Grounding & Stabilization

Therapist scripts for the most commonly used EMDR resourcing and stabilization tools. Use these during preparation, between sets if the client becomes overwhelmed, or at closure when full processing has not been completed.

1 Safe / Calm Place

A foundational resource to install an internal place of ease the client can return to during preparation, between sessions, or at the close of a session.

IMAGE	*"Think of a place, moment, or situation where you feel at ease and secure."*
AFFECT & BODY SENSATION	*"Picture it as clearly as you can, and check whether it creates a pleasant or calming feeling in your body."*
ELABORATION	*"Take a little time to explore the details — sounds, light, temperature, or other small elements that make the experience more vivid."*
SHORT BLS SET	*"Keep this experience in mind while following slow, short bilateral stimulation (4–6 movements). Check that the feeling strengthens."*
CUE WORD	*"Choose a word or short phrase that fits this sense of calm or safety, then add short BLS while the client holds the cue word + image + feeling together."*
SELF-CUED RETRIEVAL	*"Repeat that word silently, bring the image back, and notice how the body responds."*

2 Container Exercise

Safely set aside disturbing material that surfaces but cannot be fully processed today.

INTRODUCE	*"Imagine a container — a box, safe, vault, or chest. The only requirement is that it has a secure lid or lock."*
ELICIT DETAIL	*"Notice its size, the material it is made of, and how it closes or locks."*
REINFORCE CONTROL	*"This container is strong enough to hold anything. Nothing comes out unless the client decides to open it."*
PLACE MATERIAL	*"Take any disturbing thoughts, images, or feelings from today and place them inside the container, one by one."*
CLOSE & SECURE	*"Close the lid, secure the lock. The material is safely contained."*
AFFIRM STORAGE	*"The container stays here, safely stored, until you decide to open it together in a future session."*

3 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1 Grounding

Five-senses orienting exercise to return the client to the present moment.

SEE (5)	*"Look around the room and name five things you can see."*
TOUCH (4)	*"Name four things you can touch or feel right now."*
HEAR (3)	*"Name three things you can hear."*
SMELL (2)	*"Name two things you can smell — or smell your sleeve / the back of your hand."*
TASTE (1)	*"Name one thing you can taste. A sip of water works."*
REINFORCE	*"Notice how you feel now — more present, more grounded here in this room."*

4 Butterfly Hug

Self-administered bilateral stimulation for self-soothing and stabilization.

POSITION	*"Cross arms over the chest so fingertips rest on the opposite shoulders."*
BEGIN TAPPING	*"Tap slowly, alternating left then right, at a steady pace — like the slow beating of a butterfly's wings."*
SETTLE	*"If comfortable, let the eyes close. Breathe slowly and evenly while tapping."*
CONTINUE	*"Keep tapping gently for about 30 seconds, focusing on the rhythm and breath."*
CHECK IN	*"Let the tapping rest. What do you notice? Has anything shifted?"*
REINFORCE AS RESOURCE	*"This is a tool the client can use anytime they feel overwhelmed."*

5 Box Breathing

A four-sided breathing rhythm — inhale, hold, exhale, hold — each for the same count. Activates the parasympathetic nervous system; useful for stabilization, down-regulation, or closure when processing is incomplete.

INHALE (4)	*"Breathe in slowly through the nose for four counts."*
HOLD (4)	*"Hold the breath gently for four counts."*
EXHALE (4)	*"Release the breath through the mouth for four counts."*
HOLD (4)	*"Hold empty for four counts before the next inhale."*
REPEAT	*"Continue for 4–6 cycles. Adjust the count to what feels comfortable."*

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