

CLIENT HANDOUT: BOBBING FOR REALITY

(BY THE WAY, YOU'LL BE BOBBING IN ICE WATER)

Dissociation is a word that is used to describe the disconnection or lack of connection between things that are usually associated with each other . . . in severe forms this disconnection tends to interrupt the typically integrated functions of consciousness, awareness, memory, and identity. For example, someone might think about an event that was extremely distressing, but have absolutely no feelings connected to it. Conversely, one may feel intermittently “taken over” by feelings of terror, rage and/or sadness that really don’t seem to fit the occasion. Someone may find him/herself doing something that (s)he would not ordinarily do, but feel compelled to do it anyway.

If you have felt any of those aforementioned, or similar states of confusion, distraction and/or detachment, then you may wish to experiment with “Bobbing for Reality.”

Based on the physiological underpinnings of the freeze response (which always includes a dissociative component), it follows that immersing one’s face in a bowl of ice water would illicit the “dive response” — a primitive physiological response that appears to be an effective means of regulating emotions — specifically, in preventing or bringing someone back from a dissociative or ruminative episode.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Fill up a large bowl with ice water.
2. Dunk your face for several seconds.
3. Remove your face from the bowl.
4. Reorient yourself to the present (Who are you? Where are you? When are you?)
5. You have approximately ten minutes of clarity, during which time you must decide whether or not you wish to return to perseverating, fantasizing, and/or ruminating on traumatic/distressing material, or if there is another activity that might be more helpful in maintaining your sanity at this time.