

Sunlight for the Soul



A self-help handbook for Refugees

Information and exercises to help cope with traumata

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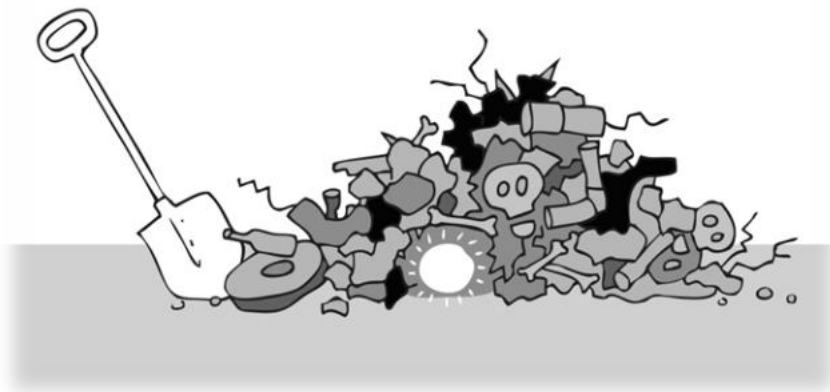
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Preface

Welcome to Germany!

Perhaps you have heard this often, perhaps there are other people who make you feel unwelcome. I would like to say, "Welcome! I'm glad you're here!" And it's great that you have made it so far. You have had a hard time in your homeland and more hard times on your flight to Germany. But you made it. You survived and I'm happy for you. Maybe it's hard for you to feel good about being here right now. You miss your home, your family and your friends very much. I am truly sorry that you had to leave all of that behind. I am sorry that you had to experience and somehow cope with all that fear, loss, hardship, violence and death. I'm sorry you had to give up all your dreams to save your life. It is all so painful, and I empathize with all your grief, anger and fear.

And yet, I'm glad you're here! I hope you can gain a foothold here, finding perspectives for your future, and I would like to join you in looking at your Here and Now (present), so you can rediscover your strengths, which are often buried and forgotten beneath all the negative and terrifying rumble. I wish you the support (maybe even in this book) to bring your strengths back into the sunlight! They are there, waiting for you, of that I am completely sure!

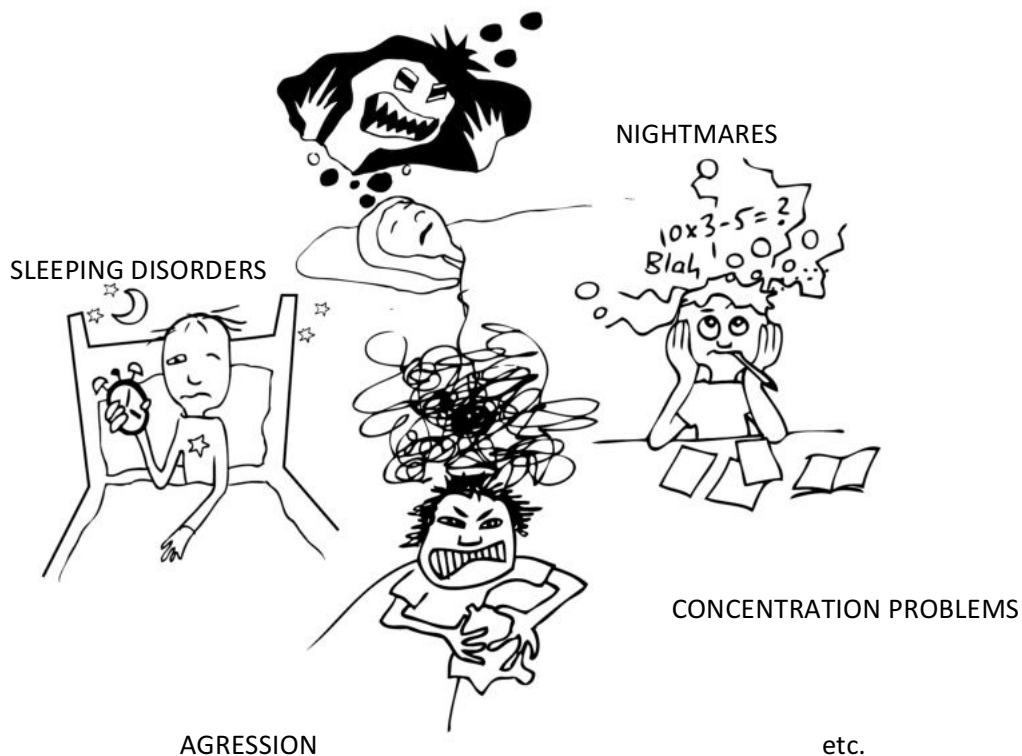


Introduction: For whom is this book intended? And how can it help?

This book has been written for you. You have come to Germany because you suffered extreme hardships in your homeland. Because a war is raging there, or the Taliban is persecuting you or because the AL Shabab militia want you to fight for them. Because, in your homeland, you are forced to bear arms for a dictator or because you have no means of survival and no hopes of that changing any time soon. Maybe you would have been forced to marry someone, against your will in your homeland. Whether you are young or old, male or female, no matter what your personal reasons are for coming to Germany, we want to join you in looking ahead and finding a way for life to be better for you here. To reach this goal, we may have to look back into your past, but as far as possible, we would like to concentrate on Here and Now, and on the future.

That is not always easy, is it? Maybe you have experienced how images or experiences from your past, ones you would very much like to forget, catch up with you. They simply appear and take over, even though you would rather not think of them at all. Maybe that's why you can't sleep at night, because the past haunts your dreams? Maybe it takes you hours to fall asleep, because you can't turn off the thoughts and worries? Maybe you're having a hard time learning the language, although

you were always quick to learn and want to learn German as fast as possible? Maybe you get into a rage much more quickly and lose control of yourself? Or you feel guilty because you're here and other people are not?



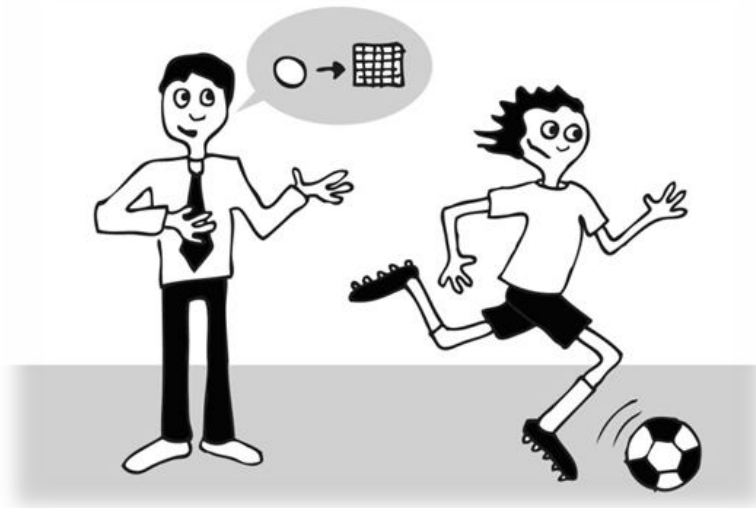
Perhaps you are seeing things in yourself that you don't recognize and you feel disoriented, because you didn't used to be that way. And this makes you feel bad.

We will talk about these possible changes in this book. This book is intended to help you understand where these changes come from and to realize that these influences are 'normal' when someone has experienced what you have experienced. And, of course, we would like to find options together, for how you can deal with and improve some of these negative influences. For example, how you can sleep better.

There are many possible methods and I will describe some of them in this book. But there is no magic recipe that helps immediately and works for all people.

This means I can't simply say, "Do this and this and you will sleep better right way." That's because every person is different and therefore must find the solution that works for him or her best. But there are strategies that have helped many people around the world. These methods have been proven by scientific studies and surveys of suffering people, and can also help you, too. You probably know certain traditional healing methods from your own country that could lend you support now. These options can also contribute to easing your current problems. The most important things you need are courage and patience to try out different methods and find your own personal solution. This book can help you on your quest by describing ways and means that you can try out. That means, you don't have to do everything in this book in order to feel better. Instead, you can try out those exercises that appeal to you; that you can imagine yourself doing. Still, it is important that you don't just try it out once and then give up when it doesn't work immediately. No, things don't work

that quickly. If you really want to change something, it's hard work. It's like, for example, working hard to become a good soccer player. You must shoot more than one goal, and if you miss the first time, you don't give up and never play again. No, you must train long and hard before you can shoot goals easily. And no one else can shoot the goals for you. You must do it yourself! But your trainer can tell you what you have to do and show you strategies to improve your game. This book is something like your trainer. You have to do the actual training yourself, though! And I wish you loads of success!



Chapter 1: What's wrong with me? – Important information

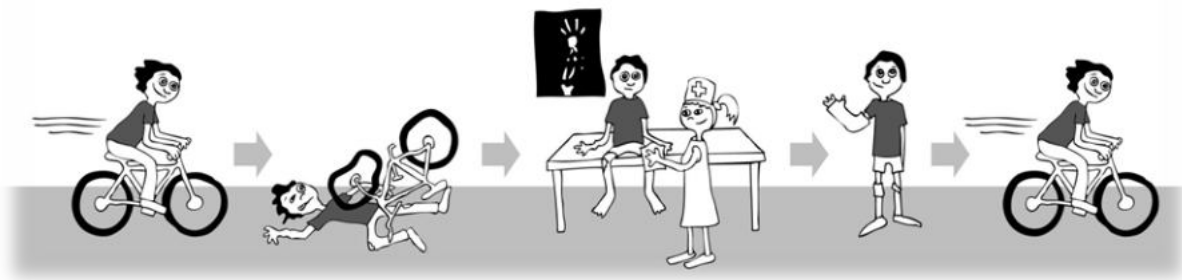
1.1. When the soul suffers – Trauma

Maybe you are reading this book because someone gave it to you, in the hopes that it would help you to feel better. Maybe you discovered it on your own and opened it because you feel like you're walking under black clouds. Because your soul is suffering from the experiences you had in your homeland and on your way here. Because you cannot forget (let go of) those horrible experiences yet and the memories plague you.

A wounded soul is very painful, even though you can't see the wounds. And you may often feel helpless because you have no idea what to do to heal those wounds.

Everyone knows what a physical injury is and what to do about it, don't they? Here's an example:

You fall off your bike and your arm hurts terribly. You have scrape wounds on your knees and you are bleeding. You go to the doctor or to hospital to have your arm examined. The doctor cleans and disinfects the wounds on your knees, so they do not get infected. He takes an x-ray of your arm and sees it is broken. He puts your arm in a cast so you cannot move it and the bone grows back together cleanly. Six weeks later, the doctor removes the cast, your arm is healed and free of pain and your knees have healed, too.



The doctor's treatment allows your wounds to heal. X-ray pictures will always show that your arm was once broken and you will have scars on your knees. But they no longer hurt. You can move your arm freely again. You can ride your bike again!

It is not so very different with **wounds to your soul**. These are also caused by painful experiences, but we rarely give them our full attention. We don't go to the doctor; we don't ask for help. We think we just have to be strong and they will heal all by themselves.

And that usually works, too, when the wounds to the soul are small, such as when someone hurts our feelings or when a good friend moves away to another city.

But then there are **severe wounds to the soul** that no one can cope with easily and we feel their consequences powerfully for a long time. These consequences torment us and they usually do not go away by themselves. These **most severe wounds to the soul** are called **trauma**. The word trauma comes from ancient Greek and means 'wound.' Maybe there is a special word for this in your language?

You can recognize a trauma or several traumata by the **impacts** these invisible wounds have on your behavior and emotions, and that these effects do not go away, even when the horrible experience is over. These impacts are called **symptoms**, exactly as they are called when you **show the signs** of a physical illness. But don't worry, that doesn't mean you are weak or 'crazy'! It just means that any person who experiences what you have experienced would suffer from the wounds on his or her soul, and their behavior and emotions would also noticeably change. It is completely **normal** for terrible experiences to change a person. But what you have been forced to experience is not normal, it is truly crazy! To see what these impacts (symptoms) can look like, you can read later in Chapter 1.3.

It is important to know that you can do something to heal your soul. You can treat the symptoms so they no longer torment you. You can even make them go away, so you can be yourself again. The you, you recognize as yourself. You cannot undo the terrible experiences, from now on they belong to your life story. There will be scars, but we can treat the wounds that these experiences have inflicted upon you. This book can offer you some help. **It should help to help yourself!** You will need lots of patience and the honest desire to get better. If you have both of these, it is important that you first understand yourself better. When you understand the connection between the horrible things you experienced and their impacts on your soul, you will also understand that you are not going crazy. Like I said before, **YOU are not crazy, CRAZY ARE THE THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO YOU!** Any soul in the world would suffer from them; would have the feeling that your mind and body are out of

control. But that can be healed! You must be understanding towards yourself, which is the first and maybe the most important step towards healing. After reading Chapter 1, you may better understand the impacts of terrible experiences!

1.2. What causes a severe emotional suffering? – Traumatic events

Now we know that the severest wounds to the soul are called **trauma**. A trauma is a horrifying experience in the past(!) where

- your **life** or the **life** of others was in **danger**
- you were forced to witness the **torture** or **death** of another human being
- you yourself were **tortured** or **raped**
- you could neither run away nor change the situation, you **couldn't flee or fight**
- you were **terrified**
- you felt **helpless** and **powerless**
- and you were **shocked** by what had happened



Examples of horrifying, inexplicable experiences/traumatizing events are violent attacks on your family or friends, physical/emotional abuse, torture, incarceration, rape, war experiences, death of people near and dear to you, disappearance of a relative, forced separation from family members, combat, accidental or natural disasters...and many other shocking experiences that are inexplicable and hurtful to the soul!

Many people have had more than one traumatic experience, some having lived in prison or in war zones for years. This makes the wounds to the soul even more severe. The traumatic events **intentionally inflicted by other human beings** such as torture, war or sexual violence are even harder to cope with and even more damaging than traumata such as a car accident or natural disaster. These kinds of traumatic events shake the very foundations of our understanding of the world and humanity. We never thought that people could be so cruel and cannot understand it. The fact that people are capable of such horrors is terrifying and makes it very difficult to trust anyone.

So, we are talking about events that would cause an **overwhelming** sense of **fear, shame and despair** in nearly every person on the planet. They are also called **no-way-out situations**, because there is absolutely nothing we can do, we are completely helpless and powerless. You could not escape the situation, and no one else could have either!

While reading these lines, you may have been reminded of the terrible things that happened to you. Try to push them away for a moment so you can continue to concentrate. We do not want to linger among the horrors, we want to look ahead at how you can better cope with them.

Maybe this first little exercise will help:

Exercise 1: The safe

Do you know what a safe is? It is a large, heavy cabinet in a bank, where money is securely stored. A safe has a complex lock or number code, so that it is difficult for anyone to get inside. A safe is usually kept in a separate room.



Let's look for such a place now. A place where you can securely store the thoughts and pictures of traumatic events until you have enough strength to look at them again. Try to imagine a place where these thoughts, pictures and feelings can be securely put away until you are ready to work with them. It should be a safe with only one key, and you are the only one who can open it. Your safe can be a deep hole in the Earth, a cage, a cave or something similar. What does your personal place look like? Where can you safely put your deepest thoughts and feelings? What does the area look like? How do you get there?

When you have an idea, try to imagine this place very clearly. Can you see it? It would be best if you would now draw a picture of it here:

Now, when thoughts and images of traumatic events arise in your mind, visualize your safe (or whatever your personal place is) and pack the thoughts and images in the safe, saying to them, ***"You are disturbing me now! I am putting you into the safe and will think of you when I decide to think of you!"***

Don't be discouraged when it doesn't work right away. Catch hold of these disturbing thoughts and feelings when they come and put them back into the safe, again and again, always giving the same command, "*You are disturbing me now! I am putting you into the safe and will think of you when I decide to think of you!*"

With lots of practice you will learn to distance yourself from the disturbing thoughts and feelings, putting them aside so that they no longer invade your mind and you have better control of them. You're the boss in your head!

Digression: The power of imagination

Perhaps, while reading this exercise, you thought, "What nonsense! How can it help me to **imagine** a safe or something like it?"

Well, let me explain something about imagination (**visualization**) to you. Our thoughts and imagination have enormous **power**. They influence our feelings and our attitude towards life. Maybe you know this. When horrible memories arise, you immediately feel helpless and unhappy.

Memories are nothing more than imaginings. Imaginings of what happened to you in the past. They are often dark thoughts and images that rob you of all your energy, making you fall into a deep, dark hole of unhappiness.

Our bodies and souls react to imaginings and thoughts. Picture a lemon! A large, fresh, yellow lemon. Can you imagine how it smells? Imagine you cut it open and take a big bite! Can you see it? Do you notice how your mouth waters and your face puckers up?



Imaginings influence our body and emotions! In a positive direction, too. Brain research has proven this. Positive imaginings help people ease the suffering caused by traumatic experiences! Healthful imaginings change our thoughts and feelings when we direct them towards how we want to be. More on this subject in Chapter 2.

1.3. What happens in my brain during a traumatic event and how does that affect me? – Brain research results, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and trauma symptoms

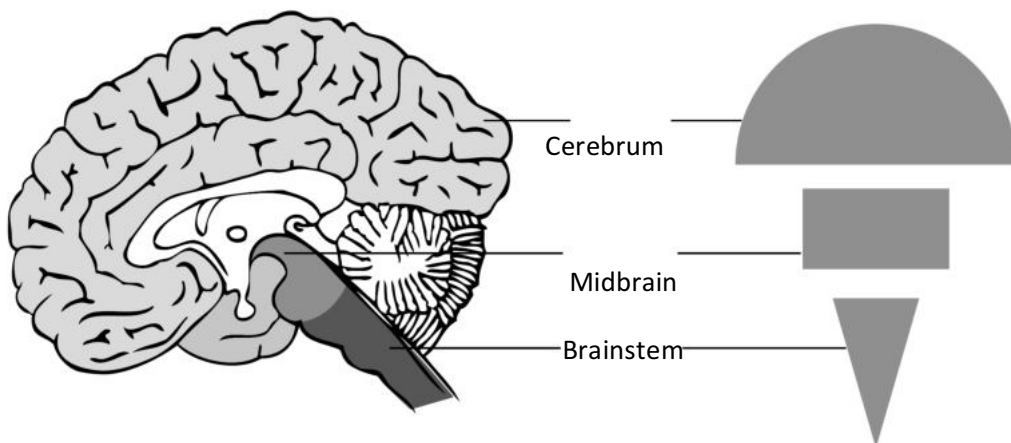
A traumatic situation leads to **extreme stress**. It is a situation that people can barely endure. I would like to explain and show you what happens in your brain during a traumatic experience. Then this would explain why the impacts that are still plaguing you even though the traumatic events are in the past. Much of what we call soul or psyche resides in the brain. The brain is the computer in our minds, navigating our thoughts, feelings, behavior and our entire body.



The human brain is made up of many different parts. Each part has its own task, working with the other parts in a very complex system. It looks like the left side of the image below.

The brain

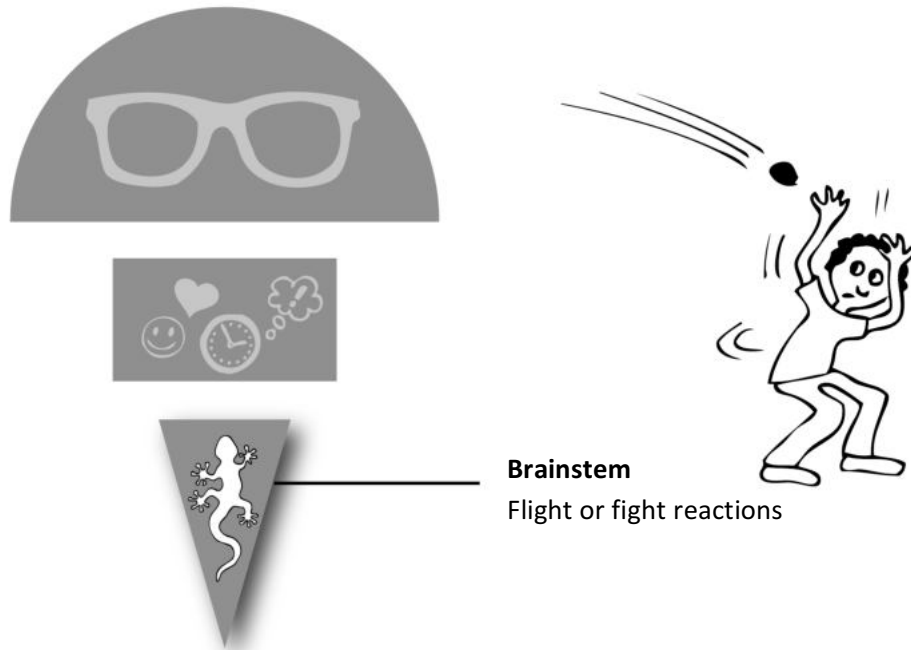
Schematic representation of the brain



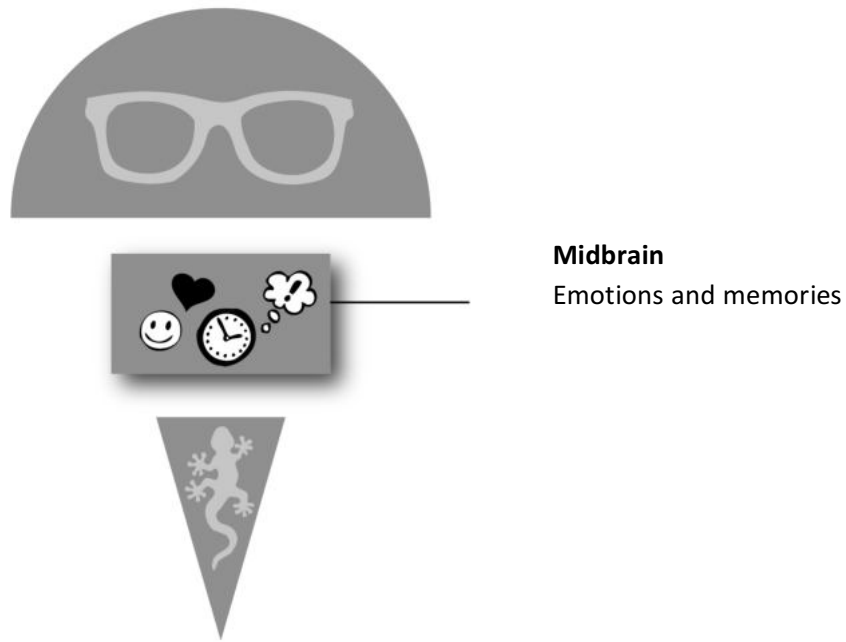
Brain experts study all the complex processes in our brain to understand them better. Everything we think, feel and do is navigated from up there. What is important for us right now, is what happens in the brain when we have a traumatic experience; when we suffer extreme stress, and are in extreme danger. Over the past 20 years, brain researchers have discovered amazing things which will help you understand yourself better.

The parts of the brain we want to talk about are in the above image on the right, in a simplified form.

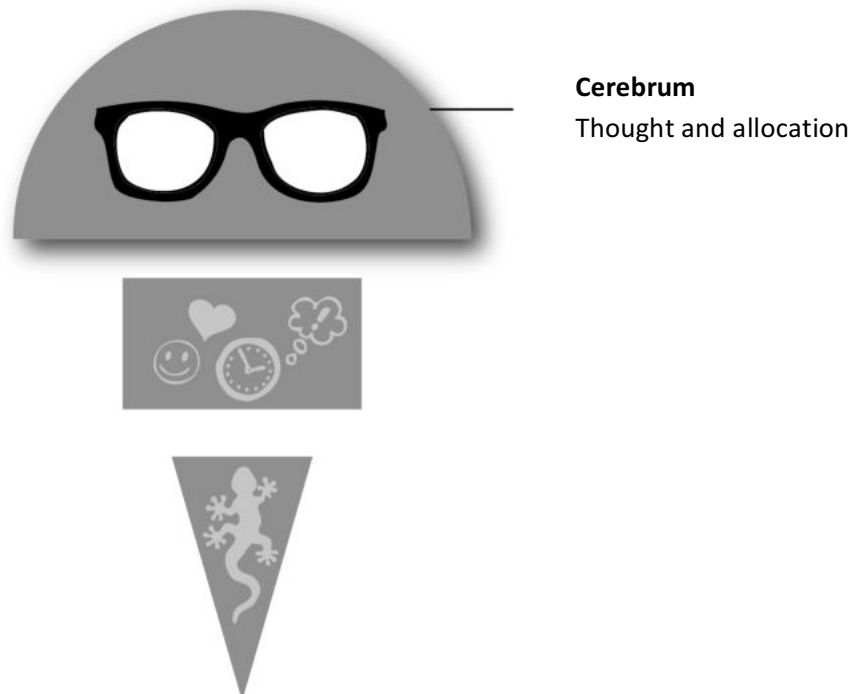
The **brainstem** is also known as the **reptilian brain**. This is the oldest part of the human brain. Animals also have this brain part. It is the part of the brain that governs our physical survival and our body functions, such as breathing. The brainstem is responsible for reacting lightning-fast to danger. For example, when someone throws a stone at you, you will **automatically** duck aside so you don't get hit. There is no time to think about, it just happens. It's the same when someone raises their hand to hit you. You **automatically** raise your arm to protect yourself from the blow. These instinctive reactions are governed by the brainstem. The brainstem is also responsible for lightning-fast **fight or flight reactions**.



Our **feelings** are navigated and controlled by the **midbrain**, or the middle part of our brain. The midbrain also governs our **remembrances and memory**. But sorting and filing memories into the right drawer is the job of the **cerebrum**. The cerebrum classifies our experiences according to space and time, so we can remember **where and when** an event took place.

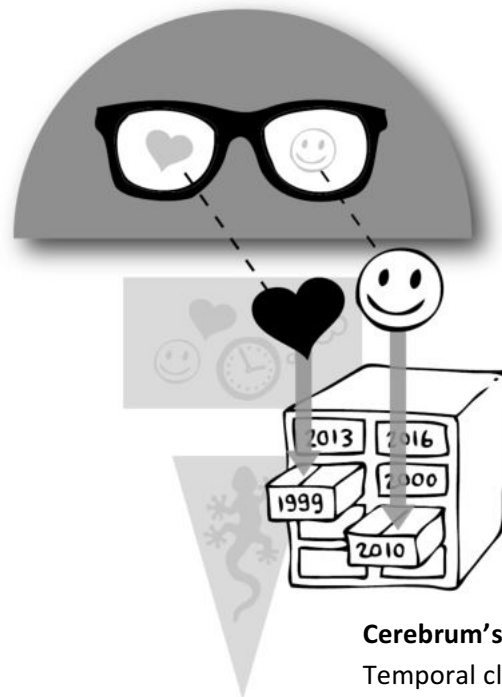


The **cerebrum** is what separates us from the animals. It is responsible for our **thinking**. It gives us the ability to reflect on ourselves, to understand the world, to make decisions, to plan, to learn and to speak.



As already mentioned, the cerebrum classifies our remembrances according to space and time. It puts them in the right drawer, so when we remember, we can say, "Oh yes, that was in the year 2000, on my first day of school, and I was so excited!" If the cerebrum didn't classify our memories and experiences, they would simply fly around in our brain, turning up any time without us having

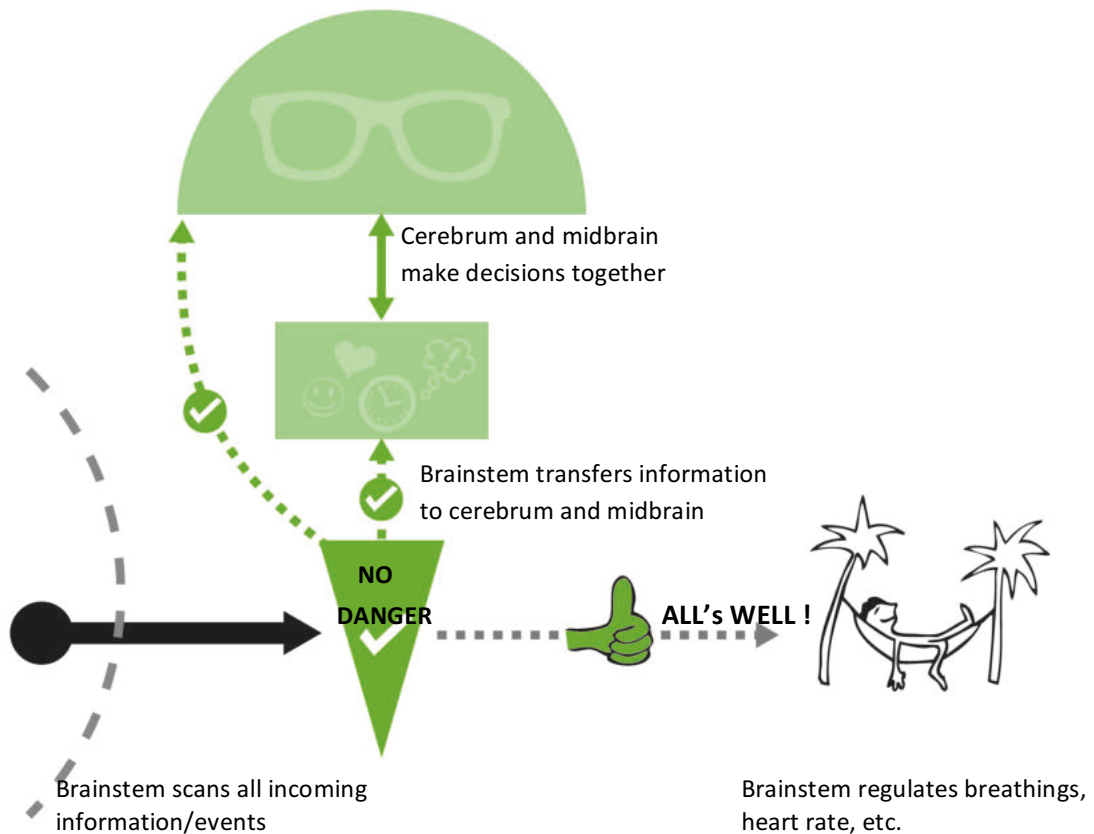
the slightest idea where they came from and to which experience they belong. It could be that the feeling arises, like being so excited on the first day of school, but we wouldn't realize that this feeling belongs to the memory of our first day at school. We are simply excited without knowing why and without knowing that the reason for our excitement lies in the past and there is really no event arousing excitement right now.



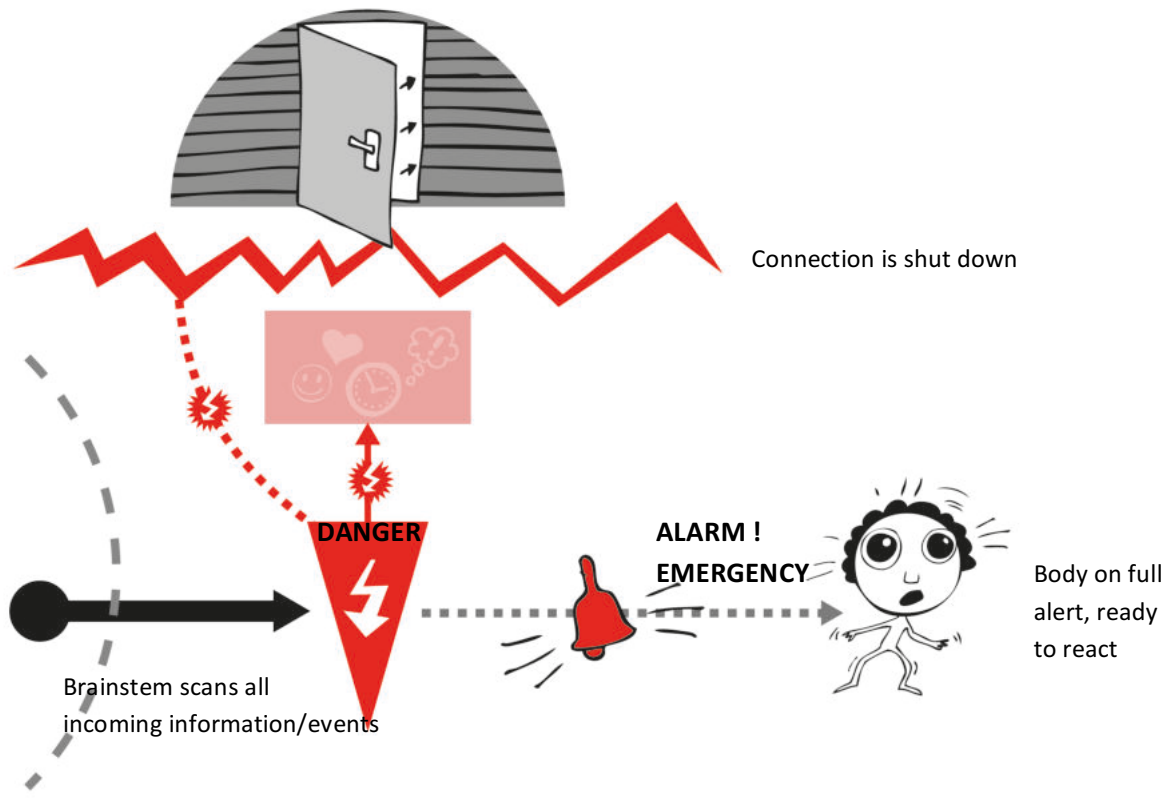
Cerebrum's task:

Temporal classification of experiences

Normally, these three parts of the brain work well and closely together. The computer program is running smoothly. Together, our **brainstem** and **midbrain** examine all incoming information, deciding whether danger is looming or not. When there is no danger, the **brainstem** relays this to the **cerebrum** via the **midbrain**. The **brainstem** continually regulates our breathing, metabolism, sleep and heartbeat, so that everything in our body functions normally. When the **midbrain**, the center of emotional perception, suggests it would be a good day to go to the swimming pool because the sun is shining, the **cerebrum** steps in and considers. Should I follow the impulse or is there something else to consider? When the cerebrum remembers that you must finish an important paper for your boss or for school, it communicates this to the midbrain and they discuss your options and come to a mutual solution. In this example, the solution could be to finish the paper first, and then go to the swimming pool. Intellect (cerebrum) and emotion (midbrain) have come to a peaceful agreement.

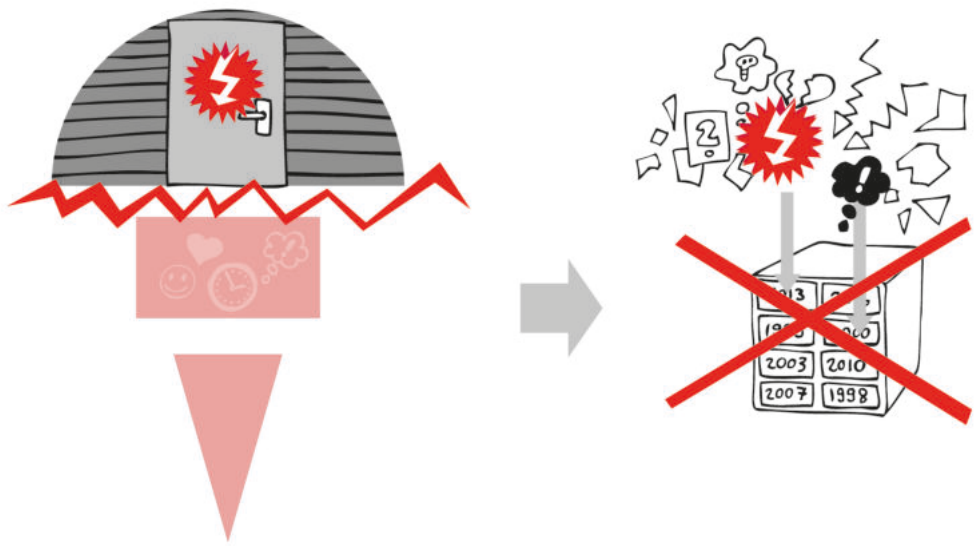


When the brainstem and midbrain sense danger in the incoming information, from that moment on, all incoming information goes **directly to the midbrain** where a kind of **alarm system goes off in your head** and a **crisis program** is started. The crisis program **cuts off the connection to the cerebrum** because by the time the cerebrum has weighed options and decided it could already be too late! So, it has nothing to say at the moment and is shut down. That is like closing the door and the cerebrum doesn't know what is happening. The **brainstem** is now **the boss in your head**. **Normally**, when there is no danger, the cerebrum makes all the decisions. **In a crisis**, the brainstem takes over and your **entire body is prepared to flee or fight**. The brainstem literally 'zaps' your body full of energy, sending stress messages everywhere. You are in a state of extreme tension. It is something like a racecar driver before the starting gun goes off, tense, wide awake and ready to hit the gas the second the starting signal goes off.



Since the cerebrum is cut off at this time, it cannot classify and process what is happening. That means, it can remember events, but cannot, for example, determine **whether they are happening now or are already in the past.**

To classify events in time and space is normally the cerebrum's job.





It is very important to know...

...that closing the door to the cerebrum is our brain's **protective function** and is **essential for our survival!** If our brain takes the time to weight all options, we would not be able to react quickly enough to, for example, save our lives. A crisis is not about classifying and thinking, it is about survival! Actually, it all makes perfect sense. And it is an **automatic process** in the brain! We **automatically** react to a crisis fighting or fleeing and when we cannot do either of these, we become paralyzed. How we react to such situations is **not a decision**, it is an automatic process! We often do not even realize what is happening, or we experience it as if **from a great distance**. The cerebrum is switched off and can no longer influence what we do or do not do.

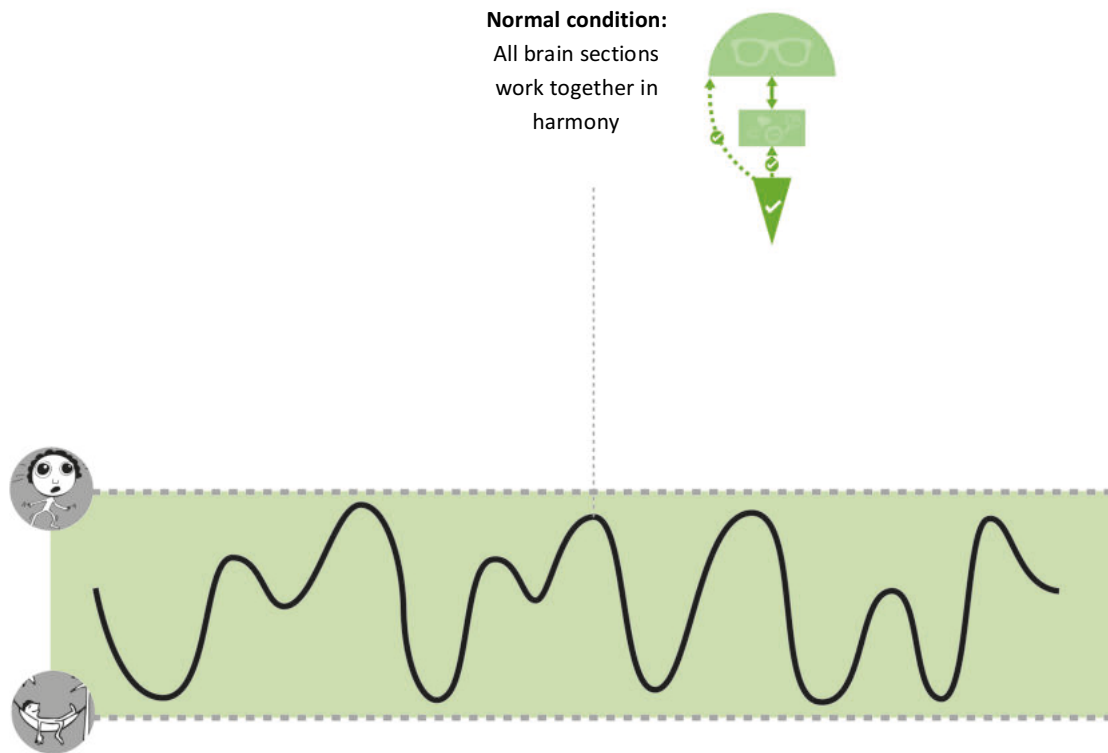
Later, when the crisis is over, the doors to the cerebrum are opened again and the cerebrum begins to think and is amazed. It often worries about what it could have done differently and blames itself for failing. Thus, **guilt feelings** arise, but **it (you) had no choice, the doors were tightly closed!**

In addition, following a crisis, the cerebrum is confused because many fragmented images arise that the cerebrum cannot navigate and classify as it usually does. This is really terrifying because it does not understand what happened and cannot correctly classify the impressions. The memories appear like a short segment of a film or singular, disconnected images flash by. It could be that emotions suddenly arise, anxiety, a racing heart, emptiness, and our cerebrum – we, as thinking human beings – do not know why. Sometimes the cerebrum simply shuts down again because it is all just too much. This means that when memories of traumatic events arise in shreds and fragments, we cannot think clearly because the cerebrum simply closes the door again, like in a crisis. So, we have no control over these recurring memories. They often feel like they are happening right now because the cerebrum cannot put them in the right drawer yet. Our cerebrum cannot decide whether something is happening now or has happened in the past. And we react to this with extreme stress. We go back to the fight or flight mode and protect ourselves by acting like the crisis is Here and Now. And although these actions were right and essential to survival in the crisis, they are no longer appropriate Here and Now, as the crisis is over. But we can't see that. This can lead to uncontrolled **aggressive** behavior. Some people **do themselves harm** in such situations, to relieve the tension and pressure. In moments like this, we cannot think clearly because the cerebrum has shut itself down. The doors to the cerebrum are closed again. The crisis program is re-activated, although the crisis has passed.

Again and again, the memories catch up with us and there is nothing we can do about it. Especially when something **reminds us of the traumatic event**, for example the color of the floor or feelings of anxiety and despair.

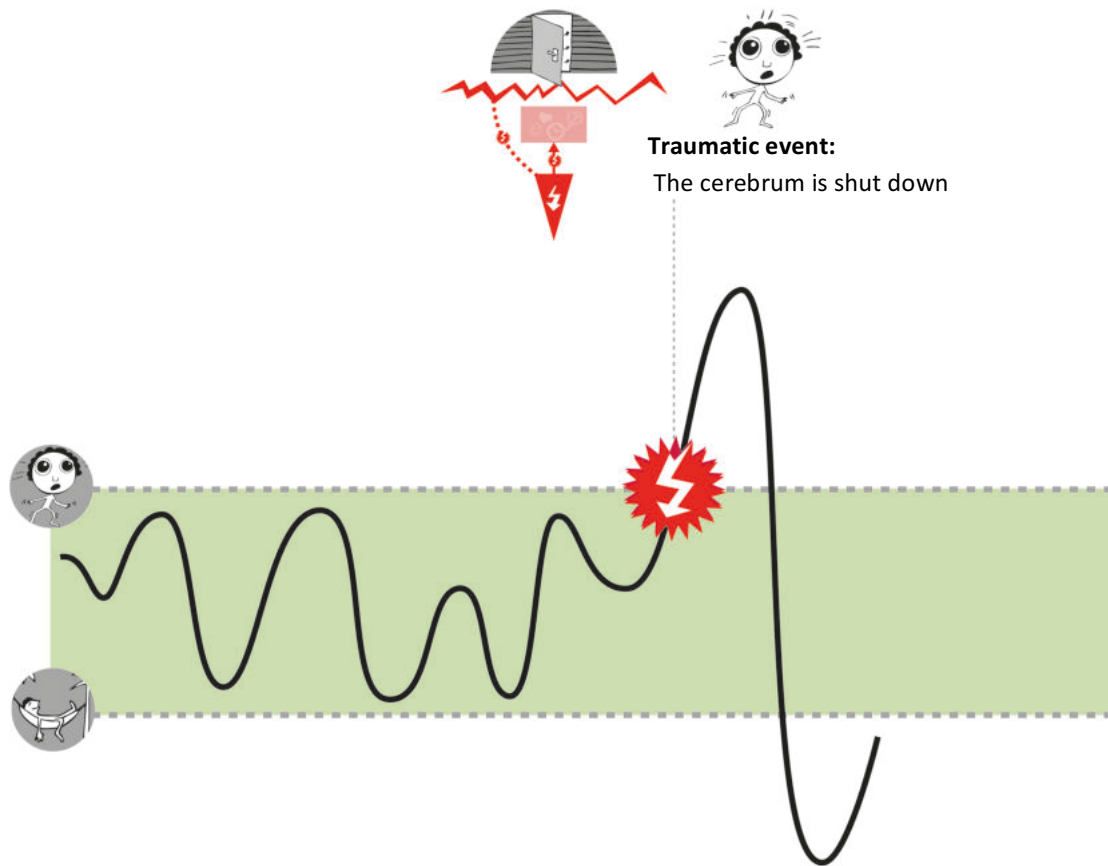
With hard work and effort, this will stop when we convince the cerebrum that the memories belong to the past, and it must help us to classify them properly. It's a matter of reprogramming the computer in our head by turning off the crisis program and re-booting the normal program! How to persuade your cerebrum to turn off the crisis program is explained closer in Chapter 2.

I'd like to show you another picture explaining what happens when we experience a traumatic event:



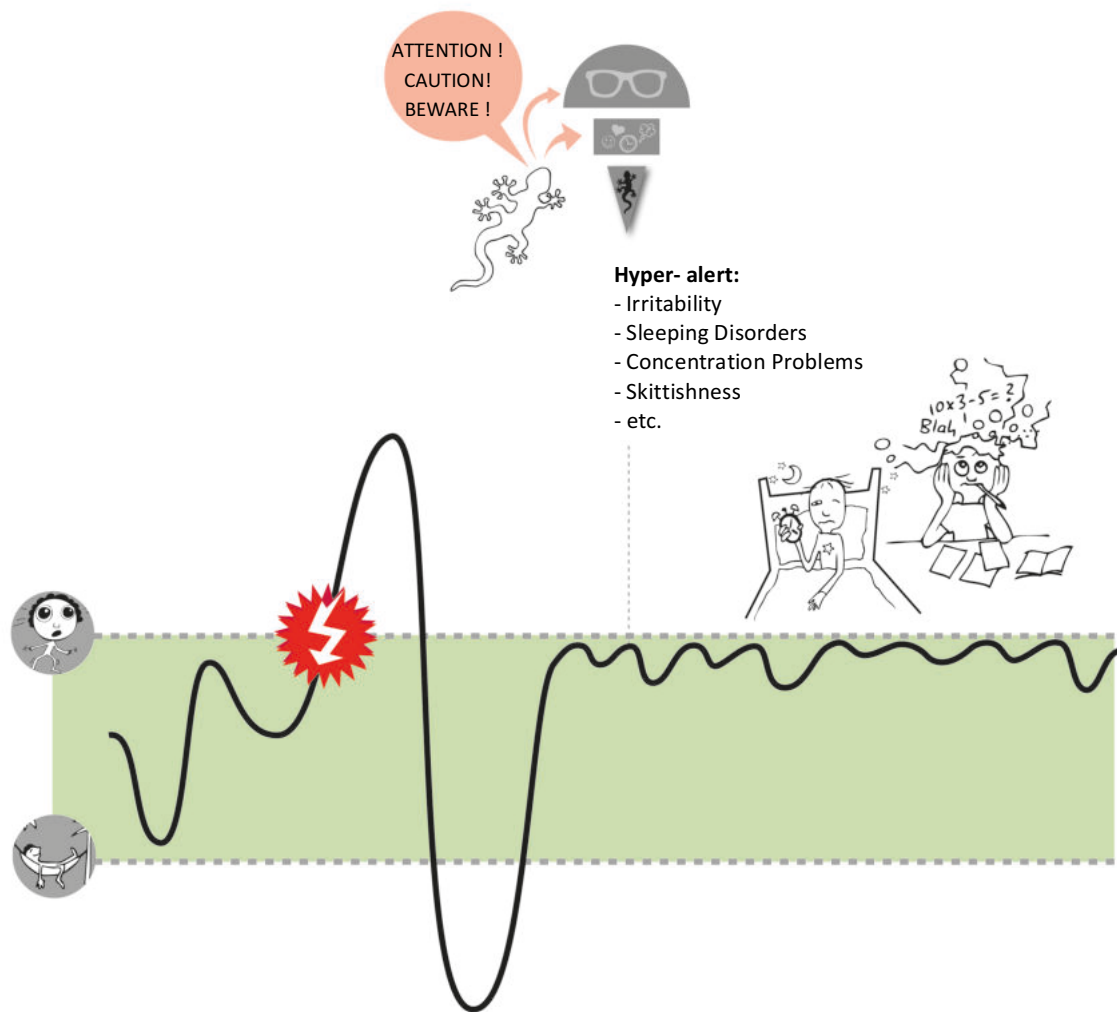
The wavy line is the tension curve showing how much stress you feel at a given moment. Normally, it moves up and down over a certain area. Sometimes we are somewhat tense and stressed when, for example, we are going to take a test. Other times we are relaxed and at ease when, for example, we are lying on the couch listening to good music. In this area, the increase or decrease of tension and stress is completely normal. All parts of the brain are working together smoothly and in harmony.

But in a traumatic situation, where we can neither fight nor flee, where we feel completely helpless and at the mercy of others, then the stress and tension are so enormous that they peak beyond the point where we can endure them. The cerebrum shuts down so that the brainstem can react more quickly to the impending danger. But if we cannot run from the danger and we cannot defend ourselves against it, a kind of paralysis sets in. Like when an electrical system is overloaded and blows a fuse. When the situation is so threatening and there is nothing we can do to change it, our awareness shuts down to protect us. It is as if we are not there, even though our body is still present. In professional language, this is called **self-dissociation**. And for a while, the tension disappears completely.



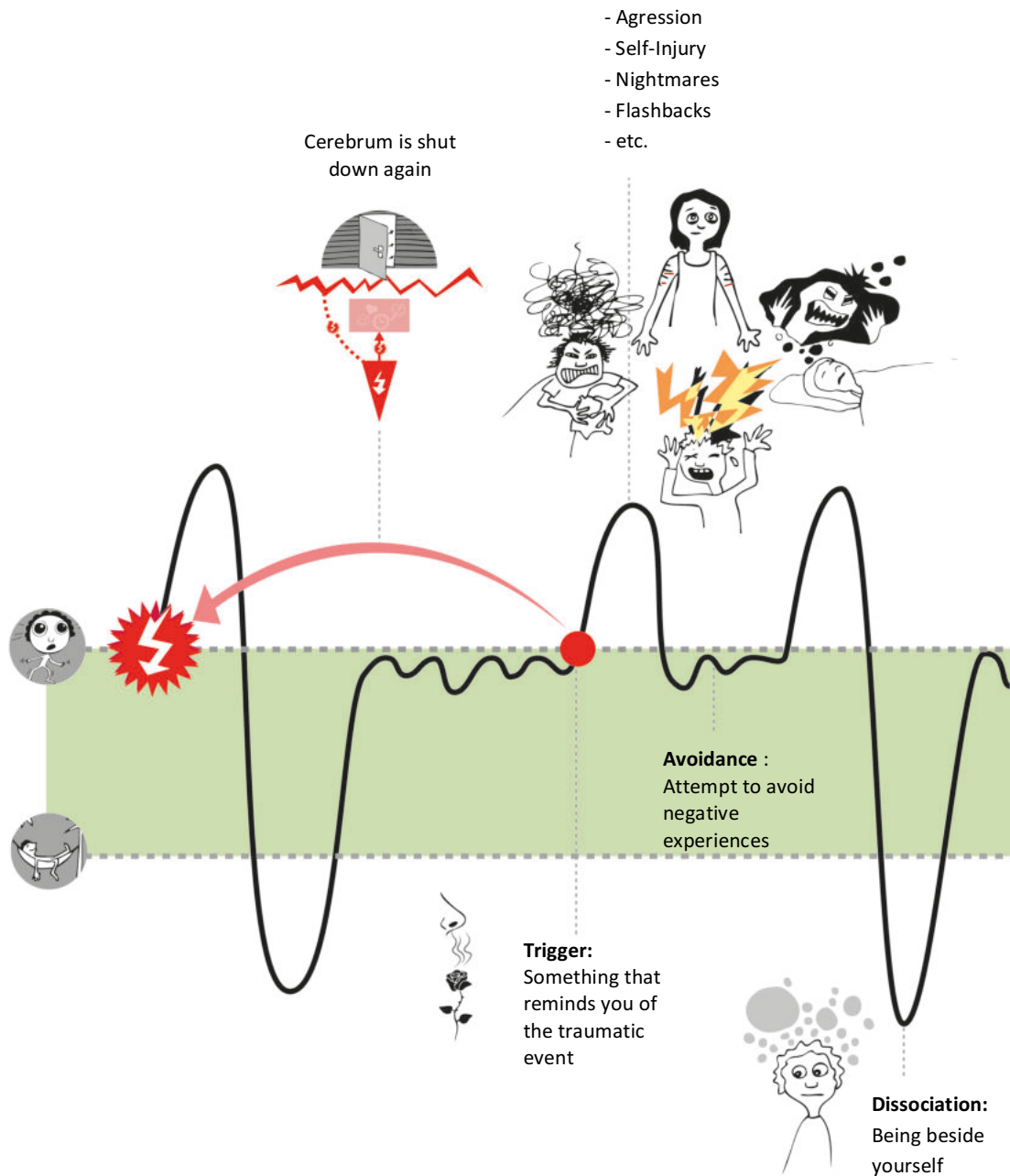
Once we have experienced a traumatic event our brainstem remains more active than it was before the extreme stress situation. It whispers to us, so to speak, that danger could be lurking just about anywhere and that we must stay alert. This influences our thinking, even when we know better. We are then over- careful rather than risk danger. That leads us to **avoiding** anything that may remind us the traumatic event. Sometimes, we go so far as to avoid closer contact with people and emotions because they could be dangerous. This is called **avoidance behavior**. Some people try to block out the terrible memories with **alcohol** or **drugs**, which only creates even more problems.

The brainstem is now so active that we find ourselves in a nearly permanent state of alert. We are **over-alert** so we can react if something threatening happens. This means we are constantly tense and ready for action. The tension curve holds steady on the upper limit. Our motor, so to speak, is revving and revving. This is called over-excitement, an exhausting condition that prevents us from **falling asleep or sleeping through the night**. We are much more **irritable**, where even little things can trigger our anger. **Concentration** is also more difficult, for example in school. And we are constantly **anxious**.



If something reminds us of our traumatic experience, maybe a smell, a sight or a feeling, we revisit the experience, or something similar, in our minds. The tension rises so strongly, we can hardly endure it. We feel as if we are reliving the experience all over again. This is called a **flashback**. Flashbacks are **overwhelming memories** impossible to control. They can occur in a dream while we sleep, in a nightmare about the traumatic events. Our cerebrum does not know whether it is happening now or is in the past.

This can make us very **aggressive**, even when we are normally peaceable. During such moments, we have no control. Our intellect, our cerebrum is not working. We can even **do harm to ourselves** to relieve the pressure and escape the memories.

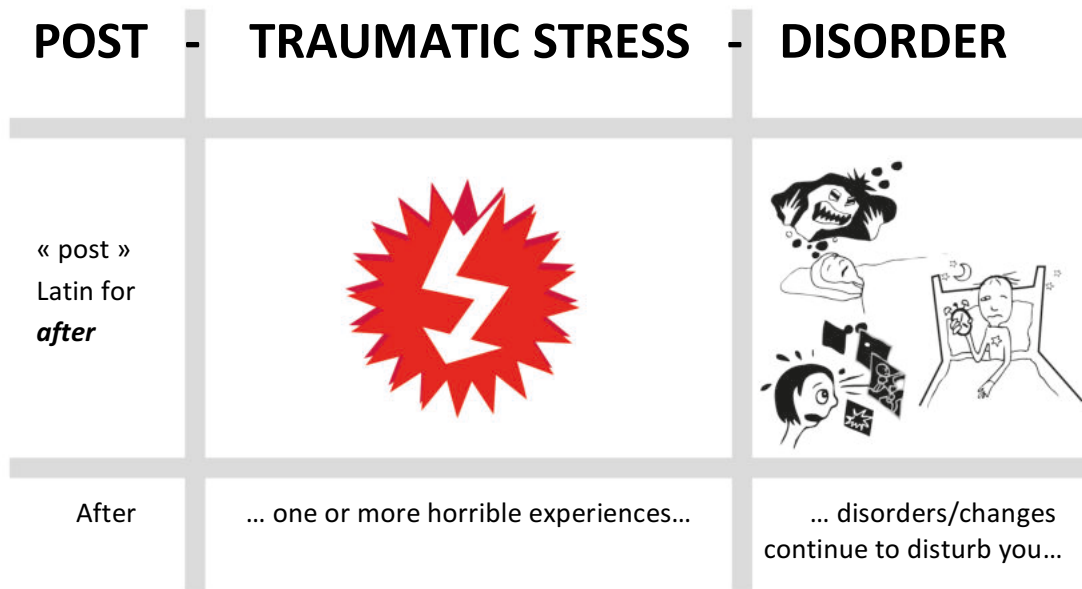


The things and situations that can lead to flashbacks are called **triggers**. A trigger can be almost anything and it is often difficult to find out what it is. When we have, for example, survived a bomb attack, then the sound of an airplane can trigger a flashback. It's also possible that during the bombing we were standing next to a rose bush and the smell of roses returns us to the dramatic situation. This is not something we can consciously control or know. These are details saved in our brain and we rarely remember them, but they can trigger flashbacks. And, as you have already learned, there is no way you can control them.

Actually, all these processes come from our brainstem want to protect us and make sure we survive. That is the brainstem's job and all these symptoms have a purpose, namely to save us and protect us from further dangers. Unfortunately, the symptoms are not easy to turn off when the danger has passed and we no longer need them. Here in Germany, a rose bush is nothing dangerous, the

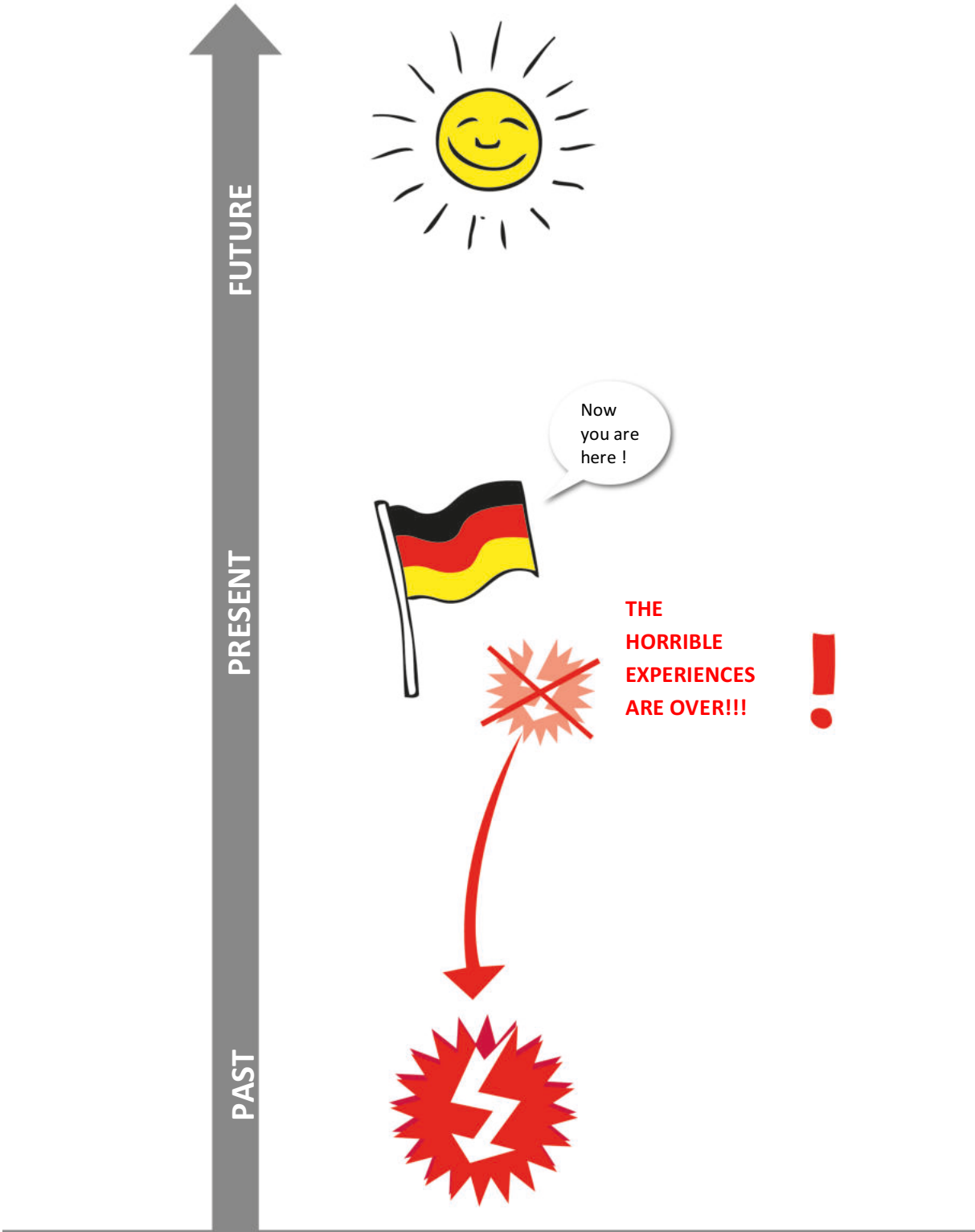
brainstem could relax. But the brainstem has saved the connection between the smell of roses and your traumatic events, so roses still represent a risk.

When symptoms continue to disturb us for a long time, this is called **posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**.

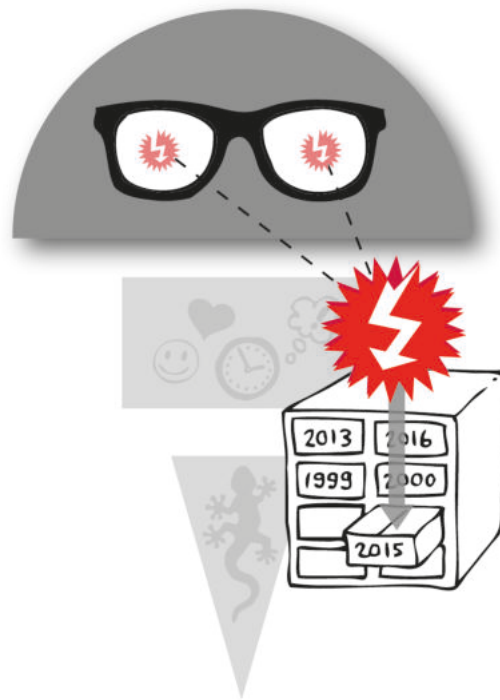


But we can do something about these disorders, about these mechanisms that we no longer need and that disrupt our lives. There are three things we need to achieve this end. On the one hand, we need lots of patience and practice, as mentioned already at the beginning of this book, and on the other hand, we need our intellect, our ability to reason. Our intellect can again become the boss in our head, convincing the brainstem to take a break and go on a well-earned holiday!

The main goal is to gradually teach the brainstem that the traumatic events are in the **past**. **They are over!**



We need to activate our cerebrum. It must learn to classify the traumatic events into the correct drawers after they took place (retrospectively), even though it was shut down during the events.



No easy task! However, in Chapter 2 you will learn how you can help your cerebrum master this assignment.

How you can work with the varying specific problems is described in Chapter 3. Not all disturbances occur in all people. Some people have trouble sleeping, others explode at the slightest provocation and others are occasionally and temporarily simply 'not there.' No matter what it is, if there is something disturbing you and you are suffering because of it, this little book can help you change that! In Chapter 3, you can see and select at a glance what applies to you personally and what you would like to change. Of course, you can read everything! But before you do that, you should finish reading this chapter and read all of Chapter 2, as this is important for everyone and is the foundation for the exercises in Chapter 3. Still, don't forget to take a break! It is important that you understand everything, letting the information gradually penetrate your intellect. As I said, you need patience and practice to change things. You can do it!

1.4. Additional problems and compounded stress factors

It is a tragedy that you have had such horrible experiences. For many people who have come to Germany, these problems are compounded by many other difficulties.

You have come to a strange country with a completely different culture and language. Everything is new and different and you feel displaced, you don't understand anything and must find your way through a completely new situation. Particularly your first reception in a community camp is especially hard. You don't have any time alone, there are comings and goings all around you and you have no peace and quiet. You have to adapt to all these unknown people and it is particularly difficult to live in a group when you don't feel well because you have had a long and hard flight and you miss

your homeland. There is often conflict and trouble with the other people, which simply adds to your stress.

Also, many people miss their friends and families and are terribly worried about those left behind in the homeland or have yet reach the safety of Europe. Maybe you have lost someone, or more than one person, close to you and have not had any time to grieve for them.

And then there is the uncertain future. How will I live? Who will help me? Will I be allowed to stay here? And on and on.

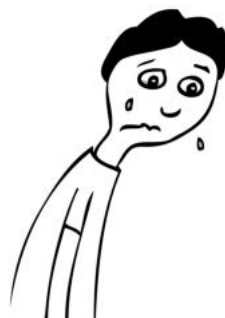
Each of these problems is hard to bear. All of them together are an enormous burden.



In the following section, I would like to describe a few problems that many people suffer under after they have had a traumatic experience.

1.4.1. Depression

For many people, the move to another country (for example) is enough to plunge them into deep darkness. They are always sad and are not motivated to anything at all. They don't want to get up in the morning or go out with other people. They don't feel much of anything, are not interested in anything, not even the things that they used to enjoy. They may also suffer a lack of appetite, feel constantly guilty and wonder what's the sense in living at all.



This is called **depression** or a depressive phase. Many people suffer from depression, including people who have not suffered the trauma of war or fleeing. Anyone can be afflicted with depression. The good thing is, there is something you can do about it, and after a while, you start feeling better. When a depression is so severe that a person can no longer laugh or sleep at all, a doctor can prescribe a medication called anti-depressives. But usually, simply taking medication is not enough. It helps to talk to someone and become aware of certain things and to change them. You can read more about depression in Chapter 3!

1.4.2. Anxiety

Since so many bad things have already happened, the fear that even more bad things could happen is great. Worry and anxiety about what may happen can grow until panic breaks out. It can get so bad that the body reacts powerfully with a pounding heart, sweating, trembling, shivering and dizziness. Some people have the feeling they can't breathe. A panic attack can catch you completely unawares, even when your mind knows there is nothing to fear at the moment.



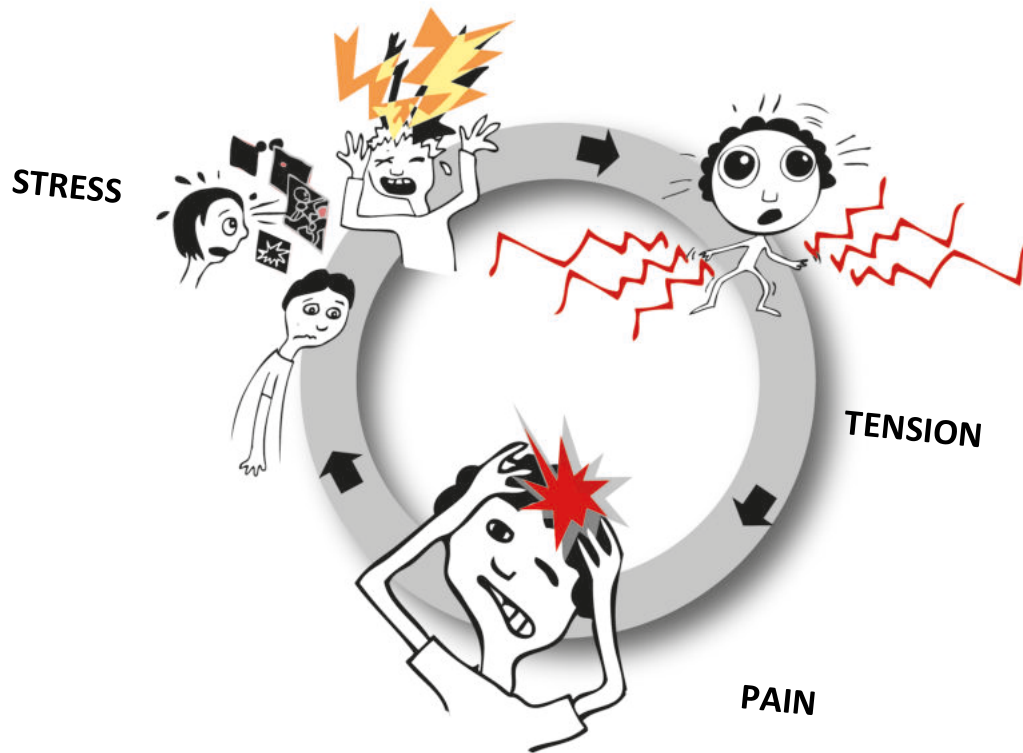
Exercises to ease anxiety can be found in Chapter 3.

Anxiety can also manifest itself by constant brooding that you cannot turn off. Your mind circles and circles around the same, unhappy subject.



1.4.3. Pain

Very often, people who have suffered such intense stress develop physical pain. For example, they have constant headaches or back pain. When you are in pain, you should always consult a doctor to find out where the pain is coming from. But often the doctor cannot find a physical source of the pain. In this case, the pain can come from permanent tension which causes the muscles to seize up, become very hard and immobile. This can be very painful.







Chapter 3 offers you possible ways to ease your pain.




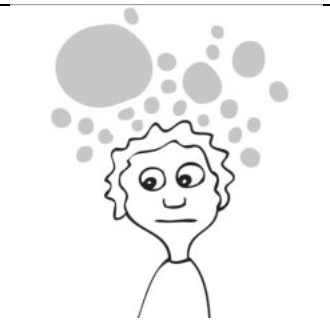

1.5. What disturbs me? What causes me pain? What do I want to change? – My personal survey

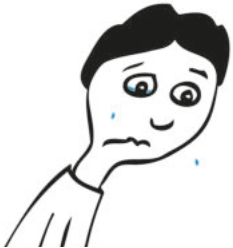


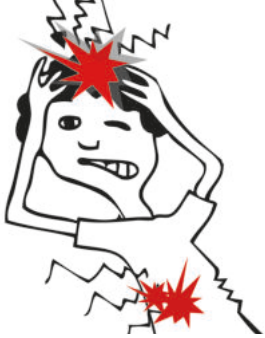

In this chapter, you have discovered that the changes you may have noticed in your behavior are all normal reactions to traumatic events. You have learned that you are not alone. Many people who have experienced such horrors also know these symptoms.

In the following tables, we have summarized possible disorders that may arise when a person is traumatized. In the third column, you can make a mark (x) for the symptom you feel apply to you, and in the fourth column, how strongly it affects you. You can use the numbers 1 to 10; 1 meaning you hardly notice it and 10 meaning the symptom severely obstructs your life. This way, you can decide how strong your symptoms are. The last column shows you where you can read about how to ease your symptoms.

Checklist: What changes have I observed in my behavior? What makes me suffer?

Symptom		Do I have this? If yes, make a mark (x)	On a scale from 1 to 10, how severely does it disrupt my everyday life? 1 = hardly at all; 10 = very severely	Read here for help with this symptom
<p>Sleeping disorders</p> <p>I'm tired, but can't fall asleep and/or I wake up often in the night.</p>				Chapter 3.1.
<p>Nightmares</p> <p>I often have nightmares about my experiences.</p>				Chapter 3.2.
<p>Concentration problems</p> <p>I cannot concentrate very long and often forget things.</p>				Chapter 3.6.
<p>Recurring memories</p> <p>I often 'see' images from the past, during the daytime, too.</p>				Chapter 3.3.2.

<p>Flashbacks</p> <p>Sometimes I feel like I relive everything all over again. All at once, all the memories and horrible feelings attack me. I can't control it.</p>				<p>Chapter 3.3.1.</p>
<p>Aggression/Rage</p> <p>I'm often furious, without knowing why.</p>				<p>Chapter 3.4.2.</p>
<p>Self-inflicted injuries</p> <p>I hurt myself to relieve the pressure and ease the memories.</p>				<p>Chapter 3.4.1.</p>
<p>'Out of it' condition (dissociation)</p> <p>Sometimes I feel 'beside myself.' My body is present, but I am somewhere else.</p>				<p>Chapter 3.3.3.</p>
<p>Alcohol or drug abuse</p> <p>To escape the thoughts and memories I drink too much alcohol or take drugs.</p>				<p>Chapter 3.10.</p>

<p>Depression</p> <p>I am often very sad and in despair. I don't want to do anything, not even things that used to be fun. I just want to be alone.</p>				<p>Chapter 3.5.</p>
<p>Brooding</p> <p>I don't believe I can change. I have no future.</p>				<p>Chapter 3.5.</p>
<p>Anxiety</p> <p>I am often horribly afraid and feel like there is no way out.</p>				<p>Chapter 3.8.</p>
<p>Physical pain</p> <p>I often have head/belly aches, but the doctor can't find any physical explanation for them.</p>				<p>Chapter 3.9.</p>
<p>Guilt feelings</p> <p>I feel like everything that happened was my fault.</p>				<p>Chapter 3.5.</p>

Chapter 2: What feels good? What helps me? - My strengths and resources

We begin this second chapter with a small exercise.

Exercise 2: My last 24 hours

Think back on the past 24 hours. What **POSITIVE** or pleasurable experiences have you had? Or what was not so bad. What was nice? What brought a smile to your lips? What gave you a moment of pleasure? Even tiny things count!

You can't think of anything? Take your time and go slowly through the day. What exactly did you do? Who did you speak to? Did you talk to anyone on the phone? Did you do anything with someone? What did you eat? How did it taste? When did you stop thinking of the horrible experiences in the past? Maybe you learned a new word in German? Did the sun shine in your room? Or did someone give you a smile? Did you watch soccer or a nice film? Did someone listen to you? Did you get some good news?

No matter what it was, or how quickly the moment passed, write down in the space below everything that was **positive** (or at least **not so bad**) in the past 24 hours. Imagine you are holding a magnifying glass and searching for even tiny moments!



Everyday over the next days, try to write down every good moment you experience. Keeping a so-called **Joy Book** everyday can be very helpful. You can look through it in moments when you are feeling badly, and the positive memories could lighten your burden.



2.1. Positive and negative thoughts have power

If this exercise is difficult for you to do, it's no wonder. Positive thoughts, feelings and memories are often buried deeply beneath the wounds of every person suffering severe injuries to the soul.

Negative memories and thoughts constantly push their way to the forefront, shoving positive ones back down. This is because the brainstem is still boss in your head and is perpetually on the lookout for new dangers, to make sure you survive. And the cerebrum has not yet had a chance to classify the negative memories and store them in the right place.

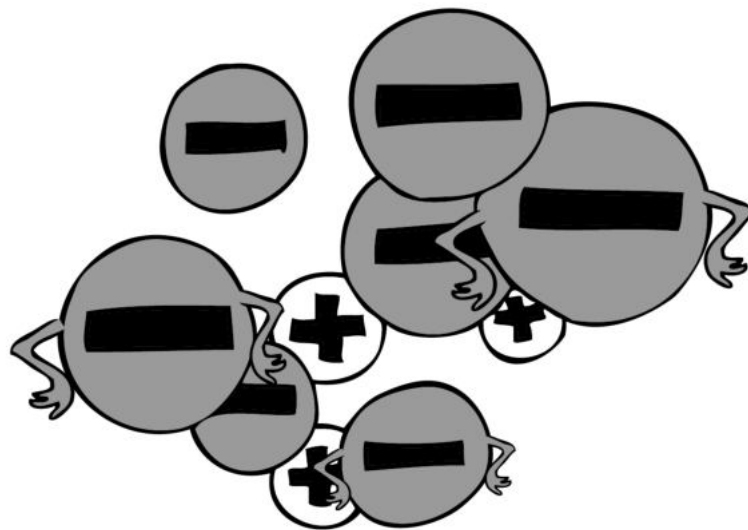
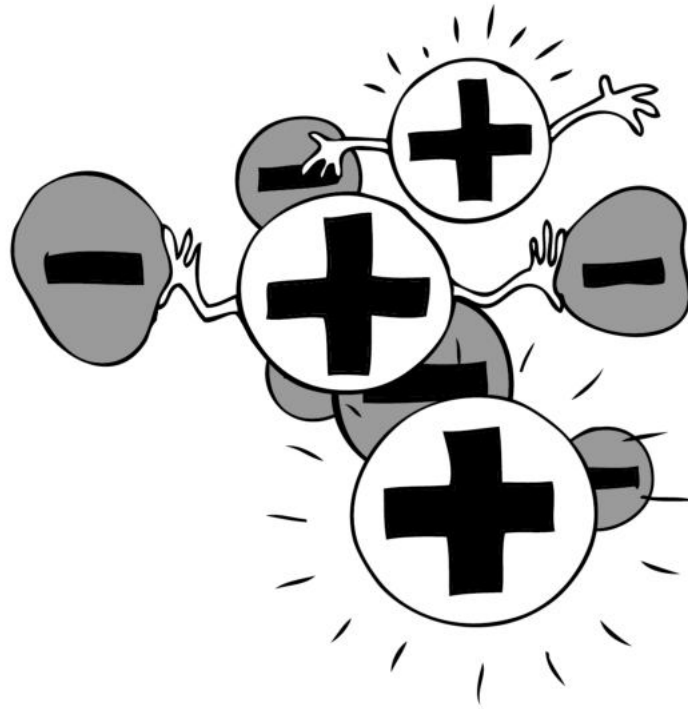


Image explanation: In Germany, the plus sign (+) stands for something positive, while the minus sign (-) stands for something negative. Is that the same in your culture? Or are there other signs for positive and negative?

The good news is that the positive memories and thoughts are still there! Everyone has them! Even when our brain momentarily cannot access them because it is so busy with overwhelming negative things. The positive energies are hidden in the back of the drawers in the cupboard. Or you can imagine that they are buried under a huge pile of negative memories. We must help our brain dig up and strengthen the positive thoughts so that the negative thoughts no longer tyrannize us.

Remember in Chapter 1: we are re-programming our minds so the crisis program can shut down! Strengthening positive thoughts is one of the switches that help shut the crisis program down! And to shut it down completely, it is vital that we activate our cerebrum, filling it with nice, beautiful visualizations and thoughts to win the upper hand over the negative experiences. This signals to the brainstem, "You can let go now, the danger has passed! Let us work together again. We can relax now and think lovely thoughts and enjoy life again!"



When we succeed, through hard work and patient training, in properly classifying negative thoughts, pushing them back with strong, positive ones, our general tension level sinks and we are not so easily thrown back into the past. The border between past and present events is fortified. We then spend more time in the green area of the tension curve (Chapter 1), where all parts of the brain work well together. Over-excitement lessens and with it the sleeping disorders, irritability, fits of anger, concentration problems also abate. Sounds easy, doesn't it? Practice, practice, practice! The brainstem is not going to surrender its top position easily. The cerebrum must be very convincing. One good argument is not enough.

Together with our cerebrum we go on a quest for authentic, positive input. Positive input is our resources, our power sources and our strengths. They will help us to assure the brainstem so our wounds can heal and we can overcome our trauma.

2.2. What are resources?

Resources are our strengths and our sources of power. And there are many of them, for example:

- Good memories
- Our positive attributes and characteristics
- The values we treasure
- Our upbringing and all the valuable things our parents and caregivers gave to us along the way
- Abilities: What am I good at?
- Strategies: How have I solved and overcome problems in the past?
- Insights: What do I know, what have I learned?
- Interests and preferences: What am I interested in? What do I like?
- Enjoyable activities: What do I like to do?
- Faith and beliefs
- Wishes and visions: What do I wish? How do I envision my future?
- Role models: Who can I learn from? Who do I admire?

- Support: Who is supporting me? Who can help me?
- Social contacts: who is important to me? With whom do I like to spend time? To whom do talk about myself?
- The certainty that I can change things and attain my goals.

2.3. What are my personal resources? – The quest for buried sources of strength

Every human being has different resources. One is an excellent soccer player, is interested in aviation and has a wonderful sense of humor. Another enjoys painting, solves problems creatively and lives in his or her faith. Every person has his or her very own strengths and treasures, some we are aware of, some we aren't. Sometimes we really don't know all the things we are good at, who we really are and what we have been given throughout our childhood and upbringing. We don't think about it. We simply are how we are.

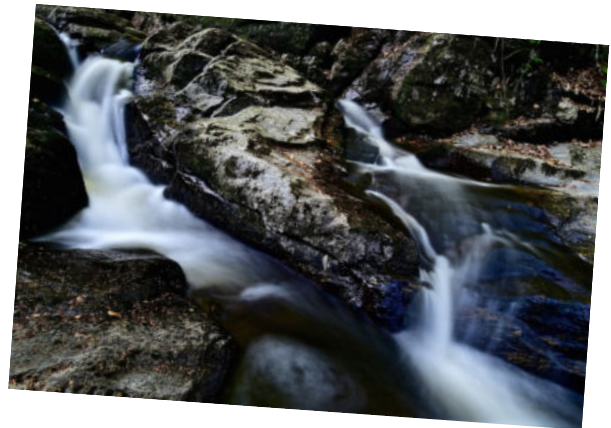
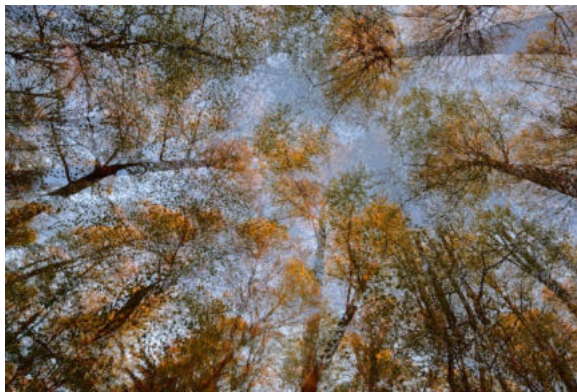
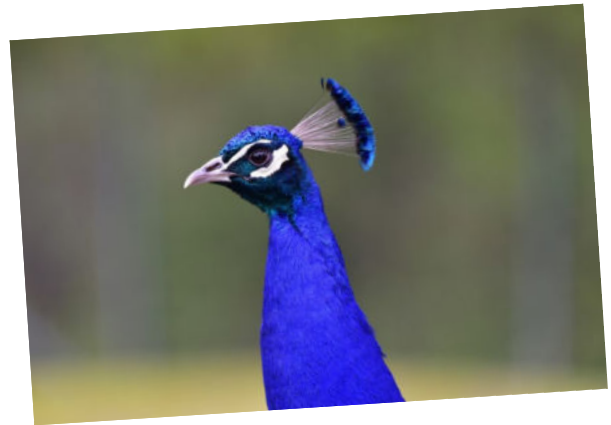
Maybe it's the same for you, as it is for many people, who can't come up with much when asked about their resources. The following exercise will help you discover what is important to you.

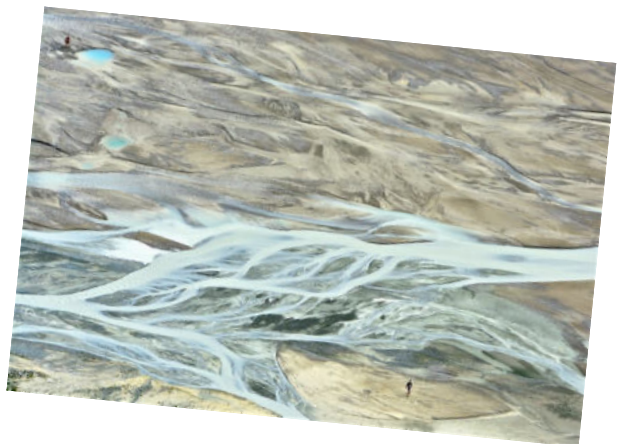
Exercise 3: Positive pictures

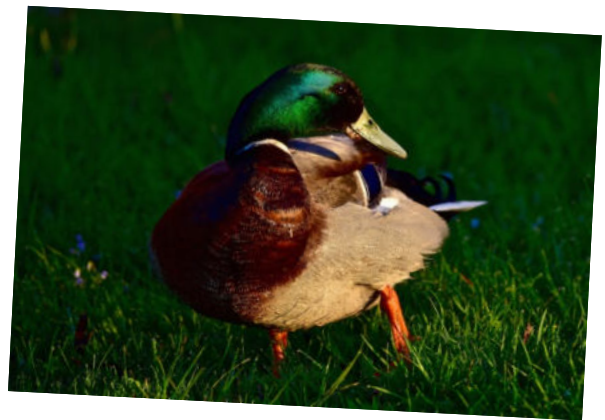
Look at the following pictures. Choose the pictures that spontaneously appeal to you. Maybe they immediately remind you of something positive? Mark these pictures with a small 'x' and write a short note about what the selected pictures mean to you or about of what they remind you.

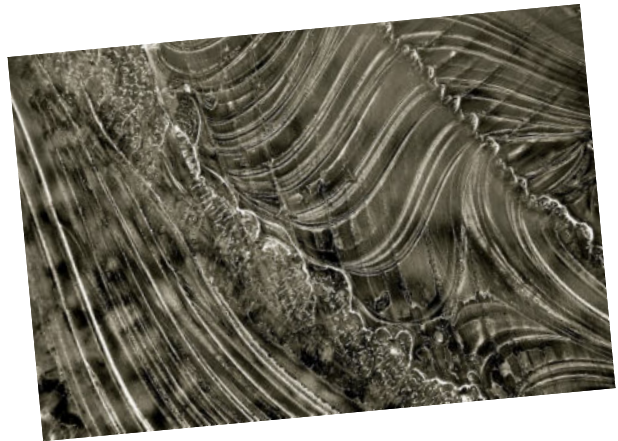




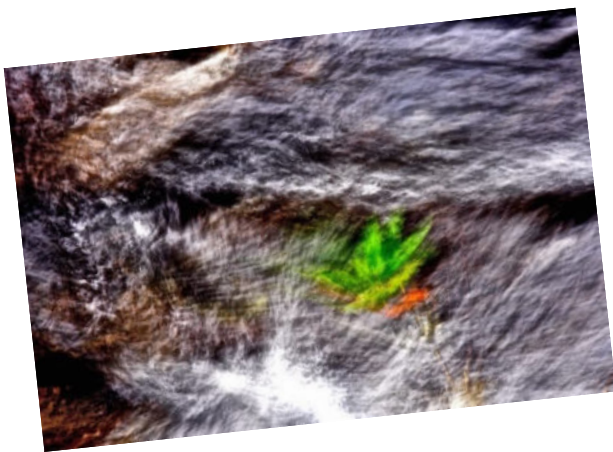


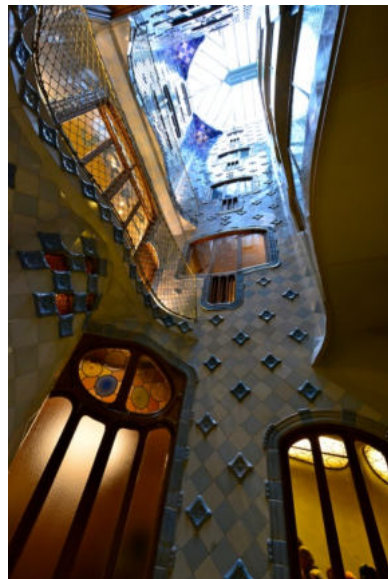
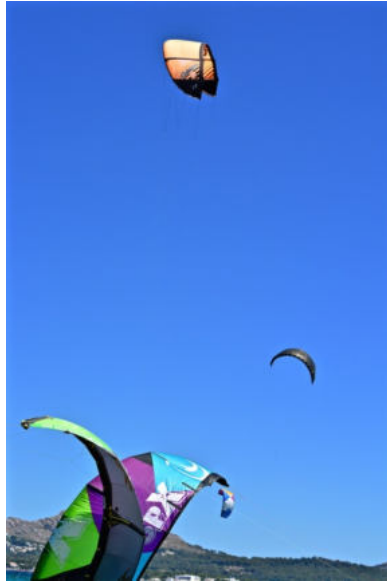
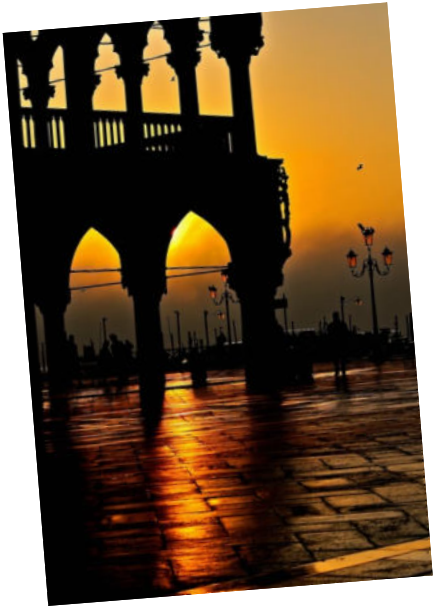








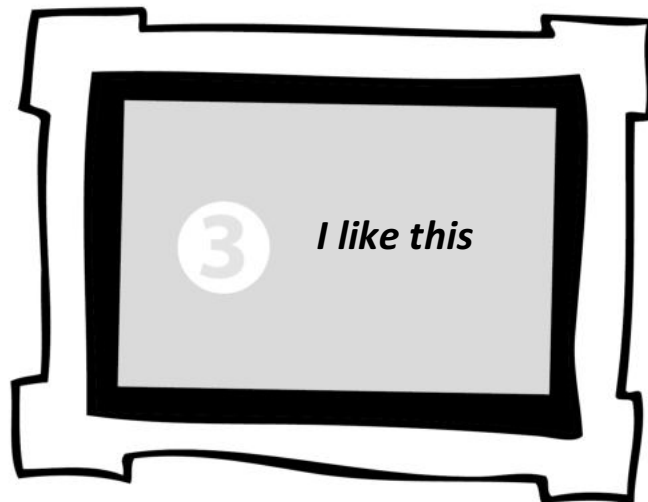




Now cut out three of the photos you have chosen and paste them in the frames numbered:

1. *A good memory*
2. *My strength*
3. *I like this*

Cut out the page and hang it over your bed, for example, to remind you of your resources!



Now think about what you like to do in your free time. What do you enjoy, or did you enjoy in the past? What would you like to try out or learn? What do you want to do? Which activities are fun? Here is space to write down your answers:

Could you think of a few things? Great! Those are things that you should do again, more and more often. They make you strong and do you good!

If you couldn't think of many things, then your resources are deeply buried beneath the rubble of negative memories. Maybe the following list will help to rediscover some things you enjoy doing.

Exercise 4: List of positive activities

Read the activities and put an 'x' next to those that apply to you. Things that you enjoy doing, once enjoyed doing or would like to do. Don't think about it too long, simply spontaneously check everything that appeals to you.

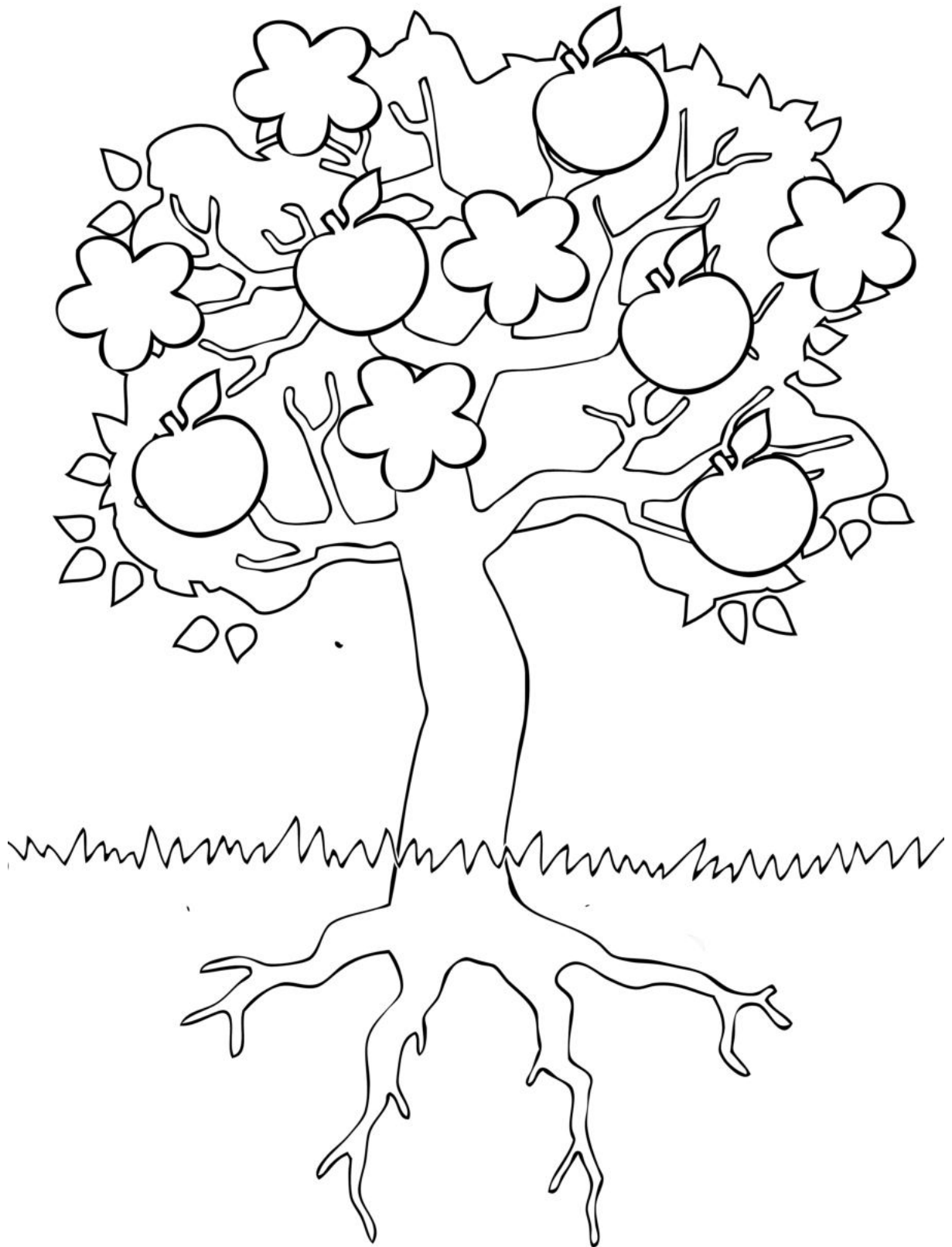
- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Bike riding <input type="radio"/> Eating with friends <input type="radio"/> Listening to music <input type="radio"/> Playing soccer <input type="radio"/> Helping someone <input type="radio"/> Watching animals <input type="radio"/> Hearing jokes <input type="radio"/> Reading a book <input type="radio"/> Taking a walk <input type="radio"/> Exploring the city <input type="radio"/> Enjoying good food <input type="radio"/> Singing <input type="radio"/> Reading the Koran or Bible <input type="radio"/> Sitting in the sun <input type="radio"/> Window-shopping <input type="radio"/> Hiking <input type="radio"/> Going to a party <input type="radio"/> Doing arts & crafts <input type="radio"/> Talking about soccer <input type="radio"/> Making someone happy <input type="radio"/> Doing your hair <input type="radio"/> Exercising <input type="radio"/> Watching TV <input type="radio"/> Talking on the phone <input type="radio"/> Baking a cake <input type="radio"/> Watching the sky <input type="radio"/> Doing technical work <input type="radio"/> Collecting leaves or stones <input type="radio"/> Playing cards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Tending a plant <input type="radio"/> Jogging <input type="radio"/> Exploring the forest <input type="radio"/> Watching people <input type="radio"/> Writing a story <input type="radio"/> Reading aloud <input type="radio"/> Sorting things <input type="radio"/> Swimming <input type="radio"/> Play-acting <input type="radio"/> Organizing something <input type="radio"/> Barbecuing <input type="radio"/> Going to the zoo <input type="radio"/> Visiting a city festival <input type="radio"/> Sightseeing, i.e. visiting a museum or gallery <input type="radio"/> Playing badminton <input type="radio"/> Lighting a candle <input type="radio"/> Buying flowers <input type="radio"/> Sitting on a park bench <input type="radio"/> Writing a diary <input type="radio"/> Writing a song or poem <input type="radio"/> Playing an instrument <input type="radio"/> Going to a concert <input type="radio"/> Going to a soccer game <input type="radio"/> Listen to the sounds of Nature <input type="radio"/> Surfing in Internet <input type="radio"/> Going to a museum <input type="radio"/> Playing cricket | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Planning an excursion <input type="radio"/> Solving crossword puzzles or Sudoku <input type="radio"/> Playing billiards <input type="radio"/> Taking photos <input type="radio"/> Going to the cinema <input type="radio"/> Making compliments <input type="radio"/> Using perfume <input type="radio"/> Reading newspapers <input type="radio"/> Eating sweets <input type="radio"/> Going to a library <input type="radio"/> Paddle-boating <input type="radio"/> Playing chess <input type="radio"/> Going to the theater <input type="radio"/> Praying <input type="radio"/> Repairing something <input type="radio"/> Drinking tea or coffee with friends <input type="radio"/> Decorating a room nicely <input type="radio"/> Playing ping-pong <input type="radio"/> Walking barefoot <input type="radio"/> Collecting something <input type="radio"/> Meditating or practicing Yoga <input type="radio"/> Watching a film <input type="radio"/> Tidying up <input type="radio"/> Making music <input type="radio"/> Learning German <input type="radio"/> _____ |
|---|--|--|

- Going to the park
- Playing volleyball
- Playing Play Station
- Sewing
- Doing martial arts
- Playing computer games
- Dancing
- Playing with children
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

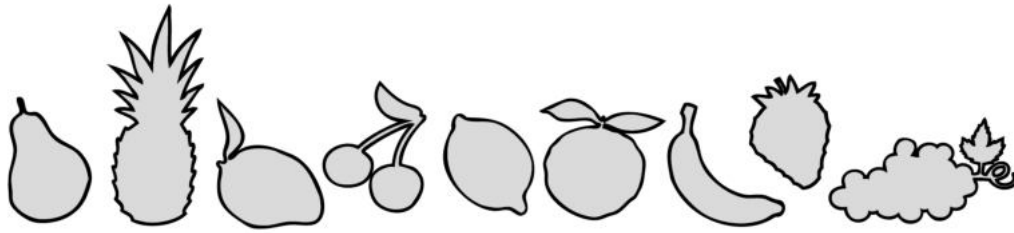


If, while reading the list of activities, you thought, "Oh, yes! I used to enjoy doing that!" or "That's something I've always wanted to try out!" then the next step is to plan it into your everyday life and consciously take the time to do it. Maybe you cannot organize the activity on your own and need the help of your helper or someone from Social Services or some other nice person. Ask them where you can do this activity in Germany. With a little help, you can probably do this. There are many nice people in Germany who would like to help you do something pleasurable! It's worth asking! If you don't know who to ask, then try one of the counseling offices listed in Chapter Four, section 4.2.1.

Exercise 5: My tree of life



Here is a splendid apple tree with countless blossoms and fruits. Are there apple trees in your homeland? Maybe there are other fruit trees there, with blossoms and fruit. Feel free to draw your own fruit tree! Perhaps a tree with your favorite fruit? The tree is a symbol for your life – your tree of life.



Your roots:

All trees have their roots firmly embedded in the Earth. Whether the Earth is sandy or stony, the roots find their way down and support the tree. They keep the tree standing when the wind blows. Even when there are powerful gales, or large animals come to gnaw on the bark or shake the fruits down, the tree keeps standing because it has strong roots!

If you compare your life to a tree, what are your roots? What holds you up when storms toss your life into confusion? What gave you strength to live? What values did your family give you for your life? Which traditions in your homeland and/or which faith shaped you and give you comfort? Write your answers directly beside the tree's roots.

Your blossoms:

The tree's blossoms, pollinated by bees, will grow into fruit. You, as a blossom, are a beautiful sight and we look forward to your ripe, delicious fruit.

You have many blossoms in your life: your dreams and wishes, your visions and your goals.

What do you wish for your future? If you had three wishes, what would they be? If dreams could come true, what would happen in your life? Which goals have you set? What would you like to achieve in Germany?

Write your answers inside the blossoms! And remember, you can wish for anything! We are not thinking about whether they can come true or not, right now. Everything can be written in the blossoms! If there are not enough blossoms, simply draw some more!

Your fruit:

Your life has already born so many fruits!

What have you learned? What are you good at? What do you know a lot about? What interests you? What good qualities do you possess?

Write your skills, knowledge, interests and qualities in the fruits on the tree or in the tree you drew yourself. If there are not enough apples, simply draw some more!

If you like, you can now color in the tree.

Now take a moment, and look closely at this tree!

How rich and colorful your life is, with so many blossoms and fruits! How deeply your roots go, to hold you up in the strongest gale!

Your life is a wonderful tree!

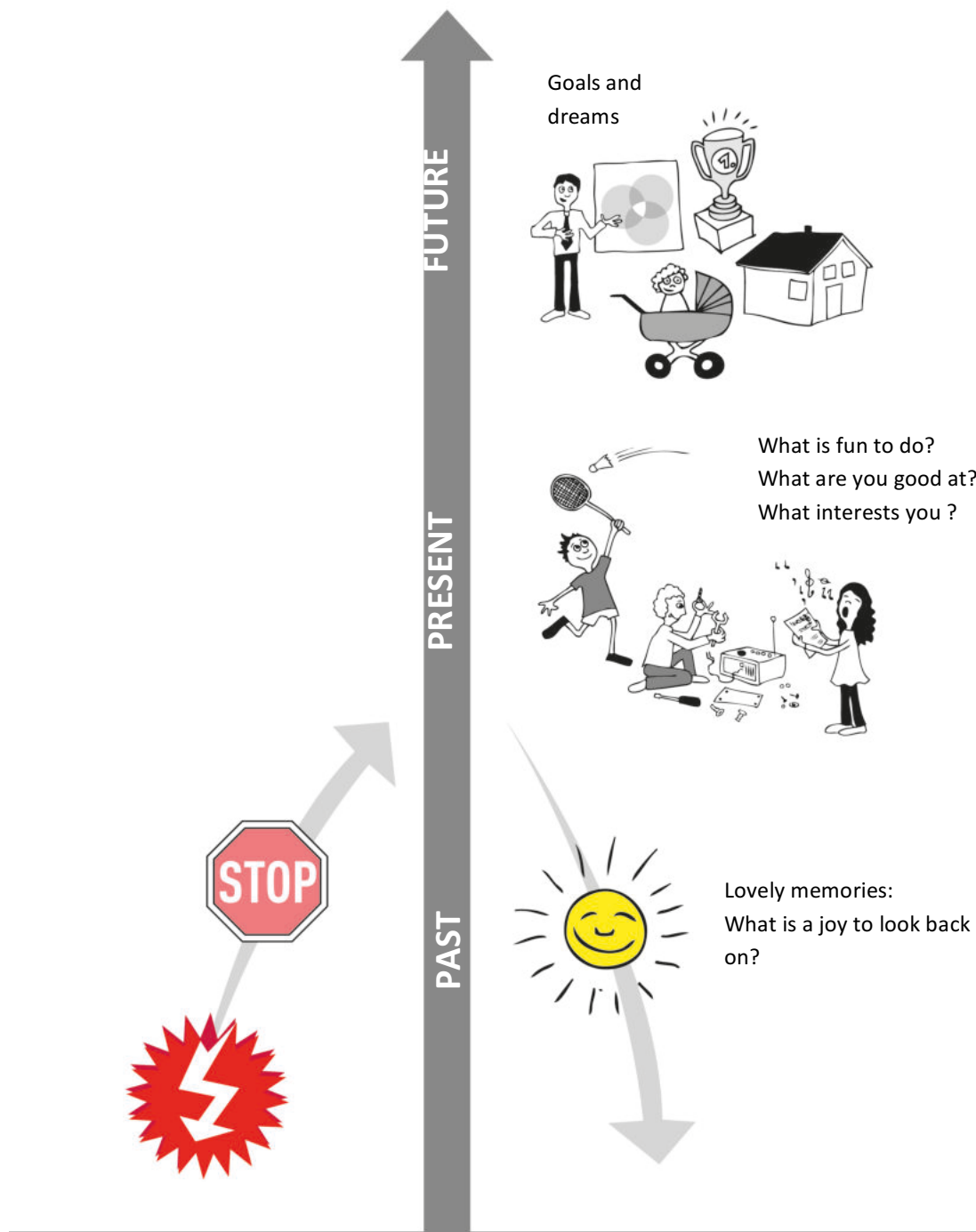
Feel free to cut out the page and hang it up or carry it in your wallet or pocket so you can look it again and again. It's worthwhile to look at your tree often!

2.4. Positive experiences in the present

In Chapter 1, you have learned how important it is to teach the brainstem that the traumatic experiences belong to the past. They are over! Our cerebrum must classify past experiences and store them in the correct drawer. We can help the cerebrum do this.

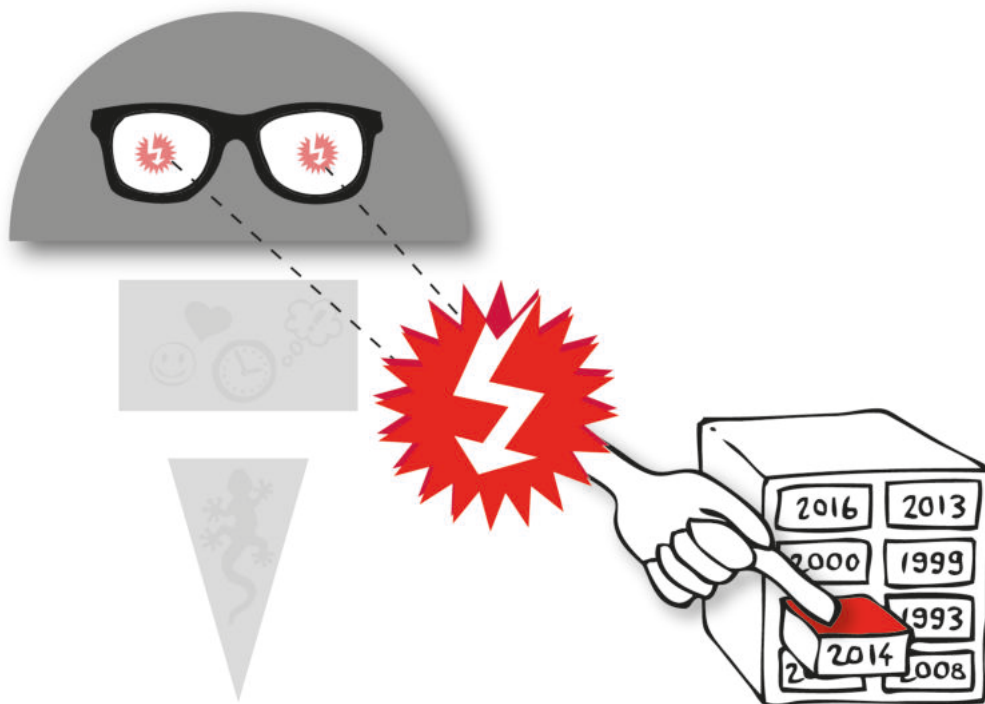
First of all, when past experiences repeatedly come to mind, you can say again and again, "**That is over!**" Secondly, you can counterbalance the past by saying, "**And NOW I am in Germany.**" To further strengthen this counterbalance, continuously remind yourself of everything that is important and good for you **NOW**.

Let's look at this on the timeline.



As you can see on the timeline, there are positive memories in your past. We can consciously remind ourselves of these many wonderful moments by calling them up and looking at them. That helps us in HERE and NOW and strengthens us!

The memories of traumatic experiences come to us unbidden, whether we want to look at them or not. We have little control over them. But you can learn to slow them down and gain control over your memories again. To help slow them down, there are two things you can do. For one, say again and again, "**That is over! These horrible experiences belong in the past!**" The other helpful activity is to realize what is **NOW**. What is fun **NOW**? What is interesting **NOW**? Who is helping me **NOW**? What nice experiences am I having **NOW**, in Germany? What do I like **NOW** in Germany? You can see some examples on the timeline. By thinking about **NOW** and what belongs in the past, you help your cerebrum classify events and show it the correct drawer for traumatic events.



There are even more strategies to slow down recurring memories. More on this in Chapter 3, 3.3.!

On the next page is a timeline. YOUR personal timeline! Consider what there is in Here and Now.

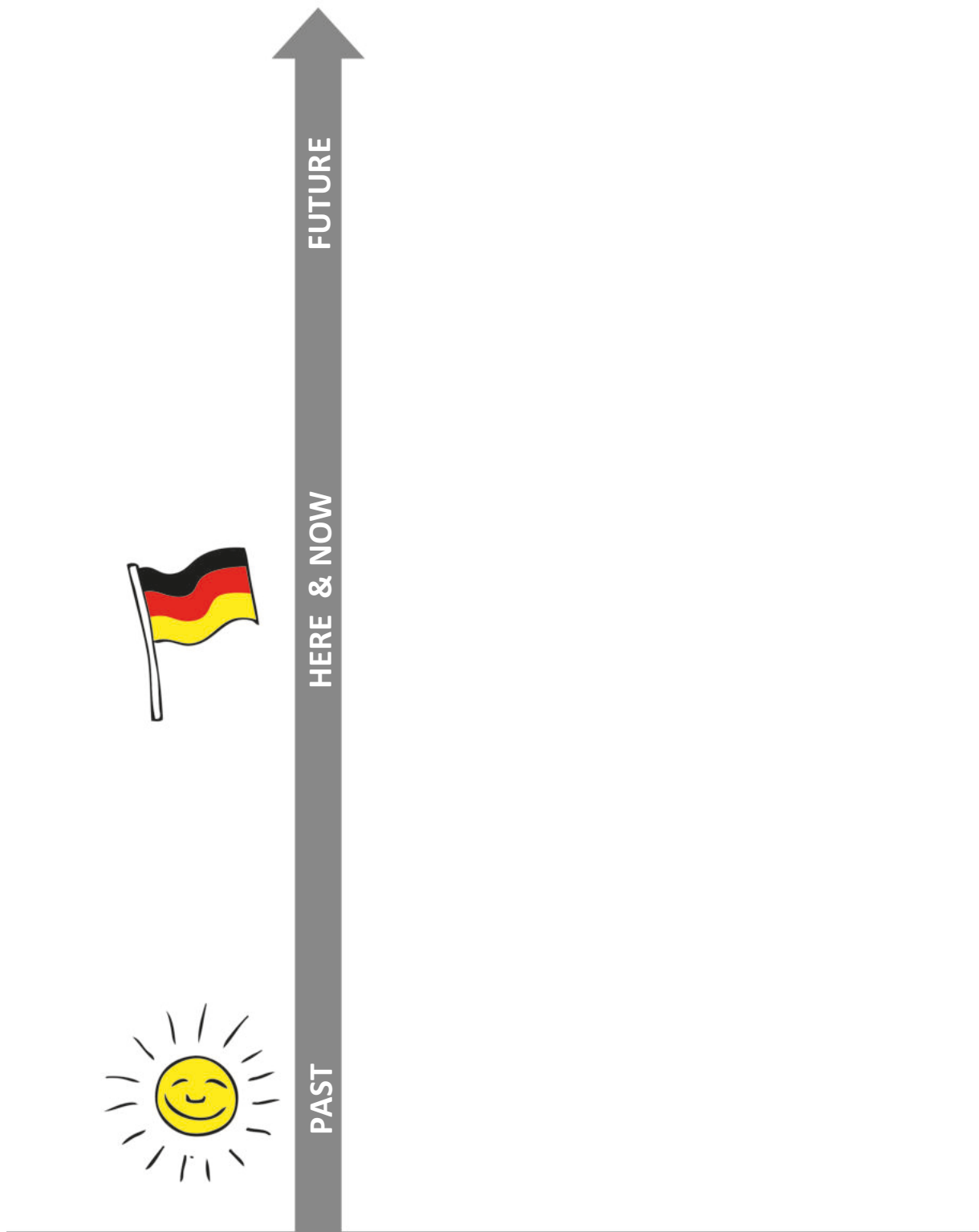
Think about what and who is important to you. Think about what you like and what you can do.

Write or draw these things in the area marked Here and Now.

It is hard to think of the future when the past keeps popping up. If you have wishes and goals, write them down again here. If you don't really know what you wish for the future, simply concentrate on the Here and Now, and you will learn to slow down the horrible memories. When you have practiced that, this book may help you to dare a peek into the future.

Can you now remember a lovely time in your life? What was an unforgettable moment? Did you remember one in **Exercise 3 Positive pictures**? Maybe you can find another one, or take the one from **Exercise 3** and write it in the sun of your past. You can draw it or use the photo from **Exercise 3**.

Exercise 6: My personal timeline



2.5. Anchored in Here and Now - Attentiveness

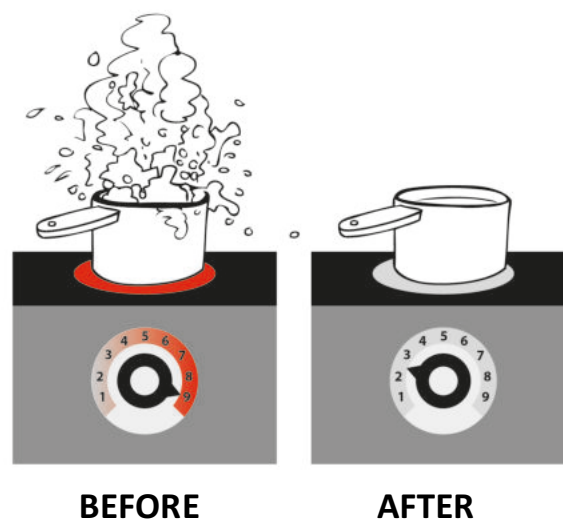
Concentrating on what happens and what is Here and Now can help us classify the horrible experiences in the past so they do not overwhelm us so often. We concentrate our minds on **what is happening in the present**, with the help of **all five senses, seeing, hearing, physical feeling, tasting and smelling**.

This is called attentiveness and means detailed perception without judgement, detailed seeing, detailed hearing, detailed feeling, detailed physical awareness. When we do not try to perceive all these things in detail, we do not notice many of the processes that occur inside us and around us. For example, we are sitting in a German course, listening to the teacher. Outside, a bird flies by the window, it begins to rain, a table is slid across the floor in the next room, two people are talking in the corridor, another course participant drops a tissue on the floor, the room is getting warmer and warmer and the air begins to smell pungently. All these things are happening at the same time, but we probably don't notice many of them because we are concentrating on what the teacher is saying. In this case, it is important to blank out everything else from our awareness. This situation is an example for when it is helpful to blank out stimuli (certain perceptions).

That can also work in the other direction:

When a nasty memory or disturbing thought invades our minds, or we just can't stop brooding then it helps to observe and perceive things in detail that are happening NOW. That distracts our mind/brain from the dominating negative thoughts and memories of the past and brings us back to Here and Now. We are present; we are completely in this moment.

Buddhist monks use attentiveness exercises to help them meditate better; to erase as many thoughts as possible from their minds for a while. Meditation is a great art and must be practiced a long time before succeeding. You have certainly noticed how difficult it is to think of absolutely nothing, even for a minute or two. That's no wonder, when you consider in 24 hours a person thinks up to 70,000 thoughts! That's a new thought nearly every second. When there are too many negative thoughts in our thought-storage, it's hard to concentrate on anything else. The method we use to reduce stress caused by negative thoughts is called attentiveness, and you can train yourself! It has been scientifically proven that attentiveness exercises lower blood pressure, make your breathing deeper and can even ease pain. You can imagine the effect of attentiveness like this:



Each person can decide for him or herself which sense or combination of senses they would like to use for attentiveness exercises. Here are a few tasks to help you discover which sense/senses are most appeal to you.

Exercise 7: Conscious listening

- Sit down in a comfortable position and relax. Now, open your ears. Bring your entire attention to what you can hear. If you like, close your eyes. If closing your eyes is uncomfortable, choose one point in the room and focus your eyes on it.
- Concentrate on the sounds you can hear right now. Say to yourself, "I hear a...and ...and..."
- Are the sounds loud or soft? Are they ongoing or momentary? Are they high or low? Deep or bright?
- Now try to hear your own breathing. Did you already hear it before?
- Pay attention to your slow and calm breathing, simply listening to how the air flows in and out of your mouth or nose without any effort on your part. Listen to your very own breathing rhythm.
- Open your eyes, if they were closed. Look around you, take a deep breath and end the exercise.

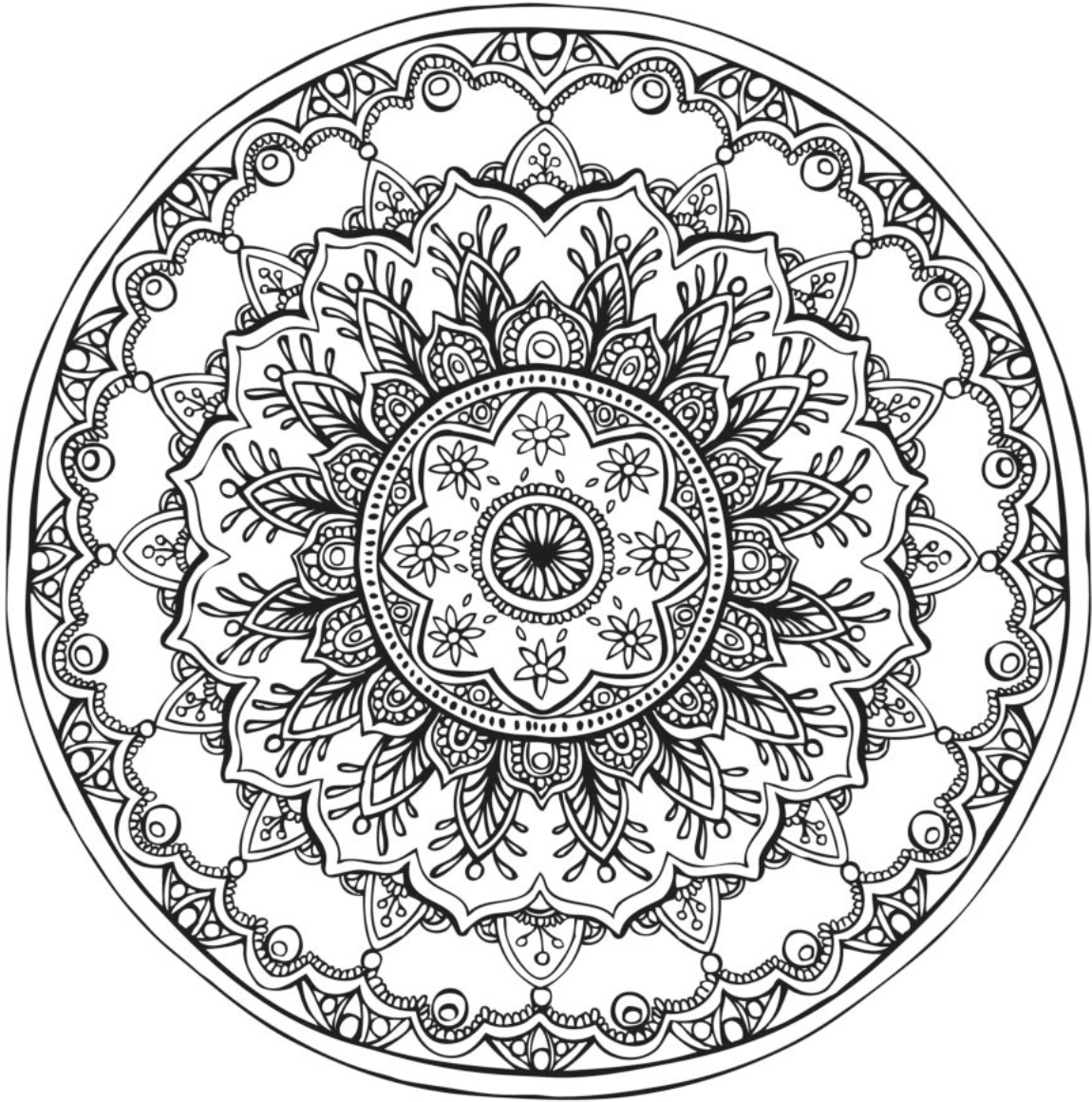
Exercise 8: Attentive drawing

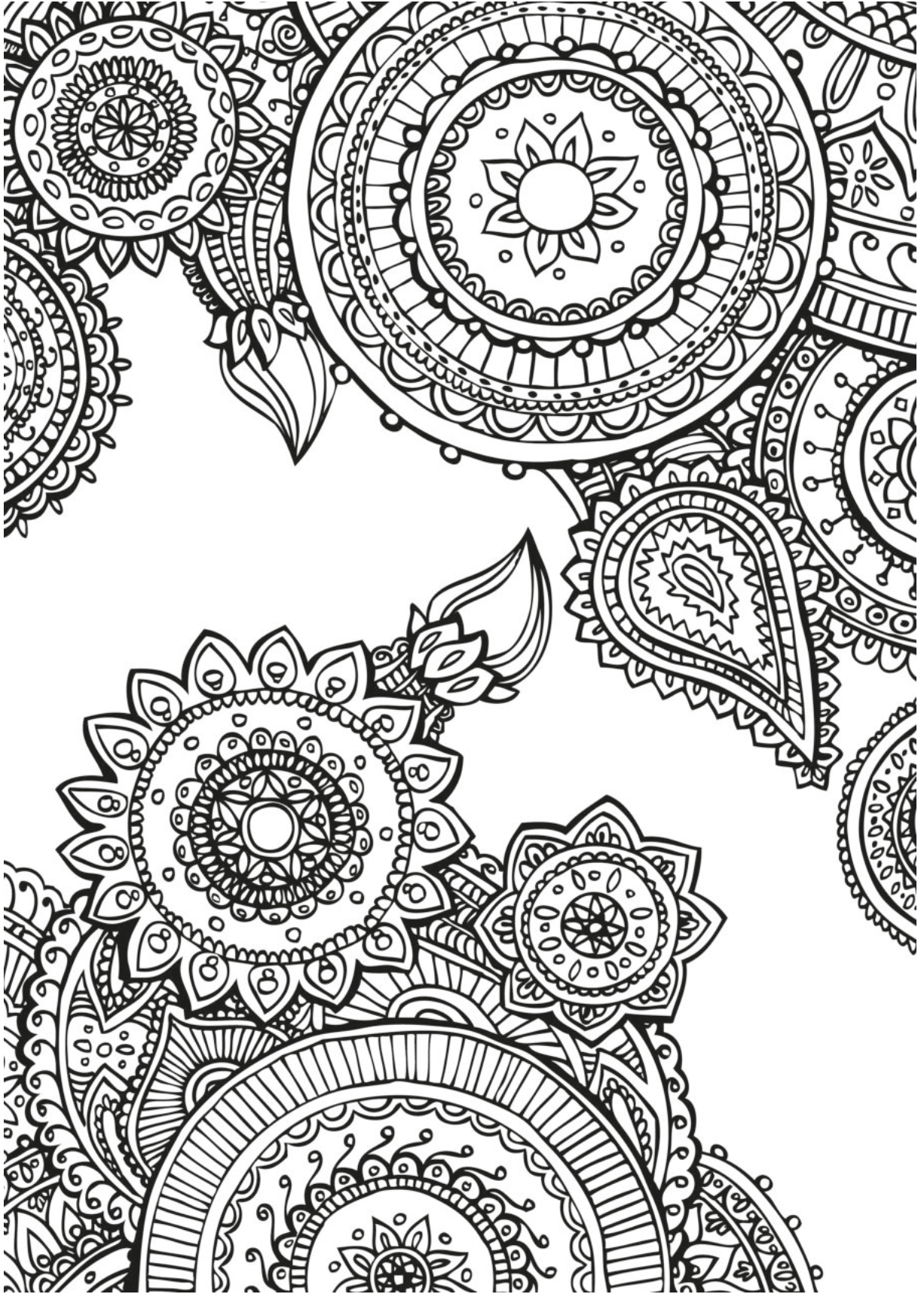
You will need colored pencils for this exercise.

On the following pages, you will find an assortment of pictures that may radiate serenity and strength. Choose a picture that particularly appeals to you. Now take your pencils and begin to color in the shapes and patterns one at a time. Use different colors, changing color for every shape outlined in black. Concentrate completely on the drawing process and the resulting powerful picture.









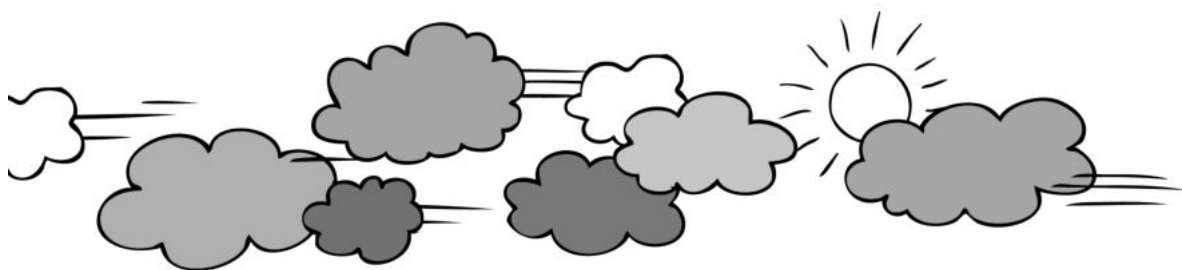


Exercise 9: Traveling through your body

You will want to find a quiet place for this exercise, somewhere where you will not be disturbed. Try to remain aware of each step throughout the entire exercise. The goal is to simply observe, not to change anything.

- Sit as straight as possible on a chair or bench. Are you comfortable? Are both of your feet flat on the floor?
- If you like, you can close your eyes or concentrate on one point straight ahead of you during the exercise.
- Imagine the **soles of your feet**, touching the floor. How do they feel? Are you wearing socks or shoes? How do they feel? Are your feet warm or cold? What else do your feet feel?
- Now turn your attention to your **calves, the part of your leg between the ankle and knee**. How do they feel? Are you wearing shorts or a skirt? Can you feel the cloth from your clothing?
- Traveling in your mind, move your attention to your **thighs and bottom**. Feel the contact with the chair you are sitting on. Is the surface you're sitting on hard or soft? Are your thighs tense or relaxed?
- Now turn your attention to your **back**. Focus on your spine from your seat bone to your neck. Are you sitting straight or slightly hunched?
- Next, focus on your **stomach**. Are your stomach muscles relaxed? Does your upper stomach rise and fall with your breathing?
- Turn your attention to your **chest**. Observe how your chest rises and falls as you inhale and exhale.
- Focus on your **shoulders**. Are they tense and high or hanging loosely and relaxed?
- Turn your attention to your **hands**. What are they resting on? How does the material beneath your hands feel? Are your hands warm or cold?
- Feel your **underarms**. What do you sense there?
- Focus on your **upper arms** and then, moving through your **neck**, bring your attention to your **head**. Is your head resting on something or does your neck hold it freely? Is your hair blowing in the wind or are there strands of hair in your face? How does your forehead feel? Is it cool or tense? Focus on your **eyes, nose and mouth**.
- Now, inhale deeply and slowly let your breath out, bringing your attention back to your surroundings.

The wonderful thing is that you can be attentive and present anywhere and anytime. No matter where you are or what is happening around you, when you notice you feel uncomfortable, you can immediately begin to concentrate on your surroundings and senses. Try not to be too hard on yourself. When undesired thoughts turn up, let them come, just perceive them without letting them disturb you, and let them go again. You can, for example, imagine that the thoughts are clouds, sailing through the sky, coming towards you and moving past again. Or that they are balloons, rising into the sky.



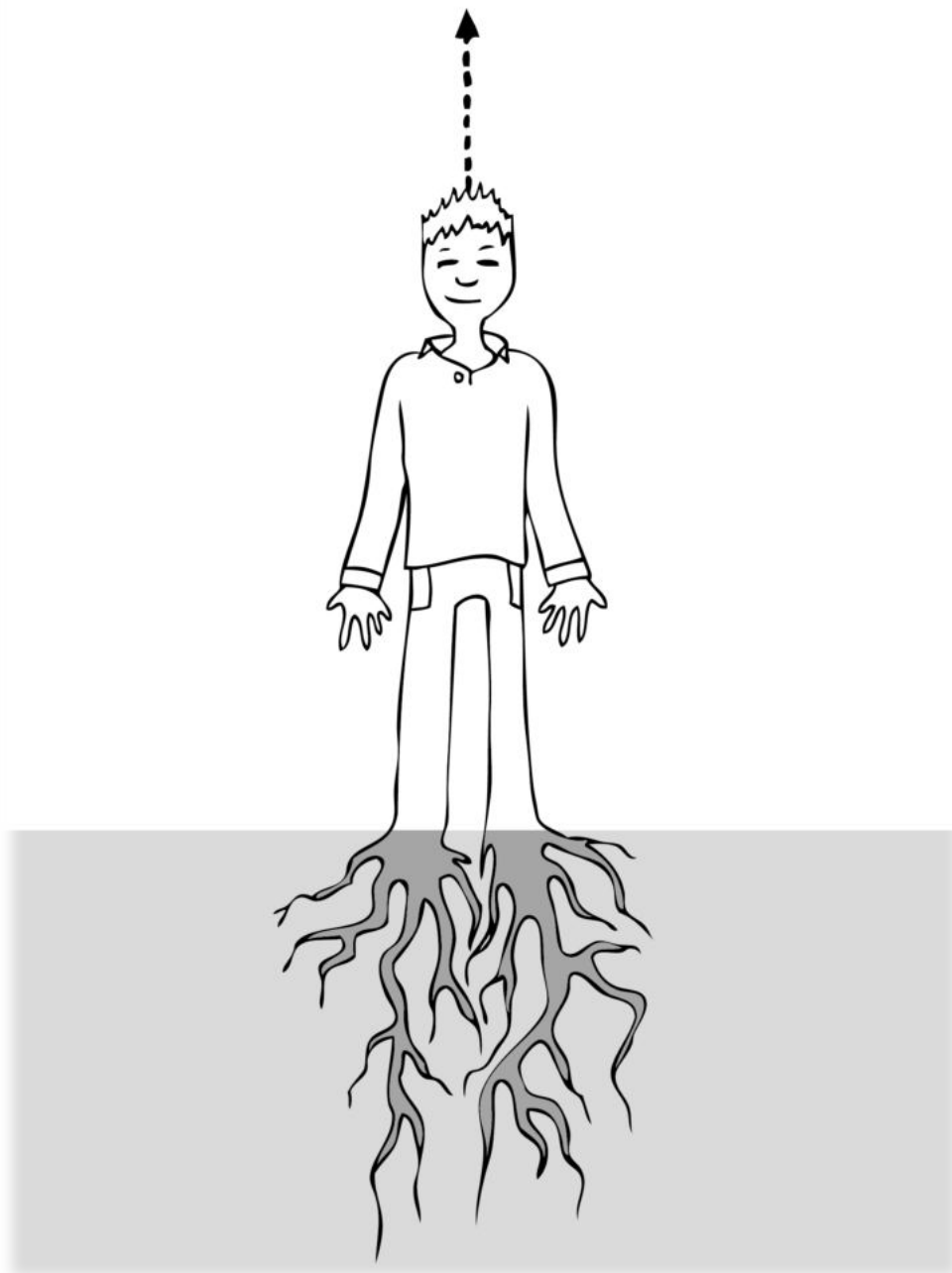
The tree exercise will also help you become anchored in Here and Now.

Exercise 10: The tree

If you have done the “my tree of life” exercise, this one goes along with it very well.

Stand up very straight, with both feet firmly on the ground. Your legs and feet are shoulder-width apart, aligned with your hips. Imagine a thread running up your and out of the crown up your head, and someone gently pulls you up even straighter. Your arms hang loosely by your sides, your palms turned forward.

Now, visualize your feet firmly connected to the floor or ground. Roots slowly sprout from the soles of your feet, growing far down into the Earth. The roots anchor you firmly in the ground. Imagine a gust of wind that rushes through your leaves, but the tree stays straight and tall, deeply rooted, enjoying the wind’s caress.



A small pointer on the **meaning of practice**:

The positive feelings that come with these exercises can only take hold when they are practiced regularly. Our bodies quickly 'forget' a single moment of relaxation because our brains are still so busy with traumatic events. Negative feelings and thoughts are branded on our brains, so we must counterbalance them with constantly repeated, short, positive impulses. And these small exercises provide just that, short, positive impulses that, when practiced, become firmly anchored in our brains. It has been discovered, that a thought must be repeated 1,000 times before it becomes integrated and effects your bodily senses automatically. So, if you enjoy one or more of the exercises I have described so far, I would like to encourage you to do it again and again and again, until it is a natural part of your everyday routine. Of course, not all the exercises in this book, just the ones that appeal to you. Even if it is only one exercise, that's fine! Practice it regularly, that's the main thing!

2.6. My routine, my security!

Following terrible experiences, body and soul are in turmoil. Nothing feels safe anymore. You have already read how your brain is always on the lookout and is frightened that something terrible can happen again. The emergency program is still active. Even when a part of you knows, that was in the past, I am now in Germany, I am now safe! Out brainstem is not so easily convinced. With the all kinds of methods and especially the cerebrum's help, our rationale, we must teach the brainstem, convincing it with repeated input, that we are safe now. You have already learned one strategy to achieve this. Another, important strategy is to live out your safety consciously, creating steadiness in your everyday life. Of course, you do not control all aspects of your life right now, but there are many ways you can contribute to generating stability. For example, have a close look at your daily routine. You are not constantly confronted with unexpected events. Appointments and procedures dictated by outside influences can even help you gain a sense of security. It feels good to have a consistent routine. A daily structure is a secure and reliable framework for your life.

2.6.1. Structured daily routines

Sometimes it's difficult to create a structure when there's not much to do and you don't know how to use your day. When there's no obvious good reason or need for getting up in the morning or going to bed at night. You run the risk of just living for the moment, waiting to see what the day will bring. It takes a lot of discipline, and maybe even external support to insist on creating your own daily routine and rhythm; to set small goals; to plan your days. But it is worth the effort, because establishing a daily rhythm brings more and more security into your life.

Planning and regularity are the enemies of uncontrolled negative thinking.

Maybe you will say, "How am I supposed to feel safe, when I don't even know if I can stay here? When I don't know where I will live? Or if I will be permitted to work? When I don't know how my friends and family are doing?" You are right, of course. All these uncertainties that are still hounding your life, particularly your future, do not make it easy for you. And it often takes a long time, requiring many tiny steps, before you can gradually feel secure amid all these outer uncertainties. I would like very much to give you a portion of my confidence. Confidence that most of these questions will be answered in time, allowing your sense of security to grow.

And you can gain security **NOW** in several areas! We can **actively shape and change the NOW!** Do not wait for answers to those huge questions about the future, start taking small steps **NOW!** Many small steps will take to the most distant destination!

By consciously shaping your daily life, **you** create and experience a bit of normalcy **yourself**. Pleasant activities and regular duties, such as doing the laundry or going shopping, can become rituals and habits, giving you a sense of **normalcy, which means security**. The following exercise can help you to better shape your daily routine.

Exercise 11: Be your daily manager!

On the following page, you will see a page from a calendar with a whole week. On the far left is the time.

Now think about all the regular appointments you have each week. Do you have a regular German course? Regular meetings or tasks?

Young people in in youth home will find loads of appointments. There are regular lessons, meal times, lights out time, group activities, excursions...

Fill in your personal weekly schedule on the weekly planner on the next page.

Here is an example:

WOCHENPLAN									
	MONTAG	DIENSTAG	MITTWOCH	DONNERSTAG	FREITAG	SAMSTAG	SONNTAG		
07:00	AUFSTEHEN								
08:00	FRÜHSTÜCK ☺								
09:00	DEUTSCHKURS 📖					AUFSTEHEN			
10:00									
11:00									
12:00									
13:00	MITTAGESSEN ☺					ZIMMER PUTZEN	JOGGEN MIT FREUND		
14:00									
15:00	COMPUTER-ZEIT 🖥️				AUSFLUG MIT GRUPPE 👥				
16:00	FUSS-BALL ⚽				FUSS-BALL ⚽				
17:00	ABENDESSEN ☺								
18:00									
19:00									
20:00	MUSIK-ABEND 🎸								
21:00						KARTEN SPIELEN 🃏			
22:00	INS BETT GEHEN 🛏️								
23:00									
24:00						INS BETT 🛏️			

If you live in a communal accommodation, you may have difficulty finding fixed, routine dates and times. Even more important that you create your own. What could they be?

You could, for example, make a date with yourself to go jogging every Tuesday and Thursday. Or to play soccer. Or to draw. Or to make music. Whatever you like to do! Think about the rituals and habits that were once part of your everyday routine. Which ones would you like integrate into your life in Germany?

You would like to draw, but don't have any drawing materials? You don't have a soccer ball? Ask a German person in your proximity. Show them your weekly agenda and ask for drawing materials or for a soccer club in the area where you can play. **There are always possibilities! Many people would be more than happy to help you out with such things!**

You can schedule regular times for **meals** and regular times for **going to bed and getting up** in the morning. This will give your day a solid structure. Your inner clock will adjust to it. This is especially important when you have trouble sleeping. I'll explain more sleeping disorders in Chapter 3.1.!

Regular sleeping hours are a very important aspect of your daily routine.

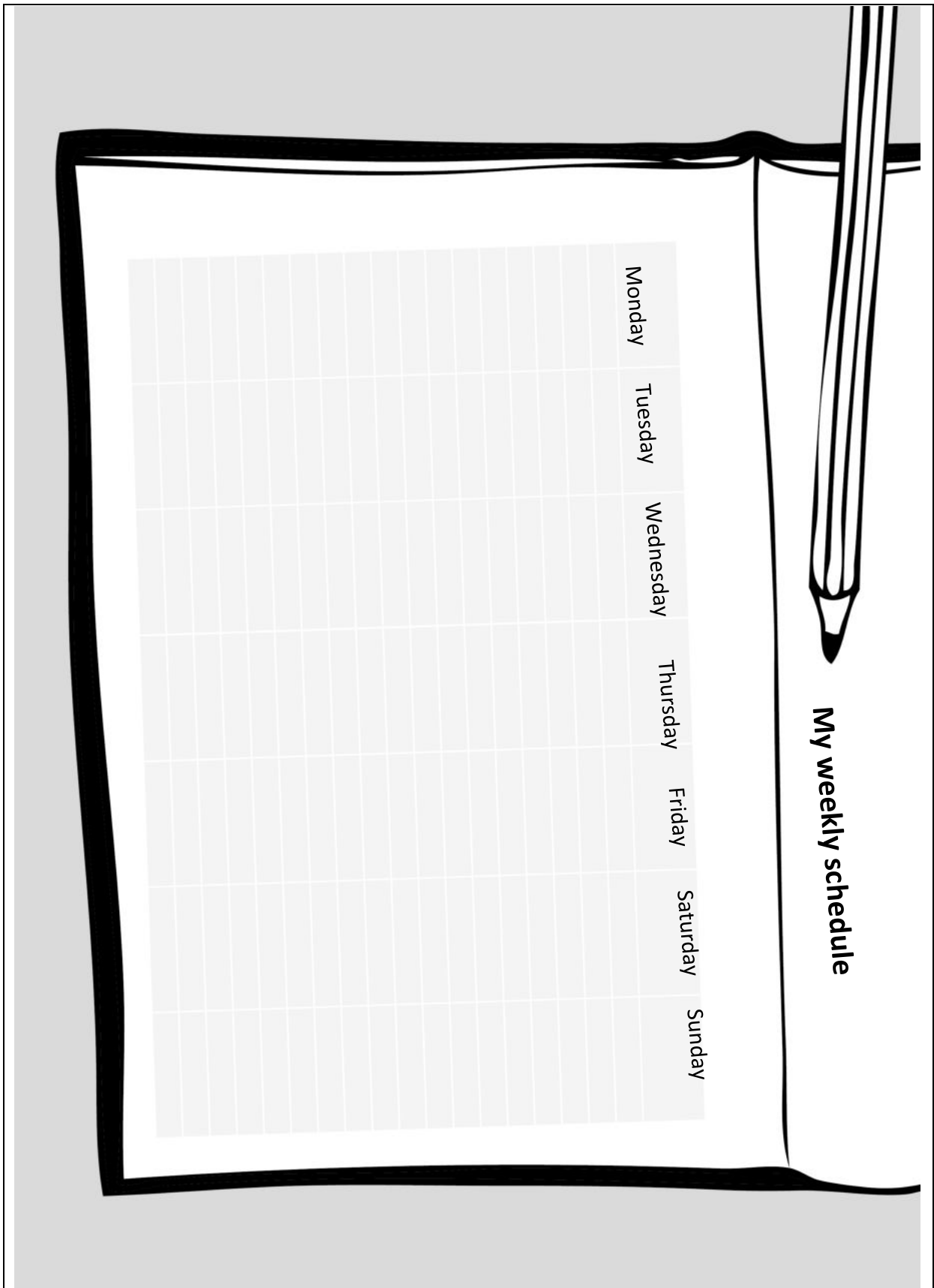
Surely you have made some acquaintances with people from your own country. Maybe there is someone who enjoys playing cards as much as you do. Suggest getting together once a week, on a certain day, at a certain time to play cards.

Create regular time periods for practicing your German.

Maybe you enjoy cooking and can make regular dates with other people, to cook and eat together?

Perhaps you can help the superintendent by sweeping the corridor once a week, or something like this?

Aside from your regular agenda, there are many days with other appointments, such as doctor's appointments or appointments with your guardian or social worker. Appointments with the foreigner's registration offices, etc. That's why it's good to make a new agenda for every week, to cover all times and dates, the regular, recurring dates and the one-off appointments. This way, you have a comprehensive awareness of your daily routine. **Then *you* are the manager of your everyday life!**



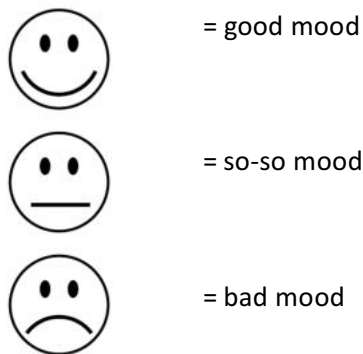
Of course, you can use the calendar function on your cellphone to create your weekly agenda!

Exercise 12: My diary of pleasant activities

Especially important for you are pleasant activities. Every day, consciously plan **at least one pleasant activity**. Enter this into your weekly agenda as you learned in **Exercise 11**, to be sure it happens. If you have already done **Exercise 4 (List of positive activities, Chapter 2.3.)**, you can look over the list again to find the activities that appeal to you and make firm dates to do them. These can be very simple things like taking a walk, listening to your favorite music or reading a poem. Evenings, before going to bed, look at your agenda for that day. Did you do all the things on the agenda? Were there other, unplanned pleasant activities? On an extra sheet of paper, make a note of all the pleasant things you did this day, and how you felt afterwards.

Is there a symbol in your language for good or bad moods? Then use this symbol.

You can also use the smiley system:



Here is another form that you can use for your weekly notes. In the first column, write what you planned. In the second column, write which pleasant activities you did. And in the third column, make the symbol for how you felt after the activity, good, neutral or bad.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE of pleasant activities

Planned pleasant activities									
Pleasant activities I did									
Influences on my mood									



* = good mood



= so-so mood



= bad mood



A growing sense of security also comes from **understanding the new language**. By learning the language, you feel less of a stranger. You can communicate more and more in German, finding your way around increasingly better. You feel more secure because you understand what people around are saying. You can read and understand the signs and fill out formulas by yourself. You should plan plenty of time for learning the German language.

Just as important is **exercise and sports**. When we move our bodies, our brains send out happy-message chemicals to lighten our moods. Attaining small, self-assumed goals also gives us good feeling about ourselves and increases our self-confidence. Movement stops the mental merry-go-round of negative thought. So, it's worthwhile to pick yourself up and get your body moving, even if you don't feel like it and would rather just stay in bed. Take a walk or play some sport, it doesn't matter which. Dancing is also an option.

2.6.2. Rules

This is especially addressed to the young people among you living in a youth aid facility.

There are so many rules and I know that most of you don't like rules! Not liking rules is part of being a teenager. At this time of your life, it is important to sometimes rebel against adults so you can find your own way into adulthood. You're experiencing a difficult time right now, with special tasks, and all these rules don't seem to help much. All the same, let me say that rules also offer a secure framework. You can move about within this framework, knowing that when you break the rules, there will be consequences. That is also a form of security, when you know what will happen when you don't follow the rules. You can rely on certain things happening when you break a certain rule. Whether you follow the rules or not, is your decision. But you know the structure you live within, the rules of the facility where you live. And the custodians did not make the rules to make your life difficult. They made the rules to provide you with a clear and secure structure, making communal life possible. They gave these rules plenty of thought and the rules have very clear objectives. Later on, in your adult life, you will also be confronted with rules, for example at your workplace. There are also traffic rules. If you are caught exceeding the speed limit, you must pay a fine. If you come to work too late once too often, you will be fired. The consequences of your behavior are predictable and **predictability means security!** You decide which rules you follow. You know what will happen when you break the rules. **You are in control!**

2.7. Social contacts

Some people who have experienced traumatic events withdraw, in the hopes this will protect them from further negative experiences. They find it hard to trust other people. Maybe you, too, are afraid of being a burden to someone or feel you won't be understood anyway. Some people are convinced that they must work out their problems by themselves or feel guilty and won't accept any help. Also, the fear that talking about it will only make things worse, makes many people avoid social interaction.

Humans are social creatures. We need contact to feel well and safe. Isolating yourself leads to a heavier load and increased loneliness. **Social interaction is extremely helpful in coping with and processing negative experiences.**

Any contact that feels good is helpful! Maybe there's someone you simply enjoy playing cards with, and someone else you like to talk to about everyday hurdles, and yet another person who helps you fill out forms. You will sense who you can trust or who you want to tell about what moves you.

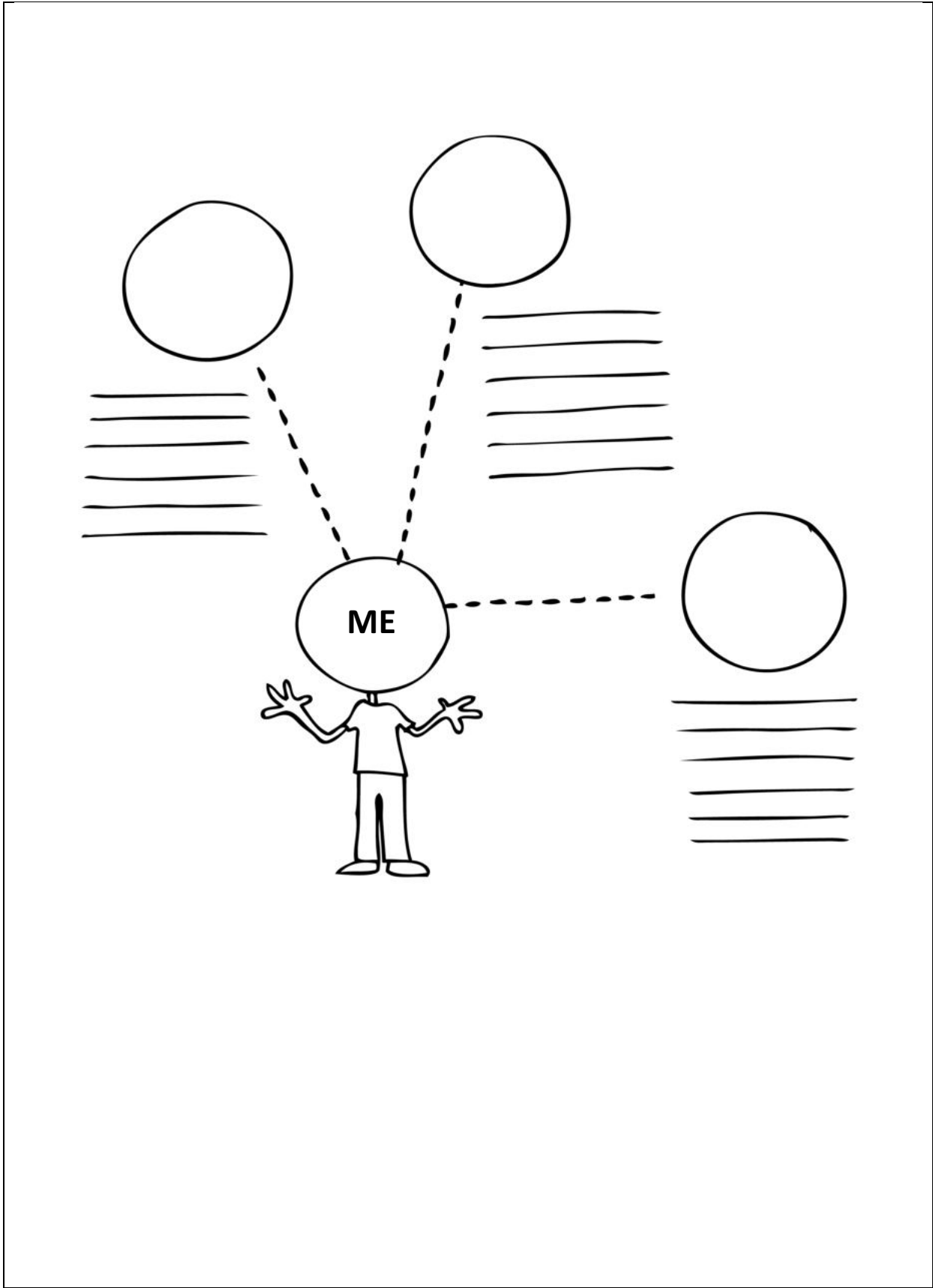
Naturally, you can also say no to people who disturb you! Pay attention to present or past positive experiences that you have shared with other people.

Interaction with people who are not nearby, and live in another country are also important social contacts. Sometimes it's not possible to contact certain people. But these people are important to us. Just like people we have loved, but are no longer living, still mean a lot to us. They have given us something important, and the memory of them and shared moments are a valuable treasure we carry with us. In Chapter 3.7., you can read more about how you can keep inner contact with someone who is no longer with you.

Exercise 13: My social network

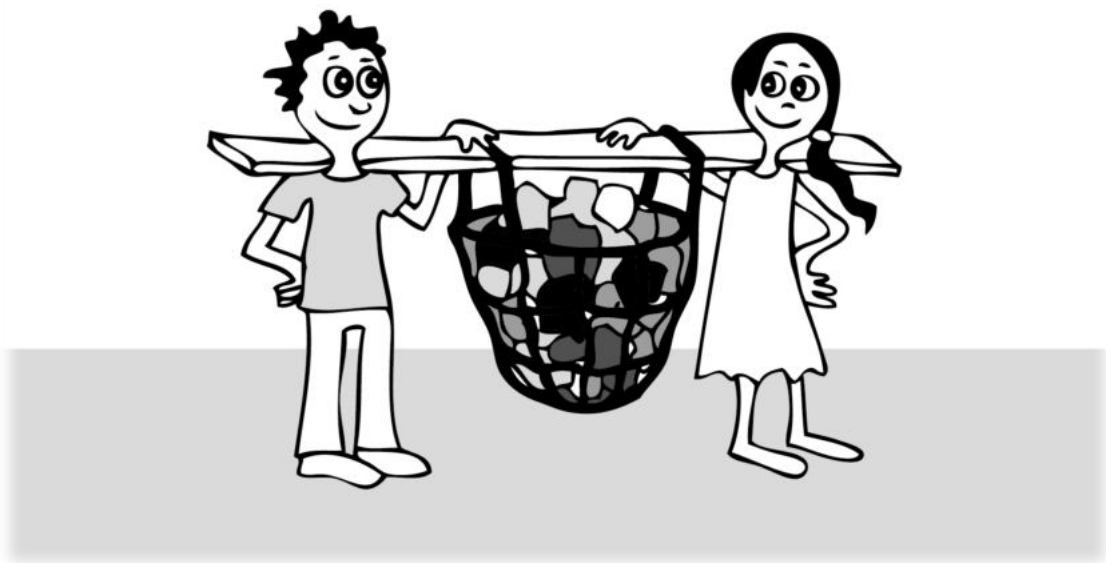
Think about which people are important to you now. Write their names in the empty circles in the picture. If there are not enough circles, simply draw some more circles around you. Even people who live far away or have died can be a part of this. It can be people who you enjoy spending time with, who you like to talk to, who make you laugh. It can be people you spend a lot of time with or rarely see, or people from your past. It can be people you see every day or only occasionally talk to on the telephone. It can also be people who are not present in life at all right now but who you think of often.

Now think about these people's good qualities. What impresses you about them? What about them makes you feel good? Is it something they say or something they do? Is it the special way a person acts? Which worldly wisdom have you learned from him or her? What did you or do you enjoy doing with them? Write down the answers to these questions on the lines below the circles.



2.8. Sharing thoughts, expressing yourself, being creative

Most people find help in talking to someone else about what burdens them or about their worries. It can feel very good to talk about memories, dreams, thoughts and feelings. There is a saying in Germany that goes, *Sorrow shared is sorrow halved*. This means that your own suffering can become less when you share it with someone. You don't have to suffer alone. Sharing can help you feel a bit better. It is important, though, to decide yourself to whom and how much you share! Think about who you would like to share with and who you would not.



Is there a proverb in your language with a similar meaning? In some cultures, suffering is not expressed in words, but in loud wailing or shared reading of the Quran. Which examples and traditions are there in your culture for sharing suffering?

Many artists express their personal suffering in their pictures, songs or poems. That can also be healing. You don't have to be an artist to do it. Writing things down or bringing color to paper can lighten your soul because it comes out instead of staying inside us.

Is there music that expresses how you feel?

Which colors and shapes describe your experiences?

Which songs express good feelings? Joy? Enthusiasm? Fun?

How would you draw happy feelings? Counterbalance your suffering with positive feelings and experiences so you will not be imprisoned by your suffering.

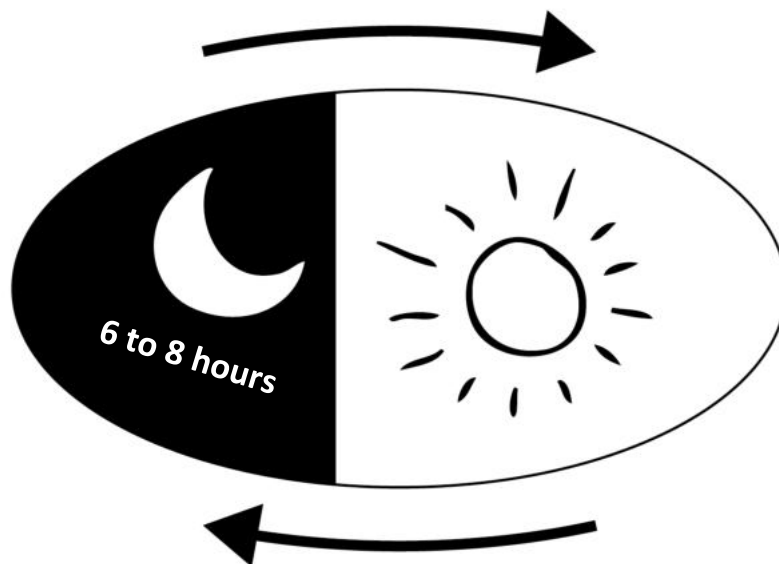
Chapter 3: What to do when...? – Help with specific problems

3.1. Difficulty falling asleep and/or sleeping through the night

In Chapter 1, you learned why traumatic experiences often make you over-alert. Your brainstem keeps your body tense and ready to react to any possible new danger. This often leads to lying awake at night because you can't fall asleep, or when you do fall asleep, that you wake up often and have trouble going back to sleep. This happens even though there is no immediate danger in your room or bed. Lying awake in bed at night invites negative thoughts and the mental merry-go-round starts to go in circles.

Therefore, it is important to consciously reduce **bodily tension** in the evening. Targeted **relaxation exercises** can help you (see **Chapter 3.1.2.**). There, I introduce you to two exercises you can try out. There are other, good exercises to help **quiet thoughts** and steer them in a relaxing direction. To this end, you can choose from one of the **visualization exercises** in this chapter, **section 3.1.3.**

The over-alertness and its accompanying tension are the causes of normal **sleeping-waking rhythm** disturbances. Rhythm means regularity, like in music, where the tempo is regulated by a certain repetition. You can imagine a sleeping-waking rhythm like this:



There is a time to sleep and a time to be awake. Most people need 6 to 8 hours of sleep to feel alert during the day. When this rhythm is disturbed, you need to train yourself to recover it. Until it becomes automatic again. To regain your sleeping-waking rhythm, there are some rules to follow.

3.1.1. Guidelines for a good night's sleep

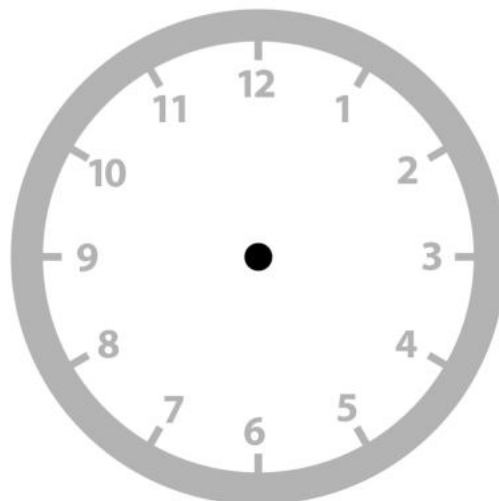
A biological rhythm is something regularly repetitive. You can regulate your 'internal clock' by training your body to go to sleep at a certain time. You can compare it to feeding time for farm animals. When you feed them at the same time every day, after just one week the animals begin to call for their feed at this time. Their 'internal clock' has been programmed for food now.

Exercise 14: The internal clock

Look at the clock face and think about what would be good time for you to go to bed each evening and to get up each morning. Remember that the entire sleeping time should not exceed 8 hours. To get your sleeping patterns back on track as quickly as possible, plan **only 6 hours** of sleep at the beginning. When that is going well, slowly increase your sleeping time to 6.5, then to 7 hours. You will find an example just below, and the next clock is for your own, personal sleeping agenda!



Example:
Sleeping time 11pm to 6am

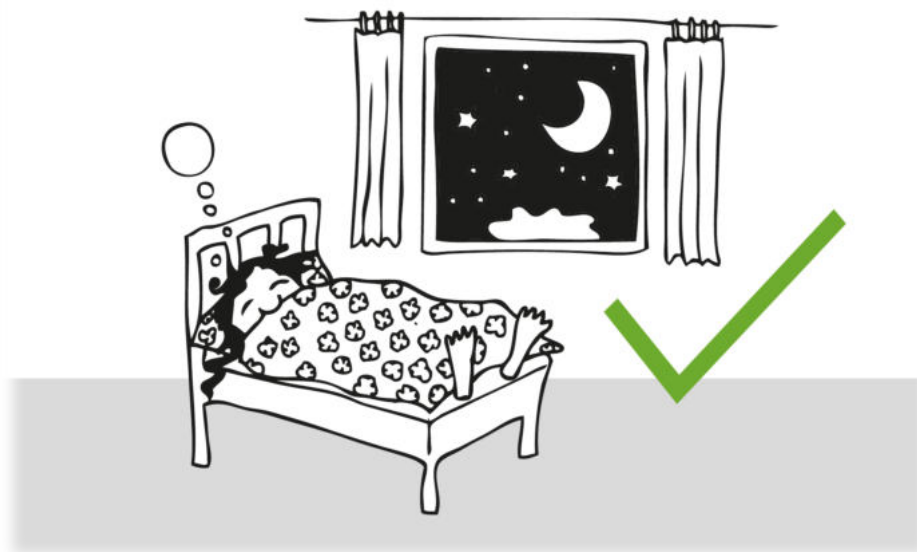
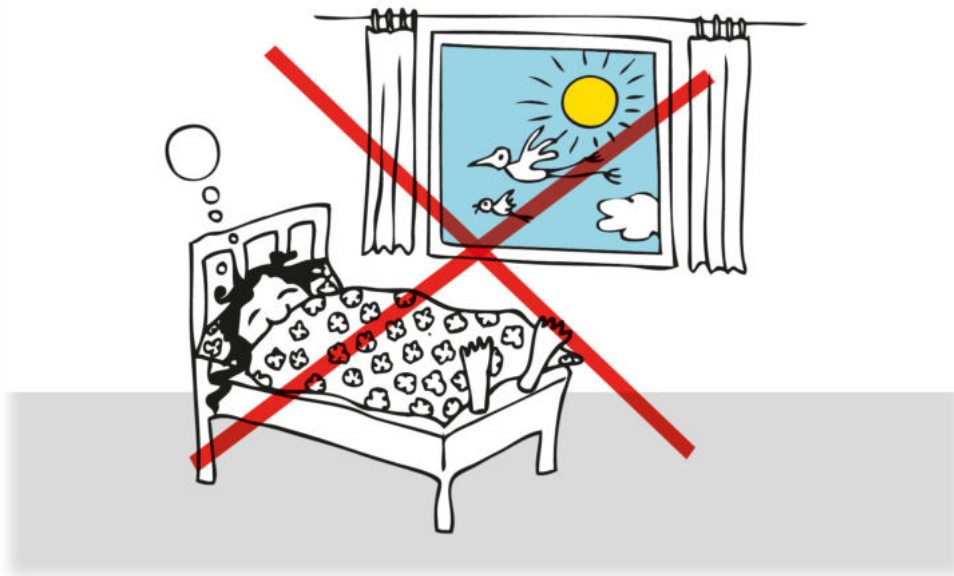


My personal sleeping time:
Bedtime: _____
Get up time: _____

This will only work when you try to stick to your agenda **every day** over the next weeks. Even if you can't fall asleep right away and are tired when you get up in the morning, keep at it! It is important to get up at the same time and you will discover that practice certainly does make perfect. It may be hard in the beginning because you're tired during the day, but don't let that discourage. Persevere!

It is especially important **NOT** to sleep during the day, no matter how tired you are. Sleeping during the day will only make it more difficult to stick to your agenda because you are no longer tired at night when it is time to go to bed. Bearing up under the tiredness during the day will make it easier to fall asleep at night.

Rule # 1 Do not sleep during the day!



Another important rule is:

Rule # 2: Beds are only for sleeping!

Train your brain and your body to associate your bed with sleep. Only lay down in bed when it is time for you to sleep. Do not use your bed for listening to music, doing homework, writing letters or other activities. Make sure you find another place to do these things.



Rule # 3: Try to fill your days with physical activities or sports!

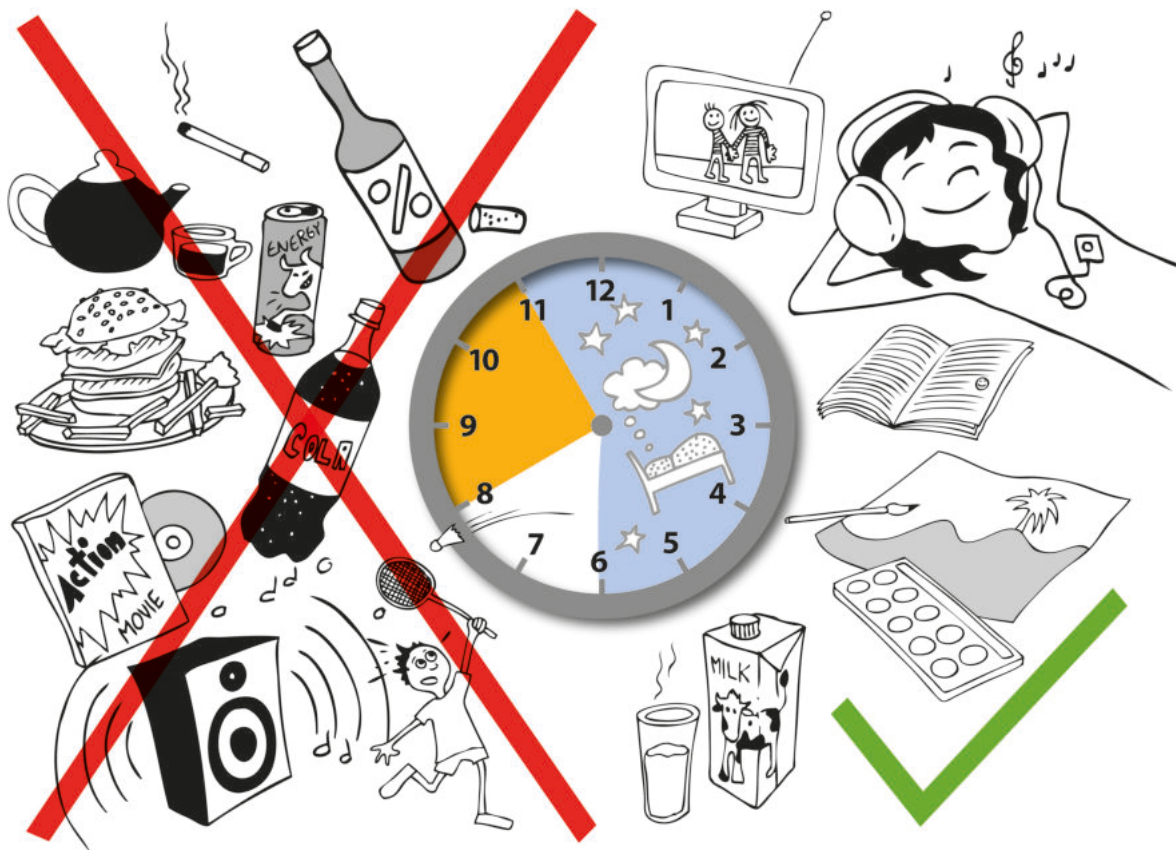
Burning off energy is a great way to help you feel tired at night! To help you sleep better, do at least 30 minutes of sports each day.



Rule # 4: Prepare your body for sleep two to three hours before it's time to go to bed!

This means:

- **No sports** two or three hours before your sleeping agenda begins. Sports energize and activate, making you tired much later.
- Before going to sleep **do not eat large, heavy meals**, as they give your stomach so much work to do, that your body cannot relax properly.
- **Do not watch suspenseful films** such as action or horror films, or listen to **loud, pulsating music**. The thrills keep your body awake for a long time!
- **No black tea, cola, coffee or energy drinks!** All these drinks contain caffeine and keep you awake! Drinking **alcohol** in the evening also stimulates your nervous system, making it harder to fall asleep. The same thing applies to nicotine in **cigarettes**.
- Choose **calming activities** in the evening two or three hours before going to bed. For example, watching a funny film, listening to gentle music, practicing German vocabulary or filling in a relaxing picture *such as one of the pictures in Exercise 8, Chapter 2.5*.



Rule # 5: Create a good-night ritual!

While reprogramming your sleeping agenda, you can additionally support your body by creating a ritual that you carry out every night at the same time. The ritual, i.e. something you repeat, every evening, sends signals to your brain and body, telling them it is time to go to sleep. Maybe you had such a ritual when you were a child? What could this ritual be now? Here are a few suggestions: reading passages from the Quran or Bible, drinking warm milk with honey (a natural sedative), writing a diary of positive moments (*see Exercise 12, Chapter 2.6.1*).



22:30



My personal good-night ritual: _____

3.1.2. Relaxing your body

Now, you are lying in bed at your personal sleeping agenda time and still cannot fall asleep. A wonderful tool is to relax your body consciously. The two following exercises can help you to do this. Choose one of these exercises and do it regularly. Even if it doesn't work the first time, keep practicing. Don't forget, regular training brings you to your goal!

Exercise 15: Breathing exercise

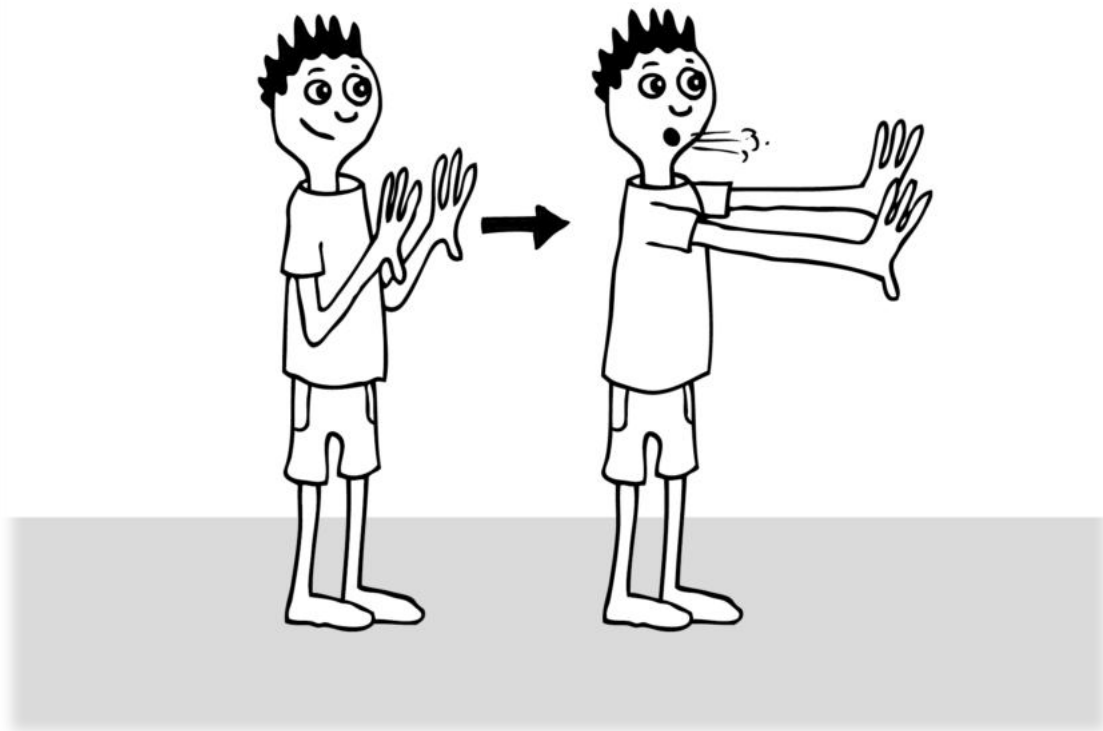
Breathing is our body's fundamental rhythm. Tension influences this rhythm and the rhythm influences tension! When we become upset, our breathing becomes faster and shallower. This incurs a lower level of CO₂ in our blood, which in turn makes us restless and nervous. Slowly exhaling lowers the stress level as the CO₂ level rises again. This helps us regain a bit of serenity. Many sportspeople exhale slowly intentionally in stress situations or by physical exertion. This breathing method requires some practice, since we normally inhale more, or even hold our breath when we are stressed.

During this exercise, you can close your eyes or focus on one point on the ceiling.

Try to perceive your breathing rhythm without changing anything.

Observe your inhalation and exhalation. You can lay your hand on your stomach and feel it rise when you breathe in and fall when you breathe out. Begin to count your breaths; in and out, 'one'; in and out, 'two'. This will help you to keep the focus on your breathing without side-tracking onto thoughts and memories.

Now, try to breathe more deeply. Breathe in through your nose slowly and deeply, so that your stomach rises very high, and breathe out through your mouth until all the air is out and your stomach is flat again. Then, make a small pause before you breathe in again. You can count to three, and then breathe in again just as slowly and deeply through your nose, and breathe out your mouth, pause, (1, 2, 3) and continue. When your thoughts begin to drift, simply come back to concentrating on your breathing rhythm. When negative thoughts or memories arise, breathe them out powerfully. Send them out with a strong exhalation or even a heave. You can also use your arms and hands to push the thoughts and memories away from you as you breathe out. In this way, but still maintaining your breathing rhythm, push away all worries and fears that may arise.



With every exhalation, more and more tension leaves your body and you become more relaxed. Try to feel the relaxation in your body. You can continue this exercise until you fall asleep or as long as you like.

Exercise 16: Progressive muscle relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is about feeling the difference between tension and relaxation, using physical activity to achieve physical and mental relaxation. A man named Jacobson developed this method. The method entails intentionally tightening up certain muscle groups. When the muscles are then released, the group is more relaxed than before. You can do this exercise laying down or sitting up.

Sitting up: Sit up with a straight back in a chair. Your head is an extension of your spine, your chin is slightly pulled in. Your shoulders are relaxed. Both feet are firmly planted on the floor.

Laying down:

Feel your head lying on the pillow. Allow your shoulders to relax and lay your arms next to your body. Feel how they sink into the mattress. Your legs are stretched out, lying flat on the mattress and relaxed.

Breathe in and out of your stomach deeply and quietly. You can lay your hands on your stomach, feeling it rise and fall.

The next time you inhale, make tight fists with your hands, bend your arms at a 45° angle and tense your **hands and forearms** with all your strength. Press your upper arms very tightly to your sides. Hold the tension for about 5 seconds, breathing in and out twice in this time. By the next exhalation release the tension in your hands and arms for about 10 seconds. Try to feel the difference between tension and release. Now repeat the whole cycle one more time.

Concentrate now on your **upper arms and shoulders**. While inhaling tighten your biceps, triceps and shoulders. Hold the tension very tightly for 5 seconds, raising your shoulders up to your ears. Release the tension and relax for 10 seconds, noticing the difference between tension and release. Now repeat the whole cycle one more time.

The next is your **face**. Tighten your face muscles, squint your eyes, turn up your nose, clench your teeth and open your mouth very wide. Imagine you have bitten into a lemon. Take notice of the tension, breathing in and out twice while holding the tension. On the second exhalation, release the tension. Feel your face becoming smooth. Forehead, eyes, nose, cheeks, mouth, and jaw are completely relaxed. Now repeat the whole cycle one more time.

Now it's your **shoulder blades and back's** turn. Pull your shoulders back as if you want to bring your shoulder blades together. Pull your chin down to your chest, stretching your backbone very long. Hold the tension for 5 seconds, breathing in and out. On the second exhalation, release the tension. Notice the difference between tension and release. Now repeat the whole cycle one more time.

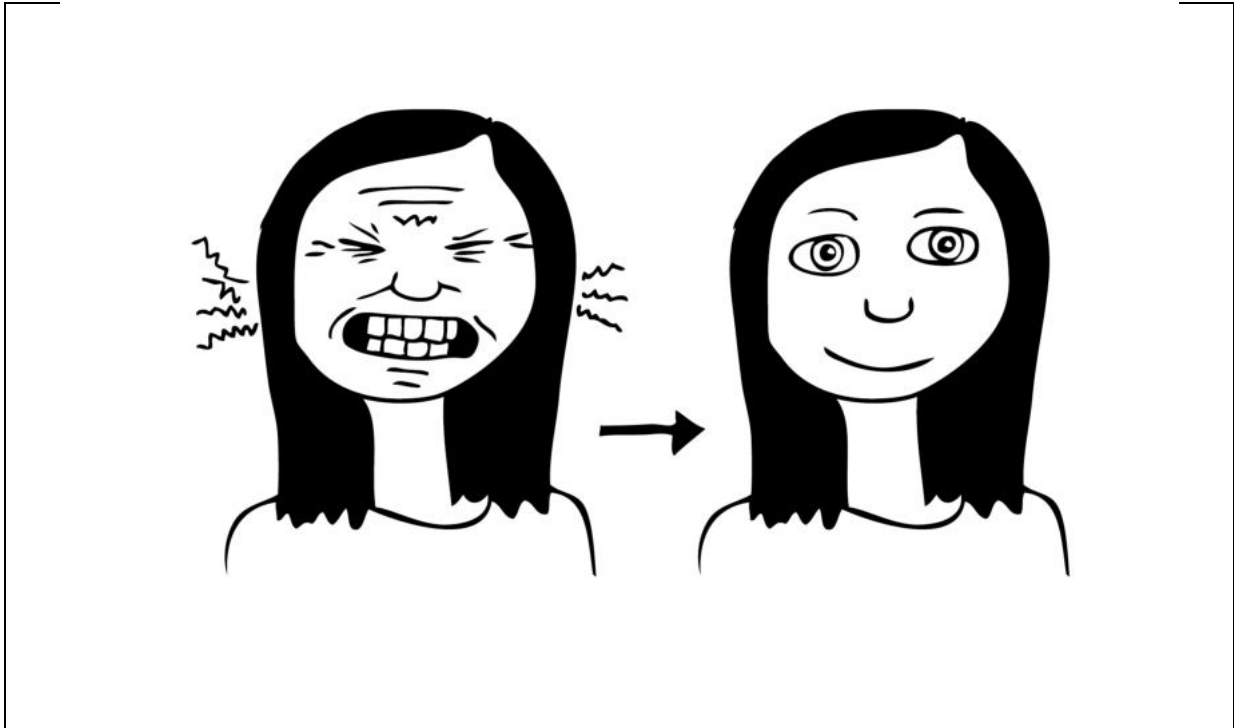
Now squeeze your **buttocks** together tightly and hold the tension. Release and feel the difference. Now repeat.

Take a deep breath and hold it in, tightening your **stomach** muscles as if you wanted to touch your backbone. Relax the tension and notice the difference, Repeat.

Now tighten all your **leg** muscles in both legs, raising them slightly from the mattress. Pull your toes towards your thighs and feel the tension in thighs, calves and feet. Release the tension and notice the difference. Repeat.

Finally, make fists with your **toes**. Hold the tension, release and feel the difference. Repeat.

Now notice the relaxation throughout your whole body. Feel the warmth, slight heaviness and comfort.



3.1.3. Relaxing your mind

If relaxing your body is not enough to quiet your thoughts, you can choose one of the following exercises. Is there a common belief in your culture for helping you fall asleep? In Germany, it is said that imagining counting sheep helps. You imagine a herd of sheep and you count them as they, one after the other, jump over the fence. This is said to help keep thoughts from focusing on problems that may keep you awake.

Exercise 17: Touching head and heart

Put the palms of your hands together, lifting your arms and bending your head slightly so the tips of your fingers gently touch the middle of your forehead, above your eyebrows.

Think back on everything you experienced over the past day. For which experiences are you grateful? Don't give up! There is always something to be grateful for, even when it is simply the fact that you survived the day!

When you have found something that brings you thankfulness, let this memory come alive and vivid in your mind. Now lay your hands on your heart and make a small bow. Thank you!



Scientists have discovered that thankful memories arouse positive feelings in the part of our brain relating to emotions. These positive feelings quickly produce and send out sleep-inducing messages to other brain sectors.

If you keep a Joy Book (*see Exercise 2, Chapter 2*), you can do this exercise after you have entered the positive experiences of the day.

Exercise 18: My personal, private, peaceful place

An inner place is an **imaginary place** where you feel safe, well and relaxed. These and similar visualization exercises have helped millions of people to reduce tension and restlessness. Doing this exercise regularly can invoke feelings of relaxation and well-being. Remember - your thoughts have power! (*Chapter 2.1.*)

Begin by concentrating on your breathing. Breathe in deeply through your nose and out through your mouth, emptying your lung completely. Let yourself relax. Find your own breathing rhythm.

Now visualize a place in your mind's eye. A place where you feel protected and taken care of. A place where you can relax completely. This place can be somewhere you have actually been before or a place that only exists in your imagination. Take your time. It's quite possible that several locations come to mind.

Perhaps you feel most at home in a natural place, like a beach, or forest, on a flowery meadow or in the mountains. Perhaps your place of inner peace is in a house, on a space ship or in a cave....

Once you have decided on a place, look around closely.

What do you see? What is next to you? Under and over you? What colors are there?

What do you hear? Listen to the comforting and pleasant sounds. Perhaps the wind is blowing or rustling through the forest trees? Are there birds singing? Is there the sound of water flowing?

What do you feel? What do you feel on your skin? What is beneath your feet? Is the place warm or comfortably cool? Is the ground soft or hard? Does the grass or sand tickle your feet? Does the wind play in your hair or do you feel the warmth of the sun on your skin?

What do you smell?

Is there a particular **taste** on your tongue?

Are there other living beings in your place of inner peace? People or animals? Keep in mind, though, that **only those with your permission** are allowed to come to this place! This is your very own personal, private, peaceful place, and you alone decide who or what can come there. Perceive who is there and feel the connection between you. Is there anything else you would like at this place? Maybe a cuddly blanket, a stuffed animal, something tasty to eat or beautiful music.

Linger a while at your beautiful, personal, peaceful place, enjoy the stillness and peace surrounding you. Soak up the comforting atmosphere. You feel completely comfortable and relaxed. If you like, you can snuggle down and take a nap here...

Maybe there is a photograph (*see Exercise 3, Chapter 2.3.*) that reminds you of your personal, private, peaceful place? Or you can draw a picture of it yourself.

Hang the picture of your personal, peaceful place where you can see it from your bed. This will help you find your way back to it whenever you wish to go there. If your cellphone has internet access, you can find relaxing background music on YouTube, such as forest bird song or a babbling brook, which, if it suits you, can be listened to over headphones when you visit your personal, peaceful place. This can possibly support your imagination in seeing your place more clearly.

The more often you imagine and spend time in your personal, peaceful place, the easier it becomes to go there and the more quickly its relaxing effect takes hold.

Note:

You will find an audio file (MP3) where you can listen to this exercise in different languages in internet under:

<http://www.refugee-trauma.help/selbsthilfe-fuer/traumatisierte-menschen/>

The exercise is called "Ort der Geborgenheit"

If you wake up at night and can't go back to sleep, you can repeat the above exercise. When that doesn't help you to fall back asleep, do not try to force it. Get up and do something relaxing for a short time, about 10 minutes. You can listen to relaxing music, read, draw or do stretching exercises. Only when you begin to feel sleepy again, then go back to bed.

3.1.4. Seeing a doctor and sleeping medications

Once you have tried all these exercises regularly for several weeks – remember, only practice can change your sleeping rhythm! – and you are still having problems sleeping, then it is time to pay a visit to your doctor. The doctor will decide whether it is advisable to prescribe a remedy to help you sleep. Sleeping pills may be addictive and should only be taken as prescribed, and never combined with alcohol or drugs. Most often, it is enough to take sleeping pills for a night or two until your sleeping rhythm has returned to normal. You should then discontinue the medication to avoid becoming dependent on it.

3.2. Nightmares

Nightmares are dreams arousing powerful fear, grief or disgust. Usually, the strong emotions in nightmares shake us awake in the night. Nightmares most often come in the second half of the night, and are a common occurrence. More than half of adults have nightmares occasionally, and 5% have nightmares regularly.

Truly horrible things happen in nightmares, persecution, threats or death. Sometimes we dream of things like what we have experienced. But we also dream completely unrealistic scenarios, such as monsters or aliens. Sometimes our dreams take place in the future. It is then important to know that dreams cannot foresee the future.

Do you have nightmares? How many times a week?

What are your nightmares about?

Are they recurring dreams or similar nightmares?

3.2.1. What to do when you wake up from a nightmare

When you have a bad dream, or are startled awake by a nightmare, it is important to wake yourself completely with all 5 senses, returning to the present. This will help you to realize, **“It was only a dream, I am in my room in Germany NOW!”**

That is not always as easy as it sounds because nightmares are confusing and disorienting, and when we wake up, we don't know immediately where we are. Therefore, it is helpful to collect several reminders by your bed that remind you that you are in Germany. These reminders are called **present tense anchors**, a lifeline to the **Here and Now**. What could these reminders be for you?

Maybe you have a couple of photographs from pleasant events here in Germany that you can hang up around your bed? Or perhaps you can draw a German flag and write 'I am in Germany!' underneath it, and hang it up by your bed. Maybe you have a stone or shell on your night table? You can take it in your hand when you wake up from a bad dream.

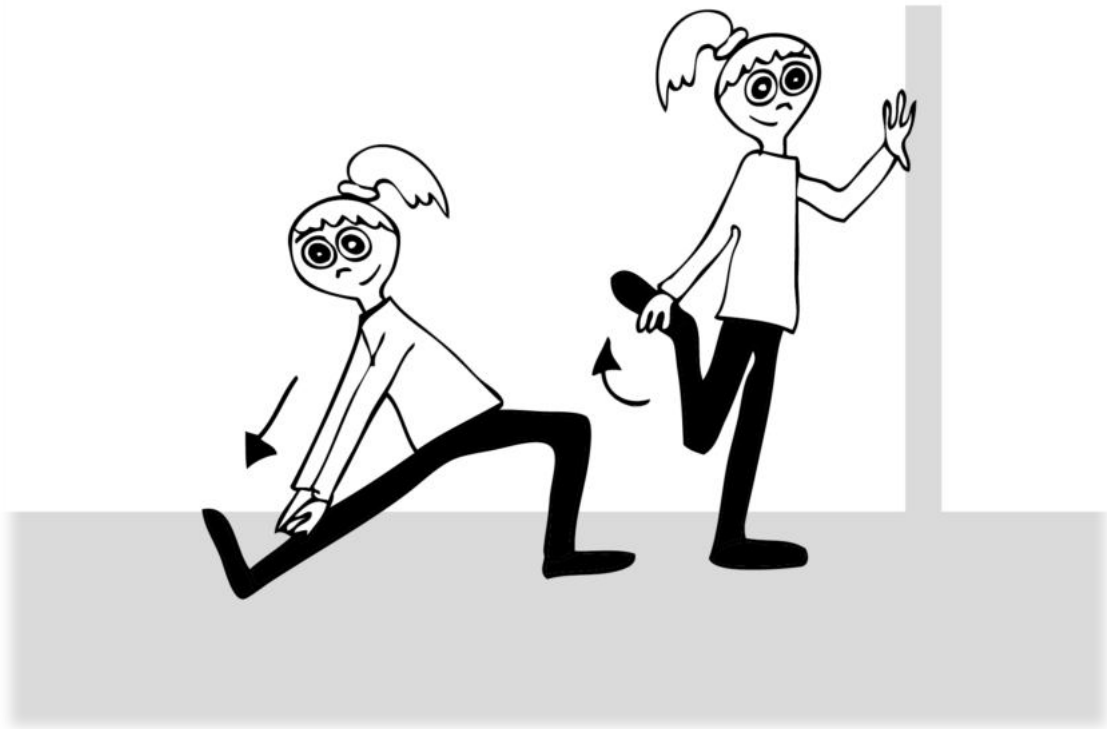


It is important to see your present tense anchors immediately when you wake up. You can tape it to the ceiling over your bed. Then, when you wake up disoriented and paralyzed from a bad dream and can't move, your eyes find the anchor right away! This feeling of paralysis arises from the powerful fear the dream caused, it doesn't last long. You can shake it off with tiny movements, like blinking an eye or bending one finger or toe. When tiny movements help, then gradually move your whole hand or foot until the paralysis is broken and you can move your whole body.

Many people find that getting up and drinking a glass of water or splashing cold water in the face helps to wake up and come back to the Here and Now!



Simple stretching exercises also help to bring you back to the present tense.



Say to yourself something like, **"I am in the present. Whatever happened to me, it is over now! My mouth, my legs, my heart, my ears, etc. are right here, right now."**



Some people find relief by writing down the bad dream and then tearing up the page and throwing it away. The following little exercise helps you to transform the passive, helpless feeling into a feeling of active nightmare conquering.

Exercise 19: Shoulder toss

Raise your arms, stretching out your hands and fingers. Revisit the pictures from your nightmare and imagine placing these pictures and feelings in one of your hands. Now, toss the dream content behind you over your shoulder. A fluid tossing movement from in front of you to behind you. Toss away your nightmare! Now do the same thing with the other hand. Repeat this motion with one hand and then the other, again and again until your hands are completely empty and the nightmare is gone.



Alternating right and left-hand motion reconnects the parts of your brain that were shut down during your traumatic experience. This physical activity gives you the power to **ACTIVELY** counteract the helplessness in nightmares. The physical motion sends important signals to your brain.

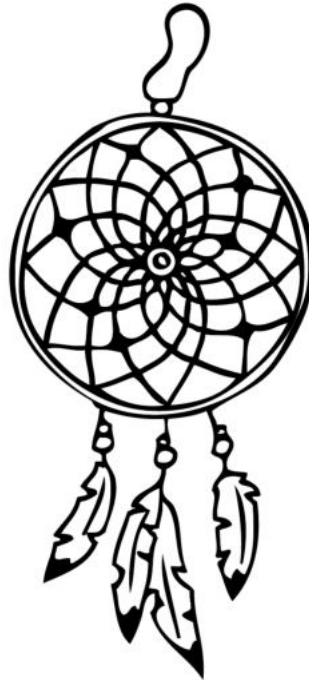
Do not go back to bed immediately, but do something else for a short while. You can listen to relaxing music, read, draw or do stretching exercises. Only when you begin to feel sleepy again, then go back to bed. To help you fall asleep, you can do the ***Breathing Exercise 15, Chapter 3.1.2.***

It is also possible to “re-direct” bad dreams when they frighten you awake by imagining that helpful people or creatures intervene or that you overcome the difficulties with special powers. Become the director of your own dream! Make yourself a hero! By changing the script in your imagination, you can overcome the fear and helplessness caused by nightmares.

It is sometimes difficult to re-direct your dreams alone. Let someone with a little bit of experience help you. Ask your mentor or the person who gave you this book.

3.2.2. Preventing nightmares

Research scientists do not always discover what and how something helps us. But there is valuable wisdom in many cultures arising from centuries of experience. Native Americans invented a 'medicine' against nightmares called a *dream catcher*. Look at the picture of one. The Native Americans make these themselves. Dream catchers aim to protect people from bad dreams. Bad dreams are caught in the webbing, while the stone in the center allows good dreams to pass through. Dreamcatchers are still quite popular today in America and throughout Europe. They are hung over the bed or in the bedroom window and many people are convinced of their effectiveness.



Are the rituals or medicines in your culture that help deflect nightmares?

3.3. Flashbacks, recurring negative memories/images and being beside yourself

3.3.1. Flashbacks

When memories of traumatic experiences become so strong that you feel like the traumatic events are happening right now, these are called *flashbacks*. In **Chapter 1**, you read about how these flashbacks come about. During a flashback, your cerebrum shuts down again and you no longer know where you are on your timeline. If you look at your timeline again in **Chapter 1.3.**, you will see that the flashbacks belong in the past. Varying exercises help your cerebrum bring attention back to the Here and Now, gaining distance from the events in the past; from overwhelming emotions connected to past events.

You must do the exercises regularly for them to be effective, not only when you are having a flashback. The exercises must come automatically, then they will help you in an acute situation, i.e. during a flashback. Practice makes perfect, is a common English saying. Do you have a saying in your language that expresses the same idea?

Exercise 20: Stimulating senses

Imagine you are biting into very spicy chili pepper. How does that feel? Is it so spicy that your mouth burns and your eyes water? Can you think of anything else right now besides your burning mouth? Probably not! Your brain is completely absorbed with the spicy stimulants in your mouth. Everything else is secondary.



And precisely this mechanism can be useful to you! When memories bowl you over or when you are beside yourself and feel like you are not in your body at all. Intense stimuli disrupt both!

You can learn to stimulate one or more of your five senses in such situations! Be as creative as you like when considering which stimuli are good for you and which senses you would like to stimulate.

Here are a few ideas. Which would you like to try out? Maybe you have much better ideas? Choose one or two ideas to try out over the next few days.



- Holding a rough stone
- Stroke your arms with ice cubes or cold water, or take a cold shower
- Snap a rubber band against your wrist
- Pinch the skin between thumb and pointer



- Smell vinegar
- Smell perfume or a scented oil



- Suck on sour candies or peppermint drops
- Chew peppercorns
- Bite into a lemon or chili pepper



- Play shrill tones on your cellphone
- Ring a little bell
- Turn on loud music



- Gaze at a picture associated with positive thoughts
- Name things in the room that have, for example, the same color

These are the things I will try out:

Exercise 21: The 1-2-3-4-5 exercise

This exercise is a simple way to bring your attention back to the Here and Now. You can do it anywhere and anytime. It is also good against nervousness, fear and tension.

First practice this exercise in normal, everyday situations when you are neither tense nor confronted with negative emotions. You should know the exercise very well, only then will it help you in difficult moments. It will help you regain control over yourself and not be overwhelmed by negative thoughts and feelings. The best thing would be to practice the exercise 1 to 3 times a day in normal, everyday situations.

Start the exercise by **naming a thing** that you **see** right now. For example, "I see a red car driving by."



Then, **name a thing** you **hear** right now. For example, "I hear people talking."



Then, **name a thing** you **are touching** right now. For example, "I feel the underside of the chair's armrest."



Now, name 2 things for each area.

2 things you see

2 things you hear

2 things you feel

Move on now to 3 things.

3 things you see

3 things you hear

3 things you feel

Then 4 things,

4 things you see, hear and feel.

Finish off with **5 things in each category.**

Don't worry if you lose count, just keep going. Also, it quite all to you repeat things that you see, hear and feel.

This exercise can also help you to **fall asleep**. In that case, do the exercise backwards, counting down from **5 things you can see, hear and feel, to 4 things, to 3 things, to 2 things and lastly, to 1 thing you can see, hear and feel.**

Once you have successfully brought yourself back to the Here and Now and realize that the memories belong to the past, it is important to soothe the roiled-up emotions. The **Exercises 15 (Breathing exercise) and 16 (Progressive muscle relaxation) in Chapter 3.1.2.** are very useful. You can also travel to your personal peaceful place (**Exercise 18 My private, personal peaceful place in Chapter 3.1.3.**) or write a comforting sentence on a small piece of paper that you always carry in your pocket, reading it several times when you need it. What could this sentence be?



3.3.2. Recurring negative memories or images (intrusions)

When your thoughts wander off into negative terrain, they most often have to do with the past. Some memories come back again and again. At such times, it is important to stop them and chase them away, concentrating on the Here and Now. That puts them at a distance. The following exercises can help you.

Exercise 22: Thought stop

As soon as you notice that memories and emotions from the past are taking over, **clap your hands loudly** and say “**STOP!**” Loudly if there’s no one around and quietly if there is. Imagine a stop sign at an intersection, which looks like this:



What kind of stop signs do you know? Imagine the most forceful stop sign you can! While imagining the stop sign, breath in slowly, counting to three as you inhale. Hold your breath now for a count of three. Breath out while counting to three. Repeat the exercise until your concentration is completely focused on your breathing.

Exercise 23: Reckoning & riddles

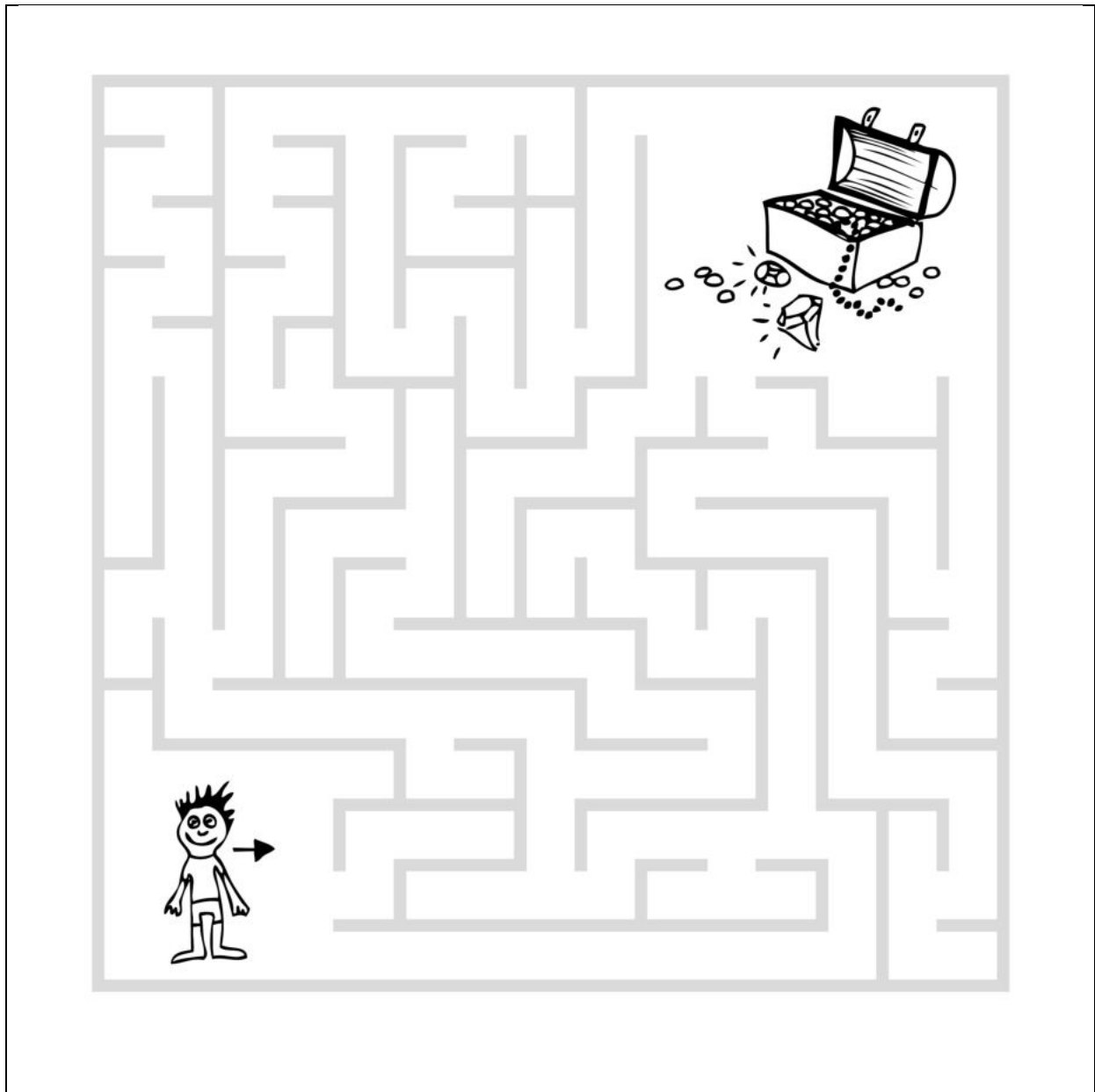
When you start thinking disquieting thoughts, try to solve the following Math problem, **10,000 minus 13.**

Subtract 13 from the result, **subtract 13** from that result, and **13 again** from the result. **Subtract 13** from **that result**, taking away **13 again**, and then **13 again** and then **subtract 13 again** from the last result, and **take away 13** from that result.

If you have calculated correctly, you will come to a result of 9883.

While you were busy with the Math problem, you forgot the negative thoughts. The subtracting repressed them because there was no more room in your mind.

Keeping a small list Math problems with you can be very helpful. Puzzles and riddles have a similar effect. Perhaps you can buy a mind jogging magazine with puzzles like this one:



Once you have returned to Here and Now, the Safe Exercise (**Exercise 1, Chapter 1.2.**) can help you to maintain a distance from the negative thoughts and feelings, by imagining you are packing them safely away. Hanging up a picture of a safe or your personal safe place may help you to pack them away quickly when negative thoughts threaten to overtake you.

After packing them away, you can do a breathing exercise (**see Exercise 15, Chapter 3.1.2.**) or visit your personal peaceful place (**see Exercise 18, Chapter 3.1.3.**). These exercises help you to calm yourself so that you regain control of your emotions.

3.3.3. Being beside yourself (self-dissociation)

This section deals with moments when you feel like an observer of your own thoughts and body. Times when your environment suddenly feels strange and unreal. Such moments can make you very afraid of losing control.

To a certain degree, we have all experienced this state of being. For example, when sitting on a bus, lost in thought, staring into space. You only come out of your reverie when someone speaks to you.

Only then do you notice you have been twisting your hair the whole time and have missed your bus stop.

When you have been traumatized, this “being beside yourself” can take on greater proportions, causing problems in your everyday life. You may, for example, find yourself somewhere without knowing how you got there. You may often ‘vanish’ from your lessons; your body is present but you have no idea what was said or done in the past 10 minutes. It’s as if someone pressed the pause button on a CD player. These experiences are often frightening, you are afraid of losing control. Your body is reacting to your traumatic experiences. If you remember, in Chapter 1, there is a point where your cerebrum shuts down and an emergency program is activated. When the situation is more horrible than you can bear, your consciousness protects you by simply shutting down and blocking out reality.

Even after the traumatic event is over, there are certain situations that re-activate the emergency program. Your body is somehow reminded of the traumatic event and wham – our consciousness shuts down to protect us! We often don’t even know what triggered this reaction.

Try to observe the situation that caused you to “vanish.” Is there a pattern?

It is important to try and stay Here and Now, as described in **Chapter 2.5**. In addition, you can help your body stay Here and Now with strong stimulants, **See Exercise 20, Chapter 3.3.1**.

During these “beside yourself” periods, your body and cerebrum attempt to gain distance from the burden of memories by closing the door to your cerebrum and shutting down completely. You can learn to establish this distance deliberately and consciously by working with your cerebrum. All exercises focusing on the Here and Now help you to train your brain so it no longer activates an emergency program and you remain in control! (**see Exercises 7, 8, 9, 10 in Chapter 2.5.**)

When you notice you’re about to vanish you can also **run, loud and stomping** or **slap your hands along your body** or **hop on one leg**. These activities will bring you back to Here and Now.

3.4. Aggression: Self-injury, anger, irritability and violence

In Chapter 1 you have already read how aggressive and self-injuring behavior arise from traumatic experiences. Both emerge in situations that trigger overwhelming memories. This enormous stress causes intense and hardly bearable tension. And since the cerebrum shuts down in such situations, we may do things to vent this extreme tension that we normally wouldn’t do.

You could call it self-defense against unbearable stress!

Although you have no control over your behavior at such times, you may feel guilty later because you have hurt someone or completely lost control of yourself. For this reason, it is good to gradually learn how to cope with your aggression. In **Chapter 3.3**, you have learned that by anchoring yourself in Here and Now you can stem the flow of overwhelming thoughts and feelings. There is a series of other things you can do to avoid exploding so quickly or doing harm to yourself.

3.4.1. Self-injury

If you feel the only way to vent the tension arising from horrible memories and feelings is to do harm to yourself, then **Exercises 20 and 21** in **Chapter 3.3.1** are especially important for you. The unbearable stress can take the form of anger, fear, loneliness, guilt and/or a feeling of terrible emptiness. Injuring yourself is one way of venting these torturous emotions and getting them back under control. And it works, for a short time. But you also damage yourself in the process. Afterwards, you may feel ashamed of the visible proof of your suffering, but there really is no need to be ashamed. We know that this was your only choice at the moment, an act of despair to escape

your anguish, and you had no control because your cerebrum was shut down. Understanding this is the first step to changing it!

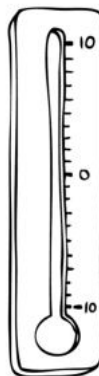
Or you may display your self-inflicted wounds to express a soul suffering you cannot put into words. This is hard for other people to understand and usually inspires a feeling of helplessness. By applying powerful stimulants to your senses, you can learn to vent the tension without hurting yourself. Practice alternative methods of venting your anguish, they are healthier for you and better for those who wish to support your healing. You may inflict injuries to yourself because you feel empty and numb and lifeless. Applying powerful stimuli to your senses can also help you overcome this situation.

By closely observing your behavior, you will learn when the time has come to apply powerful stimuli to your senses that bring you back to Here and Now. The following exercise will help you.

Exercise 24: The tension thermometer

Do you know what a thermometer is? A thermometer is used to measure temperatures. Zero degrees is in the middle of the thermometer. The farther down you go, the colder it is. These are minus temperatures. And the higher up you go, the warmer it gets.

The thermometer pictured below is not for measuring temperatures, but for measuring your degree of tension. At the bottom, by **-10** you are **completely and deeply relaxed**. At the top, by **+10** the **tension is extreme und unbearable**.

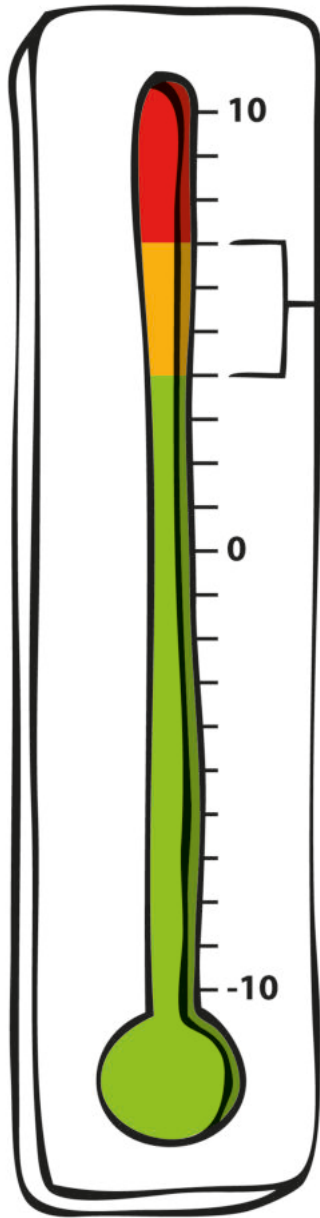


Where is your tension level right now? If you like, you can mark this level on the thermometer.

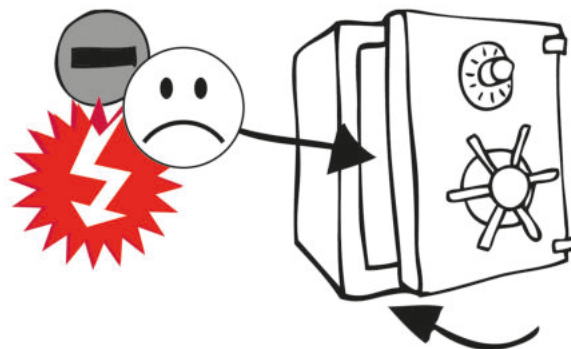
Now consider which area on the thermometer describes your **well-being temperature** best. This is the area where you feel okay; where you do not feel the need to vent tension. Color this area on the thermometer green. When your tension level rises above the well-being point, the color changes like it does on a traffic light, going from green to orange. At this level, you can still manage the tension; you can still think and act clearly. How high on the thermometer does this level go? When you overstep this boundary, you see red, which means your cerebrum shuts down, you are out of control and will give in to the urge to hurt yourself.

Once you reach the red area, it is **too late to act**. You must learn to listen closely to yourself to notice where your tension level is at a given moment. Am I in the green area or am I moving up to the orange area? When you notice that tension is rising and you move into the orange area, **you can still act!** Apply powerful stimuli to your senses (*see Exercise 20, Chapter 3.3.1.*), first bringing yourself back to Here and Now. Then, try to regulate the tension back down into the green area by doing a relaxation exercise like *Exercise 15 or 16 in Chapter 3.1.2*. You can also bring the tension down by

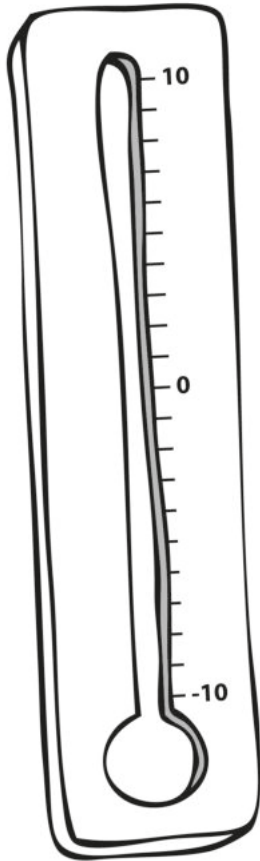
doing soothing activities. What could they be? **Make a list of soothing things and activities.** On the next page is space for your personal emergency list. You can also pack the negative feelings away in your safe or other safe place (*see Exercise 1, Chapter 1.2.*).



**1. Pack away
bad memories**



2. Close the safe!



Over the next weeks, take time to register where you are on your tension thermometer. Try to perceive and name the feelings you are having at that moment. Particularly when you notice you are moving up into the orange area, give the negative feelings a name and do one of the exercises you have learned to restrain them. You can be very proud of yourself when you successfully move from orange to green! And when you slide into red occasionally, do not be discouraged. Learning to control your feelings is a demanding and difficult job! The main thing is to practice, practice, practice!

Other helpful hints:

- **Have compassion for yourself!** Know that self-injury is your method of coping with unbearable experiences. Learning new methods takes time and patience.
 - **Accept help!** Such enormous emotional burden need someone to help us carry them. You don't have to carry it alone! Talking to someone about the feelings that make you hurt yourself can ease the load. And easing the load leads to easing tension! When you realize that your talk partner understands your feelings and doesn't judge your behavior, you can stop feeling ashamed of yourself, and start changing things.
 - **Take care of your body!** Let a doctor treat sever wounds.
 - **Lear to know yourself well!** Pay attention to which feelings come in which situations. Which situations trigger stress? What are the names of the negative feelings that arise? Is it loneliness? Rage? Fear? Grief? Despair? Name the feelings that pressure you into wanting to hurt yourself. Here is space to write them down.
-
- **Stay Here and Now!** When you notice that tension is rising, anchor yourself in Here and Now! Tell yourself, "The horrible events belong to the past! They are over!"
 - **Be patient with yourself!** Do not be hard on yourself when you hurt yourself again, even though you don't want to. You will reach your destination one step at a time!

3.4.2. Anger, irritability and violence

If you become furious more quickly than you used to and the smallest thing makes you flip out, that is sign of hypertension. Your brainstem keeps you permanently tense so you can react quickly when danger threatens you. That's why the tiniest thing can trigger shouting screaming, cursing at someone, breaking things or hitting someone. In contrast to self-injury, the aggression is directed outwardly. The unbearable tension is then relieved for a short time. But afterwards, you may be sorry because you hurt someone or broke something. You want to have better control over your aggression.

How do you vent your anger?

Anger is not a bad or forbidden feeling. Quite the contrary, it is natural and healthy to become furious when someone is intentionally hurt by another, or treated unfairly, or something doesn't work out the way we intended it to. In such situations, our anger helps us when we can handle it appropriately. For example, when you're angry at yourself for miscalculating a Math problem, your anger helps you work harder next time. Anger is energy. When we are angry with someone, our anger helps us to approach them and talk about how we can find better solutions for the future. It all depends on how we deal with our anger. We can express it appropriately so it helps us, or we can vent it negatively, causing destruction.

Aggression, i.e. anger, rage, violence, is triggered by stressful situations. Different things make different people angry, aggressive or loud. It is important that you recognize the situation that trigger your anger or make you violent.

Common **causes for anger**:

- **Injustice:** You perceive something as unfair or feel unfairly treated.
- **Frustration:** You cannot fulfil a task, but believe you should be able to.
- **Insults or humiliation:** You feel insulted or humiliated or attacked by someone.
- **Loss of control:** You feel you have lost control of yourself, of your actions or of a certain situation.

There may be other triggers.

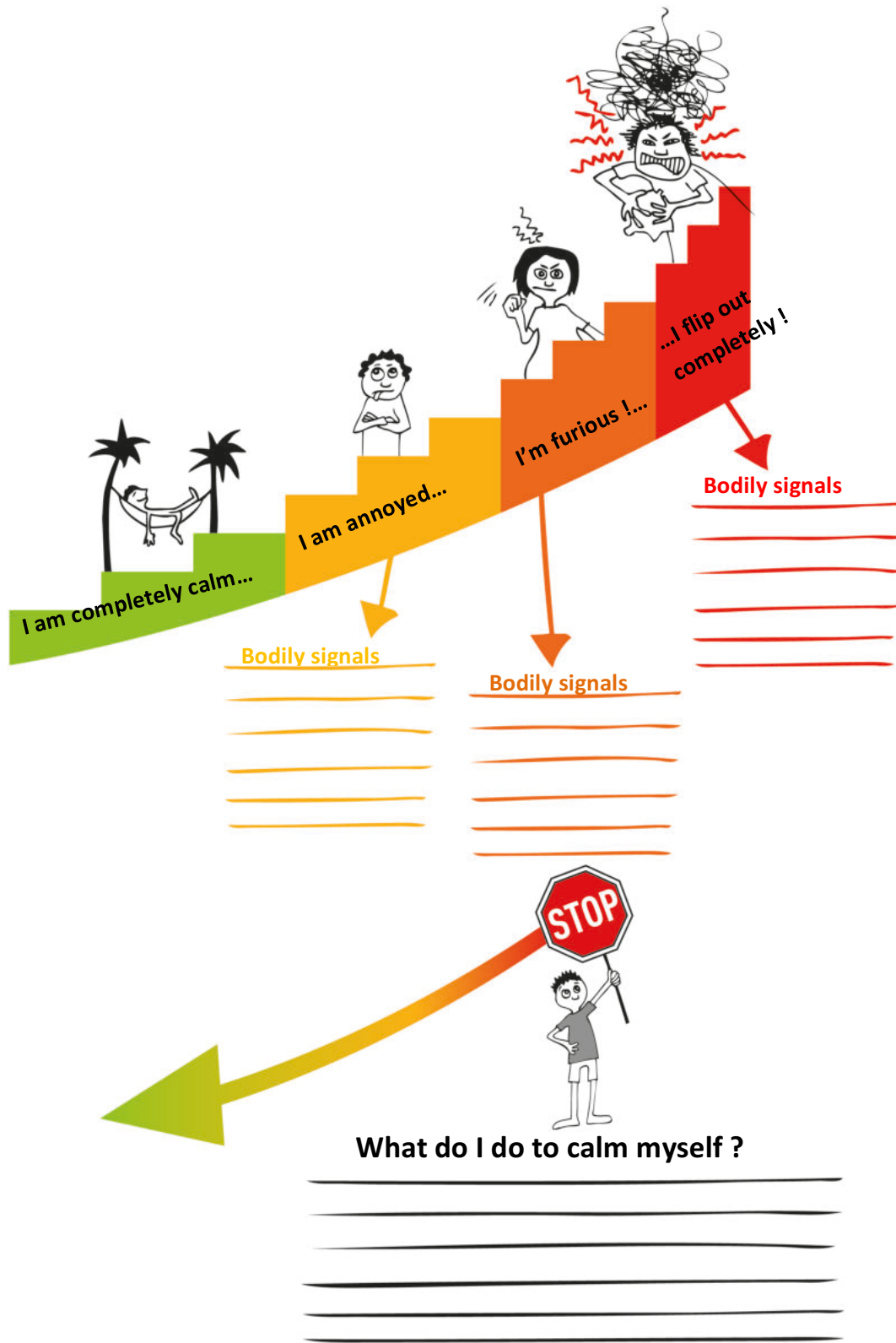
Which situations trigger your anger? Write them down.

Sometimes our anger has little to do with the current moment, but is triggered by things that made us angry in the past. The past anger compounds the current anger, creating an uncontrollable, highly explosive blend of rage. This makes it very difficult for others to understand why you are suddenly sooooo furious. You don't know yourself. The old anger just comes creeping in and feeds the fire of the current anger because it wants to be released and in the past, you couldn't express your anger.

Therefore, it is important to differentiate. Is your anger triggered by Here and Now issues that you can handle appropriately, using your anger to help you? Or is your anger so huge that you cannot control it because old anger feeds the fire of new anger? To be able to recognize the danger signs; to realize when you are about to explode, it is important to observe your behavior over the next weeks. This exercise will serve you here well.

Exercise 25: The steps of anger

Anger is not just anger. There are huge differences and levels, starting with testiness and moving to being annoyed, then angry and ending with explosions and running amok. Imagine these levels as a staircase. The first steps are broader, becoming gradually more narrow. The more wrathful you are, the higher you are on the stairs. Your body sends very clear signals, changes that you can recognize as you climb up the steps.



The next time you are furious, try to consciously perceive when your anger began. Pay attention to your thoughts and what you feel taking place in your body.

The first signs of anger may be a faster heartbeat, you can't sit still...

The higher you climb the steps of anger, the more intense you will feel the fury in your body.

Which reactions do you feel? Mark the ones that apply and write your body's reactions in the spaces under the steps of anger. Write the first signs under the yellow steps. Note the physical evidence that you are really angry under the orange steps. And write how your body reacts when you lose control and explode under the red steps.

- I breath heavily or faster
- My mouth is dry
- My heart beats faster
- I become red in the face
- I make fists
- My muscles are very tense
- I get a headache
- My stomach hurts
- I start sweating
- Some body parts go completely numb
- I cannot think clearly
- I tremble
- Other signs: _____

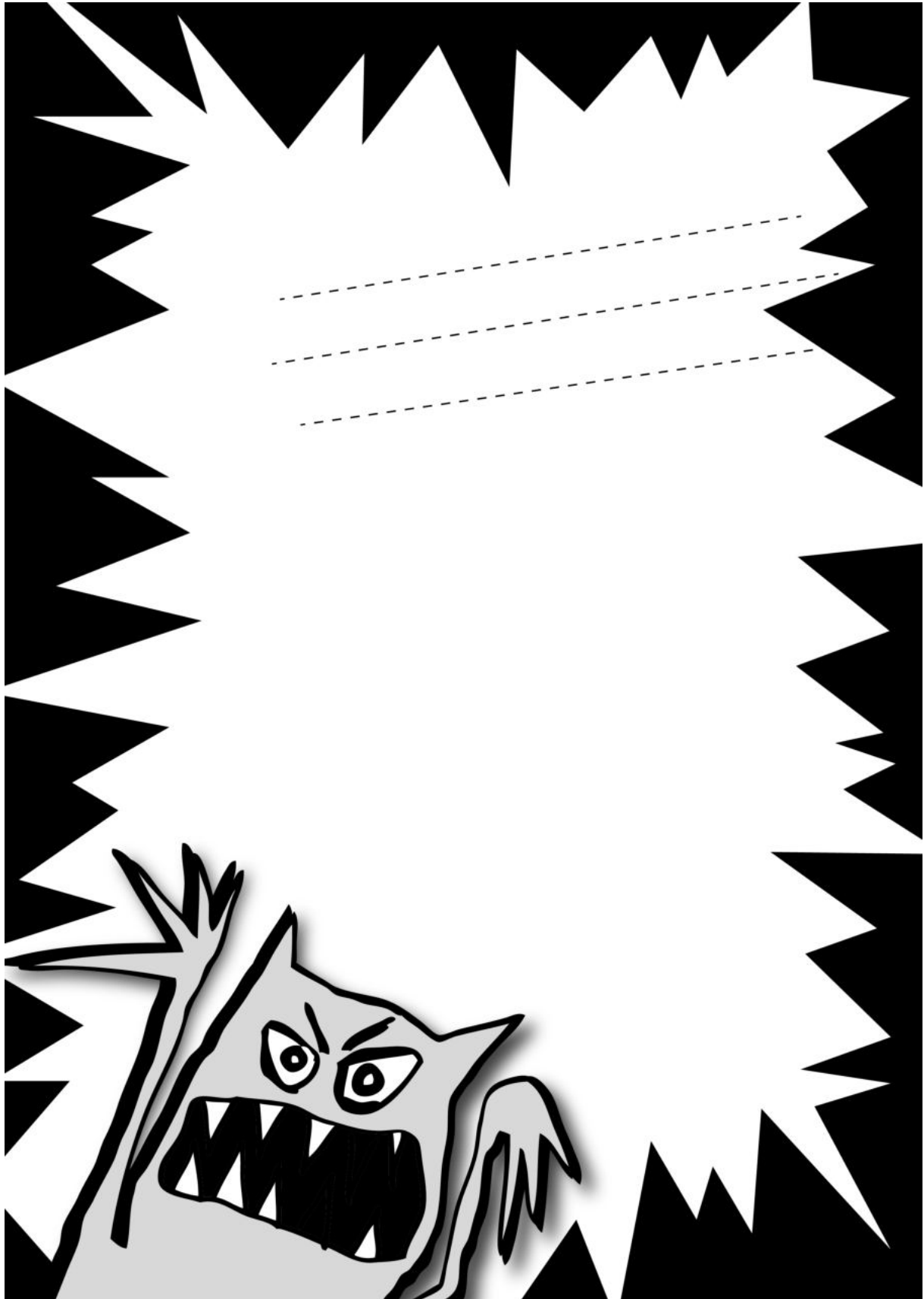
The bodily reactions under the orange steps tell you that you are almost on the red steps. You are close to losing control. When you are already on the orange steps, it is time to act! You need to pull the brakes on your anger and go back down the steps instead of going further up them. The bodily signs under the orange steps are a kind of STOP signal. Now is the time to think about what you can do when you have reached your personal STOP signal.

What can you do to catch yourself in time? What calms or soothes you? What feels good? What relaxes you?

Here are a few ideas that may help. It is important though, that you collect and try out your own ideas. In the box under the STOP sign, write down what could calm you down. Here's a few examples.

- Call "time out"! Distance yourself from the situation by leaving the room or counting to 10 or taking 10 deep breaths
- Do something you have in your control, such as tidying up, surfing the Internet...
- Talk to friend who can help
- Make it clear to yourself that it is wrong to vent you anger on others
- Sports
- Do something pleasant
- Pet your stuffed animal
- Vent your anger without involving others. For example, you can pound your anger into a pillow, make very tight fists, press an anti-stress ball (these are balls you can press very hard), tear up paper, go outside and scream out loud, run, draw angry pictures.

Here is space for your angry picture:



- Do relaxation exercises (*Exercise 15 or 16, Chapter 3.1.2.*)
- Visit your personal peaceful place (*see Exercise 18, Chapter 3.1.3*)
- When you are furious with another person, write an angry letter full of terrible things you would

like to say to that person. Do not give the letter to the person. When your fury has passed and you are calm again, talk to the person and tell them what made you so angry. Tell them what you wish from them, so you do not get so furious.

When you feel composed again and find yourself on the yellow or even green steps, take the time to reflect calmly on your anger.

- What exactly made me so angry? Is my anger directed at the current situation or was it intensified by something in the past? Was my anger appropriate to the current situation? What did I want to gain from being angry? How can I express my anger differently next time, so I stay in control and use my anger to help change something?
- If you regret having said or done something when you were furious, talk to the people who were on the receiving end of your fury. Apologize to them. Explain why you were so furious. Forgive yourself for losing control, it happens to the best of us!

Observe not only yourself, but also others to see how they handle their anger. How do they cope with their anger?

Remember! Anger can be a positive energy. It can help you stand your ground, set limits and combat injustice. Only uncontrolled rage can do none of this.

3.5. Depressed mood, brooding, guilt feelings

In Chapter 1 you could read about depressive phases and how to recognize them. In this section, you will learn how to influence your positive moods.

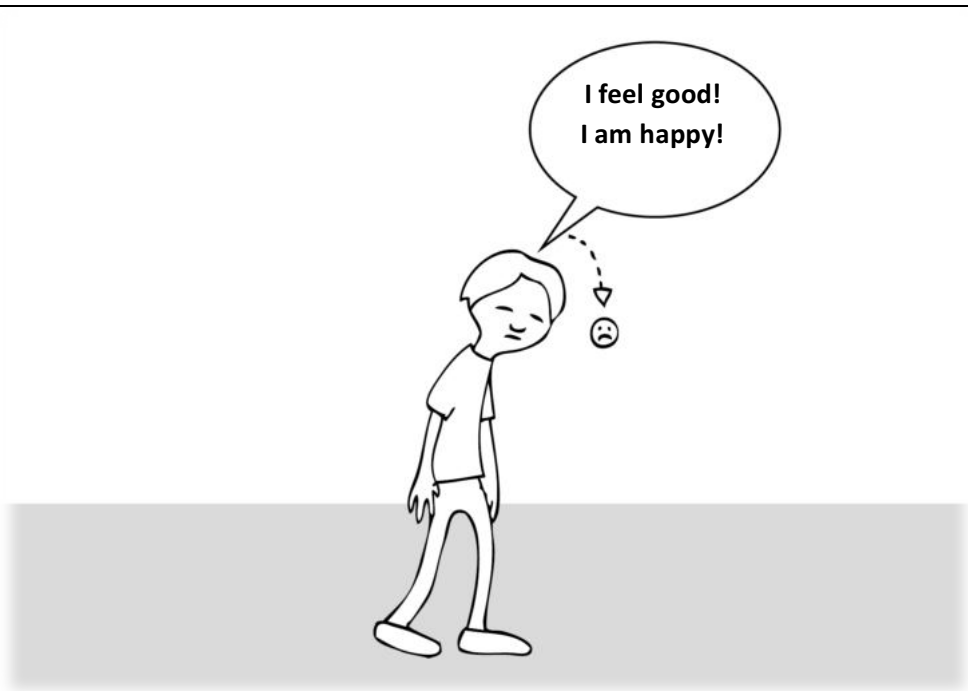
It is good, and very important to know that our thoughts, feelings and actions determine and influence each other. The following exercise is an excellent example.

Exercise 26: Posture

You will need to stand up for this exercise. Assume a depressive posture, i.e. a stance expressing your discouraged, sad mood. Let your shoulders and hand hang down, keep your eyes on the floor.

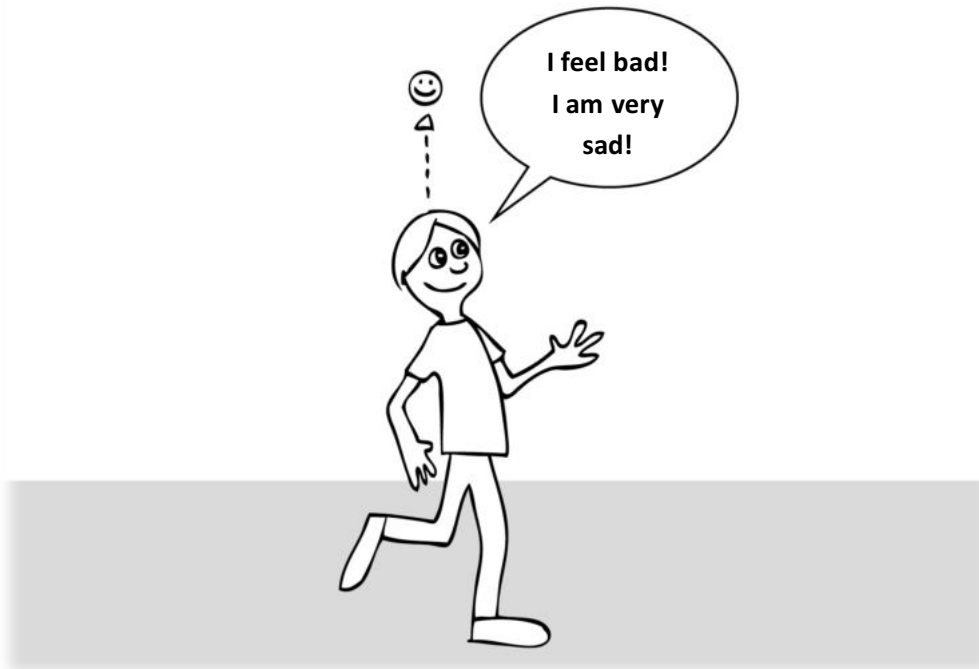
You whole body is limp and heavy. Walk around a bit in this posture.

Now say to yourself, "I feel good, I am happy!"



Assume an erect posture, as if a string is pulling you up. Walk around with your head held high. Stretch out your chest and look straight ahead.

Now say to yourself, "I feel bad, I am very sad!"

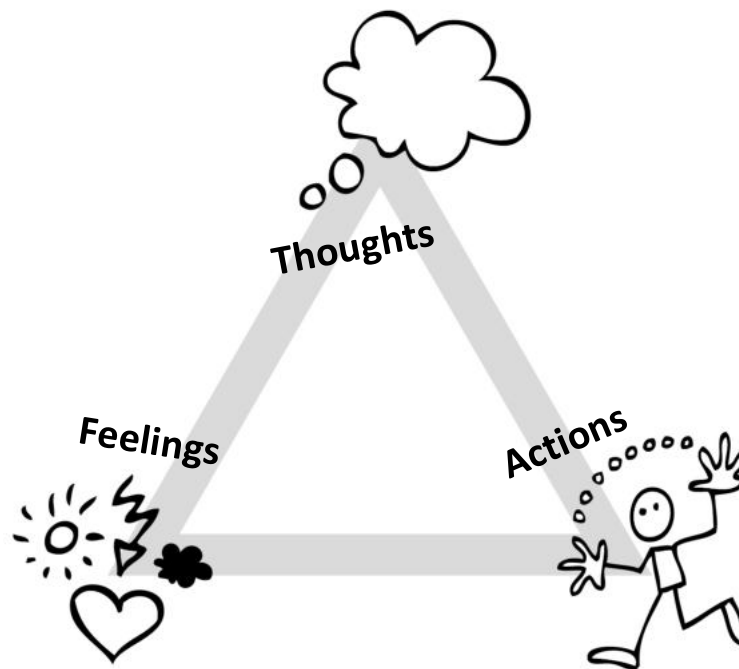


Now you can sit back down again. What differences did you feel? How did you feel in each of the two different postures?

When you assume a depressive posture, it is impossible to contact others because your eyes are glued to the ground. It is hard to say, "I am happy and satisfied!" because we feel heavy and listless in this posture.

In an erect posture, it is totally different. You make eye contact with others and take part in your surroundings. It is hard to say, "I am sad and depressed!" in this posture.

Our behavior, and in this case, our posture, influences what we feel and think.



To gain more control over our emotions, we must learn to change our thoughts and behavior.

When we are depressed, our behavior, thoughts and feelings influence each other negatively. We find ourselves in a downward spiral that pulls us further and further downwards.



I can't go out like this. I feel bad and everyone can see that. I'd rather be alone.



Always the same four walls! This is so depressing! I have got to get out of here!



But what's the point? No one cares about me anyway! I am so sad, alone and lonely!



No wonder no one cares about me, I am no use to anyone! I am worthless!



It's no use! No one can help me! No one understands me anyway!

This downward spiral breeds “errors” in your thinking, thoughts that put you down, make you doubt yourself and are generally negative. These are “errors” because they are not realistic and have no basis in reality.

Examples for such errors are:

- Exaggerations: “I’ll never be able to do this!” “That is so terrible”
- Negative generalizations: “Nobody likes me anyway”, “I never get anything right” ...
- Self-accusations: “It’s all my fault” ...
- Pessimism: “Everything always goes wrong!” ...
- Ignoring positive things: Remembering only negative things
- Blind to your successes: “That was just dumb luck!” ...

The connection between thoughts, feelings and behavior can be used to re-direct yourself in a **positive direction**. As you may have noticed in the exercise above, that you had a better feeling when walking upright.

Therefore, you can turn the **downward spiral** into an **upward spiral**!

I feel better! It was nice to get out of the house and see other people on the street! I had a nice little talk at the store. That felt good!



I go out and do my shopping. Finally, I see and hear other people.



I don't believe it will do any good, but I'm going to make myself go for a walk anyway. Maybe I can get the shopping done at the same time.



What's the use? I am so sad and lonely, stuck inside the house all the time!



You can influence your thoughts and feelings with your actions! When you become active, doing pleasant activities, your mood will swing upwards. The trick is **to pick yourself up and become active, even if it's hard!**

Have you noticed how this has worked before? What helps you when you're sad or lonely?

Here are a few pointers for lifting your mood

- **Reward yourself**, treat yourself to an ice cream or watch your favorite movie...
- **Be active**, go for a walk or jogging, ride your bike, meet with friends...
- **Change negative thought patterns**, for example with the help of the STOP-Exercise (*see Exercise 22, Chapter 3.3.2.*)
- **Reinforce positive thoughts**, with exercises from **Chapter 2.3.**
- **Be proud of what you have achieved**, say to yourself, "I did that very well!"

If you tend to brood, i.e. often spend long periods of time thinking about your situation and how bad everything is, or how many worries you have, try out the following exercise.

Exercise 27: Brooding time

Have you ever tried NOT to think of something for five minutes? Imagine a big, red elephant. See it clearly in your mind's eye.



Now, for the next 2 minutes, try NOT to think of the red elephant. You can think of anything else you want, just not the red elephant!!!



2 minutes are up? And what did you think about?

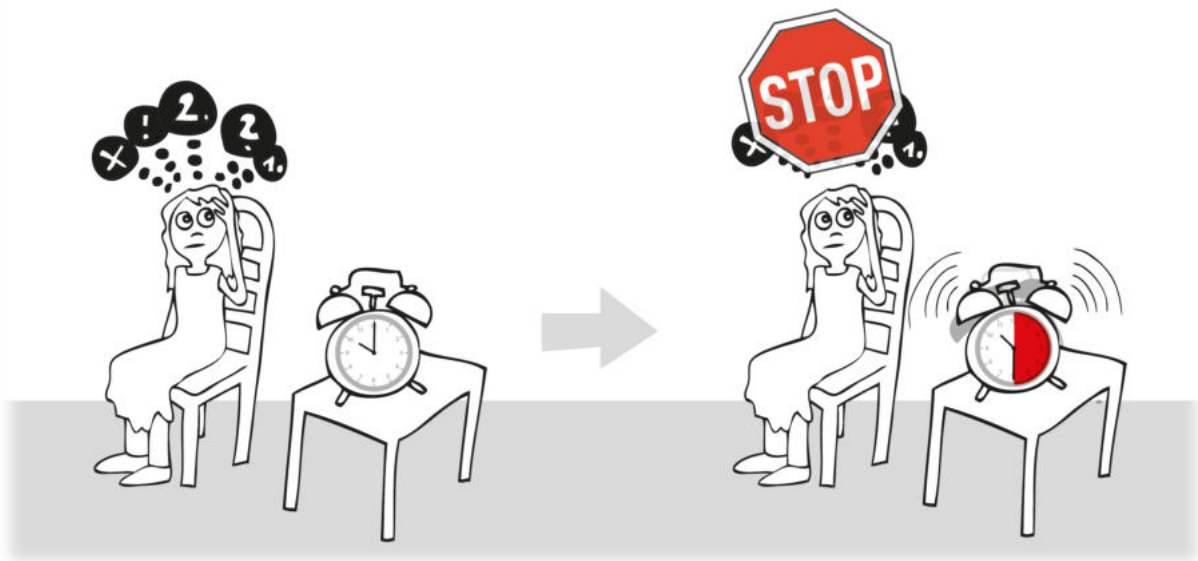
I bet you couldn't think of anything else besides a red elephant!

That is completely normal. Trying not to think of something almost always leads to thinking of nothing else!

So, it really makes no sense to try and not think of our worries or not brood. We will hardly be successful. However, you can re-direct your thoughts, as you have seen in some of the exercises. For example, how you can deliberately focus your attention on Here and Now by concentrating on your immediate surroundings. This directs our thoughts in another direction. It distracts us from our troubles.

It can also be helpful to **take time to think about certain things**. That works better than trying not to think about them at all. **Set a specific time** when you **allow yourself to brood and think and worry** for, for example, 30 minutes. Limit the time span and be sure to set timer or alarm on your cellphone to remind you when the time is up. Brooding time is over!

You should also choose a **special place** for your brooding time, like a certain chair. Make sure to leave this place when your brooding time is over. When you haven't finished thinking and worrying, put it off until your brooding time the next day!



End the exercise with a clear *thought stop* signal such as clapping your hands or imagining a STOP sign. Now do something completely different! Do sports or go shopping.

You can enter your brooding time in your weekly schedule, see **Exercise 11, Chapter 2.6.1**.

Many people who have suffered traumatic events often blame themselves. They feel **guilty**. They think in retrospect, "If I had only done this or that!" But you really had no choice in the matter. You were not capable of thinking rationally because your cerebrum had shut down, as I explained in Chapter 1. Let me remind you again - **You had no choice in the matter!**

Maybe you feel guilty because you were lucky enough to escape and to survive, while others stayed behind or died. And maybe you're right. You were lucky. But is it your fault that others were less lucky? No! It was not in your hands! If it had been your decision, then everyone would have been lucky! **It is not your fault!**

The judgement you pass on yourself is exaggerated and much too harsh. No one else thinks that about you, because it has nothing to do with reality. What happened is tragic and we feel sorry for everyone who weren't so lucky. But **it is not our fault!**

When guilt feeling plague you, although they have nothing to do with reality, try to imagine that someone else experienced what you experienced. Like an actor in a movie. Imagine you are watching a movie on TV and someone is playing your role. They do exactly what you did, in exactly the same situation. How would you judge the actor? Would you blame him or her for everything that happened?

3.6. Difficulty concentrating and absent-mindedness

In **Chapter 1**, you could read about how concentration problems arise. Our brainstem is over-active and can only concentrate on the possibility of impending danger. Any attention we want to give to other things is pushed to back of your minds. This makes it hard for us to remember things and what we do remember, we forget quickly all the same. And when you have slept badly, it is even more difficult to concentrate because you are tired.

Therefore, all exercises that deal with relaxation are very helpful against concentration problems. Remember – your goal is to lower the tension curve permanently so sleeping and concentrating become easier again.

Exercises 15, 16, 17 and 18 from **Chapters 3.1.2. and 3.1.3.** (for relaxation) are excellent help to improve concentration and should be done regularly.

When you suffer from frequent forgetfulness, you can also create **memory joggers** to remind you of important appointments or when to take your medication or of what you learned in German class. What could your memory joggers be? Or maybe you have already developed your own memory strategy? What is it?

Here are a few possible **memory joggers**:

- Start a **memory book**, writing down all the things you wish to remember. Keep your memory book in a place where you will see it every day.
- Wear a **memory bracelet** that reminds you of a certain thing every day, such as taking medication.
- Write **memory notes** and hang them up where you will see them several times a day. For example, you can write a note and tape it to the door to remind you to take your key with you.
- Also helpful are **consciously carried out activities**. For example, on your way to the doctor's, pay special attention to what you see, who you meet, which houses line the street, the names of the streets, what the trees look like. Are they blossoming? Do they have leaves or are they bare? Deliberately taking in your environment helps you to remember objects and situations better. Intentionally focusing your attention on what is around you trains your concentration skills.



3.7. Grief

Grief is a normal reaction to loss. There are so many different types of loss. You may lose your job, become separate, lose your home or lose a person close to you. Death is a permanent loss, making this kind of grief the most powerful.

You may have recently experienced more than one type of loss, making your grief more complicated and harder to cope with.

Every human being reacts to loss differently. Grief is a highly personal issue and there is no right or wrong way to cope with it! Every human being has the right to grieve as they see fit. There are varying approaches to help you cope with your grief. Have a look and see if there is something you think may help you. I wish you strength for your time of grieving!

3.7.1. Stages of grief

It can be helpful to know that grieving has various phases, each related to certain steps in coping. The phases do not always follow a predetermined order and some phases are longer by some people than by others. Sometimes the phases of grief are all jumbled together, first this one, then that one. This is quite common and even valuable for integrating your loss well.

- **Shock phase:**

You feel numb and cannot believe that your loved one is dead and will never return. You are able to function, but more like a robot than a living being.

- **Phase of longing:**

You wish for nothing more than to bring the deceased back. The pain is terribly intense. You possibly feel restless, can't sleep or eat and spend a lot of time brooding. Some people even see or hear the departed person in their dreams. You may experience chaotic and powerful feelings of rage and anger; are plagued with feelings of guilt and remorse. You may wish to be left alone and withdraw from your immediate community or rather try to distract yourself from your grief

and memories. In the latter case, you may grieve loudly, listening to loud music, slamming doors and are constantly on the move. Grief can make us aggressive, too.

- **Phase of despair:**

The despair over your loss may cause a powerful lethargy. Everyday chores and duties may seem impossible to carry out. You may have a time where you just don't care about anything.

- **Phase of adjusting:**

At some point, you will accept and integrate your loss. You will turn your attention to life and the living. Memories of your dearly departed become less intense; the pain less severe. They will become a rich treasure stored inside of you.

Many people experience their pain in waves. It comes and goes, there are good times and hard times. Usually the pain gradually eases after about a year. But how long this takes is extremely variable.

3.7.2. What makes grieving even harder?

It is very difficult to cope with death when it comes very suddenly or is a result of violence. It is even harder when the people around us do not understand and respect how we grieve. When we feel helpless, blame ourselves and have no support, it only makes the situation worse. And when we are confronted with several losses at once, the situation is truly hard to bear. These obstacles can make it very difficult to work through our grief and return to the world of the living. Some people need years, and they still don't feel better. Some people repress their grief, developing **physical complaints** like headaches and heart pain, so their body expresses the grief. Other symptoms that can arise are feelings of **emptiness, hopelessness and numbness**.

Sometimes it is impossible to grieve for a dearly departed because we are on the run, trying to save our own lives. We must push our grief to the back and deal with the immediate situation first. In this case, the grief can emerge **much later, so delayed** that we don't know exactly what is going on. This, also, is normal. If there is no time or opportunity to grieve, we experience our grief later, when we can work through it. Then, all of the sudden, the deceased visits us repeatedly in our dreams. This can be very confusing.

3.7.3. What can help?

Many people have found comfort for their grief by doing the following things. Is this also true for you? Would you like to try one or two of them?

- **Give yourself time** to grieve.
- **Express and suffer through feelings.** Expressing your pain is an effective step towards healing. You can write about it, scream it out, cry, draw or speak about your grief. This brings more comfort than suppressing or numbing the pain with alcohol or such. Repressing the pain is short-lived comfort and only makes your grief re-emerge more powerfully. There can also be other feelings besides sadness. You may also be very angry, angry at the deceased for leaving you or angry at the world for allowing his or her death. Phases of strong anger are often a part of the grieving process.
- **Occasionally distract yourself from your grief. Allow yourself a moment of enjoyment and/or fun.** This is an important source of strength and energy, which you need to cope with your grief. Going through grief is truly hard work. And just like with hard work, every now and then you need to take a break in order to work more effectively.

- **Think back on your relationship to the departed and talk about it.** What was your relationship to the departed? What did he or she mean to you? What experiences did you share? What did you learn from her or him?
- **Say goodbye.** There may be things you would have liked to have said to the departed but didn't get a chance to say them.

Write her or him a letter. In a goodbye letter, you can say thank you and express all the things you still need to say. Some people talk to the person who has gone, telling her or him things directly.

Do you know of a ritual that can help you say goodbye? For example, a memorial?

- **A place to remember.** Maybe you have a photograph or object that reminds you of your dearly departed. Arrange a place where you can put the object or photo to remember them. In Germany, people light candles when they think of those gone. Is there a similar ritual in your homeland?
- **Write good memories in a small book.** Draw pictures or paste photographs in it, too. How do people mourn in your culture? Do you grieve together or alone? Are there religious ceremonies for saying goodbye? It is important that you find **your own personal way** to say goodbye and let go of a deceased loved one. Take your time.



3.8. Panic attacks

3.8.1. What does anxiety do to us and what is it good for?

Every human on Earth knows the feeling of fear. What happens when we are afraid? What goes on inside us? What noticeable changes take place? On the one hand, **our body reacts** with, for example, trembling, a racing heart, sweating, breathing faster or even hyperventilating, which leads to pins and needles in our feet and hands. We can also become dizzy and nauseous. Fear often brings **feelings** of losing control and intense tension. We **think** we will pass out if the fear grows in intensity.

Fear changes our **behavior**, we feel a great urge to run away, or get drunk, or to do anything to make the fear go away.

Fear is basically an essential, protective instinct. Fear allows us to recognize danger; to flee when necessary or in some way avoid the danger.

When you encounter a dangerous animal, your body reacts with trembling, an accelerated heartbeat, and maybe you get hot all over. You are afraid, and that releases enormous reserves of energy, allowing you to run extremely fast and far to escape the dangerous animal. Or to climb a tree out of the animal's reach. Or to find a hiding place.

Fear is disturbing when it no longer serves this purpose, but is still active even when there is no immediate danger. Or when fear is triggered by things that are not dangerous. This happens often to people who have experienced traumatic events. As you learned in Chapter 1, our brainstem stays over-alert even when the danger has passed. It reacts to the tiniest stimulus, seeing danger in things that are not threatening. At such times, our rational cerebrum can't get messages to our brainstem. The alarm system in our brain is not reacting to current, 'real' danger, but to danger in the past because our cerebrum has not yet sorted events chronologically. That is why we sometimes have no idea what triggered the fear. Even though we understand nothing is threatening us NOW, and there is nothing to be afraid of, the fear is still there.

3.8.2. What can you do to ease panic attacks?

First, try to discover what triggered the fear. Was it a bad dream or a situation that reminded you of the past? Then, try to determine whether the fear **is appropriate right now**. Are you in danger **right now**? Or is the fear triggered by something that happened in the past? If the answer is yes, then all exercises that bring you back to Here and Now are helpful. Exercises that help you concentrate on right now. Excellent tools are **Exercises 7-10 and 20-21 in Chapters 2.5. and 3.3.1**. You can also deliberately change the internal tension, as one thing is absolutely certain, **relaxation and fear can never exist at the same time!** They cancel each other out. If you have already tried one or more relaxation exercise, then use it or them now deliberately to counteract fearful feelings. See **Exercises 15-18, Chapter 3.1.2. and 3.1.3.**

Here is another exercise to ease fear and panic:

Exercise 28: Hands on hips

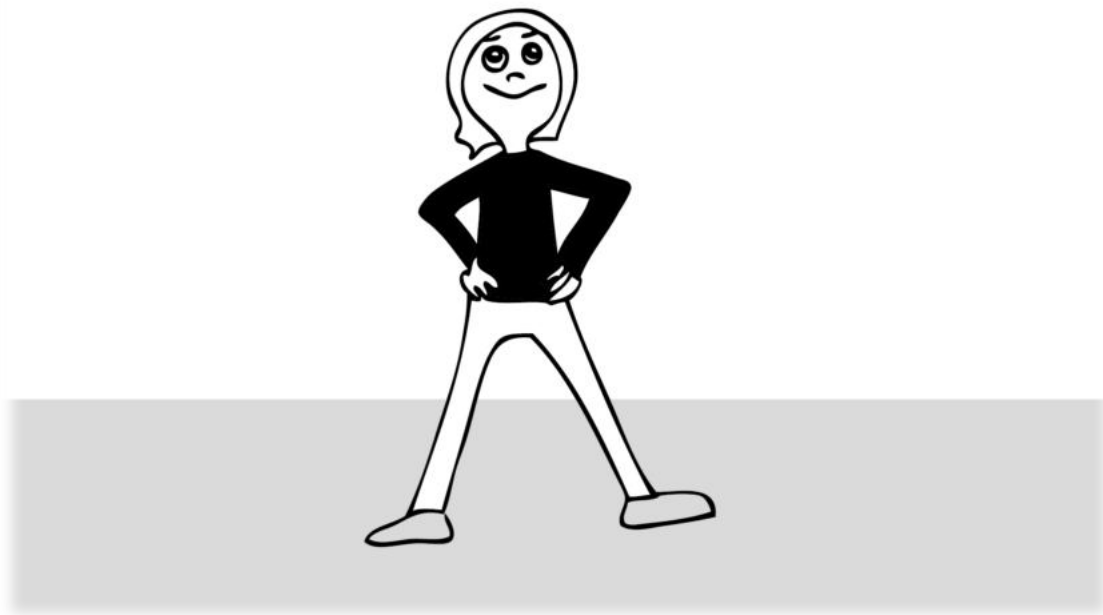
Your body can help you send powerful messages to your brain. I am not in danger! There is no need to be afraid!

Stand with your legs well apart and your head held high. Place your hands on your hips, pushing down so that all your upper body weight is in your hips, flowing through your pelvis, legs and feet, which are planted firmly on the floor. This is a **powerful, courageous stance**, sending an unmistakable message to your brain:

I am big and strong and cannot be moved!

I am invincible!

I am a rock!



This stance expands your chest so you can breathe better and more deeply. That is relaxing! And fear doesn't like relaxation!

When the fear is so strong that it paralyzes you and you feel you cannot move at all, try very tiny movements. Blink one of your eyes or bend one finger or toe. As soon as your paralysis is broken, begin with **relaxation exercises (i.e. Exercise 15 or 16, Chapter 3.1.2.)**.

When you know ahead of time that you will soon be confronted by a fearful situation, you can prepare yourself by visiting your personal, peaceful place (*see Exercise 18, Chapter 3.1.3.*), and using **Attentiveness exercises (Exercises 7-10, Chapter 2.5.)** to help you stay Here and Now. For moral and practical support, include a friend or mentor in your preparations. Someone to help you stay Here and Now.

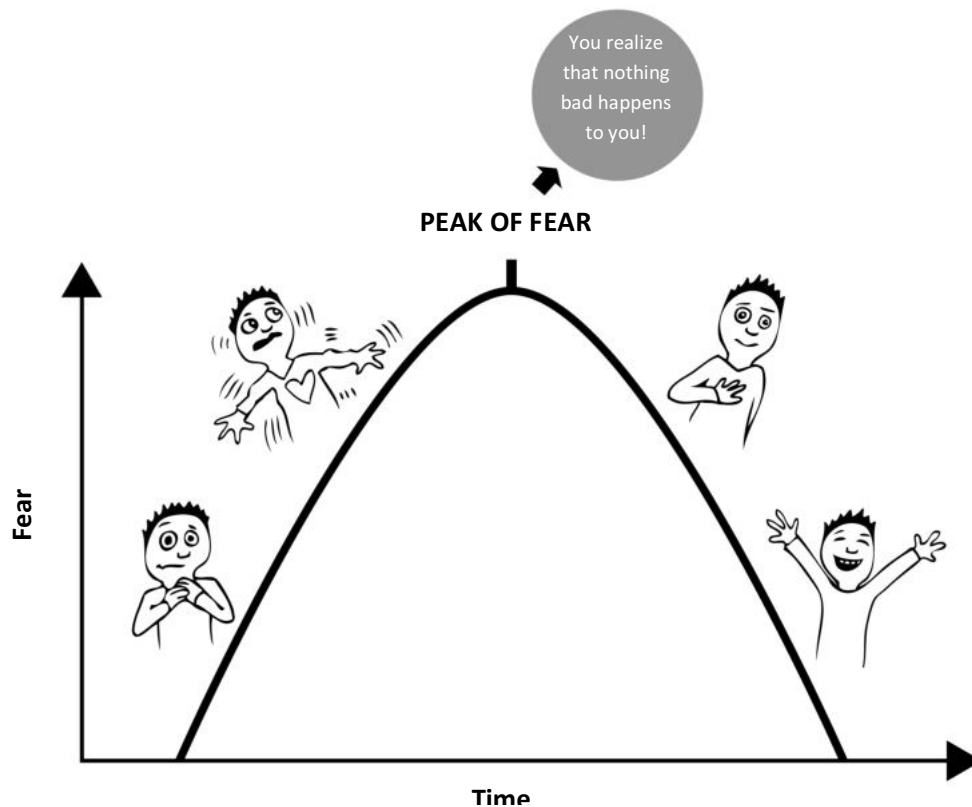
It always helps to talk about feelings that are so difficult to bear. Talking to someone can ease the burden, bringing relief from thoughts and feelings that weigh on your soul.

When the fear is truly unbearable, a doctor can prescribe temporary medication to help you cope better. Medication, however, must not be taken over a long period and must be accompanied with relaxation exercises, Here and Now orientation and talks to heal your fear so you can discontinue medication as quickly as possible. Medication is only a temporary, emergency solution!

3.8.3. Why fear grows when we try to avoid it

Trying to avoid fear is only a short-term solution. In the long term, avoiding fear only makes it stronger, until we **fear the fear**. We fear that the fear will grow endlessly, it will swallow us up completely.

This is simply not true. When you confront your fears; have the courage to withstand them without side-stepping them, you will discover that **fear does NOT grow endlessly!** Fears only grow to a certain point before they fade away again!








It is good to test this truth, preferably **with support** from someone who can help you stay focused and encourage you when the fear reaches its peak. When you do this, you will notice how relieved and good you feel. You will see that when you confront fear, it fades away all by itself!

3.9. Headaches

In Chapter 1 you read about pain that can come from intense, continuous tension. Headaches, for example, are often caused by too much tension in neck and shoulder muscles. There is an English saying reflecting the connection between emotional burdens and pain. For example, when you constantly worry about something, we say, "I wracked my brains over it." Is there a similar expression in your language connecting bodily pain and soul suffering?

3.9.1. Pain Journal

To determine when, how often and how strong your headaches are, and which situations possibly cause or intensify them, it is good **to observe** your headaches for a while. Keeping a Pain Journal is enormously helpful. Each time you have a headache, write down the date, the time and how strong the pain is. You can use a scale from 1 to 10 to measure the strength of the pain. 1 would be very slight pain and 10 would be the opposite, unbearable pain. Also, write down whether you have taken a pain pill, what happened before the headache began or what you were doing or thinking before the pain began.

DATE 	TIME 	PAIN INTENSITY 	WHAT HAPPENED? 	 What did I do to ease the pain?

A Pain Journal can also be useful to your doctor, helping him or her to prescribe the appropriate medication. Should you seek a doctor's help for your headaches, take your Pain Journal with you.

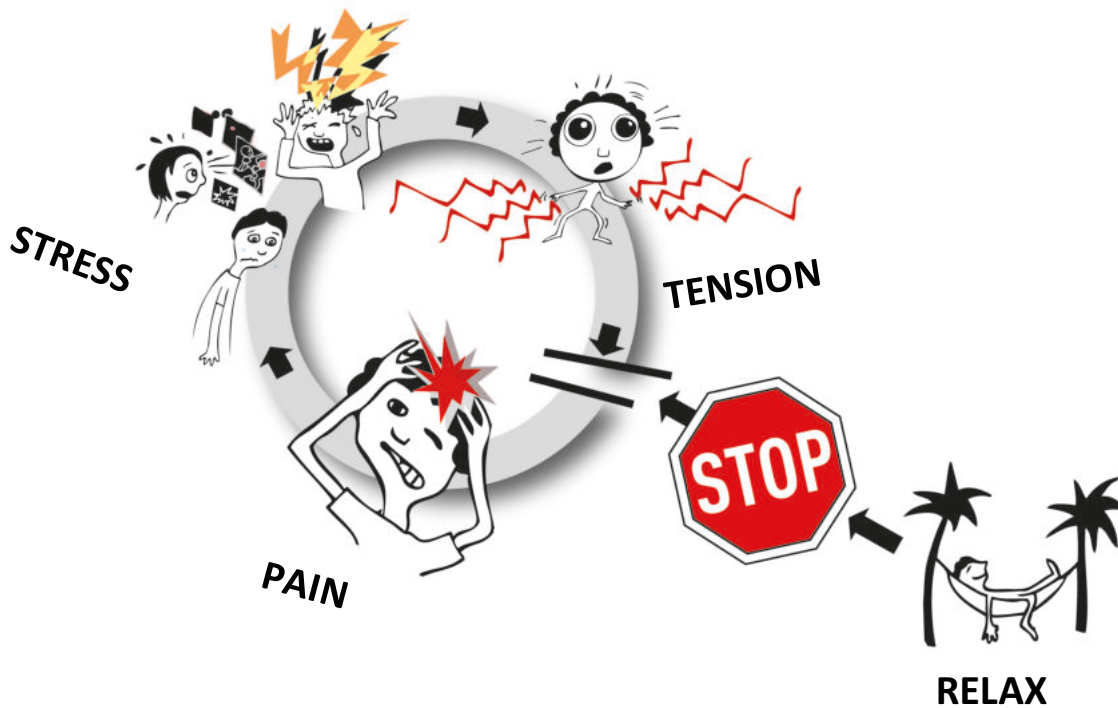
The same thing applies to all kinds of pain, such as stomach or back pain.

3.9.2. Describing pain

Try to draw a picture of the pain. What does it feel like? Where exactly in your body does it come from? How big is it? Perhaps it is like an ugly animal? Or a fantasy figure or monster? This way you give your pain a form. By putting it on paper, you get it out of your head. You can also draw next to your pain figure a figure that conquers your pain! That can be a creature, an instrument, a tool or whatever you imagine it to be! It can be quite a relief to imagine who or what can conquer your pain.

3.9.3. Relaxation helps

Relaxation exercises help break through the vicious circle of stress and strain, tension and pain. You can do breathing exercises (*see Exercise 15, Chapter 3.1.2.*) or visualize your personal peaceful place (*Exercise 18, Chapter 3 1.3.*).



The following exercise can help you consciously relax neck and shoulder muscles, which can ease your headaches.

Exercise 29: Neck muscle relaxation

To become aware of tension in your neck and shoulders, first tense them up deliberately. When we feel the tension clearly, we also feel the relaxation clearly.

Turn your attention to your neck and shoulder muscles.

Tense up the muscles very tightly.

Pull your chin down to your chest and your shoulders up to your ears. Make sure both shoulders are equally tense.

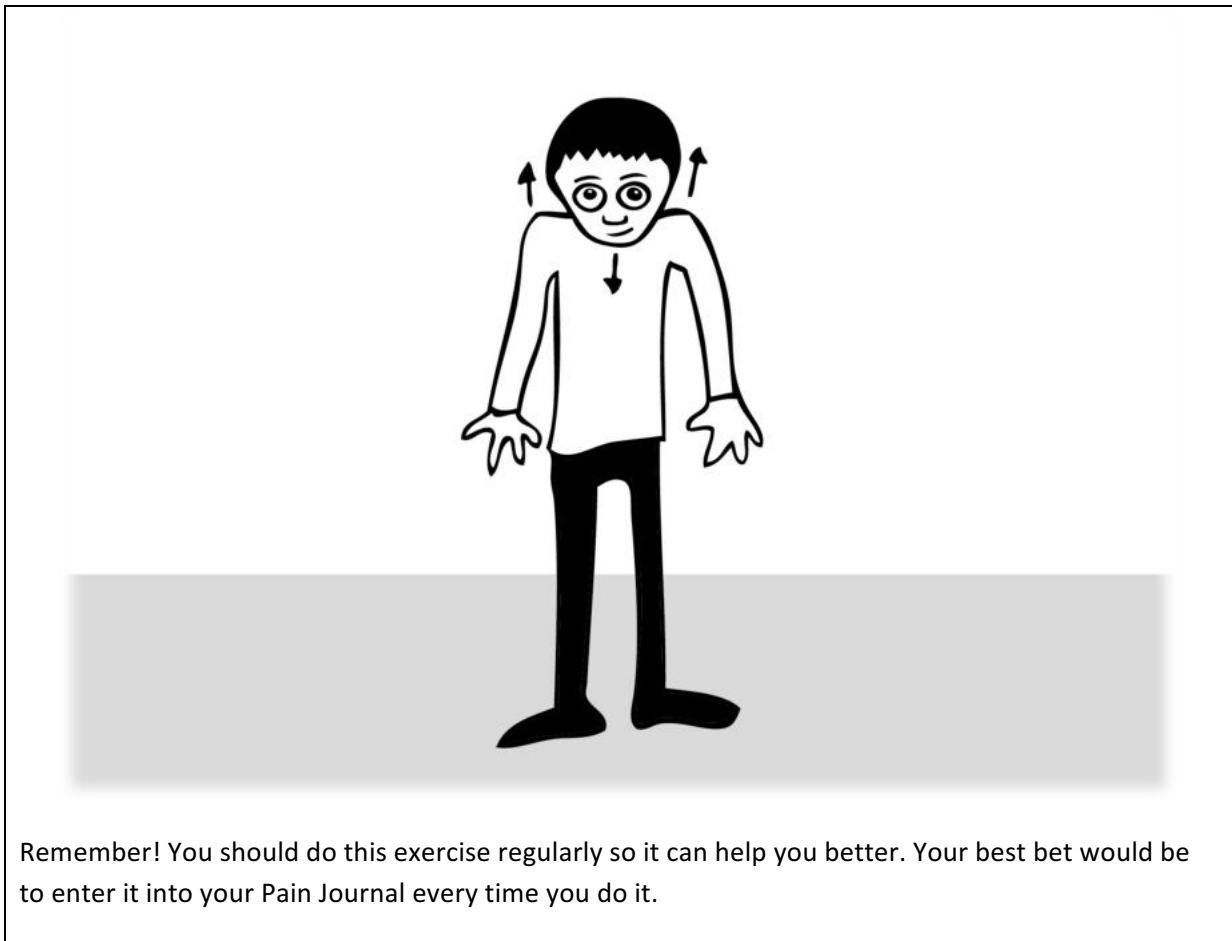
Feel the powerful tension in your neck, throat and jaw.

Breathe into the tension and hold it tightly for two breaths.

Release the tension on the second exhalation.

Now, become aware of your throat and neck. How do they feel? Notice how much more relaxed your shoulders, neck and upper back feel.

Repeat this exercise until the entire area is loose and relaxed.



3.10. Alcohol and/or drug use

Many people who have had traumatic experiences try to drown the memories in alcohol or to obliterate them with drugs. That helps, but only for a short time. Alcohol and drugs release substances in the brain that make us feel happy for a while. Unfortunately, it only works as long as we are high. As soon as the alcohol level goes down or the drug effects wear off, reality and all its negative emotions catches up with us. Often, we feel even worse. When body and brain become accustomed to alcohol or drug consumption, our brain stops producing other substances that send out happiness messages in other situations. So, eventually, only alcohol or drugs help us to feel good, we are dependent on alcohol or drugs. Alcohol and drug addiction then have very negative consequences, and it is very difficult to break an alcohol or drug habit. If you feel you no longer have control over your alcohol or drug consumption, you must by all means consult a **drug counseling center**.

If you are trying to avoid or forget something by using drugs or alcohol, you must find out what it is you are trying to forget or avoid. Is it recurring, horrible memories or flashbacks? Are you simply trying to escape a terribly sad mood? Do you want to stop the guilt feelings or fearful thoughts? Read the chapters in this book on each of these issues and you will find things you can do to help, instead of drinking alcohol or taking drugs. Alcohol and drugs will eventually make you sick! You can combat your problems without their help! Talk to someone about your problems and worries, that can help, too. Explain to people who criticize your drug and alcohol use why you drink or take drugs. Maybe together you can come with a better idea to make you feel better!

Chapter 4: Who can help me? Who can I turn to? – Important addresses

4.1. What is a psychiatrist/psychotherapist/psychologist? How does psychotherapy help?

Perhaps, this book has been able to help you **learn to help yourself** heal the injuries to your soul. Even though it was hard training and took loads of patience. If you have read this far, YOU have come a long way!

But sometimes a book and patience are not enough because the injuries are too severe and so many other additional burdens compound your suffering. In this case, it is good to seek help from someone who knows all about injuries to the soul, a special doctor for the soul. In Germany, these doctors are called psychiatrists or psychotherapists or psychologists. A **psychiatrist** is a doctor who begins by asking you a lot of questions and perhaps does some tests. There are no wrong answers to these questions, it is only the psychiatrist's way of getting to know you and your problems in order to help you better. There are no right or wrong answers! A psychiatrist will also examine your body, to make sure everything is working properly. A psychiatrist can also prescribe medication, for example to help you sleep, relax or lighten your mood, if he or she thinks this is appropriate. A psychiatrist can also send you to a **psychotherapist**. Together, you and the psychotherapist develop strategies and exercises that help you, for example, sleep better, control your anger, etc. He or she can look at and work through your traumatic events with you, giving your cerebrum the chance to classify them into the proper drawers. By integrating your traumatic experiences into your **past**, it becomes easier to live with them. This is called **trauma therapy**.

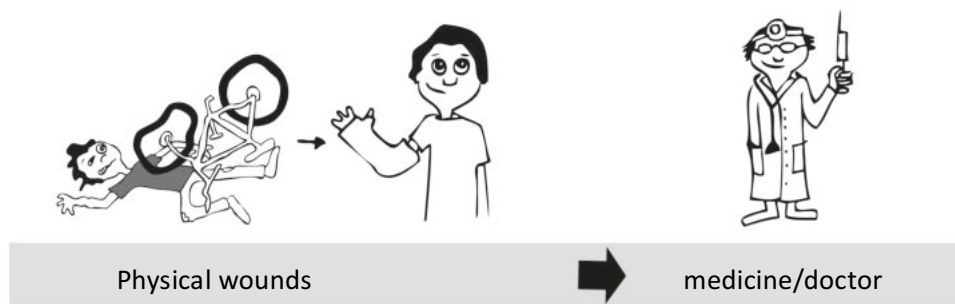
A psychotherapist is not going to give you a pill or injection and make everything simply go away. Therapy for your soul works differently than treatment for physical problems. Psychotherapy focuses on you and the therapist talking together and finding out what can help you best. Your therapist helps you to recognize and integrate things. At the beginning of this book, you learned how to store traumatic thoughts and feelings in a safe or in a similar place, so you aren't constantly thinking about them (Exercise 1, Chapter 1.2.). It could be, though, that it is important for you to look at the traumatic experiences again before they stay in the safe place. You shouldn't try to do this alone, though, and a therapist is the right person to help you. A therapist knows exactly how to work with your issues, so that they are easier to bear. Sometimes, talking about problems makes them worse for a while. Your brain needs this time to classify the experiences, so you will gradually feel better. Then, the past does not have as much influence over your Here and Now and you can live without fear and all those bad feelings.

This takes time, but it's worth it! And you don't only talk to the therapist about bad things. You also talk about the beautiful and positive things in your life. The therapist helps you dig for treasures; for your strengths and resources buried beneath the rubble of your negative experiences. That can be fun!

! **Very important:** **!**

It is just as reasonable and 'normal' to go to a psychotherapist or psychiatrist to treat soul injuries as it is to go to a doctor for treatment when you have hurt your body. It is not only normal, it is important, so your soul can heal, when we realize we cannot do this alone.

Don't worry! In Germany, no one thinks it is crazy or demented to get help from a psychotherapist or psychiatrist! It's quite normal!



At the end of this book, you will find addresses of organizations that offer psychotherapy for refugees. These therapists specialize in trauma therapy and have already helped many people who have had similar traumatic experiences. There are so many medical and psychotherapy practices that can help you, I cannot list all of them. Without a doubt, your mentor, guardian or social services can tell you whom you can turn to for help! Don't be afraid to ask! It is not sign of weakness to ask for help. Quite the contrary, it is a sign of **courage and strength!**

4.2. Addresses and Internet links

4.2.1. Psychosocial counseling offices

These counseling offices are for people seeking support to resolve traumatic experiences based on war, torture or other soul-suffering events. Most counseling offices provide therapy or can refer clients to therapists.

<p>Cactus e.V. Family and Health Center Riemannstr. 32 04107 Leipzig Tel.: 0341 / 225 45 44 oder 225 45 74 Email: beratungsstelle@cactus.de www.cactus.de</p>	<p>Caritasverband Rhein-Mosel-Ahr e.V. IN TERRA – Psychosocial Center for Refugees Caritas Cochem Herrenstr. 9 56812 Cochem Tel.: 02671 / 9752 32 www.caritas-rhein-mosel-ahr.de</p>
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<p>Psychosocial Center for Migrants in Sachsen-Anhalt PSZ Halle (Saale) Charlottenstr. 7 06108 Halle (Saale) Tel.: 0345/ 21 25 768 Fax: 0345/ 20 36 91 37 Mail: kontakt@psz-sachsen-anhalt.de www.psz-sachsen-anhalt.de</p>	<p>Diakonie Mark-Ruhr, Standort Hagen Refugee Counseling, Psychosocial Center Stresemannstr. 12 58095 Hagen Tel.: 02331 / 3860 582 www.diakonie-mark-ruhr.de</p>
<p>Refugio Thüringen e.V. Psychosocial Center for Refugees Wagnergasse 25 07743 Jena Tel.: 03641 / 226 281 Email: koordination@refugio-thueringen.de www.refugio-thueringen.de</p>	<p>Psychosocial Counseling Office for Refugees Diakonie Ruhr-Hellweg Wildemannsgasse 5 59494 Soest Tel.: 02921 / 36 20 161 Email: fluechtlingsberatung-soest@diakonie-ruhr-hellweg.de www.diakonie-ruhr-hellweg.de</p>
<p>Treatment Center for Torture Victims, e.V. GSZ Moabit Turmstr. 21 10559 Berlin Tel.: 030 / 303 906 0 Email: info@bzfo.de www.folteropfer.de</p>	<p>Frankfurter Arbeitskreis Trauma und Exil e.V. FATRA Bergerstr. 118 60316 Frankfurt Tel.: 069 / 499 174 Email: info@fatra-ev.de www.fatra-ev.de</p>
<p>Xenion e.V. Psychosocial Aid for Politically Persecuted People Paulsenstr. 55-56 12163 Berlin Tel.: 030 /32 32 933 Email: info@xenion.org www.xenion.org</p>	<p>Evangelisches Zentrum für Beratung und Therapie - Haus am Weißen Stein Psychosocial Center for Refugees und Opfer organisierter Gewalt Eschersheimer Landstr. 567 60431 Frankfurt am Main Tel.: 069 / 5302-291 Email: fluechtlingsberatung@frankfurt-evangelisch.de http://www.frankfurt-evangelisch.de/91.html</p>
<p>Diakonisches Werk Mecklenburg-Vorpommern e.V. Psychosocial Center for Migrants in Vorpommern Langestr. 60 17489 Greifswald Tel.: 03834 / 79 92 74 http://www.kdw-greifswald.de/Bereiche_Seiten/fluechtlingsberatung.html</p>	<p>Deutsches Rotes Kreuz Landesverband Saarland Psychosocial Center for Refugees and Migrants Vollweidstr. 2 66115 Saarbrücken Tel.: 0681 / 97642 71 Email: psz@lv-saarland.drk.de http://lv-saarland.drk.de/angebote/migration-und-suchdienst/migration-und-integration/psychosoziales-zentrum-psz.html</p>
<p>Shefa e.V. Center for Intercultural Health Support Jägerstr. 7 24143 Kiel Tel.: 0431 / 730 38 44 Email: shefa.ikgf@gmail.com www.shefakiel.de</p>	<p>Refugio Stuttgart e.V. Psychosocial Center for Traumatized Refugees Weißenburgstr. 13 70180 Stuttgart Tel.: 0711 / 6453 127 Email: info@refugio-stuttgart.de www.refugio-stuttgart.de</p>

<p>Refugio e.V. Psychosocial Center for Refugees and Torture Survivors Parkstr. 2-4 28209 Bremen Tel: 0421 / 376 07 49 Email: info@refugio-bremen.de www.refugio-bremen.de</p>	<p>Diakonisches Werk der evangelischen Kirche Württemberg e.V. PBV Stuttgart – Psychological Counseling for Politically Persecuted and displaced Persons Landhauserstr. 62 70190 Stuttgart Tel.: 0711 / 285 445 0 Email: pbv@eva-stuttgart.de http://www.eva-stuttgart.de/fluechtlinge-mit-traumaerfahrung.html</p>
<p>Psychosocial Center Migrants in Sachsen-Anhalt Magdeburg PSZ Magdeburg Liebknechtstr. 55 39108 Magdeburg Tel.: 0391/ 63 10 98 07 Mail: kontakt@psz-sachsen-anhalt.de www.psz-sachsen-anhalt.de</p>	<p>Association to Support Traumatized Migrants, e.V. Alter Schlachthof 59 76131 Karlsruhe Tel.: 0721 / 628 83 06 Email: trauma-migranten@web.de www.traumatisierte-migranten.de</p>
<p>Psychosocial Center for Refugees Benrather Str. 7 40213 Düsseldorf Tel.: 0221 / 544 173 22 Email: info@psz-duesseldorf.de www.psz-duesseldorf.de</p>	<p>Refugio VS e.V. Reference Office for Traumatized Refugees, e.V. Schwedendammstr. 6 78050 Villingen-Schwenningen Tel.: 07721 / 50 41 55 Email: refugio.vs@t-online.de www.refugio-vs.de</p>
<p>Caritasverband für die Stadt Köln e.V. Therapy Center for Torture Victims/Refugee Counseling Spiesergasse 12 50670 Köln Tel.: 0221 / 160 740 Email: fluechtlingsberatung@caritas-koeln.de www.caritas-koeln.de www.therapiezentrum-fuer-folteropfer.de</p>	<p>REFUGIO München Counseling and Treatment Center for Refugees and victims of Torture e.V. Rosenheimer Str. 38 81669 München Tel.: 089 / 98 29 57 0 Email: info@refugio-muenchen.de www.refugio-muenchen.de</p>
<p>Educational Center Aachen e.V. Psychosocial Center for Refugees Mariahilfstr. 16 52062 Aachen Tel.: 0241 / 49 00 0 Email: paez.ac@t-online.de www.paez-aachen.de</p>	<p>Exilio – Aid for Refugees and Torture Survivors, e.V. Reutiner Str. 5 88131 Lindau Tel.: 08382 / 40 94 50 Email: info@exilio.de www.exilio.de</p>
<p>Ecumenical Counseling Center for Refugees Dasbachstr. 21 54292 Trier Tel: 06 51/ 2 30 22 or 9 91 06 00</p>	<p>RehaVerein for Social Psychiatry Donau-Alb e.V. Treatment Center for Torture Victims Ulm (BFU) Innere Wallstr. 6 89077 Ulm Tel.: 0731 / 22 8 36 Email: kontakt@bfu-ulm.de www.bfu-ulm.de</p>

<p>Caritasverband Rhein-Mosel-Ahr e.V. IN TERRA – Psychosocial Center for Refugees Caritas Andernach Ludwig-Hillesheim-Str. 3 56626 Andernach Tel.: 02632 / 2502 44 www.caritas-rhein-mosel-ahr.de</p>	<p>Rummelsberger Services for Young People gGmbH Psychosocial Center for Refugees St.-Johannis-Mühlgasse 5 90419 Nürnberg Tel.: 0911 / 393 63 55 Email: jugendhilfe-nuernberg@rummelsberger.net http://www.jugendhilfe-rummelsberg.de/jugendhilfe_nuernberg_zentrum_f luechtlinge. jugendhilfe</p>
<p>Caritasverband Rhein-Mosel-Ahr e.V. IN TERRA – Psychosocial Center for Refugees Caritas Mayen St.-Veit-Str. 14 56727 Mayen Tel.: 02651 / 98 69 0 www.caritas-rhein-mosel-ahr.de</p>	<p>Treatment Center for Traumatized Refugees – Center for Refugee aid and Migration services in Zentrum ÜBERLEBEN 15517 Fürstenwald 03361 35708-00 / - 01 http://kooperation-für-flüchtlinge-in- brandenburg.de/</p>
<p>IBIS – Intercultural Works Center, e.V. Psychosocial Counseling Klävemannstr.16 26122 Oldenburg Tel. 0441 - 39 03 89 43 Email: asyl@ibis-ev.de www.ibis-ev.de</p>	<p>Medicinal Refugee aid, e.V. Psychotherapy und Psychological Counseling / Therapy Center for Torture and War Survivors Dr-Ruer-Platz 2 44787 Bochum Tel.: +49 (0)234 913 87 43 www.mfh-bochum.de</p>
<p>Network for Traumatized Refuges in Niedersachsen e.V. Marienstraße 28 30171 Hannover Telephone: 0511-856445-0 Email: ntfn-ev@web.de http://www.ntfn.de/</p>	<p>PSZ Bielefeld – Psychosocial Center for Refugees Friedenstraße 4-8 33602 Bielefeld Tel. 05 21 – 7 87 – 1 52 46 Email: dallwitz@ak-asyl.info www.psz-nrw.de/psz-netzwerk/psz-bielefeld/</p>
<p>Refugio Münster – Psychosocial Refugee aid Hafenstr. 3-5 48153 Münster Telefon: 0251 – 14486 – 31 Email: info@refugio-muenster.de www.refugio-muenster.de</p>	<p>Diakonisches Werk Altenkirchen – Professional Services for Refugees and Migrants Stadthallenweg 16 57610 Altenkirchen Telefon (02681) 8008 – 20 Email: Info@diakonie-altenkirchen.de http://www.diakonie-altenkirchen.de/fachdienst- fuer-fluechtlinge-und-migranten</p>
<p>Diakonie Pfalz Psychosocial Center Pfalz Wredestraße 17 67059 Ludwigshafen Telefon: 0621 49 07 77 10 Email: psz-pfalz@diakonie-pfalz.de http://www.diakonie-pfalz.de/ich-suche- hilfe/migranten-und- fluechtlinge/psychosoziales-zentrum- pfalz.html</p>	<p>Caritasverband Mainz e.V. Beratungs- und jugendhilfe-zentrum St. Nikolaus Psychosocial Center for Flight and Trauma Lotharstraße 11-13 55116 Mainz Telefon: +49 6131 90746-0 Email: beratungszentrum@caritas-mz.de www.caritas-mainz.de</p>

Mosaik Leipzig – Kompetenzzentrum für transkulturelle Dialoge e.V. PSZ Leipzig – Psychosocial Center for Refugees Peterseteinweg 3 04107 Leipzig Tel.: 0341/92787712 Email: psz@mosaik-leipzig.de www.mosaik-leipzig.de	
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4.2.2. Psychosocial online counselling

Online counselling in seven different languages. The language can be selected on the upper right hand side of the homepage.

<https://www.ipso-ecare.com/home-14.html>

4.2.3. Links in Internet

You can download audio relaxation and visualization exercises from the following website:

<http://www.refugee-trauma.help/>

Aid for children and adolescents with emotional problems, in the German, English, French, Arabic and Farsi languages, can be found here:

<http://www.ntfn.de/infomaterial/ntfn-flyer-4/>

4.2.4. What can help my child?

When your child has suffered horrible experiences and you notice he or she is suffering, or behaves very differently than before, this picture book may help. The book can be downloaded for free and comes in German, Arabic, Farsi, English and French:

<http://www.susannestein.de/VIA-online/traumabilderbuch.html>

The guidebook *Wie helfe ich meinem traumatisierten Kind? (How Can I Help My Traumatized Child?)* is for parents of refugee children who would like to know how to help their children. The guidebook contains information on how parents can react correctly and age-appropriately, based on many practical situations. The book can be downloaded for free in German, English and/or Arabic:

<http://www.bptk.de/publikationen/aktuelle-publikationen.html>

Epilogue

This book would not have come about without all the wonderful people with whom I have had the honor to work. Through them, I have learned so much about other cultures and countries, about personal strength and incredible vitality and energy. I admire every single person who comes here and builds a new life. I feel like a treasure hunter, promised to find treasure. In every human being. And that is so beautiful! Thank you to all those who allowed me to join their treasure hunt!

I thank you, that you have read this book up to this point! You have my deepest respect for your stamina and your will to change your situation! I hope and wish for you, that you found something helpful and worthy of practicing. If so, stick with it! Keep practicing! You can do it!

I would be very pleased to hear from you and discover what you liked about this book and what you didn't think very helpful. Maybe you have some questions? Please feel free to contact me! I would like to learn more, and maybe your feedback will help some else when I can improve on this book. It

will help me, too, when you explain to me how some things are seen very differently in your culture. Or when you tell me about helpful customs and strategies in your culture for coping with problems, such as I have never heard of before. Write to me! I would be happy to hear anything you may have to say about this book and would be glad to answer your questions! selbsthilfebuch@gmail.com

Exercise Index

Exercise No.	Name der Exercise	Chapter	Page	Source
1	The Safe	1.2.	9	
2	My last 24 hours	2.	31	
3	Positive pictures	2.3.	35	
4	List of positive activities	2.3.	53	based on Opel et al. (2015), pg.84
5	My tree of life	2.3.	55	based on Opel et al. (2015), pg.38ff
6	My timeline	2.4.	59	
7	Conscious listening	2.5.	61	
8	Attentive drawing	2.5.	61	
9	Traveling through your body	2.5.	67	based on Krüger (2015), pg.109f.
10	The tree	2.5.	68	
11	Be your daily manager!	2.6.1.	70	
12	My diary of pleasant activities	2.6.1.	73	based on Opel et al. (2015), pg.38
13	My social network	2.7.	76	
14	The internal clock	3.1.1.	80	
15	Breathing exercise	3.1.2.	84	based on: Cross-Müller (2015), pg.32; Fischer (2011), pg.35; Kern (2015), pg.139; Liedl et al. (2013), pg.171,
16	Progressive muscle relaxation	3.1.2.	85	based on: Boon et al. (2013), pg.143; Fischer (2011), pg.45; Liedl et al. (2013), pg.168;
17	Touching head and heart	3.1.3.	87	Cross-Müller (2015), pg.36f.
18	My private, personal, peaceful place	3.1.3.	88	based on: Boon et al. (2013), pg.105; Hantke & Görge (2012), pg.328; Krüger (2015), pg.139; Liedl et al. (2013), pg.167ff.; PSZ Düsseldorf (2006), pg.15f;
19	Shoulder toss	3.2.1.	93	Cross-Müller (2015), pg.20
20	Stimulating senses	3.3.1.	95	
21	The 1-2-3-4-5- Exercise	3.3.1.	97	based on: Hantke & Görge (2012), pg.246
22	Thought stop	3.3.2.	99	based on Boon et al. (2013), pg.120
23	Reckoning & riddles	3.3.2.	99	based on Fischer (2011), pg.55
24	The tension thermometer	3.4.1.	102	based on Huber (2013), pg.223
25	The steps of anger	3.4.2.	106	
26	Posture	3.5.	110	Liedl et al. (2013), pg.97
27	Brooding time	3.5.	116	
28	Hands on hips	3.8.2.	122	Cross-Müller (2014), pg.12f
29	Neck muscle relaxation	3.9.3.	126	Liedl et al. (2014)

Bibliography

To spare the reader unnecessary confusion, the literary sources have been bundled. Exercise sources, when known, are listed in the Exercise Index. It is often impossible to trace the origin of an exercise. Please forgive any related oversights on my part.

I have noted the primary source of inspiration for each chapter. A complete bibliography is then listed at the end of this book.

Chapter	Source
1	Hantke & Görges (2012); Krüger (2015), Opel et al. (2015)
2	Frick-Baer (2015), Hantke & Görges (2012); Krüger (2015), Opel et al. (2015)
3.1.	Boon et al. (2013), Liedl et al. (2013), Opel et al. (2015)
3.2.	Opel et al. (2015), Thünker & Pietrowsky (2010)
3.2.1.	Boon et al. (2013), pg.121;
3.2.2.	Caby & Caby (2009), pg.112; Krüger (2015), pg.105
3.3.	Beckrath-Wilking et al. (2013), pg.208; Fleischhaker et al. (2010); Gschwend (2006), pg.; Hantke & Görges (2012), pg.209; Krüger (2015), Liedl et al. (2013), pg.74ff;
3.4.1.	Beckrath-Wilking et al. (2013), pg.210; Boon et al. (2013), pg.297; Huber (2013), pg.326;
3.4.2.	Boon et al. (2013), pg.251-262; Dudenko (2015); Gschwend (2006), pg.68; Krüger (2015), pg.116; Liedl et al. (2013), pg.123; Stewart (2003), pg.13 u. 19;
3.5.	Boon et al. (2013), pg.273 u. 280; Gschwend (2006), pg.72; Liedl et al. (2013), pg.97;
3.6.	Liedl et al. (2013), pg.97
3.7.	Beckrath-Wilking et al. (2013), pg.241; Gschwend (2006), pg.30; Liedl et al. (2013), pg.147; Weinberger & Papastefanou (2008), pg.226-238; Worden (2011)
3.7.1.	Bowlby (1983) nach Liedl et al. (2013), pg.
3.8.	Boon et al. (2013), pg.263; Liedl et al. (2013), pg.113; Opel et al. (2015), pg.
3.9.	Boon et al. (2013), pg.143; Hantke & Görges (2012), pg.420; Liedl et al. (2013), pg.88; Liedl et al. (2014);
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