

The Six TSM Structures For Safety
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One of the underlying principles of the Therapeutic Spiral Model (TSM) is that there are no secrets; the provision of information is part of creating safety and containment. In that vein, we wanted you to be aware of the structure that we use in workshops and the purpose of the different activities. The three strands of the Therapeutic Spiral represent Energy, Experience and Meaning. In a 3-day workshop, the first day is spent on creating energy and providing safety. Six structures have been created that are a part of the beginning of any TSM workshop.

1) The first structure is to concretize and have in place our Observing Ego role. In TSM, we use cards to represent this. The OE is the role that observes and takes in data without judgement or criticism. It is about noticing and observing. It can be a place to go, literally or metaphorically, when we get stuck in experiencing and thus is an important resource for establishing and maintaining safety.

2) As a group, the next step is to create an experiencing space that can be contained. TSM creates this with the Circle of Scarves. Participants and team members name and offer the different strengths that each is bringing to the workshop and to the work. The strengths can be personal, interpersonal or transpersonal. They are represented by scarves and are individually named as the circle is completed. In order to explore and make meaning of trauma experiences, it is first necessary to resource ourselves and have strengths available. The circle of scarves also creates a boundary between our experiencing space and our observing space.

3) Then we begin to create connection and learn about ourselves as a group. We will utilize a structure known as a spectrogram. Participants stand in a single line and place themselves along a continuum from least to most. This is an action method that makes it possible for the team and participants to gain assessment information quickly. Information such as how much psychodrama experience participants have had helps the team to determine interventions that will be appropriate for each particular group.

4) The fourth structure is called an action sociogram. Group members identify connections to others. This allows the participants and the team to see what connections are present in the group and to help the group to make connections with one another.

5) Finally, we will experience circle sociometry. Group members are in a circle and place themselves in or out of the circle depending on whether a particular criteria applies to them (e.g., how many people own pets? If you own a pet, you step into the circle). This is designed to continue the process of making connections and to provide narrative labels of our experiences in an inclusive fashion. Accurate labeling is an important piece in the process of trauma recovery. This action structure gives us a chance to learn about one another and our experiences.

6) Each workshop also incorporates an art project that will be in a project in progress and process throughout the workshop. The art project allows participants to label and identify different roles and experiences that are non-verbal and creative.

This model encourages the asking of questions if something is not understood or if something feels unsafe. While the team takes the primary responsibility for safety, it is important that each person be responsible for stating their needs for safety and letting the team know if something is distressing and needs to be addressed.