

trauma site visits

Revisiting the site of a traumatic experience can help in a whole series of ways. Using Google Earth for a "virtual" visit can sometimes also be useful – either because going to the real site isn't at all easy to arrange, or as a first step before actually visiting the site itself. Benefits come through a series of overlapping mechanisms:

1. ***behavioural experiment*** – what is the fear or other "prediction" that the trauma survivor feels might happen if they go back to the trauma site. It can sometimes be helpful therapeutically to make this imagined "prediction" specific & explicit and then check out its truth or falsity.
2. ***safety behaviours*** – watch out for ways that trauma survivors may subtly avoid fuller "exposure" to (over-) feared experiences and so limit the benefits they could have achieved by facing their fear.
3. ***relive & reconstruct*** – once at the site, typically the therapist would ask "please talk me through what happened".
4. ***then v's now*** – are there any differences between how the site was in the trauma memory and how it actually is now on revisiting it?
5. ***time-code on memory*** – coming back to the site can help to highlight that the memory really is in the past.
6. ***new information*** – coming back to the site (and talking through what happened) provides more cues to trigger fuller memories.
7. ***new meanings*** – what additional or changed meanings emerge as new information becomes available from the site visit?

Grey N. *Memory-focused approaches in cognitive therapy for adults with PTSD*. Workshop BABCP Spring Conference 12th April 2012, London.
