The container

An imagery exercise for setting upsetting thoughts aside until a time you choose.

Some thoughts and memories need attention, but not at three in the morning or in the middle of work. This exercise gives you a way to set them aside and come back to them at a time you choose, such as in a therapy session.

Steps

1. Imagine a container strong enough to hold anything. A safe, a vault, a chest with a lock, a shipping container. Make it yours.
2. Picture it in detail. What is it made of? How big? What colour? How does it close?
3. Decide where it is kept: buried, at the bottom of the sea, in my office, wherever feels right.
4. Bring to mind what is troubling you. You do not need to look at it closely.
5. Imagine it going into the container. It might flow in like smoke, or you might place it in as a file or a film reel.
6. Close and lock it. Notice the sound it makes.
7. Remind yourself: "It is stored safely. I can come back to it when I choose."
8. Take a slow breath and turn your attention to the room.

My container

What does it look like? How does it lock?

Where I keep it

What I am putting in it for now

How I felt before and afterwards

The container is not for locking things away for good. It is for choosing the right time and place to open them.

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