

A client's reflections on integrating the Rainbow Map into their day-to-day life.

Introduction

The client who wrote this on an anonymous basis was asked if they might share their experience late on in the work at a point where confidence was high that they were very unlikely to agree if they felt it was not appropriate for them. They were also asked to reflect on the request rather than provide an immediate response.

I am very grateful to this person for sharing their reflection with us, and hope it helps you learn more about the Rainbow Map in terms of if and how it might be useful to

you in your work as a psychotherapist or counsellor, or directly in your life.

Andrew Thomas MBACP Accred

Client Reflection

I was introduced to the Rainbow Map in one session and then subsequently learnt more about how to work with it between sessions. I printed a few copies of it and used them to draw on, comment on, scribble and record my feelings, reactions, and behaviours.

There were times when I could see myself heading fast into the red zone and I was able to, with time and practice, recognise this behaviour and reflect on previous

episodes. I learned to stop and acknowledge - to "be in the moment" - to observe how I felt and what was happening to me physically. Were my hands clammy? Was my heart racing? Did I feel tearful and panicky? I recorded episodes to help me to see a pattern of what sent me towards the red zone and what physical, emotional and thought changes took place. Charting this on the map gave me something to see and recognise and become really connected to so that when "it" came back, I was prepared and could start to preempt the escalation before it got hold of me. I had hard copy evidence of what was going to happen to me and how it made me feel. I could use that to reference my current behaviours and how I did not want it to go a shade darker to the even

worse experiences I had recorded.

I could also, generally after an episode of fight/flight, freefall fast into the very dark blue. Again, physical behaviours were present and by recording them, I was practicing using them as a means of both understanding myself and how I react to situations but also being able to recognise what was driving them.

Being in the hottest red is horrible. For me it can be scary and panicky or angry and aggressive. Either way, it was a feeling of being out of control and fearful of what might happen to me and what I might do in response. With practice I could use the map to chart my progress from soft orange as it raced up towards dark red. This is not easy

and takes a huge amount of discipline as when that train is charging out of the station, do I even want to stop it and can I? But with time, I could see the path I was on and practice techniques to help me embrace the situation and prevent it taking me into the danger zone where I knew I would be at risk.

Visualising the colours that I was moving through gave me a tool to record both mentally but also on the actual print out to see behaviours and patterns. There were times when I did not want to look at that map and address the behaviour change but once I had levelled out again, I could see that this was an avoidance and a means of not addressing the real problem which was not what was happening around me but how I was affected by it and how I was

angry or frustrated or sad or panicky because I did not feel I could manage the effects on me and that I was totally overreacting as a result.

Recognising this on the map showed me where the triggers started to move me out of the "safe" zone and enabled me to learn to grow a new set of tools so that, while I will still be triggered, I can buy myself some time to acknowledge, consider and react in a way that does not exhaust me and send me spiraling.

Moving into the opposite end of the spectrum was more dangerous for me as this was me in a place where I did not want to go on and could not see how progress was possible or even desirable. Using the map, I would watch my deterioration and

recognise again, a repeated behaviour. I would remind myself that I had been here before (many times) and that I would come back up again, that it didn't last and that it was a terrible place to go to. I used notes and scribbles on my map to help me see the changes in my mood, my energy, and my thinking and to take steps to prevent me going from one extreme to the other.

I am a big believer that it is easier to maintain than to start from scratch. As someone prone to extremes and an all or nothing approach, this again is a learned skill. Maintenance takes discipline and regular conscious practice is essential. Whether it is weight or measurements or performance, for me, staying in the middle lane is safer, less exhausting and allows me to be a better version of

myself. I am OK fluctuating between the yellow and blue bands, I can experience changes in behaviour, mood, and energy but it keeps me away from the very destructive extremes that, ultimately, send me back to starting from scratch which is exhausting. If I keep a regular check on me against the Rainbow Map, I can chart myself and just keep an eye on things before they start to get away from me. With that skill, I am calmer and more prepared for the triggers as I know that I can work safely and productively through them.