

Resources and Reconditioning Module

Module Goals

This module provides you with:

- Background on reconditioning and resources and what those terms mean in the context of this Trigger Orientated Therapy (TOT) website.
- Why evolution has made some behaviours resistant to change.
- How evolution has also made it possible to bypass that resistance to change and modify how we react to ourselves and others around us in an enduring way.
- Ways to use the Rainbow Map to generate therapeutic resources and activate them to help us change and recondition behaviours that are no longer playing a positive role in our lives and perhaps of those around us.



Resources and Reconditioning Module

Definitions

Survival System: Our ancient nervous and physical systems that continuously monitor the environment within and around us for threat real or imagined. Always ready to trigger us into uncomfortable fight/flight and/or hide/freeze states.

Destructive Avoidance: Resources that help us and/or others avoid triggering that instead harms us and/or those around us.

Constructive Avoidance: Resources that help us avoid being triggered and that do not harm us or others around us.

Reconditioning: Progressive reduction in the intensity and/or duration of discomfort we experience each time we trigger.

Resources: Anything we can do that reduces our psychological discomfort and/or that of others around us.



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Definition: Triggering

A commuter just misses their regular train home and experiences mild irritation but calms quickly as a host of resources they already have, such as reminding themselves the next train will be along shortly, prevents their survival system from triggering and generating intense discomfort.

The experience of arguing is likely to be more intense for some couples. Conflict in the office can be very disturbing for some people. The aftermath of an accident, abuse and violence can be very destabilising generating PTSD for some people.

Unlike the commuter, those who experience more intense triggering will find their emotions, thoughts, sensations and behaviours change causing heightened levels of discomfort that negatively impact their and perhaps others' quality of life. That is the type of triggering that this module focusses on.

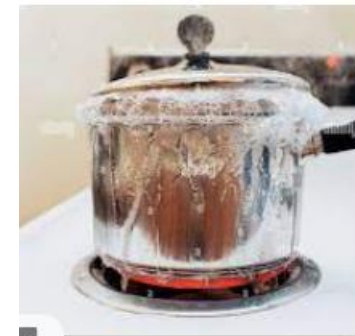


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Destructive Avoidance

Some forms of avoidance can harm us and perhaps those around us such as:

- Retreating from social contact because it generates anxiety resulting in a sense of isolation and loneliness in us and perhaps others who were close to us.
- Delaying asking for an overdue pay rise because you know your boss is uncomfortable about things like that.
- Bottling up your views on things that frighten you but if resolved would reduce discomfort, resulting in intermittent explosions of anger or enduring but exhausting anxiety and/or sadness/depression.
- Others awareness of your emotional sensitivity preventing open and useful dialogue causing anxiety and isolation.



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Constructive Avoidance

Some avoidance can be constructive and considered a viable therapeutic resource if it does not cause you or others unwanted discomfort or consequences. For example:

- If you fear public speaking, finding work that does not involve it may never effect you or anyone else negatively.
- If you had a traumatic accident on a particular road but the only time you are triggered is when you drive along it then choosing a different route that does not cause you or perhaps your passengers any undue inconvenience would be a constructive form of avoidance.

In short if it is broken and is not fixed but that doesn't cause you and/or others unwanted discomfort/problems, that approach might be a useful constructive avoidant resource.

However there will be no reconditioning of the original source/s of discomfort which may be playing an invisible and unwanted role in other parts of your life.



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Reconditioning 1

The ancient human survival system in the modern world.

In the modern world our ancient but fully intact survival system can cause us to trigger and experience intense levels of discomfort that might reasonably be more associated with an actual threat to our physical wellbeing. This type of triggering can contribute directly and indirectly towards us experiencing unwanted outcomes at times in our lives and those around us that include:

- Trauma and PTSD.
- Low self-esteem.
- Depression.
- Anxiety.
- Anger issues.
- Relationship issues.
- Addictions and disorders.
- Intractable grief.



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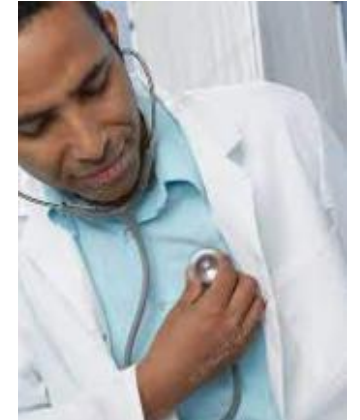
Reconditioning 2

Human Survival System: Characteristics

Evolution has made our fight/flight and/or hide/freeze survival system capable of:

- Recording and retaining, perhaps for the rest of our lives, our experience of the environment around and within us when first activated* typically in a situation in which we experienced intense psychological and physical discomfort. Often this occurred when we were babies, toddlers, and children.
- Continuously monitoring the environment around and within us, ready to trigger us into a survival state even if only a few of the original signs of danger are or are imagined to be present.
- Regenerating the original recorded discomfort before the existence of the danger has been confirmed. Imagining its existence is enough for the system to trigger and create discomfort which in turn drives our behaviour.

* The environment we are born into, the sensory thresholds at which we trigger and the intensity of that experience are influenced by our genetics.



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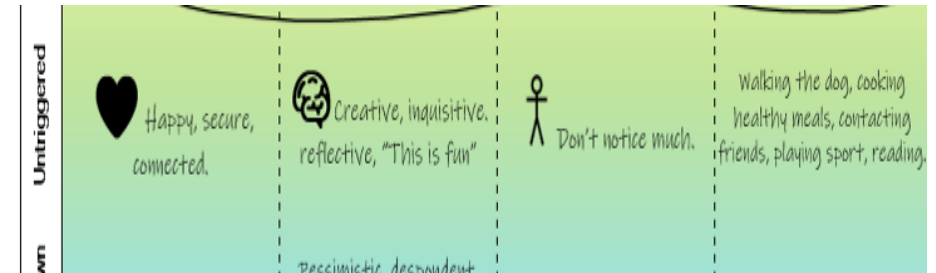
Reconditioning 3

Why our survival system is hard to recondition.

It was evolved to be resistant to change because if an ancient ancestor escaped from a forest fire when they were very young it was important, they remained constantly vigilant to that threat even if it happened very rarely.

In the green band of the Rainbow Map the systems that regenerate discomfort when we are triggered are protected from reconditioning.

This makes evolutionary sense as they were not there to drive our behaviour when things were OK but must be immediately available when our survival system senses danger.



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Reconditioning 4

How the need for an inaccurate survival system created a reconditioning opportunity.

Our ancestors could trigger into a survival state many times but only die once. Mistaking the scent from a village cooking fire as a forest fire, triggering, and escaping meant they stayed safe which increased the chance that their DNA would be passed into the next generation and ultimately us.

However, each mistaken forest fire escape would reduce foraging/hunting time and expend precious energy, lowering the chances that their DNA would survive.

This meant it was an advantage to have a survival system that could be reconditioned each time they were triggered to rebalance their level of sensitivity to actual risk ,always with a bias to over sensitivity*.

* That sensitivity generates intense discomfort which can also cause our senses to become disconnected as a way to reduce discomfort.



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Reconditioning 5

When can our survival system be reconditioned?

Once we have triggered above the yellow or below the blue bands of the Rainbow Map, our Reflective Mind's capacity is overwhelmed by the compulsive nature of our Reactive Brain/Body system inhibiting the activation of reconditioning resources.

Our survival system is only available to be reconditioned as we trigger into the yellow or blue bands where our Reflective mind can drive our Reactive Brain & Body to activate reconditioning resources (See the Reflective Mind and Reactive Brain/Body Module).

All mainstream therapeutic modalities generate this outcome, but in different ways. Some, like EMDR, work in the transitional zones in a very purposeful way. Others, like Person Centred therapy, ultimately generate the safe conditions where clients can trigger without being overwhelmed*.

*The Trigger Orientated Therapy website does present a view that one modality is preferable to another, instead TOT tools and concepts have been developed to be integrated into any mainstream modality.



| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Frustration, exasperation, insecurity, anxiety. | Critical of others, pessimistic, untrusting, tunnel vision "Get me out of here, why bother." | Tight middle throat, pulsating heart, <u>clenching rear jaw</u> . | Finger pointing, retaliation, blaming, crying, eating fatty foods, raising my voice, mindfulness |
|---|--|---|--|

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| Distant, guilty, frightened, insecure, anxious. | Pessimistic, despondent, narrow minded, inflexible. "I might as well disappear, who cares, why me..." | Numb all over, slack jaw, queasy stomach. | Retreat to the bedroom, eat ice cream, smoke, drink, call the doctor, binge on face book and feel worse. |
|---|---|---|--|



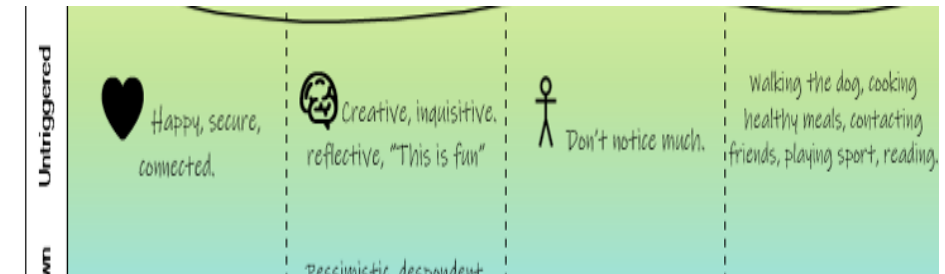
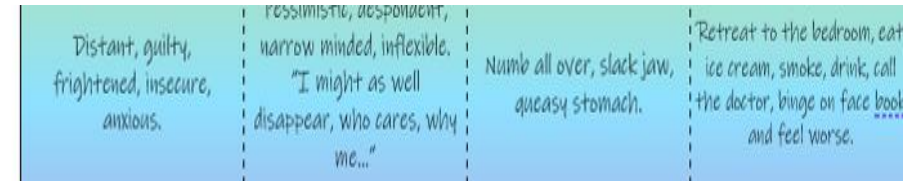
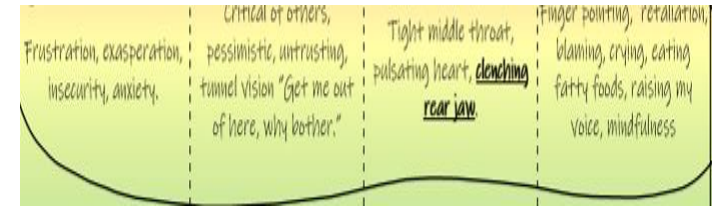
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Reconditioning 6

Summary: How to recondition our survival system

Reconditioning resources that enhance our psychological resilience and result in a progressive reduction in the intensity and duration of our discomfort when we trigger are effective when they are:

- Activated as we trigger up into the yellow or down into blue bands of the Rainbow Map.
- Focussed on specific areas of discomfort we experience in the yellow and blue bands.
- Developed while we are in the green band ready for recall and activation when our Reflective Mind notices our Trigger Flag/s. Our capacity to be reflective and constructively creative typically diminishes the further our system moves away from the mid points of the yellow and blue bands. The type of creativity we experience above the yellow band and below the blue band is typically focussed on reinforcing the direction of our triggering, generating increasingly dogmatic and inflexible behaviour.



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Types and Styles of Reconditioning

Types of Reconditioning Resource*:

- Narrative
- Visual
- Physical: Sensory
- Physical: Behavioural
- Material



Styles of Reconditioning*:

- Externalising
- Soothing
- Distracting
- Challenging
- Rationalising



These will be demonstrated through the following examples drawn from the Rainbow Map.

*Not an exhaustive list: mindfulness and other practices would be very helpful in the development of reconditioning and soothing resources while in the green band.

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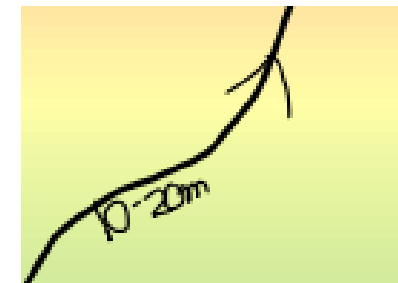
Reconditioning using the Rainbow Map

The following elements of the Rainbow Map can be used to both create and focus our reconditioning resources and activities.

- Thoughts
- Sensations
- Behaviours
- Trigger Cycle
- Trigger Flag



5. Tight middle throat,
pulsating heart, clenching
rear jaw.



Resources and Reconditioning Module

Reconditioning using the Rainbow Map

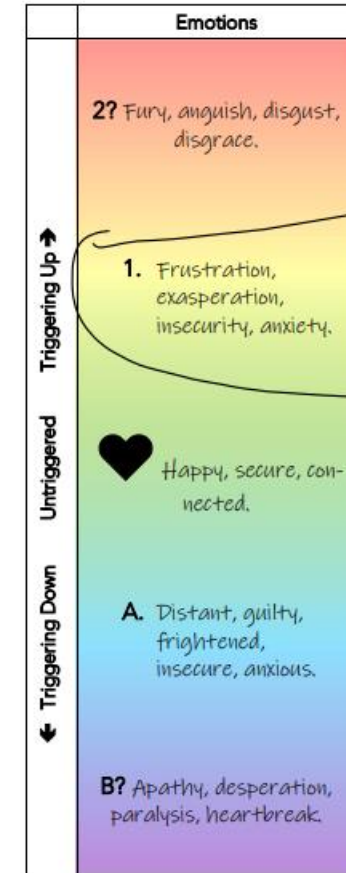
Why aren't emotions listed as a reconditioning resource?

The emotions column and the entries in it act as one way to sense if and how well the reconditioning resources and activities are working in terms of achieving a progressive reduction in the intensity and/or duration of discomfort we experience each time we trigger.

In some ways we can think of our emotions as being generated by the combination and interaction of the other elements of our system, thoughts, sensations and behaviours.

Asking someone to be less frightened is less likely to impact fearful styles of thinking and typical thoughts. Whereas working on resources that can modify and moderate fearful styles of thinking and typical thoughts are likely to have an impact on fearful emotions.

Emotions offer fewer discrete access points for reconditioning resources unlike the other columns on the Rainbow Map.



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Reconditioning using the Rainbow Map

It is assumed that the reconditioning resource examples on the following slides would actually have been:

- Developed while we are in the green band.
- Activated when we notice ourselves triggering into fight/flight and or hide/play dead. The Rainbow Map's Trigger Flag tool can be used to help us do that, often using a sensation or behaviour as the first thing we notice when we trigger.
- Activated as we leave the green band and before we reach the higher and lower ends of the yellow and blue bands respectively while our survival system is malleable and our Reflective Mind is still powerful enough to activate reconditioning resources.

5. Tight middle throat,
pulsating heart, clenching
rear jaw.

Resources and Reconditioning Module

Reconditioning using the Rainbow Map

Reconditioning and soothing resource examples connected with Thoughts:


"Critical of others": A narrative and challenging resource would be to generate and memorise examples of when whoever is the subject of that criticism did something positive in your view.

"Tunnel Vision": A visual and challenging resource might be sitting next to perhaps the person connected to your triggering and both looking out of plane window and seeing for miles.

"Get me out of here": A narrative and soothing resource might be something constructive you might usefully say to improve that situation.

"I might as well disappear": An empowering and physical resource might be to agree with one or more friends that you can call them when you experience that thought.

"Pessimistic": A material and soothing resource might to have a list of favourite episodes perhaps from comedies, films, or some quotations that you can access easily and look forward to.

| Thoughts |
|--|
| 4? Catastrophising, paranoid, fixated, no one ever listens, its hopeless. |
| 3. Critical of others, pessimistic, untrusting, tunnel vision "Get me out of here, why bother." |
|  Creative, inquisitive, reflective, "This is fun" |
| C. Pessimistic, despondent, narrow minded, inflexible. "I might as well disappear, who cares, why me..." |
| D? Catastrophizing, disorientation, fixation. "Its over, it will never end, I'm a failure." |

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Reconditioning using the Rainbow Map

Reconditioning resource examples connected with Sensations:

“Tight middle throat”: Physical & sensory soothing resource might be gently massaging your middle throat with the tips of your fingers. Behavioural & empowering resource might be practicing breathing exercises.

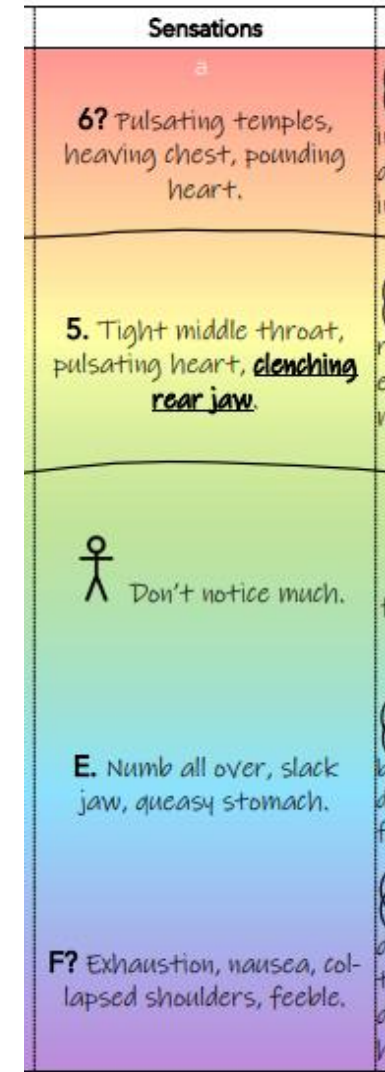
“Pulsating heart”: Visual & distracting resource might be recalling a memory from a favourite holiday and replay what was happening in as much detail as you can.

“Clenching rear jaw”: Physical behavioural, empowering and soothing resource might be yawning in an exaggerated fashion, moving your lower jaw around to ease it up.

“Numb all over”: Visual, physical behavioural, recalling resource might be thinking of an experience perhaps warming in front of a heater and how your hands, face and chest feel.

“Slack jaw”: Material, soothing, distracting, empowering resource might be eating a healthy vegetable or fruit.

“Queasy stomach”: Physical behavioural, distracting, recalling resource might be drinking a favourite herbal tea, remember how quickly that helped the last time, use a favourite mug that has positive memories.



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Reconditioning using the Rainbow Map

Reconditioning resource examples connected with behaviours:

“Finger pointing”: Physical behavioural, empowering, soothing resource might be to drop your hands by your side, relax and flex your fingers.

“Blaming”: Narrative, visual, externalising resource might be visualising an image and imagining the sounds of a comical clown like you telling everyone off.

“Eating fatty foods:” Physical behavioural, planning ahead, soothing, empowering resource might be ensuring you have access to fatty foods but a more limited supply than normal.

“Retreat to the bedroom”: Physical behavioural, planning ahead, empowering resource might be agreeing ahead of time with your partner where you might go if triggered and how long you will stay there before leaving or sharing an update on how you are.

“Call the doctor”: Physical: behavioural, physical sensory, empowering, challenging resource might be to take the doctor’s telephone number out of your phone keep it in a box in a prominent location and setting up a place in your home to sit comfortably and listen to music. Create a favourite calming play list.

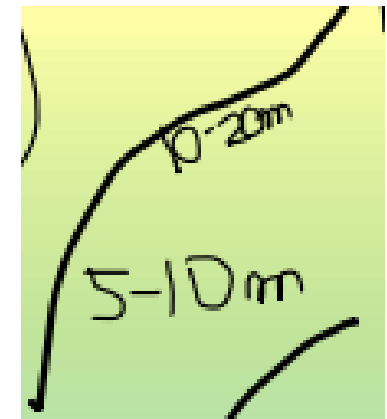
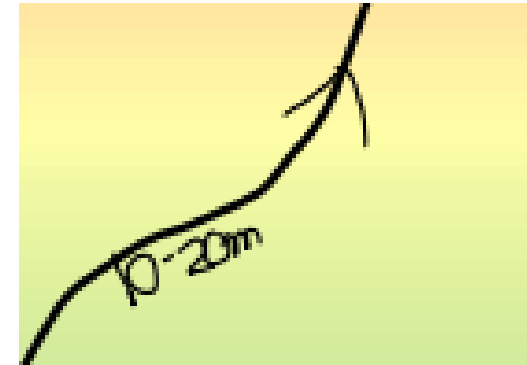
| Behaviours |
|--|
| Shouting, swearing, slamming doors, binge drinking/eating/porn, storming out. |
| Finger pointing, retaliation, blaming, crying, eating fatty foods, raising my voice, mindfulness |
| walking the dog, cooking healthy meals, contacting friends, playing sport, reading. |
| Retreat to the bedroom, eat ice cream, smoke, drink, call the doctor, binge on face book and feel worse. |
| Stay in bed all day, don't return calls, stop talking, Binge on pain killers, drink and food, cry for hours. |

Resources and Reconditioning Module

Reconditioning using the Rainbow Map

Reconditioning resource examples connected with the trigger cycle:

Reflect on what happens at points where your triggering cycle starts or where perhaps you move out of yellow into red. Focus on developing resources that may stop that from happening. As a general rule of thumb the higher you go into orange and red the lower and longer you will go below the green. Many people experience the Rainbow Map and are shocked by how little time they spend in the orange and red bands compared to the blue and dark purple bands. That cost can also be used as a resource to drive the creation of resources that might reduce the chance of triggering in a constructive avoidant way or increase the chances that it does not go particularly high.



Typical Cycle duration: 2 -4 days

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Module Summary

Our survival system is:

- Powerful and constantly available to activate and dominate our behaviour causing unwanted outcomes at times in the lives of ourselves and those around us.
- Resistant to change although it has an Achilles heel, but access to that weakness only opens up to us when we are partially triggered and prepared to exploit that opportunity.
- Reconditioning requires focus and determination. While the Rainbow Map may offer a tool that enables us to focus it is our determination while we are in the green band to develop useful reconditioning resources that will help us when we trigger.
- Resourceful and determined to protect us. That means we may need to be flexible, review and change our resources to maintain momentum and effectiveness in our reconditioning.

Most main stream modalities will have books and training that focus on resource development. The Rainbow Map has been developed to compliment all mainstream modalities.

