

Self-Esteem Intervention

1. Client details

Sophie* (pseudonym) was a 43 year old Caucasian female. She worked in real estate, had a 17 year old son and was divorced from her son's father. Her sister was her only living relative. Sophie presented as exceptionally kind, intelligent and attractive; with a keen interest in personal growth and a razor-sharp wit. She had followed many self-help programmes and had aspirations of becoming a life coach, author and/or comedian.

2. Relevant history

At the time of the BWRT Level 2 intervention, Sophie was a known client who has attended approximately 20 sessions over the past 2 years. She first presented for therapy in 2016 following her divorce from a man, whom by Sophie's accounts, was emotionally, financially and sexually abusive. Sophie was struggling with depression and having difficulty adjusting to a life on her own.

Sophie's problems appeared to stem from a chaotic and impoverished upbringing. According to Sophie, her father was an alcoholic and an abusive man. Sophie's mother, described as a passive person, divorced her father when Sophie was nine years old. Sophie's mother struggled to support Sophie and her sister financially and the family was often destitute. Sophie earned an income from the age of fifteen to help her family in this regard.

Sophie met and married her ex-husband in her early twenties. There was a large age difference between the two, with Sophie admittedly viewing her husband as a substitute father figure. The marriage was fraught with problems; it was evident that Sophie's husband coerced her into sexual acts with other couples in order to please him and threatened to disclose this publicly if she refused. These acts also resulted in two unplanned pregnancies which required termination; events which were unbearably upsetting for Sophie. Sophie also reported that her ex-husband was controlling and manipulative in all areas of her life including her work and her friendships.

Despite her chronically unhappy childhood and numerous traumatic events, Sophie demonstrated immense resiliency and resourcefulness throughout her life. It was likely that she would excel at motivating and inspiring others.

3. Presenting problem

Previous therapy with Sophie focused on adjustment following her divorce, childhood trauma processing as well as boundary setting tasks and grief work concerning the TOPs. Sophie was able to successfully leave her marriage and maintain a stable financial base for herself and her son. However, Sophie continued to enter into dysfunctional romantic relationships with men and struggled with unremitting poor self-worth. She also tended to seek out unhealthy friendships and her sabotaging behaviours manifested in a difficulty managing money, problems with her weight and poor motivation. BWRT was proposed to assist Sophie with her exceptionally poor self-esteem; what she referred to as her 'fat, lazy, pathetic' side.

4. Overview of the therapy

3.1 Preparation for Level 2 work

Sophie underwent several sessions of BWRT Level 1 interventions relating to childhood trauma, the loss of her mother and self-hatred associated with her life as a swinger.

Sophie was then a good candidate for Level 2 work as she was invested in change, familiar with the BWRT process and open to new therapies. However, her tendency to self-sabotage was noted, discussed and monitored. Her chronic self-esteem difficulties met the criteria for Level 2 work (Assessment of Level 1 and Level 2 work)

3.2 The Unlock Questionnaire

Sophie appeared to enjoy answering The Unlock Questionnaire and as it had given her ‘lots to think about’. She stated that she had worked on her Guilty Secrets using BWRT Level 1. Her Perceived Arousal Level (PAL) regarding her Old Self was sufficiently elevated (8), she was determined to change (10) and her Ideal Self was associated with a high PAL (10).

Sophie identified four triggers connected to her Old Self namely:

1. Lack of support for her ability to effect change in her life, by self and others.
2. An unhealthy attachment to troubled men.
3. A big lapse in ‘healthier’ living. Sophie was not actively dieting but wanted to make small changes to her diet in order to feel healthier and have more energy.
4. Significant financial concerns.

Sophie appeared to understand Homework Task 1 but did experience some difficulty consistently completing the exercises over the seven days. Although she stated that she was having a ‘bad, tiring week’ and ‘struggled to focus on the task’, this was most likely initial resistance. This was discussed telephonically and her resolve returned. She required no further prompting thereafter.

3.3 The Unlock Routine

Following the homework setback, Sophie reported to be feeling positive with the personal mantra ‘I am determined, I am strong, I am exactly where I belong. I use my personal power to commit, create and empower.’

Sophie’s homework was reviewed and it appeared to mirror her mood for the week. Her Old Self seemed to have a strong presence in her life, filling her with doubt about her future success.

The Unlock Routine was completed with little trouble. Sophie was able to envisage her New Self in a park drinking tea. She created a happy Future Memory of herself relaxing and writing a self-help book. Her Old Self PAL had dropped to 2 at the end of the session. Homework Task 2 was explained and set.



3.4 The Reboot

Sophie reported that she was able to complete the second homework task with more ease than the first. There was a notable delay in Optimism on Day 5 of Homework Task 2 but the remainder was, otherwise, uneventful.

Sophie’s Reboot Routine was centred around a humiliating memory of an encounter with her ex-husband. He had belittled her and threatened to tell her son about their swinging history. Sophie felt that this event was the worst event relating to her Old Self. Her Best Thing About Being Free pertained to her ability to contribute meaningfully

to society in the capacity of a comedian and/or life coach. This was experienced as a sense of relief. Sophie’s Future Memory was of one of her bucket-list events, namely seeing the Northern Lights. The overall feeling associated with the Future Memory was one of gratitude.



3.5 Trigger Guard Session

Sophie’s Old Self was associated with poor self-esteem, lack of motivation and self-deprecating tendencies which manifested in several areas of her life. As such, there were a number of triggers that needed to be addressed.

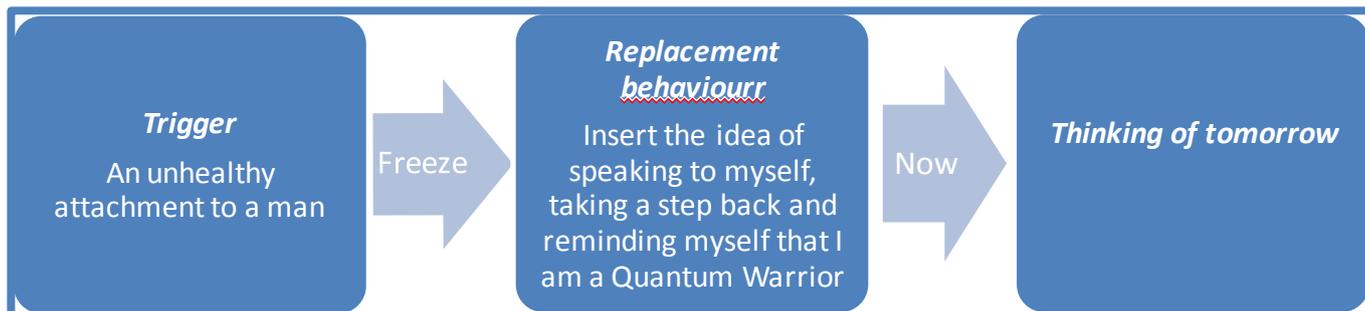
3.5.1 Trigger Guard 1

The first Trigger Guard routine was spurred on by an actual incident where Sophie felt judged by one of her closet female friends. She admitted that she tends to interpret comments negatively in order to validate her Old Self. She wanted to dismiss this trigger by simply introducing the concept of being her own best friend, who is calmer and more objective than her Old Self.



3.5.2 Trigger Guard 2

Sophie wanted to address her unhealthy dependence on unavailable and/or abusive men. Her dating history revealed several co-dependent relationships with men whom she consciously allowed to take advantage of her. At the time of the Level 2 treatment, she was entertaining one such relationship. Sophie’s replacement behaviour, for when she wanted to engage with these men in a pleasing/dependant manner, was to employ self-talk. Sophie wised to remind herself that she was a ‘Quantum Warrior’; a concept derived from a favourite self-help book. She reported that this thought allowed her to gain a sense of perspective and power.



3.6 Level 1 and Trigger Guard Session

3.6.1 Level 1 Virtual World

Sophie was aware that the focus of the session would be trigger guards. However, she asked to address a nagging childhood memory using BWRT Level 1 Virtual World. Sophie went in to recount how her father had force-fed her a head of lettuce, when she was 4 years old, while her mother passively stood by watching. Sophie felt that this memory was inexplicably linked to her unhealthy relationship with food. BWRT Level 1 work on this memory revealed an initial PAL of 7. Sophie's Preferred Memory was of her father acting like an adult, diffusing the situation with a joke and hugging her. In her Future Memory, she was pictured herself sitting on a wine farm, spontaneously choosing to eat a salad. The feeling Sophie associated with this memory was one of peace and a PAL of 10. A string of insights emerged thereafter which included; 'I never felt loved by Dad and I have been seeking approval ever since', 'I try to fix others because I could never save my Dad from himself.' 'I never felt protected by my Mom'. This was followed by a renewed sense of personal power on Sophie's behalf.

Although the trigger guards appeared to be an afterthought, Sophie was able to complete the remaining trigger guards in the session.

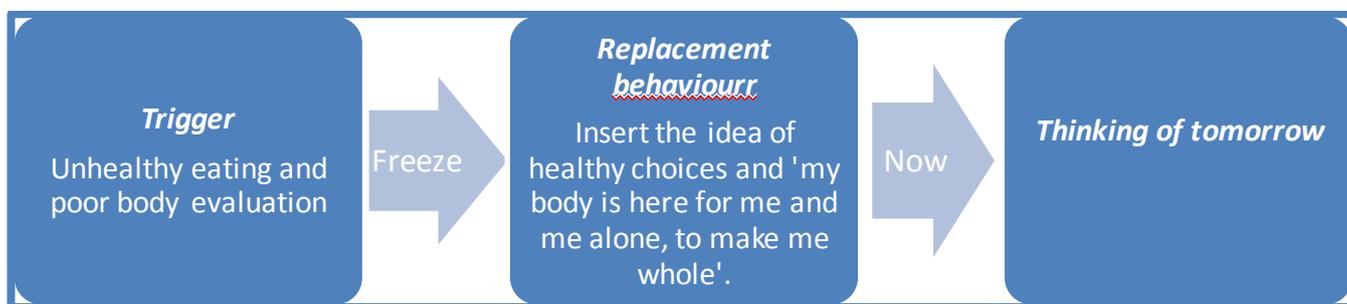
3.6.2 Trigger Guard 3

Sophie had a tendency to spend frivolously on others. As a single parent, with no financial buffer, this behaviour had caused several financial crises following her divorce. Sophie's replacement behaviour was to practice an 'attitude of gratitude' and be mindful of her spending.



3.6.4 Trigger Guard 4

Sophie was attempting to practice moderate, healthy eating. She had a history of negative associations around eating and body size. This appeared to stem as far back as the lettuce memory mentioned earlier. The replacement behaviour, in this regard, was to remind herself to make healthier choices, most of the time, and that 'my body is here for me and me alone, to make me whole.'



3.6.5 Re-trigger of Old Self

At the end of an eventful session, Sophie attempted to re-trigger her Old Self. She was unable to do so and calmly reported, 'I just can't.'

4. Difficulties encountered

The difficulties encountered with this case centered around maintaining the structure of the programme.

Sophie stopped her homework for a few days and while this was managed, it had the potential to derail the process.

In the last session, there appeared to be a struggle between maintaining the original agenda for the session, namely trigger guards, and Sophie's wish to address the lettuce memory. Working on the lettuce memory appeared helpful but whether this maneuver would impact on the overall outcome of the Level 2 work remains to be seen.

5. The outcome

Historically in therapy, Sophie tended to recover over a few months and then slip back into old habits. However, one remains cautiously optimistic in this case. At the end of the 5 sessions, Sophie was unable to re-trigger distress associated with her Old Self. The therapy appeared to shift Sophie's mindset in a fundamental and unique way, in a short space of time, and thus the outcome is positive.

Upon review of her BWRT Level 2 outcomes, Sophie reported several noteworthy changes including:

1. Enhanced self-belief and confidence
2. A decline in overall anxiety
3. Better choices regarding interactions with men
4. Continued commitment to financial stability
5. A more realistic body-image

Sophie's progress was to be reviewed on a monthly basis.

6. Therapist views on the efficacy of the therapy

Sophie's case demonstrated the efficacy of Level 2 work, particularly in circumstances where a client has attempted several other therapies without significant success.

This case proposes two areas of exploration. The first is whether familiarity with Level 1 work is associated with greater Level 2 efficacy. Sophie was comfortable with the Looping and Virtual World format when she started the Level 2 programme. It would be useful to compare Sophie's case with one where only Level 2 work is attempted.

The second area of exploration is whether the client's unique ability to visually create and recreate memories influences the success of the therapy. Sophie's case raised few technical challenges, for example, all PALs dropped and preferred scenarios were clear and visualized with ease. It is likely that this helped to foster confidence in Sophie's propensity for positive change. It would be interesting to note the difference in efficacy in cases where the client struggles with the actual Reboot or Unlock Routines.

Completed by: Lisa Grant-Stuart

Kindly note that the following case study contains confidential material and is based on information available at the time of writing.