

Container Exercise Script

Written for therapists and counsellors who need a script to read aloud. Eight minutes of containment work as it is used to close a session — building the container, putting the material away, sealing it, and agreeing when it gets opened again. The last part is what makes it containment rather than avoidance.

8 min · 4 segments

Eight minutes, four segments. This is a clinical closure exercise — read the scope note in segment one rather than cutting it.

BEFORE YOU RECORD

- Segment four is not optional. A container with no agreed reopening is avoidance, and material that gets stored and never revisited tends to come back louder. Always name a return.
- Let the listener design the container entirely. If it turns out to be flimsy, ask them to reinforce it rather than replacing it with one of yours — the strength has to be theirs or it won't hold.
- This is for closing down, not opening up. Never run it as a way into difficult material, and never use it to end a session that has been left mid-process.
- If distress rises rather than settles, stop and orient to the room. Say that explicitly in the recording — people following an audio version have no practitioner in the room to notice.

01. What this is for

1 min 30

[practical and bounded — the honesty here is what makes the exercise work]

This is a container exercise. It takes about eight minutes, and it's for putting something down that you can't deal with right now — so you can drive home, go back to work, or get some sleep.

Worth being clear about what it isn't. This is not getting rid of anything, and it isn't pretending something didn't happen. It's storage, and storage is temporary. We'll agree at the end when it comes back out.

If you find yourself getting more distressed rather than less at any point, stop, open your eyes, and look around the room you're in. Nothing has gone wrong — it just means today isn't the day. *[pause for 10 seconds]*

Sit comfortably. Eyes closed, or gaze lowered. *[pause for 15 seconds]*

02. Building the container

2 min 30

[let them design it — offer categories, never specifics]

Let a container come to mind. Something that can hold whatever you need to put away, and hold it securely. *[pause for 30 seconds]*

It could be anything — a box, a safe, a chest, something with no name. Big or small. Let it arrive rather than deciding on it. *[pause for 25 seconds]*

Now look at it properly. What it's made of. How thick the walls are. How heavy it would be to lift. *[pause for 30 seconds]*

And how it closes. A lid, a door, a lock, a seal — whatever it has. If the way it closes doesn't feel strong enough, make it stronger. Thicker walls, a better lock. Keep going until it would hold. *[pause for 35 seconds]*

03. Putting it away

2 min 30

[never ask them to describe or revisit the material — just move it]

Now bring to mind what you want to put in. You don't need to look at it closely, and you don't need to name it. Knowing it's there is enough. *[pause for 25 seconds]*

Put it in the container. All of it — the images, the feelings in your body, the thoughts that keep arriving. If it doesn't fit, make the container bigger. *[pause for 35 seconds]*

Now close it. Lid down, door shut, locked or sealed however it works. *[pause for 25 seconds]*

Check it. Is anything leaking, or showing at the edges? If so, put that in too and close it again. Take as long as you need. *[pause for 30 seconds]*

04. Where it goes, and when it opens

1 min 30

[the segment that makes this containment rather than avoidance — never cut it]

Decide where the container is kept. Somewhere it's safe, and somewhere you know how to get to. Not somewhere it could be lost. *[pause for 25 seconds]*

Put it there now, and let it be out of sight. *[pause for 20 seconds]*

Now the part that matters most. Name when you'll open it — your next session, a specific day, a time you'll sit down with it. This is a promise you're making, and it's the difference between putting something away and running from it. *[pause for 30 seconds]*

It'll wait until then. That's what the container is for. *[pause for 15 seconds, then lift the voice]*

Come back to the room now. Feel the chair underneath you. Name three things you can see. Move your hands and feet, and take a fuller breath than you've taken in a while.

Have some water, and give yourself a few minutes before you go anywhere.

USAGE

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