

STRENGTHENING OUR INNER NURTURERS

Strengthening our neural networks toward our nurturing figures helps us to quickly access feelings of calm and increase a sense of worthiness.

PRACTICE:

Start by quieting your mind and taking some slow deep breaths. Begin to identify experiences of nurturing from your life. Consider the list of possible nurturers below:

- People (real, ancestral, historical, or fictional)
- Places (real or imagined)
- Animals
- Spiritual figures/beliefs (if applicable)
- Times when you have nurtured others



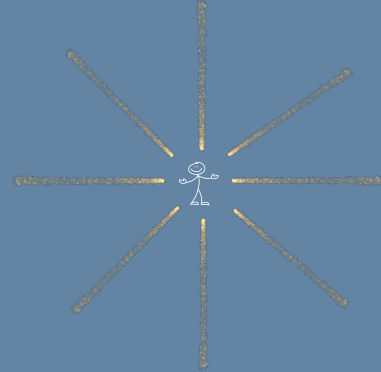
Once we've identified our nurturing figures, we can intentionally focus on them to enhance the experience and strengthen our neural networks toward these experiences.

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PRACTICE:

Imagine yourself standing in the center of a giant wheel with spokes leading out to your nurturers. There is no pressure to have multiple spokes/nurturers. You can do this exercise with as few or as many nurturers as you recall. In your mind's eye, take a moment and face each nurturer, considering the following:

- What do you see? Describe it.
- Recall the warm feelings you had when you encountered this nurturer.
- Notice all your senses as you focus on the nurturer.
- Receive a message from this nurturer (e.g., a sentence, their kind gaze, the peace of their presence, etc.)
- Express gratitude to the nurturer (if it fits).



If you have more than one nurturer, pivot and turn to face the next nurturer and walk through the aforementioned questions with each nurturer.

Receive a message from each Nurturer

Example...



My fifth grade teacher's message: "I'm so proud of you!"



My safe place's message: "You can rest here."



My best friend's message: "You've got this--I believe in you."



My message to my own child: "You will always belong here."



My dog's message: Kind eyes, warmth, always glad to see me



My grandma's message: "You're special to me."



My favorite story book character's message: "You deserve patience and kindness."



My faith's message: "You have worth and value beyond what you do."

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PRACTICE:

When you're done with the visualization portion of the exercise, you may wish to pair this practice with the beautiful Maya Angelou quote, "I come as one, but I stand as 10,000." This can help us to recall and draw on the strength of our nurturers. Knowing who "stands" with us can be a huge help as we settle our nervous systems and try to live authentically in the world.

*Exercise adapted from Dr. Laurel Parnell's, et al. book: *Attachment-Focused EMDR: Healing Relational Trauma*



"I come as one,
but stand as 10,000."
~ Maya Angelou