

Skills for Psychological Recovery

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SPR in
Relation to
PFA

PFA	SPR
Different Time Frames for Delivery	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First hours and days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First weeks and months
Different Levels of Engagement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More “doing for” Often one time meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More “doing with” Continued review of skills

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SPR in Relation to Mental Health Treatment

Mental Health Treatment	SPR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on diagnosis and treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on assessment and fostering of strengths and coping skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community based
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May encourage focus on the past and it's influence on current problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals are more present-centered, behavioral, and focused on immediate activation of change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted only by health professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted by either health professionals or paraprofessionals and trained community responders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longer duration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shorter duration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larger array of treatment interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More limited, simpler array of interventions, focused on fostering and developing skills

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What is SPR?

- SPR is a series of skill that have been shown to be effective across many settings in making people feel better after different types of adversity
- It is designed to be a 5-visit program, but, if necessary, each can “stand alone”
- You should encourage multiple visits
- It should be flexible and tailored to people’s needs
- SPR has been described as ‘facilitated self-help’ because you are teaching people skills to manage their own challenges

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Components of SPR

- Information Gathering that provides:
 - Understanding of stress reactions
 - Identification and prioritization of concerns and needs
 - Support
 - Expectancy of recovery
- Problem-Solving
- Promoting Positive Activities (activity scheduling)
- Managing Reactions
- Helpful Thinking
- Rebuilding Healthy Social Connections



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Potential Benefits of SPR over Supportive Counseling

The person is more likely to feel empowered

The person becomes activated and “unstuck”

The person is more likely to attribute their recovery to their own actions

The person is more likely to maintain new coping skills across future problems

The provider is more likely to feel that the person is making progress

The provider is less likely to feel stressed

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Goals of SPR

- Speed up recovery
- Enhance people's own ability to address their needs and concerns
- Support healthy functioning
- Prevent behaviors that may make problems worse



SPR Provider Style



Be practical, client-centered, and focused

Maintain warmth and empathy

Communicate confidence in SKILLS

Create partnership, so that the person will:

- Be comfortable learning new skills
- Come to multiple SPR sessions
- Tolerate change
- Persist in practicing new skills
- Remember his/her strengths
- Become 'unstuck'
- Feel comfortable being honest, reporting challenges


When Should SPR Not Be Used?

- If the person is not motivated to attend sessions or engage in the skills
- If the person's life is too chaotic
- If the person has thoughts of harm to themselves or others, or a severe alcohol problem
- If they have an unstable medical condition that requires attention
- If they hear or see things that are not there
- If they have a severe cognitive disability


Consider treatment if SPR does not produce significant benefits

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Set Expectations for the Person You're Working With




Give a realistic picture of what **SKILLS** can accomplish





Encourage individuals to try out the skills to see where and when the skill works best for them, and to persist with practicing skills

All skills require practice in order to be learned

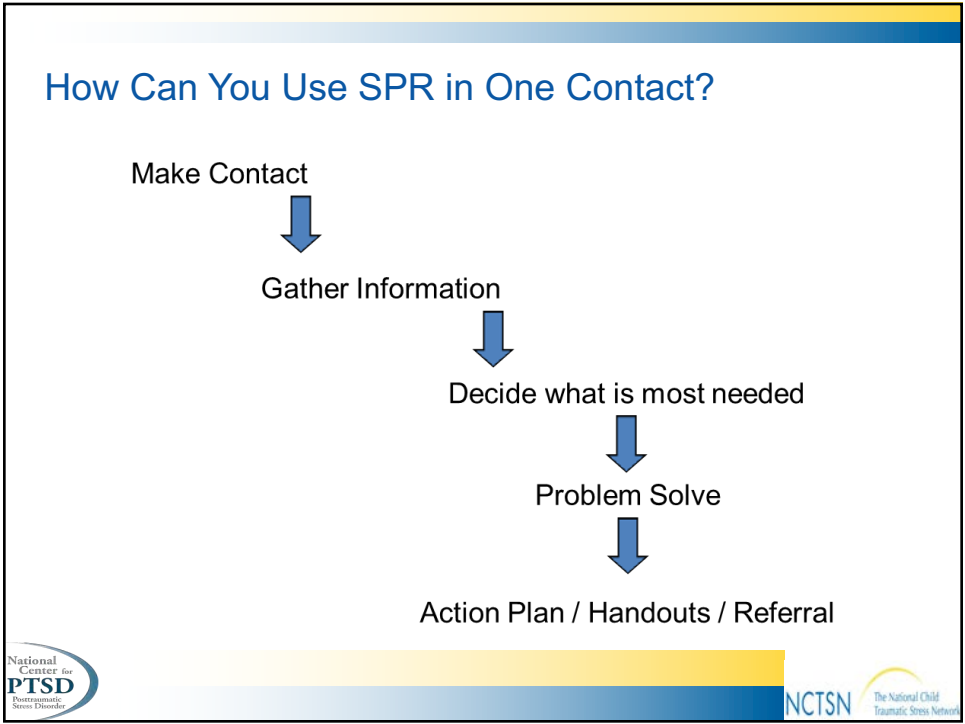
Use analogy such as learning to cook or play a sport



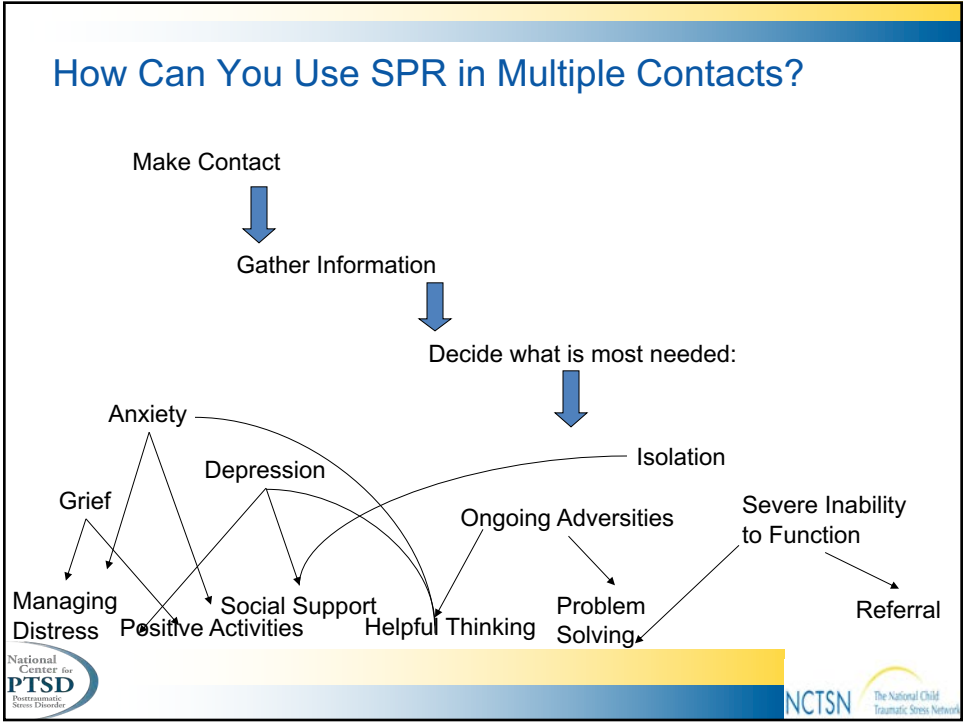
Rationales are important for each skill

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SPR: Key Points I



SPR is more *directive and educational* than supportive counselling – it's like training or coaching



Your relationship is crucial



Be flexible and use small steps



Consider timing and context



Culture, gender and developmental factors

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SPR: Key Points II



Give a rationale for SPR, and for each skill



More sessions = better results



Follow all the steps in each skill



Use the worksheets/handouts and write things down



SPR isn't for all issues



Refer people for long-standing or debilitating symptoms

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Rationale for Information Gathering and Prioritizing Assistance

- After adversity, individuals often feel distressed because of their experiences and losses
- Information Gathering can help individuals identify and prioritize their needs and concerns, which clarifies next steps and strengthens sense of control and hope



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Gather Information in a Supportive Way

- Be practical, person-centered, and focused
- Maintain warmth and empathy
- Use supportive communication so that the person will:
 - Feel comfortable being honest
 - Be more likely to report challenges
 - Tolerate change
 - Remember their strengths
- Work efficiently so that you can complete information gathering with time left to work on a skill in the first contact



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Gather Information To:



- Understand the individual's most pressing current needs and concerns
- Determine unmet needs
- Decide what assistance may be offered
- Decide what type of referrals/resources are needed
- Decide with the individual which skills to prioritize

As you gather information, also determine:

- Where they come from
- Family or social supports
- Other resources (income, shelter)
- Plans they have



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Building Problem-Solving Skills

Helps the person tackle a problem situation actively, so they can:

- Generate better ideas
- Have a more thoughtful selection of action
- Make a plan to follow through into action
- Use the skill in many situations



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Rationale for Building Problem-Solving Skills

- High levels of stress often impact our problem-solving ability – individuals may be less creative and less capable of solving problems.
- The presence of continuing problems maintains stress reactions
- Problem-solving skill provides a structured way of generating solutions

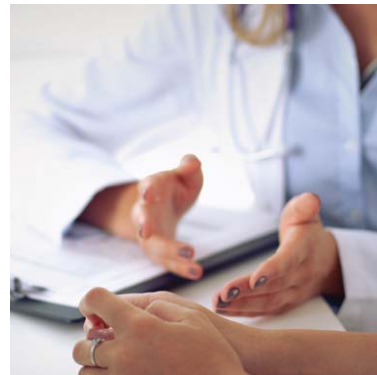


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Steps of Building Problem-Solving Skills

After explaining the rationale:

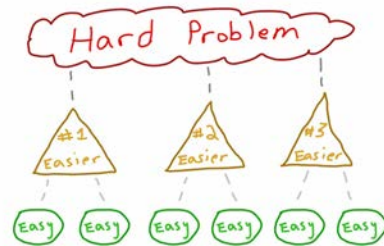
1. Define the problem/decide ownership
2. Set the goal
3. Brainstorm possible solutions
4. Evaluate and choose the best solutions
5. Determine an Action Plan



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Key Point Emphasis: Improving Problem-Solving Skills

- Break the problem down into actionable steps before you generate potential solutions
- Generate a number of creative solutions when brainstorming, even if not realistic



Promoting Positive Activities

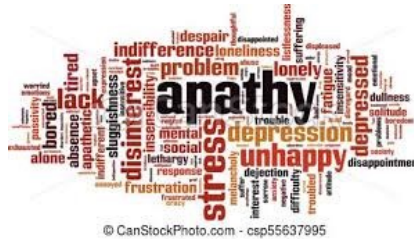
Increase Positive and Rewarding Activities to:

- Improve mood, health, and well-being
- Feel more in control and that life is more "normal"
- Build immunity from stress



Rationale for Promoting Positive Activities: I

- People stop doing rewarding things because:
- They are too busy coping with other problems
- They just don't feel like it anymore
- People become sad, down, or apathetic when they no longer engage in rewarding or meaningful activities



Rationale for Promoting Positive Activities: II

Problems with Focusing on Changing Feelings:

- Feelings are very difficult to change
- Telling yourself to feel good does not work
- It is easier to change your behaviors, which will change feelings



Promoting Positive Activities:

- Makes the person feel more in control and that life is more “normal”
- Helps them feel less sad, hopeless, fearful, or low in energy
- Reminds overwhelmed or exhausted people to do things that improve their health and well-being



Provider Alert

- Increasing positive activities alone is not by itself always adequate help
- It is important to do activities even if not feeling motivated to do so
- The important thing is *ongoing weekly participation* in positive activities
- At first, positive activities may not noticeably improve mood
- Activities are *potentially* positive: if they are not helpful, find more positive alternatives



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Steps of Promoting Positive Activities

After explaining the rationale:

1. Identify possible positive activities
2. Select activities
3. Schedule activities in a calendar



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Key Point Emphasis: Improving Positive Activities Skills

Use it for those who are depressed or exhausted, and need emotional nourishment

Address:

- Meaningful and rewarding activities in addition to positive activities, particularly for those who feel guilt for feeling positive feelings
- Any concern that this is trivial or not realistic in a post-disaster environment
- The need to keep practicing even if not immediately uplifting



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Managing Reactions Skills

The Managing Reactions skills aim to calm upsetting physical and emotional reactions:

1. Learn new strategies to calm reactions to stressful situations
2. Put words to difficult experiences to better understand and manage distress
3. Manage reactions to reminders



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Rationale for Managing Reactions

- During a stressful time, many people have distressing reactions. These can affect:
 - Mood
 - Decision-making
 - Relationships
 - Daily functioning
 - Health
- Reactions to stressful situations and to reminders can add to feeling bad
- Learning skills to manage these reactions can help with all these areas



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Steps of Managing Reactions

After explaining the rationale:

1. Identify distressing reactions and their triggers
2. Teach skills to address priority reactions:
 - 2A. Calming
 - 2B. Put thoughts and feelings into words
 - 2C. Manage reactions to reminders
3. Create a plan



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2A: Calming Skills: Breathing Retraining

- Tell the person it will take time to feel comfortable with this skill
- Ask if the person has ever learned any relaxation techniques before, and how the technique worked
- Show the person that one way to reduce anxiety is to take a normal breath and exhale slowly



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2B: Put Thoughts /Feelings into Words: Instructions

Instruct the person to:

Start writing about whatever is troubling you in as much detail as you can

Try to include detail about feelings and things you may be thinking / saying to yourself

Try to keep writing for 30 minutes

There are no rules for grammar or spelling

Repeat the writing task several times

Thoughts or feelings that come to mind during this task are important to include

Build in new helpful thoughts each time you do the exercise



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HATS: Healing After Trauma Skills



Dream Catcher



Stop Sign



Activity Wheel



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HATS: Healing After Trauma Skills



Goals Jar

Collage



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2C: Managing Reactions to Reminders: Potential Strategies

- **Self-Care**
- **Positive Activities**
- **Calming Strategies such as** breathing or positive distracting activities
- **Discriminate** between the situation or the reminder and the disaster or adverse event itself.
- **Helpful Thinking**
- **Social Support**
- **Writing**
- **Spiritual or Religious Practices**



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Key Point Emphasis: Improving Managing Reactions Skills

- Use handouts as needed
- Practice skills in session
- Assess any challenging aspects in session



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Promoting Helpful Thinking

- Help individuals look at event-related thoughts, and how these affect feelings and behavior
- Identify and practice helpful ways of thinking about disaster-related experiences



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Don't minimize by negating or criticizing beliefs



Whatever the person is thinking is understandable in context



Focus on helpful thoughts to mobilize and energize



Don't debate justification



Test out the effect of thoughts on emotions and actions



Make a referral if needed



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Helpful Thinking is Not the Same as Positive Thinking



- “Positive thinking” is too simplistic
- Negative thoughts may be accurate
- Helpful thoughts can mobilize and energize
- Test effect of thoughts on feeling and behavior

Rationale for Promoting Helpful Thinking

- Disasters and adverse events often change people’s thoughts about the world and themselves
 - The world becomes seen as a more stressful, unpredictable, or dangerous place
 - More negative thoughts about others may lead to more trouble trusting other people
 - They may be like to view their personal situation as hopeless
- People under stress can have thoughts that make their situation even worse by increasing feelings of distress
- Focus on helpful ways of thinking can improve mood and adaptive coping



Steps of Promoting Helpful Thinking

- **After explaining the rationale:**
 1. Identify unhelpful thoughts
 2. Identify helpful thoughts
 3. Rehearse helpful thoughts
 4. Assign practice of helpful thoughts



Dealing with Resistance

- Help the person see that their unhelpful thoughts, even if accurate, are:
 - stressing them out
 - interfering with their priorities
 - making the situation even worse
- Help them modify only a portion of their thought:
 - *“Another fire could happen anytime [but this time I am better prepared]”*
- Help them modify a thought at only certain times
 - *“I have a right to be angry [but when I’m with my children I will focus only on them]”*

Resistance to Helpful Thinking: Payoff Matrix

- Use when you are aware that there are some advantages of holding onto a certain thought
- Use the matrix to identify:
 - Advantages of holding on to the thought
 - Disadvantages of holding on to the thought
 - Advantages of adopting a new thought
 - Disadvantages of adopting a new thought

Payoff Matrix Worksheet

	Keep the Thought	Change the Thought
Advantages (Pros)	How does keeping your thought make your life seem more manageable, safer, or easier to handle? Does the thought give you a sense of control, make you feel secure, or make things seem predictable?	How could changing your thought improve your life? If you change your thought, would it decrease negative feelings? Would changing your thought help you focus less on problems from the past?
Disadvantages (Cons)	How does keeping your thought make your life harder? Does the thought create negative feelings that prevent you from doing things you would like to do?	What are the disadvantages or costs of changing your thought? Would changing the thought make you feel less control, less secure, or like things are less predictable?



Key Point Emphasis: Improving Helpful Thinking Skills

- Work to revise the “unspoken” addendum to, which is that “they will not be able to cope”
- Address different categories of unhelpful thoughts
- Emphasis the need for repetition and practice



Rationale for Rebuilding Healthy Social Connections

After disasters or adverse events:

- Individuals may feel isolated due to:
 - Moving from their community
 - Loss of friends and family
 - Sadness, fear, and lack of motivation
- Increase connections to positive relationships and community supports



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Rationale for Rebuilding Healthy Social Connections

- Positive social support is a proven protective factor in stressed individuals
- Lack of social support or negative social support leads to worse outcomes
- Social support helps people meet their emotional and practical needs
- Positive social support can help people:
 - Feel understood and cared for
 - Feel like they fit in and belong
 - Feel needed and wanted
 - Feel like they are NOT alone or isolated
 - Build confidence that they can handle problems
 - Feel reassured that others will be there
 - Get good advice when facing a difficult situation



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Steps for Rebuilding Healthy Social Connections

After explaining rationale, use handouts and worksheets to:

1. Develop a Social Connections Map
2. Review the Social Connections Map
3. Make a Social Connections Plan

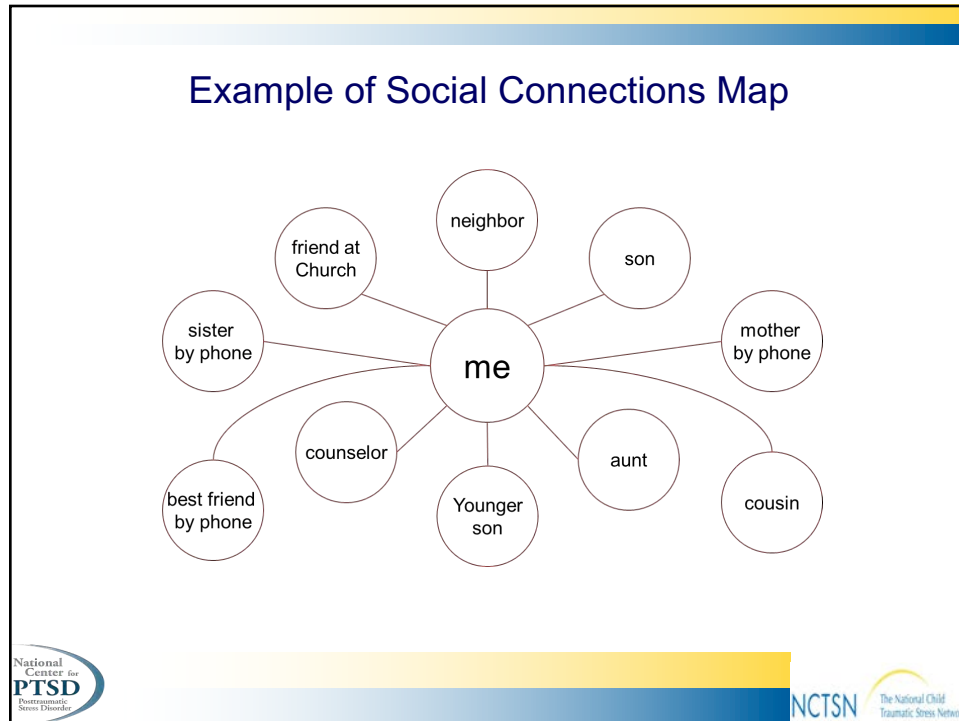


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A person may have a harder time rebuilding social support if they have:

- Had a loved one die recently
- A history of having trouble making self-protective choices in their relationships, such as connecting to people who are unreliable
- A pre-event social network that they have spent years and a great amount of energy building





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Key Point Emphasis: Improving Rebuilding Healthy Social Connections Skills

- Pay attention to loss
- Address both positive and negative social influences
- Address any underlying social skills deficits

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SPR: Key Points

- SPR is more *directive and educational* than supportive counselling – it's like training or coaching
- Your relationship with the person is crucial
- Be flexible and use small steps
- Form a partnership with the person
- Be sensitive to culture, protection, gender, inclusion and developmental factors
- More sessions = better results
- SPR isn't for all problems
- Refer people for long-standing or debilitating symptoms



Further Resources

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/type/skills_psych_recovery_manual.asp

Online Course:

<https://www.train.org/vha/course/1091207/compilation>

