

Sensations

Sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. The same sensation (such as warmth) can be experienced in any of these three ways by different people, and by any individual at different times.

When people focus on pleasant or neutral sensations, our bodies tend to feel more present and comfortable. People can use resources and attention to sensations to intentionally help relax, center, our bodies and calm our minds.

Resourcing

Bringing to mind something that evokes greater well-being, safety, or security is called **resourcing**.

Personal resources are internal, external, or imagined things that can help us feel better, safer or happier when we think of them. Personal resources are unique to each person.

Thinking about a personal resource in detail is called resourcing. Just as bringing to mind a stressful thought or a painful memory can cause our body to tense, bringing a resource to mind can do the opposite — it can help our body feel safe, feel greater well-being, or feel more energy and positivity. Resourcing can therefore lead to sensations of well-being in the body.

Tracking

When we then direct our attention to those sensations that are pleasant or neutral we are practicing **tracking** or reading the sensations. This can enhance the body's experience of well-being and help it return to (or go deeper into) our resilient zone.

Ideally, resourcing and tracking should be practiced together. Both resourcing and tracking are skills that develop over time with practice, and lead to what can be called "**body literacy**" since we are learning about our own bodies and how they respond to stress and well-being.

Shift and Stay

Although having a nervous system is a universal human characteristic, there will be great variety in terms of what functions as a personal resource for any given individual, as well as what sensations arise in us related to wellbeing or stress. One of the challenges of tracking is that when we begin to pay attention to sensations in our body, we will notice unpleasant or painful sensations. When our attention goes to these unpleasant sensations, they can lead us to become tense, stressed or uncomfortable, because unpleasant sensations can be interpreted by our brain as signs that we might be in danger. A key skill in dealing with this is called **shift and stay**.

When tracking leads us to noticing an unpleasant sensation, we can learn, over time, to shift our attention so that it does not become fixated on the unpleasant sensation. For example, we can notice a place in the body that feels better, and shift our focus there instead.

Alternatively, we can shift to grounding, resourcing or another Help Now! Strategy. However we choose to shift our attention, we then pause and allow our attention to stay with the new object of focus for several seconds (unless that new area of focus is causing unpleasant sensations, in which case we can shift again). This is called **shift and stay**.

So after shifting our attention, when we notice a pleasant or neutral sensation in the body through tracking, we can keep our attention there for a few moments, increasing the calming benefits of this resourcing strategy.

Shift and Stay

(continued)

This silent attention tends to deepen with experience, signaling to the body that we are safe, and the body typically responds with relaxation.

Shift and stay is also important because when learning and practicing resourcing, it is always possible for a student to experience a “mixed resource.” A resource is “mixed” when one part of it makes one feel better, but another part of it makes one feel worse.

For example, a student may think of a loved one, such as a grandparent, who showed them much affection. That grandparent can serve as a resource for the student. But perhaps the grandparent has died or lives far away. When the student thinks of this aspect of their grandparent, they may become sad. In this case, the thought of the grandparent is acting as a “mixed resource.” If a student experiences this, you as an educator can help them practice shift and stay. That might mean shifting to the positive part of the resource (the love that their grandparent showed them) and focusing on that rather than focusing on the fact that the grandparent is gone or inaccessible. If that’s not possible, it might mean shifting to a different resource, or to a grounding activity.