

Worksheet 15: Creating a Change Metaphor

Purpose: To create your own change metaphor, allowing you to get a different perspective on your trauma-related thoughts and encouraging you to face difficult situations and emotions. You can create metaphors that emphasize your willingness to experience difficult emotions, and metaphors that emphasize changing and controlling your situation. Experiment with metaphors to find one that works for you.

Instructions: Read the examples below. Then create your own metaphor for facing the particular PTSD-related situations, thoughts, and feelings you avoid. If you are having trouble getting started, think of an activity, thing, or place that you love or find inspiring and use that to shape the creation of the metaphor.

Example 1:

My change metaphor is a garden. I think I need to look at my life like a garden. I would have loved a yard full of roses and plenty of vegetable plants. But I know that most of my yard is too shady and not rainy enough to raise lettuce. I am going to accept the garden I have, where I notice the green hostas growing well and a few yellow dandelions on the edges.

Example 2:

My change metaphor is my living room. I really hate the color brown, but most of the furniture and the walls of my living room are brown. I totally avoid my living room. The shape of the room is all wrong too—it's too long and narrow, so it's hard to fit in the sofa I want. I never read books in there and rarely sit there to relax. Recently, I realized that avoiding that room doesn't make it any less brown and it doesn't change the shape—it just means I have less space to hang out. I'm going to start figuring out how to redo that room to make it a place that I can use. I guess that means opening the door to that brown room and figuring out what I want to do next.

Example 3:

My change metaphor is a desert island. I feel like I am on a desert island and the only way to get back to civilization is to use a small boat to row back to the mainland. I know the waters are choppy and scary, but I'm going to keep my goal in mind. It will be an uncertain journey, but the destination is worth the trip. I'm going to make this journey.

Overcoming Trauma and PTSD

Exercise:

My change metaphor is