

#06



Neuroplasticity and Healing

Whatever trauma you've endured as a survivor, healing is possible due to your brain's incredible ability to adapt and create new pathways. This process is called neuroplasticity.



Each Saprea Support Group meeting begins with 'Group Leader A' reading the script while participants follow along. The script will be the same for every group meeting. **To find the script, visit supportgroups.saprea.org.** Below are the additional meeting materials for this course.



To watch the intro video for this lesson, scan the QR code or go to <https://vimeo.com/showcase/10293739>.

Group Activity

PLANNING AHEAD

Planning ahead can be an effective tool in making your healing a priority. When you write down even one reminder of what you'd like to focus on today, tomorrow, or the rest of the week, you're not just creating a plan, you're strengthening the communication between the lower and higher parts of your brain.

Making conscious choices, such as planning, tracking, and following through, strengthens the frontal lobe (the area in the cortex that helps you to think critically, analyze situations, and problem solve). This added strength can positively impact your limbic system and your body because it helps to build new connections in your brain (or neural pathways). Over time and with consistent care, these neural pathways will get stronger, and you'll feel more empowered to act on the plans, goals, and dreams you have.

ACTIVITY STEPS

Part 1—Planning

01 As you anticipate this upcoming week, select at least one question that stands out to you and write down an answer in a journal or planner.

- What is one thing I want to focus on this week to progress on my healing journey? What can I do to achieve that?

- What is one thing I'm looking forward to this week?
- What is one new experience I would like to have this week?
- What might I struggle with this week, and how can I plan ahead so I can manage it in a helpful way?
- Who can I reach out to for support?

02 Next, write down anything that you think will help you this upcoming week. This might be notes, goals, events, reminders, etc.

Part 2—Reflecting

03 When your week is over, look back and reflect on the thoughts you had that guided your planning. Pick at least one of the following questions that stands out to you and write down your answer. Try to pick a different question each week to help you uncover new insights you may not have noticed before:

- What is something I enjoyed doing this week?
- On a scale of 1–10 (1 = This week was challenging, 10 = This week was great) how was this week? What could I do next week to move my number just one degree higher?
- How did my body feel this week?
- What relationships did I strengthen this week?
- How did I sleep?
- What was my best moment from this week?

Grounding Exercise

MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Mindful movement can help you feel reconnected with your body and ground you to the present moment. It can even help you to move through certain thoughts and emotions that you may feel stuck in. During this activity, as we gently engage with our bodies, be mindful of the sensations you experience. Try to observe those sensations with curiosity and without judgment. So let's begin.

Activity Steps

- ◆ Stand up or remain seated if that feels right for you.
- ◆ Now stretch out your left arm and wiggle your fingers.
- ◆ Stop wiggling your fingers and make a few circles with your wrist.
- ◆ Next, swing your left arm forward and backward at the shoulder.
- ◆ Now let's focus on the right side. Stretch out your right arm and wiggle your fingers.
- ◆ Stop wiggling your fingers and make a few circles with your wrist.
- ◆ And finally, swing your arm forward and backward at the shoulder.
- ◆ Now put your hands on your hips and stretch your whole upper body to the left.
- ◆ Then stretch your whole upper body to the right.
- ◆ Now reach your hands up over your head and stretch for a few seconds.
- ◆ Roll your shoulders forward in circles a couple of times.
- ◆ Reverse directions and roll your shoulders back in circles a couple of times.
- ◆ Drop your neck forward to make clockwise circles a couple of times.
- ◆ Reverse directions and make a couple of circles.
- ◆ And finally, shake out every part of your body—your hands, your arms, your feet, your legs, and your head.
- ◆ Once you finish, give yourself a moment to notice the thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations you are experiencing.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to explore the following articles in the Online Healing Resources section of our website at saprea.org.

- **HOW DOES TRAUMA AFFECT THE BRAIN AND BODY?**
- **DEVELOPING ASPIRATIONAL THINKING**
- **CREATING INTENTIONAL BEHAVIOR**

NEXT TOPIC:

#07



UNDERSTANDING DISSOCIATION

Healing from child sexual abuse involves the practice of Acknowledgement, which is looking with clarity and self-compassion at where you are today.