

This handout is based on information in Finlay, L. (2015). *Relational Integrative Psychotherapy: Process and Theory in Practice*, Chichester, Sussex: Wiley.

Encouraging clients' use of resources

Rothschild (2003a,b) identifies **5 classes of resources** which can be nurtured to help a person to feel/cope better and be more resilient. I elaborate with some specific examples:

- **Functional** – These include practical issues/activities e.g. having a safe place to live and restful space to recharge; nutritional/comforting food to eat; rewarding constructive work, hobbies and daily activities which enhance a sense of meaningfulness and productivity; health-enhancing self-care activities (e.g. going for a massage, taking a bubble bath, yoga, going for a manicure, joining a gym).
- **Physical** – The use of physical activities involving basic health and physical movement, strength, agility, coordination which increase somatic awareness (sports, working out, dancing etc) can be helpful resources.
- **Psychological** – i. Activities which involve intelligence, logic, ability to problem solve, a sense of humour, creative talents can all offer satisfaction; ii. Engaging comfort objects or images (e.g. a 'transitional object' or imagining the therapist's face) can offer solace; iii. The development of coping strategies and defence mechanisms (including survival resources such as running away, dissociating, fighting) can be important life skills to develop.
- **Interpersonal** – Supportive social networks can be activated offer an important source of support including spouse/partner, friends, family, colleagues (and even pets) in both the present or remembered from the past.
- **Spiritual** – Religious/non-religious practices including prayer, meditation/mindfulness, communing with nature, poetry, music, etc can all be helpful to relax and enhance life and meaning.

The skill when collaborating in resourcing clients is to find what works for the individual. Start with the strategies that have worked in the past; then consider and try out some new ones that could be helpful. Be creative and perhaps have a bit of fun exploring possibilities!

Rothschild has written widely about doing 'trauma work'. She suggests that clients may not have had enough resources at the time of the original trauma, for example, the individual may not have been big or strong enough to run away or they lacked the support of a protective Other or they were too young to understand. But 'that was then and this is now' she explains. In *this present*, the person can be encouraged to recognise the resources they do have or which they can develop, to help them as they work through their trauma.

Rothschild warns that before tackling any trauma face on, it is important to ensure a client feels safe and reasonably grounded; they need to have some resources to hold on to. In particular, Rothschild recommends using the idea '**oases**' (places or activities that divert from the trauma – see bullet list above); '**anchors**' (comforting memories or calming images that can help soothe or act as a brake when the therapy work gets tough); and having a '**safe place**' to go to mentally/imaginally, to reduce hyper-arousal.