Stimulus Discrimination

Trauma memories are easily triggered by stimuli in the world around us. These triggers can be sights, sounds, smells, touches, tastes, or even ideas which resemble things that were present at the time of the trauma. When trauma memories are triggered like this they can be 're-experienced' – it can feel as though the trauma is happening again in the present moment. This is because your brain has not properly registered that the trauma event happened in the past. Stimulus discrimination trains your brain to put memories where they belong – in the past. With practice your mind will get better at noticing the differences between then and now – helping you to feel safer in the here-and-now.

Instructions

Try to do stimulus discrimination at a time when your trauma memory has been 'triggered'. It is most helpful to do it 'in the moment' or shortly afterward, but if that is not possible then think back to a recent unwanted memory.

1. First, record where you were and what you were doing when you had the unwanted memory.
2. Next, pay attention to any *similarities* between what you are experiencing now (in the present moment) and what you experienced at the time of the trauma. Similar sensations are what 'trigger' your flashbacks, so doing this can help you to work out what your triggers are.
3. Next pay attention to all of the *differences* between what you are experiencing now (in the present moment) versus what you experienced at the time of the trauma. Take your time and really notice everything you can.
4. Finally, to calm you mind and body *offer yourself reassurance* that you are safe now.

Situation / Trigger

Where were you when you had an unwanted trauma memory?
What was happening?

Similarities

Then (at the time of the trauma)	Now (in the present moment)

Differences

Then (at the time of the trauma)	Then (at the time of the trauma)
Sight	
Sound	
Touch	
Smell	
Taste	
Body	
Knowledge	

Reassurance

What can you say to soothe yourself now?

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