounds, body sensations, thoughts)… see that go into your container, see the lid go on, and push the container out of your awareness for just a moment…. let me know when the distress connected with the memory is in the container and out of your direct awareness."**
- **"Check the memory in this moment and the instant that you find something, immediately container it and push the container far away from you."**

Return to Step Four if the distress is not zero.

If the distress is zero, go to Step 6.

Step 6: **Flip Through the Memory and Try to Find Distress**

Use one of the following:

- *"Now just flip through the scenes of the memory looking for any left-over pieces of distress, even if it's a tiny bit. Let me know when you find it."*
- *Now that the distress is a zero from this overall view, let's walk through the memory slowly and immediately container anytime you find any piece of distress."*

When the client indicates that the memory is containered, return to Step Four and Five until the SUDs is again a zero.

If the client is able to play all parts of the memory and there is no distress on any channel, then the memory is resolved. Check in with it next session to verify that all parts of the memory remain resolved.

Terms:

- **Round**. A round is a single loop through Steps Four and Five. In Step Four, clients will quickly blink four times every time you say "blink." You will say "blink" in Step Four every five seconds for a duration of about 30 seconds. "A round of blinking only" references Step Four without evaluating the memory in Step Five.

Troubleshooting Tips

- **Do not check the SUDs early in the work.** Wait until the client has done many rounds between Steps Four and Five or the client is having trouble finding the next "slice" of activation in the memory. Checking the SUDs too soon can be triggering since it is an evaluation of the content that has not yet been reprocessed, which may represent a lot of distress.
- **If the SUDs is not falling, check the body.** We do not want body activation. If the body is activated from the memory and the body is distressed too much of the memory was activated and the memory is in the body and not in the container. Using "metaphorical hands" or an imaginary vacuum cleaner, get the sensations out of the body and in the container… visually if not in other ways.
- **Again, clearly instruct clients that we are working on one memory at a time.** Allowing many memories to connect is a recipe for disaster. The free association of EMDR is not permitted here, nor is noticing distress (any distress needs to be immediately containered). You can instruct the client not to allow other memories into awareness and to let you know if other memories are trying to intrude and you can help the client container the assorted memories.
- **Keeping the memory out of direct attention/awareness is important.** Briefly bringing the memory into awareness, containering it, pushing it out of direct attention, and loading up a calm scene that we interrupt with blinks are the central elements in this process. It is important that the calm scene and the memory not interact with each other. It is important that the container be pushed far enough (and the client feels that the memory is far enough away that it won't intrude into the scene). If the memory keeps intruding into the calm scene, strengthen the container and push it farther away. Changing the calming scene to something even more compelling can also help. If the client is struggling visualizing their own calm place, you can play a beach scene from YouTube or another video that the client finds relaxing. Many clients with trauma struggle to visualize in compelling ways. Outsourcing the visualization part to simply actively watching a video will often result in much faster reprocessing.
- **If the client activates too much and is having a flashback of the memory, immediately use sensory grounding.** Have the client look around the room and name five nouns and notice/name the colors of those objects.   Ask the client to touch an object in the room (desk, etc.) and to notice the temperature and texture of it. Ask the client to notice several things that make up the background noise of the room. Engage the other senses as appropriate. Once the client feels like they are fully or more fully in the present and in the current room, ask the client to try to "blank out" everything associated with the memory and immediately pivot to the calm place and engage in several rounds of Step Four (without checking in on the bad memory). After several rounds, encourage the client to "very briefly, like quickly opening and closing a door,

check the bad memory to see if anything is different about it." Then resume the Step Four-Step Five work until the SUDs is a zero.

- **If the distress isn't falling or stops falling, you may need to direct the client to container the specific parts of the memory that are appearing <u>right now</u>, rather than the memory as a whole.** Some people will process an entire memory in single "bite," meaning that all parts of the memory will cool down symmetrically. Other people will process a piece of the memory at a time. If the distress isn't falling after several rounds of blinking, direct the client to container the parts of the memory that are distressing right in this moment, using language like: "Whatever it is that makes that memory a 6/10 distressing **right now** (visuals, sounds, thoughts, emotions, body sensations), just see that go in your container for just right now… see the lid close… and push the container as far out of awareness as far as you need to." Distressing body sensations indicate that the memory is too active in awareness and the somatic distress will need to be more fully containered before checking in with the memory again in Step Five.

- **Don't be surprised if the SUDs jump back up to 3-8/10 in Step Six**. This may require a few more rounds of blinks, but typically processes quickly back down to a zero.

- **Clients can blink with eyes open or shut.** If the client selects to process with eyes closed, simply inform the client at the beginning of the session to open the eyes for the blinking part and close them when the four blinks are done.

- **Repeat of the note from Step Four**. Since memories rarely starts to lose much distress in the first few rounds of Step Four, it is okay to simply do several rounds of Step Four at the beginning (without checking the memory in Step Five). Doing several rounds of Step Four before checking the bad memory can take several units of distress away from the memory and make it easier to recontainer when you do go to Step Five.

- **Clients starting outside of their window of tolerance because of a recent identified event or because too much memory content came into awareness**. It is possible to do this with a client who is already outside of their window of tolerance, particularly on the anxiety/anger side. Start with the container. If the body is fully engulfed with distress, I will often use a large metaphorical vacuum (like the kind cities use to suck up piles of leaves on the side of the road). Try to get as much distress in the body contained. Then, pivot to the calm scene. Do several sets of blinking in the calm scene before checking the memory that caused the destabilization.