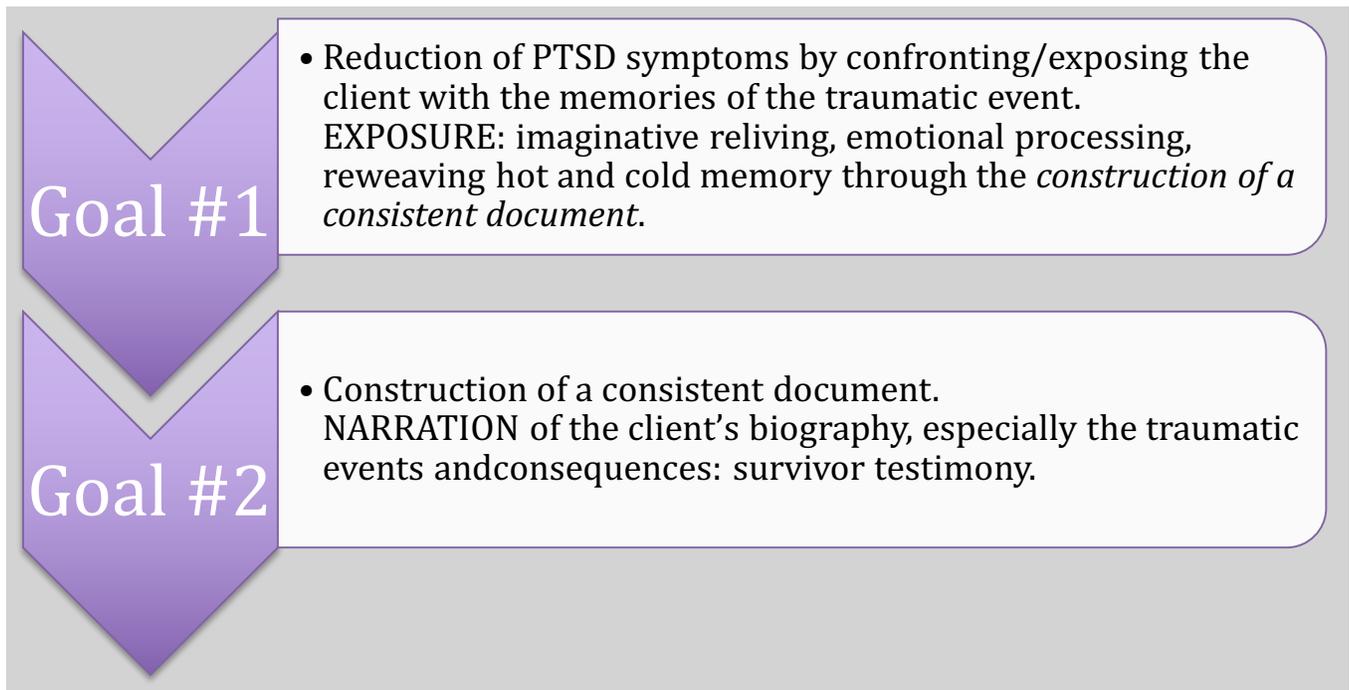


Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET)

2 GOALS:



The therapeutic agents of NET:

1. Active chronological **reconstruction** of the autobiographic/episodic memory
2. Prolonged **exposure** to the 'hot spots' and full activation of the fear memory in order to modify the emotional network
3. Meaningful linkage and **integration** of psycho-physiological and somatosensory responses to the time-, space- and life-context
4. The **cognitive re-evaluation** of behavior and patterns, as well as reinterpretation of the meaning-content through reprocessing of negative, fearful and traumatic events
5. Regaining of survivor's dignity and satisfaction of the need for **acknowledgement**.
Explicit human rights orientation of 'testifying.'

Basic Rules in NET

Survivor's fundamental basic assumptions, like beliefs in safety, trust, intimacy, human kindness and control have been shattered by the trauma.

Therefore:

- create a space of safety within the client/therapist contact
- make sure that the client is in control over the situation
- ensure predictability of your actions, next steps, behavior
- respect physical integrity of your client
- accept your client, his/her emotion and expression, his/her past actions without judgment
- be congruent - what you feel will transpire to your client eventually
- be an empathic listener: verbalize feelings, body sensations, thoughts; eye contact, full attention
- total confidentiality
- NEVER leave or end session during the peak of the hot spot – move client to next safest moment before ending and check that their arousal has lowered.

NET Psychoeducation (1)

Why do I experience symptoms?

- Normalization ⇒ a normal response to an abnormal experience: “after what you have experienced, everyone would be distressed”
- Legitimization ⇒ symptoms are an adaptive response to a survival situation in the past - limit functioning now
- Use the particular symptoms of your client to explain:
 - Hyperarousal: *“in a life-threatening situation is better to be over aroused, danger-focused, numb, etc., these bodily responses remained until now.”*
 - Avoidance: *“just like an inflammation, each time you ‘touched’ the past experience it hurt. Therefore you have quickly learned, not to ‘get in touch’ with these memories of the past.”*
 - Intrusions: *“memories come back - they intrude into your current life...day and night. All of a sudden you might get upset, anxious or detach from reality and all of this happens without you knowing why.”*

NET Psychoeducation (2)

What are we going to do?

1. Imaginative Exposure

Example: “In order to successfully store the terrible things that have happened to you, we need to gain access to these past events. We want to look at all the thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations you experienced during the incident. We want to explore them as completely as possible and go through the different incidences in in slow motion. This time, we will deliberately approach your experiences together. If we manage to stay long enough with the event and the feelings and sensations you had during the incident, those terrible emotional reactions will go down, lose their gripping impact and fade out...I know it is hard to imagine, but I will help you, that this can become true for you, like it has for many others. We have learnt that talking in a guided way about your life experiences, especially the most painful or frightening ones, can greatly ease the burden on you. Putting your sad and fearful feelings into words can help the trauma symptoms to disappear.”

NET Psychoeducation (3)

2. The Testimony

Example: “Together we will construct a detailed, comprehensive and meaningful narrative of your traumatic event(s). We want to fill in all the gaps and holes until the testimony is complete and your bad feelings about it and the pain dissolves and fear defuses. Our experience is that the more complete the narration gets the more the symptoms will decrease. Through the process of giving testimony about what has happened to you, we would like to provide the chance for you to do justice through the documentation of what you saw and went through. It will help you to reinstate a sense of dignity for yourself. I will therefore write down a complete testimony of what you have experienced in life. Documents like this counteract forgetfulness, ignorance and denial. We think that the past should not be forgotten.”

NET Psychoeducation (4)

The Process

Example: “Talking about the past takes time. We will have to meet about 4-6 times. Each time we will take about 60-90 minutes to talk to each other. This can be done in the course of 2-3 weeks.”

Pre- and Post tests

Example: “Just like we had a diagnostic session in the beginning, making sure that the symptoms you suffer related to a traumatic experience in your life, we want to know how you are doing over the course of the coming year. There will therefore be an interview after about 4 weeks upon completion of treatment, one after 6 months and a final one after one year.”