

Emotion Distancing Dialogues

Emotional distancing aims to help individuals down-regulate and contain intense or overwhelming emotions. In doing so, emotionally distanced dialogues support the development of distress tolerance and emotional regulation.

Process of dialogue:

1). The individual describes feeling emotionally overwhelmed.

Facilitator: "It sounds like you are feeling a huge amount of rage right now."

2). The facilitator invites the individual to distance themselves from the emotion by placing it in an empty chair.

Facilitator: "Imagine that your anger is held in this seat. [Facilitator introduces a chair]."

3). The facilitator invites the individual to describe salient characteristics of the emotion.

Facilitator: "What does your anger look like? What colour is it? What does it sound like?"

4). When sufficiently down-regulated, the facilitator invites the individual to continue exploring their emotional experience from a distance using third person-language.

Facilitator: "What is your anger saying? [Gestures to the empty chair]. How is that understandable? What does it need?"

Facilitation notes:

- If emotional distancing does not succeed in down-regulating affect, the facilitator can invite the individual to experiment with changing characteristics of the emotion (e.g. making it smaller, quieter, or moving the chair further away).

Further Reading:

Pugh, M. (2019). *Cognitive behavioural chairwork: Distinctive features*. Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Citation:

Elliott, R. (2013). Person-Centered-Experiential Psychotherapy for Anxiety Difficulties: Theory, Research and Practice. *Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies*, 12, 14-30

Pugh, M. & Bell, T. (2020). Emotion distancing dialogues: Facilitation guidance. Retrieved from www.chairwork.co.uk.

For further chairwork guidelines and facilitation notes
visit www.chairwork.co.uk