Cognitive interweaves

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Responsibility

Guilt, shame, self-blame

When: the patient is stuck on guilt or shame ("it was my fault", "I should have stopped it", "I am bad").

- Whose responsibility was it, really, in that situation?
- Who was responsible for what they did to you that day, the little child or the adult?
- If the same thing happened to your child, your best friend, or your sister, whom would you hold responsible?
- I'm confused: who was bigger, you or that person?
- If this had happened to a friend and she kept blaming herself, what would you tell her?

Safety

The danger feels present

When: the patient experiences the danger as present even though it is over ("I am in danger", "I am going to die").

Use these only when the history confirms the danger is over; if there is still risk, protection comes first.

- What happens if you think the words "It's over, I'm safe now"?
- Where are you now? And where are you sitting today?
- Notice what happened next.
- Can that person hurt you now?
- Where is that person today?

Control / Choice

Powerlessness, no options

When: the patient feels powerless or without options ("I have no control", "there was nothing I could do").

- What choices do you have now that you didn't have then?
- What happens if you think "I can now choose"?
- From what you know now as an adult, what would you tell that little child to help them understand what happened?
- If you were in that situation again, what would you do?

How to use them

Sparingly and as briefly as possible

- Only when processing does not move on its own: it loops, information is missing, it does not generalize, or time is running out.
- Identify the theme of the block and choose an interweave from that theme.
- A single brief question. It is offered, and if it does not fit, the patient can reject it.
- Resume bilateral stimulation: "Think of that" or "Notice that".
- As soon as processing flows again, return to a minimal role.

Illustrative examples for EMDR-trained therapists. Not a script or a self-help exercise.

Based on Shapiro (2018), Leeds (2016), Parnell (2007), and Hensley (2016).