

THE FOUR BLINKS VERSION OF FLASH: HEALING COMPLEX TRAUMA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Full Detailed Script and PowerPoint for this Presentation:
<http://FourBlinks.com>

Recommendations to Get the Most from this Training

- Download this PowerPoint and the detailed script from **FourBlinks.com** (top link on the main page). It may be helpful to **print** the detailed script if you have a printer accessible.
- While I will be able to answer some questions via chat, I probably will not be able to answer all of them.
- The Four Blinks Version of Flash may be different than the others versions of Flash that you may be familiar with. The goal in this training is to learn how to do Flash well in this version. In your practicum, please follow the script. Brining things in from other versions may be confusing to your practicum partners.
- We will do one hour of lecture/orientation, one hour of practicum in breakouts, then return to the main room for 30 minutes of questions to close.
- If you would like to participate in the practicum in a silent observer role (not therapist or client), rename yourself and put an "O" before your name, like: "O Thomas Zimmerman."

About Me

- Thomas Zimmerman, Ms.Ed., LPCC (Ohio).
- EMDRIA Approved Consultant and provide EMDR Therapy trainings through the Institute for Creative Mindfulness. Consult or train with me: <http://EmdrTom.com>
- I created and manage the EMDR Therapist Resources group on Facebook, a networking group of over 20,000 EMDR therapists globally.
- I maintain the popular EMDR blog: <http://GoWithThat.wordpress.com>
- I created and manage the EMDR Therapist Podcast: <http://EMDRPodcast.com>, which focuses on the intersection of EMDR Therapy and complex trauma.
- Starting a therapist networking group to explore and experiment with memory reconsolidation approaches: Search Facebook for “Flash Sandbox”

Background to this Training

- Developed by Phil Manfield about six years ago, understood initially as an EMDR resource to lower distress in memories prior to clearing the memory in EMDR. We have since learned that we can completely resolve memories using this approach.
- Why I describe what I do as Flash-like. Why develop a version of Flash when Flash has a developer who is able to say exactly what Flash is?
- Why it's helpful to approach this training with a beginner's mind and forget many of the things you think you know about Flash.
- What this training should allow you to do:
 - Help clients reliably, predictably, and "safely" process memories to zero distress and resolve them using every metric that a memory would be considered resolved in any other transformative psychotherapy.
 - Understand how to do the six steps of the Four Blinks Version of Flash well.
 - Understand how, where, and why intervention may be necessary.

Quick View of the Six Steps

- **1. Develop a container** to hold the bad memory (the bad memory will be working memory when we recall it, but not in direct awareness).
- **2. Develop a calm scene.** The calm scene can be a YouTube video, a pleasant memory, or an imagined or actual process (making a sandwich, watching fish in an aquarium, etc).
- **3. Identify the memory** (quickly and lightly) and **put it in the container** and push it out of awareness. Mouse trap analogy or file on a desktop analogy.
- **4. Focus fully on the calm scene** for 30 seconds at a time and do a series of guided **blinks every five(ish) seconds** to visually disrupt concentration on the calm scene.
- **5. Quickly peek at the bad memory** and container it (don't touch the mouse trap). Return to the calm scene and do guided blinks until the distress is zero or as low as it will go.
- 6. When the distress is zero, **walk through the video of the memory** looking for distress. If distress is found, container it and return to Step 4. If no distress is found, the memory is okay.

Memory Reconsolidation (In a Nutshell)

- It is possible to change implicit memory (only in the past 20ish years have we understood how to do so safely, predictably, reliably, and quickly). Approaches that produce rapid and transformational change appear to follow the steps of memory reconsolidation.
- Process:
 - Activate an individual difficult or traumatic memory. The memory will appear in a labile/plastic state for several hours, during which modifications can be made to it before it is (automatically) reconsolidated.
 - Have an experience that challenges the expectation or prediction stored in the memory/schema. This looks different depending on the psychotherapy used. [In Flash-like approaches, this is different because we visually disrupt the calm scene and this seems to speed up the transformation of the memory.]
 - Continue to cycle between activation/challenging experience until the memory loses its distress.
- To read more about Memory Reconsolidation, start with Bruce Ecker (2012). *Unlocking the Emotional Brain*.

What a Reprocessed Memory Looks Like

- ✓ Zero distress, more adaptive thoughts about self and world related to the memory, and clear body.
- ✓ The memory feels like it happened when it did.
- ✓ The memory gets inserted into the timeline and behaves accordingly.
- ✓ The client (and every part of the client's system) will report that the memory feels over.
- ✓ Intrusive symptoms drawing from the memory content will typically stop (including both flashbacks, content-specific rumination, and trauma related dreams).
- ✓ The reprocessed memory tends to generalize and other memories that may be stored as a part of its closely-associated network will lose a lot of their distress.
- ✓ The resolved memory becomes adaptive information about the self and the world.

Step One: Developing, Using, and Understanding the Container (1)

- Step One and Step Two form the “hardware” of the Four Blinks Version of Flash. You often only need to do Step One once for each client and many clients will keep the same calm scene that they developed in Step Two throughout their work on multiple memories.
- Understanding the Container (Information for the Therapist)
 - The memory (as a whole) will stay in the limbic brain and will not be put into the container. We are processing the memory a small “slice” at a time.
 - When we open the door on the memory, we container the slice of distress that comes out.
 - The container is where all distress will be routed into: that distress might come on the sensory channel, emotion channel, thought channel, or body sensation channel.
 - We do not “bring the container back” and check the container in this version of Flash.
 - A completely new and empty container shows up each time we need it... if clients complain that this is wasteful, assure them that it is only imaginary.

Step One: Developing, Using, and Understanding the Container (2)

- Developing the container
 - Enter an agreement/understanding with the client that we will be going out of our way to route all distress into the container. Explore the type of container that the client intuitively might be helpful for that task.
 - Container can be a box (actual or imaginary), a locker, a cookie jar, a safe, a vault, a small imaginary elevator with a door that opens into the wall of the client's current room, a mailbox, or anything else that the client intuitively finds helpful.
 - Practice the container by imagining (or actually) putting a small slip of paper into the container. Ask, "does it feel like the paper is inside your container? If you are not sure, check." We do this to test the integrity of the container to make sure that it works.
 - Practice pushing the container out of awareness, "See your container get pushed far, far, away from you until it is just a tiny spot on the wall."

Step One: Developing, Using, and Understanding the Container (3)

- Developing the Shop Vac resource
 - This resource is an imaginary resource that vacuums any distress that hits the body out of the body. “Imagine seeing any distress as a kind of colored smoke going into the Shop Vac hose and into the canister... See the canister get pushed out of your awareness until it is just a tiny dot on the wall.”

Step Two: Developing, Using, and Understanding the Calm Scene (1)

- The Calm Scene, or what Phil Manfield calls the Positive Engaging Focus is where the core of our work in this approach is done. The Calm Scene can be anything.
 - Examples drawing from memory: Memories of a beach vacation; somatic memory of rocking a baby or grandchild; memories of times of connection; memories of times where the client saw something beautiful; memories of a walk or run on client's favorite stretch of road; memories of a favorite trip or scenic drive; memories of a process (such as restoring an antique car, playing an instrument, or cooking a particularly enjoyable dish or desert).
 - Examples involving engaging in actual processes: Client playing an actual musical instrument, rocking an actual baby or grandbaby, petting an actual dog, deeply noticing a flower in a vase, deeply noticing a particular piece of colorful artwork on the wall (avoid photos of people... we want to be in the color part of the brain, not the facial recognition and associations parts).

Step Two: Developing, Using, and Understanding the Calm Scene (2)

- If the client has difficulty with visualization or the client has severe trauma, I highly recommend that you outsource the visualization of the scene to YouTube. YouTube has over 17 billion videos, you can explore with the client in session or make that homework for the client to find a video that is calming, centering, compelling, or interesting.
 - Video examples: island beaches with waves, videos of dogs or cats playing, video of person petting a horse, videos of a hot bubbly pizza coming out of the oven (assess for disorder eating prior), videos of gourmet coffee being prepared.
- Verify that the calm scene/calm process induces an experience. From a memory reconsolidation perspective, it is essential that the client be able to quickly get into the affective state of the calm scene and that it induce an experience that generally disconfirms the expectation in the traumatic memory.
- If the calm scene is not inducing a positive experience, you will need to help the client change it to one that does. It is possible that a calm scene that worked well for several memories may become “stale” and need to be changed to something more salient.

Teach Sensory Grounding to Manage Flashbacks

- Having developed the “hardware” in Steps One and Two, we want to review one key resource to make sure that if the client has a flashback-like experience during our work, we are able to quickly ground them and get them back into their current room and space-time.
- Grounding Exercise
 - Name to yourself five things you see and the colors attached to them (also notice if they are hard, soft, or have another texture).
 - Touch the table next to you. Is it warmer, cooler, or the same temperature as your hand? When you move your fingertips across it, is it completely smooth, or does it have a texture? Does the temperature change as you notice the texture?
 - Notice several things you hear, in order of loudest first.
 - Notice anything that you taste (or taste a mint if you have one).
 - Notice anything that you smell (or find something near you to smell).
 - Conversation about what may be additionally grounding (a cold or warm drink, a pet, rocks or other objects, etc).

Step Three: Identify and Quickly Container Whatever Got Activated in Identifying the Memory

- In this version, we are always working on a specific individual memory.
- Our goal is to not overly activate this memory when we are identifying it. Strategies that help with this: do not let the client tell you the story of the memory, you might simply find a memory that has been contributing toward current distress, verify that it is a single **memory** and NOT a theme, a negative belief, or a symptom.
- Identify the memory and immediately container whatever came up. Identifying and containering it are part of the same process. Treat the memory like a hot potato.
- Step Three should take less than 10-15 seconds from beginning to end.
- The FourBlinks.com web site has many resources that will let you do more comprehensive target selection.

Step Four: Load Up the Calm Scene and Blink Every Five Seconds for 30 Seconds

- Language to use the first round: “Load up your calm scene, let me know (or nod) when you are there. We are going to be in this calm scene for 30 seconds at a time. But, you will hear me say the word ‘Blink’ every five seconds. When you hear me say the word ‘Blink,’ open your eyes and blink quickly several times, then quickly find your way back into the calm scene.” The therapist says the word “Blink” every five seconds and does this five times (which will last a duration of 30 seconds).
- Language to use in subsequent rounds: “Load up your calm scene and let me know when you are there.” “Blink” wait five seconds, “Blink” wait five seconds, “Blink” wait five seconds, “Blink” wait five seconds, “Blink” wait five seconds.
- Ask “How did that go? [Were you able to keep finding your way back into the calm scene?]” If so, continue to Step Five.
- If distress showed up in the calm scene, container that distress (you may need to push that container farther away), then repeat this Step Four.

Step Five: Quickly, No... Really, Really, Quickly, Check the Bad Memory and Contain Whatever Comes Out

- We imagine that the memory is stored in a room. We very, very, quickly open the door on the room and immediately contain whatever content in the memory comes out of the room.
- Sample Language: "Very quickly open the door on the memory and immediately close it, whatever comes in just a few milliseconds, see it go into your container, see the container close, and see it go out of awareness. Push it further and further away until you can no longer see it or it's just a tiny dot on the wall. Let me know when it is gone."
- If you suspect or client reports body activation, use the Shop Vac resource.
- Once the client reports that the memory is gone, return to Step Four.
- Do this loop between Step Four and Step Five until the client reports difficulty finding distress when opening the door on the memory. When the distress is a zero, go to Step Six.

Step Six: Check the Video of the Memory for any Residual Content

- Once the client cannot identify distress in the memory, ask the client to slowly play the memory from the beginning using language like: “Slowly play the memory from the beginning and let me know with one hand when you find the distress and immediately container it with the other hand.” Once the distress is contained and pushed out of awareness, go to Step Four for more calm scene/blinks.
- After a round of Step Four, the client can play the memory forward or check the distress in the slice that they put in the container in the previous round. If the prior slice has heat, recontainer it and do another round in the calm scene.
- The client is not done until the client can play the entire memory without distress on any channel. This is typically accomplished with most clients in 20-40 minutes.

Where The Four Blinks Version of Flash Breaks and How to Fix It

- Problem: Overactivation. Solutions: Encourage the client to open and close the door even faster. A flashback is also an overactivation. If this happens, use the grounding resources that we practiced. Check for body activation. Body activation from the memory will contaminate your calm scene.
- Problem: Containering not working well. Solution: This is also a result of overactivation. Minimize activation next round by shortening exposure to the memory. "See" the activated piece go into the container. "See" the container close. "See" the container go out of awareness. Push it farther away.
- Problem: The problem is not overactivation and containering appears to be working, yet the distress is not falling after 10 minutes. Solution: Check to make sure that the experience of the calm scene is inducing an experience. The calm scene **must** induce an experience and the client needs to be able to find his way back into it quickly.
- Problem: You are working with a system of parts and you did not get consent from the client's parts to do this work. Solution: Engage all parts in all parts of this work, including Steps One and Two. Target selection is key.

What Is Happening In this Version of Flash

- We are going out of our way to select content for working memory by micro-activating the memory, but we are very careful to avoid distressful activation.
- We are not processing the whole memory all at once... only one microslice of it at a time.
- The five second exposures to the calm scene present a “wall” of disconfirming experiences that help process each micro-activation.
- We are processing the trauma as information, not as distress. For at least 130 years, we have assumed that recovery requires a certain amount of suffering. Flash approaches challenge that.
- Memory reconsolidation, not disrupting working memory, provides a clear explanation of what is happening in this approach.

How I Use Flash as an EMDR Therapist

- Knock out the most intrusive memories appearing as flashbacks/dreams/triggering, which can dramatically decrease the amount of time it takes to resource clients for more intensive therapies because we are working directly on the presenting issue as soon as the second session (clients noticeably get better sooner).
- If there is not time in a session to do EMDR reprocessing, there is probably time to work on a memory with Flash.
- Use Flash with somatically dissociated clients (clients who struggle noticing), overly rational clients (clients who get stuck in trying to figure it out), clients with very little adaptive information (and severe attachment wounding), clients with histories/risk of body-based catastrophes in EMDR (abreactive vomiting, high risk of panic attack), and clients with DID symptoms whose parts do not consent to the distress of EMDR.
- When I have a voice-only connection with the client. I can guide the client through Flash through the phone.
- Give the client choice and options related to how they want to interact with the memory.
- Send many clients home to do Flash approaches on themselves when moderately or severely activated with intrusive trauma symptoms between sessions.

Tentative Research

- Memory reconsolidation research started vigorously in past 20 years. Flash is just one of many reconsolidation techniques for trauma (there are perhaps dozens). Flash is not the first, but it may be one of the simplest and fastest (in part because of its simplicity, but even it may have its extraneous variables).
- Manfield, Philip & Lovett, Joan & Engel, Lewis & Manfield, David. (2017). Use of the Flash Technique in EMDR Therapy: Four Case Examples. *Journal of EMDR Practice and Research*.
- Shebini, N. (2019). Flash technique for safe desensitization of memories and fusion of parts in DID: Modifications and resourcing strategies. *Frontiers of the Psychotherapy of Trauma and Dissociation*, 3, 151-164.
- Wong, Sik-Lam. (2019). Flash technique group protocol for highly dissociative clients in a homeless shelter: A clinical report. *Journal of EMDR Practice and Research*, 13, 20-31. 195-205.
- Wong, Sik-Lam. (2021). A Model for the Flash Technique Based on Working Memory and Neuroscience Research. *Journal of EMDR Practice and Research*. EMDR-D.
- Yasar, Alisan & Gundogmus, Ibrahim & Gündüz, Anil & Konuk, Emre. (2019). Investigation of the effect single session of "Flash Technique" at a group (online).

Steps You Can Take to Learn More

- Get trained formally in this approach:
 - Philip Manfield (developer): <https://flashtechnique.com/>
 - Ricky Greenwald's Child Trauma Institute (Recommended): <https://www.childtrauma.com/training/Flash>
 - Both trainings are inexpensive and teach you many of the things you need to know to use Flash effectively with clients immediately.
- Experiment with various scripts to find an approach that works for you.
 - My script is located at: <http://FourBlinks.com> (a non-copyright/open source approach to Flash-like approaches).
 - You can join the Flash Sandbox on Facebook and coordinate with other therapists to practice Flash-like approaches with each other: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/flashesandbox>

Tips for Practicum

- To get help, text your group number to me (Thomas) at: 330 442-0428.
- In Zoom, use Speaker View under Views and double click your practicum partner to lock your partner on your screen.
- If you would like to observe groups and not be in either the therapist or client role, rename yourself by clicking on the Participants tab, find your name, mouse over it and select Rename. Put an "O" in front of your name, like: "O Thomas Zimmerman." If you are in an observer role, please make sure that you stay muted once participants start Step One.
- Please follow the Four Blinks script (it may be easier to follow the Brief Script near the end of the document. If you are doing any bilateral, counting, deep breathing (when not necessary), or any extraneous variables from other Flash versions, I will ask you to follow the script as a courtesy to other participants who are trying to learn this version well.
- Nothing magical happens at four seconds, five seconds, or six seconds. Don't worry if some rounds are shorter or longer. Just try to pace the blinks at about five seconds. You can keep track of how many five seconds have passed using fingers on one hand.
- We will return to the main room one hour after practicum starts to debrief and answer questions. If your group dissolves for some reason, text me and I'll try to reassign you to a new group.

My Agenda in Doing this Free Training

- That you will learn to do this (or your own version) well.
- That you will train others in how to do this well.
- That you will show your clients how to do this on their own between sessions.
- That those you train will train others how to do this well.
- You can use my script. You can use my PowerPoint (and modify it and make it your own). Nothing I have ever done that is Flash-related is copyright.