

# Basic Immanuel Approach Exercise for Groups and Beginners (complete instructions for *basic* exercise only)

(Karl D. Lehman MD, Revised 2/14/14)

If you have questions regarding any part of these instructions, see the “Immanuel Approach Exercises for Groups & Beginners detailed discussion of all group exercises” essay for additional explanation and discussion. Also see [www.immanuelapproach.com/exercises](http://www.immanuelapproach.com/exercises) for additional handouts for group exercises, opening and closing prayers, and more.

**1. Break up into small groups:** Break the larger group into small clusters (three to five participants in each cluster).

**Opening prayer and commands** (optional, depending on context see the detailed discussion essay mentioned above for additional explanation):

**2. Positive memories and deliberate appreciation:** Ask the Lord to bring forward a memory of a previous positive experience of perceiving His presence and connecting with Him. If no memory comes forward spontaneously, take time to deliberately find one. Ask the Lord to help you recognize different aspects of the positive experience that you can specifically appreciate. Each person in the group then describes her positive connection memory to the others in the small group, and names specific things she appreciates about the experience. The goal is to *reconnect* with the positive memory, and to describe specific things that you appreciate until you *feel* appreciation/gratitude. Note that faith and gratitude “momentum” usually grow for all in the group as each person shares.

Remember that you may need to help other group members in using safety net #1 later in the exercise. As described below, sometimes you will need to remind them of specifics as part of coaching/helping them to return to their positive memories, repeat their deliberate appreciations, and reestablish their initial connections with Jesus. So pay attention (taking brief notes is ideal).

As we and our colleagues have been working with the Immanuel approach, with groups and individuals and in many different settings, we have identified several frequently asked questions and special considerations with respect to the positive memories that recipients work with to begin the Immanuel approach process:

**a. “What if I don’t have any memories of positive connections with the Lord?”:** Memories of past positive connections with the Lord are ideal, but if you have not yet had special interactive connections with God then use a memory of some other special event. For example, a memory of a particularly beautiful experience with one of your children, a favorite family Christmas memory, a memory of an especially positive vacation with friends, or a memory of thoroughly enjoying your favorite meal. You can practice deliberately reentering the positive memory, reconnecting with the positive emotions associated with the positive memory, and deliberately focusing on things you appreciate even if an interactive connection with God was not part of the original positive experience. Also, for step 3, below, you can experiment with asking the Lord to help you perceive His presence and establish an interactive connection in the context of this “non-God” positive memory. Maybe this exercise will be your first time for perceiving the Lord’s presence and experiencing and interactive connection.

**b. More than one positive memory:** One positive memory is usually adequate, but it is ideal to have several, since appreciation momentum builds as one works with several positive memories in succession. Having several memories available will be helpful if anyone gets stuck in particularly intense negative emotions later in the exercise, and therefore needs an especially strong positive memory and appreciation safety net. So if you are working with people who are more likely to need an especially strong safety net (for example, they have survived severe trauma, their support system is poor, and their coping skills are weak), we recommend repeating the first step several times, so that each person has a safety net that includes several positive memories.

**c. Appreciation memories without splinters:** Many people have positive connection with God memories that still include trauma splinters. For example, the person's appreciation memory may be for an Immanuel approach session in which she experienced Jesus' loving, healing presence powerfully *with* her in a traumatic memory of her intoxicated father emotionally, physically, and sexually abusing she and her siblings. However, in this kind of complicated trauma, it is common to have a number of distinct traumatic pieces, so that unresolved pieces (or "splinters") may remain, even while the parts of the memory that *have* been resolved *are* indeed now positive places where the person experiences the Lord's healing presence. And if the traumatic memory the person works on later in the exercise resonates with the unresolved splinters, the initial appreciation parts of the memory can get blended together with the negative thoughts and emotions from the (now) activated splinters, so that the memory is no longer usable as a safety net. Therefore, if the people you are working with are describing appreciation memories that may have splinters (the positive memories being describe are about the Lord's presence in the midst of trauma), and especially if many of the people in your larger group have similar traumas, so that each person's splinters could trigger other participants, it is important to coach the participants to deliberately find positive memories that are completely free of splinters – memories without any aspect of pain or trauma. For example, feeling God's presence while appreciating a beautiful sunset, seeing Jesus standing beside her as she holds her new baby, or experiencing a connection with Jesus in the context of a particularly beautiful worship service.

If a participant discovers that all her memories of positive God connections are memories of God's presence in the midst of trauma, she can try a simple exercise that is often successful in generating completely splinter-free memories of interactive connections with God. The participant starts with a non-God positive appreciation memory, such as holding her baby, playing with a favorite pet, spending time with a best friend, or some beautiful nature experience like looking out over the Grand Canyon at sunrise. Then, just as for those who don't yet have positive memories for interactions with God (above), she can go through the deliberate appreciation step with these non-God positive memories, and then use these same memories to go through step 3, below. With this simple exercise, many become able to perceive God's interactive presence in memories that had previously been non-God positive memories, and these new interactive connection positive memories are totally splinter-free (not associated with trauma in any way).

**3. Reenter a positive memory and establish an interactive connection with the Lord:** After you have identified one or more memories of past positive connection with the Lord, and *feel* appreciation for His presence and care in these past experiences, spend several minutes reentering/reconnecting with one of the memories. Then, from "inside" the memory, pray something along the lines of "Lord, help me to be aware of Your living presence, and to have an interactive connection with You."<sup>1</sup> Share whatever comes into your awareness with the others in your group. Again, if you have not yet had experiences of interactive connection with the Lord, then use a memory of some other special event.

*Note about taking turns:* It's best to take turns for this part of step 3 with each member of the group going through the whole process of reconnecting with her positive memory, asking the Lord for help with perceiving His presence and establishing an interactive connection, and then describing "whatever" comes into her awareness before moving onto the next participant<sup>2</sup>. After each member of

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<sup>1</sup>In most cases the person perceives the Lord's living presence and establishes an interactive connection in the context of the memory imagery (the subjective experience of being inside the memory spontaneously morphs into a new, living interaction with Him, but still in the context of the autobiographical content carried in the memory). However, some people will perceive the Lord's living, interactive presence in the room where they are receiving ministry; some people will perceive the Lord's living, interactive presence in the context of a different memory that comes forward spontaneously; some people will perceive the Lord's living, interactive presence in the context of imagery that does not seem to be coming from any specific memories, and some will experience two or more of these simultaneously.

<sup>2</sup> See the "Immanuel Approach Exercises for Group and Beginners detailed discussion of all group exercises essay for additional information.

the group has gone through the first part of this step, pick one person to continue through the rest of the exercise as the recipient and pick a second person to be the primary facilitator. As the recipient is working on her traumatic memory, the primary facilitator (with the support of the other group members) should be reminding/coaching her regarding the instructions. (Ideally, the facilitator will coach regarding the instructions to the point that the recipient can focus all of her attention on her healing, without having to worry about looking at the instructions.) The facilitator (with the support of the others) also needs to apply the safety nets if the recipient gets stuck. \*Note that from this point onward these exercise instructions are directed to the facilitator.\*

**If the recipient perceives Jesus' presence and has established an interactive connection with Him:** proceed on to D.

**If the recipient does not perceive Jesus' presence or have an interactive connection with Him, and you would like to try simple troubleshooting:** 1.) Coach the recipient to ask, "What's in the way of my perceiving Your presence and having an interactive connection with You?," coach her to observe whatever thoughts, emotions, images, memories, physical sensations, etc that come into her awareness, and coach her to describe these to the others in the group *regardless of whether they "make sense" or feel important.*<sup>3</sup> 2.) Coach the recipient to ask, "What do I need to do to take the next step forward?," coach her to observe whatever thoughts, emotions, images, memories, physical sensations, etc that come into her awareness, and coach her to describe these to the others in your group *regardless of whether they "make sense" or feel important.*<sup>4</sup> 3.) Follow-up regarding any directions the Lord provides.

If troubleshooting has identified and resolved blockages, so that the recipient is now able to perceive the Lord's presence and connect with Him, then proceed on to Step 4.

If the recipient does *not* perceive the Lord's presence or have an interactive connection with Him after a brief season of simple troubleshooting, then coach her to return to her positive memories and appreciation until she *feels* appreciation and is at an okay place to stop. Caution note: if the recipient is not able to establish an interactive connection with the Lord *then she does not have the full safety net in place*, and it is very important that she does *not* go on to working with traumatic memories in a group exercise or unsupervised beginner practice setting.

If time permits, the group can choose a new recipient, and then start again with step 3 with this next participant.

**4. Choose a traumatic memory to work on:** Help the recipient select a low to moderate intensity traumatic memory from one of the following categories (we recommend picking low intensity memories when you are just getting started with these group exercises):<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Remember, the purpose of the "describe everything" discipline is not to push people to describe details they feel uncomfortable talking about, but rather to help people describe details that are being withheld because they don't feel important and/or make sense. Therefore, coaching the recipient to "describe everything" always needs to be in the context of "to the extent you feel comfortable doing so."

<sup>4</sup>Again, this persistent encouragement to "describe everything" always needs to be in the context of "to the extent you feel comfortable doing so."

<sup>5</sup>Some ask "Why not just ask the Lord to bring forward the memory He wants to work on?" This *is* what we do in individual sessions, but our concern in the group setting is that none of us have perfect perception

Memories for painful experiences from your recent adult life that do not yet feel fully resolved. One good way to find low intensity traumatic memories from your recent adult life is to look through recent unpleasant experiences in which you did not perceive the Lord's presence at the time of the original experience, and you still do not perceive His presence in the memory. Most of these will turn out to be traumatic experiences. Pick one that is minor. Note: picking a memory for a minor traumatic experience in recent adult life is probably the best way to stay in the shallow end of the pool.

Memories that you have been able to think about and talk about without getting overwhelmed, "stuck," and needing someone else to help you get back on your feet emotionally.

Please *do not* focus on an upsetting symptom and ask: "Lord, take me to the memory where this is coming from." This approach may take you to a memory that you have never before worked with, or even to a memory you have never before been consciously aware of.<sup>6</sup>

Please *do not* go to memories where you have gotten stuck and/or overwhelmed, and have needed someone else to help you get back to a place where you were okay.<sup>7</sup>

Please *do not* go to memories that you have never previously talked about. If you have never previously described the experience to another person, it may be much more intense and overwhelming than you initially feel or perceive. In individual sessions, the person will often report, "A memory has just come to me, but it's not important – I think it's just a distraction." But when I coach them to describe it anyway, they are surprised by the intense negative emotions that well up as they start to talk about it. As you probably recognize, this is an example of the person's brain working better in community. But we don't want you to demonstrate this phenomenon by being overwhelmed by unexpectedly intense negative emotions in the context of a group exercise.<sup>8</sup>

**5. Invite/welcome Jesus into the memory, ask Him to help you to establish an interactive connection, and engage with Him to receive healing:** Coach the recipient to focus on the traumatic memory, and deliberately reenter/reconnect with it. In some situations, such as emotional healing groups in first world countries, participants will often be high functioning, well defended, and have difficulty connecting with their traumatic memories. For these situations, one simple way for the recipient to reenter/reconnect with the memory is to picture herself back in the painful situation, and then talk about

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of the Lord's guidance. In the context of a group exercise the leader cannot discern with each participant regarding the accuracy of their perception of the Lord's guidance, and the consequences of mistaken discernment are much greater (for example, getting into an overwhelming traumatic memory in the group setting, without appropriate resources to care for this). Therefore, in the group setting we are usually more conservative and directive, and provide guidelines for selecting memories as opposed to having each person simply ask the Lord what to do/where to go.

<sup>6</sup>This is a precaution for people who are just learning the process. If the people in your group have high capacity and are experienced with the Immanuel approach, you can feel free to use the "focus on an upsetting symptom, and ask the Lord to take you to the underlying memories" approach.

<sup>7</sup>Again, this is a precaution for people who are just learning the process. If the people in your group have high capacity and are experienced with the Immanuel approach, you can be more adventurous with respect to the memories you pick to work with.

<sup>8</sup>Again, this is a precaution for people who are just learning the process. If the people in your group have high capacity and are experienced with the Immanuel approach, you can be more adventurous with respect to the memories you pick to work with.

the details until she can feel the negative emotions associated with the original experience.

**\*\*Caution note:** In some situations the concern will be for the recipient to avoid triggering and overwhelming everyone else in the group. For example, in groups where many of the participants have survived severe trauma, and in which many of the participants share similar trauma, if one group member starts talking about the details of a painful memory the others can quickly become overwhelmed by intense triggering. In these situations, the participants can usually reconnect with painful memories very easily (usually, all they need to do is close their eyes and think about the original experience for a moment), and it will be important for the person leading the overall exercise to coach participants to *avoid* describing the details of their trauma. In fact, the person leading the overall exercise should specifically coach the participants to describe their trauma very briefly, and in only the most vague and general terms.

Once the recipient is emotionally connected with the traumatic memory, coach her to invite/welcome Jesus to be with her in the memory, and to ask Him to help her perceive His presence and establish an interactive connection. From the perspective of being *inside* the memory, she can pray something like, “Jesus, I welcome You to be with me here. Please help me to be aware of Your presence and to have a living, interactive connection with You,” or “Jesus, I make a heart invitation for You to be with me here. Please help me to perceive Your presence and to establish a living, interactive connection with You.”<sup>9</sup> Then coach her to observe whatever comes into her awareness, and to the extent she feels comfortable doing so, describe her internal mental content to the others in the group *regardless of whether it makes sense or feels important*. (Remember that our brains works better in community, and that she may not recognize Jesus’ presence in her memory until she shares her internal experience with the others in the group).

**a.) If the recipient is able to perceive the Lord’s presence and establish an interactive connection:** If the recipient is able to perceive the Lord’s presence and establish an interactive connection in the traumatic memory, then coach her to keep focusing on Jesus and to engage with Him at every point in the session, regarding every issue that comes up, and regarding every difficulty that she encounters. Keep coaching the recipient to focus on Jesus and to use the following two prayers (as each is appropriate), “Jesus, what do You want me to know about this?” and “Jesus, please help me.”<sup>10</sup> And after each interaction with Jesus, coach the recipient to “describe any thoughts, emotions, images, memories, or physical sensations that come into your awareness, *regardless of whether they “make sense” or feel important.*” (Remember, our brains work better in community).

You can also add some additional coaching regarding how to engage with Jesus most effectively. One of these additional coaching tools is to use more discernment and varied vocabulary in coaching the person to ask Jesus for guidance, ask Jesus for healing, ask Jesus for resources, and ask Jesus for help. Another of these additional coaching tools is to help the recipient get words for any perceptions, thoughts, emotions, etc that feel true regarding the memory, and then coach her to share these with the Lord directly. After each interaction with Jesus, coach the recipient to observe any thoughts, emotions, images, memories, or physical sensations that come into her awareness, and especially anything she sees or senses the Lord to be doing. And then (as always), coach her to

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<sup>9</sup>Feel free to adjust the exact wording so that it feels like the best fit for your group’s experience and church culture.

<sup>10</sup>Again, you can adjust the wording so that it feels like the best fit for your group’s experience and church culture.



describe all of this to the others in the group *regardless of whether it makes sense or feels important*.<sup>11</sup> When using the slightly larger tool box, you can also include more skilled coaching to help the recipient notice the content of her internal awareness, more persistent, skilled coaching to describe *everything* that comes into her awareness, and more skilled help with recognizing the clues that come forward.

**b.) If the recipient is *not* able to perceive the Lord’s presence or establish an interactive connection:** If the recipient is not able to perceive the Lord’s presence or establish an interactive connection in the memory, try simple troubleshooting. 1.) Coach the recipient to ask, “What’s in the way of my being able to perceive Your presence and establish an interactive connection in this memory?;” coach her to observe whatever thoughts, emotions, images, memories, physical sensations, etc come into her mind; and coach her to describe these to the others in the group, *regardless of whether they make sense or feel important*. 2.) Coach the recipient to ask, “What do I need to do to take the next step forward?;” coach her to observe whatever thoughts, emotions, images, memories, physical sensations, etc come into her awareness; and coach her to describe these to the others in the group, *regardless of whether they make sense or feel important*. 3.) Follow-up regarding any directions the Lord provides.

If troubleshooting has identified and resolved blockages, so that the recipient is now able to perceive Jesus’ presence and has an interactive connection, then coach her to engage with him to receive healing (go to 5.a. above). Please don’t fall into the trap of feeling like a failure if you have to use the safety net. Remember, when you are just beginning to practice with the Immanuel approach *it’s actually important and valuable for you to use the safety net*, so that you are sure that it really works.

If the recipient does *not* perceive Jesus’ presence or have an interactive connection with him after a brief season of simple troubleshooting, then move to the *trouble-shooting safety net intervention* described below in e.ii.

**c.) If the recipient becomes stuck, and asking Jesus for guidance and help does not seem to be resolving the problem:** If the recipient becomes stuck at any point in working with the traumatic memory and she still has an interactive connection, the first thing to do is coach her to focus on Jesus and ask him for guidance and help, and then coach her to describe whatever comes into her awareness (focusing especially on anything the Lord is doing). However, if these interventions do not seem to be resolving the problem then transition to the safety net intervention described below in section e.

**d.) If you’re running out of time (fifteen minutes or less remaining) and the recipient is still feeling bad:** If you are getting to the end of the session (fifteen minutes or less remaining), the traumatic memory has not been resolved, and the recipient is still feeling bad:

**If you want to make sure the recipient’s negative emotions are resolved before she goes home:** then transition to the *end-of-session intervention safety net intervention* described below in section e.i., so that deliberate appreciation and connection with Jesus can move her to a better place before the end of the session.

**If you and the recipient are both okay with the possibility of ending the session with**

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<sup>11</sup>Again, this persistent encouragement to “describe everything” should always be in the context of “to the extent you feel comfortable doing so.”

**lingering negative emotions:** the recipient feels like something positive is happening, and she therefore wants to use all the time to continue working with the traumatic memory, you can make the judgment call to continue interacting with the Lord regarding the traumatic memory right up until the end of the session. Again, if the top priority is to make sure that the recipient's negative emotions are resolved before you go home, make sure to leave time at the end of the session (like, transition now), so that she can work *with the group* to use the *end-of-session safety net intervention* in e.i. to get back to a better place. As I have mentioned repeatedly, our brains works better in community. The safety net intervention will be much more effective with the group, as compared to the recipient trying to use it on her own after the group exercise has ended.

**e.) “Safety net intervention” overview:** What I call the “safety net intervention” is to deploy the first safety net described above – you help the recipient get back to her positive, safe interactive connection with Jesus from the beginning of the exercise. If the recipient's connection with Jesus at the beginning of the exercise was especially strong and her connection with the negative thoughts and emotions in the traumatic memory is only moderate, she may be able to go directly back to her initial interactive connection, and then quickly return to gratitude and peace as she spends time with Jesus in that context. However, if the recipient's connection with Jesus at the beginning of the exercise was not so strong, and if she is intensely connected to the negative thoughts and emotions in the traumatic memory, you may need to coach her to review her positive memory, coach her to repeat the deliberate appreciation exercise, and then coach her to repeat step 3 in order for her to return to the positive, safe interactive connection from the beginning of the session.<sup>12</sup>

**i.) End-of-session safety net intervention:** If you're using the safety net as an end-of-session intervention so that the recipient can end the exercise in a good place, then start with helping her get back to the positive, safe interactive connection from the beginning of the exercise (as just described). Once she has reestablished the connection from the beginning of the exercise, coach her to spend time focusing on Jesus and deliberately appreciating both the Lord's goodness and the initial positive memory until the negative emotions from the traumatic memory have been fully replaced by gratitude and peace.

**ii.) Troubleshooting safety net intervention:** You can also use the safety net as a troubleshooting intervention that enables the recipient to continue working with the trauma. If you are wanting to pursue this option, start with helping the recipient to get back to the positive, safe interactive connection from the beginning of the exercise (as just described). And then, *continuing in the context of this positive place*, coach her to engage with Jesus regarding the painful memory. Coach her to tell/ask Jesus anything she wants to talk/ask about regarding the trauma, and coach her to especially talk/ask about any places of difficulty (for example, any places where she was not able to perceive His presence, or any places where she asked for help but did not perceive resolution). Coach her to continue focusing on Jesus, and then to observe any thoughts, emotions, images, memories, or physical sensations that come into her awareness (and especially anything she sees or senses the Lord to be doing). Finally, coach her to describe whatever comes into her awareness. (Your brain works better in community!)

Sometimes, just reestablishing the positive, safe connection from the beginning of the exercise, and then talking to Jesus about the traumatic memory and the problems that developed in trying to

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<sup>12</sup>The *Bob: Safety Net Demonstration* live session teaching DVD (#29 in the LMS series) provides a good example of quickly and easily going back to the initial interactive connection, without having to go through the positive memory recall and deliberate appreciation steps.

work with it, will use up the remainder of the session. However, in some situations the recipient will reestablish an interactive connection, talk to Jesus about the traumatic memory and any points of difficulty, and get to a good place fairly quickly – she has a good connection with the Lord, she understands whatever He has shown her about the problems that developed in working directly with the traumatic memory, and there is a lot of time remaining. At this point, if the recipient desires to do so, she can try again with respect to working directly with the trauma (working from the perspective of being inside/connected to the painful memory). Sometimes the process will then proceed smoothly to complete resolution; but if you get stuck again, just use the safety net intervention again. And repeat this cycle until you run out of time or the traumatic memory gets resolved.

**iii.) Practical tips regarding advanced safety net coaching:** With some situations in which the recipient is intensely triggered to severe trauma, the facilitator will need to provide special persistence and skill in helping her return to the interactive connection from the beginning of the session.

**Tip #1 Provide *detailed* coaching:** If the recipient gets stuck in a bad place and is having difficulty getting back to her initial positive memory and interactive connection with Jesus, the primary facilitator and other members of the group need to provide *detailed* coaching for each step of the safety net intervention. For example, you can remind her of some of the specifics from her positive memory, and then coach her to recall them and describe them in detail. You can coach her to spend time picturing and appreciating specifics that were particularly special, and you can also help her to find some new specific appreciations. If the recipient is still having trouble with actually *feeling* gratitude, you can coach her to recall and appreciate several positive memories in succession. (Remembering from chapter six, appreciation momentum builds as one works with several positive memories in succession.)<sup>13</sup> Once the recipient is subjectively feeling gratitude, you can remind her to reenter the positive memory and ask Jesus for help with perceiving His living presence and establishing an interactive connection, and then encourage her to observe and describe whatever comes into her awareness.

**Tip #2 Persist with safety net even if recipient doesn't feel like going to positive memory:** Sometimes the recipient will be strongly connected to a memory of severe trauma, she will be feeling intense negative emotions, and her relational circuits will be deeply off. And because of the ways in which our relational circuits interact with our memories and emotions, with her relational circuits deeply off she will not initially *want* to think or talk about positive memories, when she tries to recall and reconnect with positive memories she will initially find this to be difficult, and when she starts remembering and talking about her positive memories she will not initially *feel* any appreciation.<sup>14</sup> In these situations you may need to be very directive and

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<sup>13</sup>Again, appreciation momentum builds as one works with several positive memories in succession, and it is therefore wise to build safety nets that include several positive memories if you are working with participants who are at risk for getting particularly stuck in particularly intense traumatic memories. Hopefully, group exercise leaders will be aware of these concerns if they are working with people who are particularly vulnerable. Therefore, for the purposes of these advanced safety net coaching notes I will assume that recipients have several positive memories that they can work with if this is needed.

<sup>14</sup>For a definition of relational circuits and detailed explanation regarding these ways in which they interact with our memories and emotions, see the “Key Concepts” page of [www.outsmartingyourself.org](http://www.outsmartingyourself.org), chapters 12, 15, 16, and 17 in *Outsmarting Yourself*, and Part II of the “Brain Science, Psychological Trauma, and The God Who is With Us” essays (this essay is available as a free download from



persistent in coaching the recipient to recall and describe her positive memories, name specific appreciations, and deliberately reenter the positive memory, *even when she doesn't initially feel like it*. In some situations it may take as long as fifteen to twenty minutes, but our experience is that if a person persists in recalling, talking about, appreciating, and reentering positive memories of experiencing the Lord's presence, she will eventually calm down, return to feeling appreciation, regain access to her relational connection circuits, and be able to get back to the good place of perceiving the Lord's presence and feeling connected to Him. It may take some practice to learn to be adequately directive and persistent in these situations, but with appropriate coaching most people can learn this fairly quickly.

**Tip #3 Validate distress, reassure that pain is not being dismissed or ignored:** When the recipient is intensely connected to a traumatic memory she will sometimes be deeply blended with the subjective experience from inside the original trauma. In these situations, when you suggest going back to the connection from the beginning of the exercise the recipient can feel like you are going somewhere else, and leaving her to stay behind in the painful place by herself. She might feel like you are simply abandoning her, or at the very least that you are trying stuff her pain back down into her unconscious because you don't want to deal with her messy emotions. In these situations it is very helpful to acknowledge the validity of the person's distress, remind her regarding the purpose of the positive memory intervention, and reassure her that she is not being ignored, managed, or abandoned. I usually say something along the lines of, "I understand that this painful memory place is very important, and needs to be cared for. We're not trying to ignore or minimize this memory place, or just stuff it back down. But for right now, the next step in the healing process is to "switch gears" and go back to the positive memories and interactive connection from the beginning of the session. And when you have reconnected with Jesus in that safe, positive place we will ask him for more help regarding this painful place." Or, for the end of the session, "...but for right now, in this group setting, we want to 'switch gears' and help you use the positive memory safety net so that you can get back to a good place for the end of the exercise."<sup>15</sup>

**Tip #4 Start with offering attunement:** Attunement can be a particularly helpful resource for any situations in which the recipient is intensely connected to a traumatic memory and resisting the safety net intervention. If you know about attunement and are skilled in providing it, the ideal is to start with offering attunement until the person regains access to her relational connection circuits, *and then after she has regained access to her relational connection circuits* coach her through the steps of recalling positive memory, deliberately stirring up appreciation, and reestablishing an interactive connection.<sup>16</sup> Again, starting with attunement is ideal; however,

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[www.kclehman.com](http://www.kclehman.com)).

<sup>15</sup>If you can honestly do this (for example, you have plenty of time in the current session and can return to the trauma after getting more help from Jesus in the context of the initial positive memories, or you are planning to have future sessions in which you can return to these traumatic memories), it is ideal to also assure the person that you will eventually come back to continue work on the unresolved trauma. However, do not offer this assurance unless you are sure you will be able to provide what you promise.

<sup>16</sup>When I offer attunement as part of the safety net intervention, I usually include comments validating the recipient's pain, assuring her that we are not just trying to manager her, reminding her of the purpose of the intervention, and reassuring her that we will return. For additional discussion of attunement as a resource for helping the recipient regain access to her relational connection circuits, see chapters 15, 17, and 18 in *Outsmarting Yourself*, and "Brain Science, Psychological Trauma, and The God Who is With Us, Part II: The Pain Processing Pathway" (available as a free download from [www.kclehman.com](http://www.kclehman.com)).

persistent safety net coaching as described above, even without skilled attunement, will almost always<sup>17</sup> be effective.

**Tip #5 Don't go back to the same memory:** Once the recipient has calmed down she may return to the exercise, but if the group had to do a lot of coaching (as opposed to just a few gentle reminders), *she should work with a different memory*. The fact that she needed so much help indicates that the first painful memory is not good material for a group setting. I am confident the Lord can heal any traumatic memory, but it is best to deal with the more intense and complicated traumas in settings in which the recipient can receive more advanced one-on-one trouble shooting if this is necessary.

## 6. End of exercise – more appreciation, the Immanuel story, and the safety net:

**If the recipient experienced complete resolution of the traumatic memory:** Coach the recipient to thank the Lord for His healing presence and healing work. Coach the recipient to formulate and tell the Immanuel story (be sure that she names several specifics she especially appreciates).

**If the recipient experienced some kind of positive interaction with the Lord in the context of the traumatic memory, but only partial resolution:** 1) If she has not already done so (safety net as she was running out of time), coach the recipient to return to her interactive connection from the beginning of the exercise. As mentioned earlier, the recipient may be able to just go directly to her connection with Jesus, or she may need to repeat the positive memory and appreciation steps in order to reestablish her initial connection. After she has reestablished her positive, safe connection with Jesus, coach her to spend time focusing on Jesus and appreciating both the positive memory and the Lord's goodness until she feels grateful and peaceful. (She should no longer be feeling the negative emotions from the trauma.) 2) Coach the recipient to thank the Lord for this positive interaction, and then help her formulate and tell the Immanuel story regarding the positive interaction that has occurred (be sure to help her name specifics she especially appreciates).

**If the recipient did not have a positive interaction with the Lord in the context of the traumatic memory:** If you have not already deployed the end-of-session safety net, do it now. That is, coach the recipient to return to her interactive connection from the beginning of the exercise so that she can end the exercise in a good place. Again, the recipient may be able to go directly to her connection with Jesus, or she may need to repeat the whole positive memory, appreciation, interactive connection package. After she has reestablished her positive, safe connection with Jesus, coach her to spend time focusing on Jesus and appreciating both the positive memory and the Lord's goodness until she feels grateful and peaceful. (She should no longer be feeling the negative emotions from the trauma.)

With each of these options, remember to coach the recipient to do the “end of exercise” steps out loud with the others in the group. (Our brains works better in community.)

**Brief comments regarding the Immanuel story:** The “Immanuel story” is the story of 1) how things

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<sup>17</sup>As mentioned above, a very small number of participants may encounter especially complicated difficulties that can actually hinder them from cooperating with the initial-positive-memory-and- interactive-connection safety net. As also mentioned above, deliberate, skilled, and persistent attunement is one of the most consistently effective interventions for helping these people calm down and get back to a place where they are able cooperate with the initial-positive-memory-and- interactive-connection safety net.

were before God showed up, 2) what happened when God showed up, and 3) how things have been different since God showed up. The concepts here are pretty simple, but unfortunately many of us are a lot better at talking about the pain part of the story than we are at talking about the God part of the story. As a result, we will often spend thirty minutes describing every detail of the long history of our pain, and then summarize the God/healing part of the story in thirty seconds. And in groups with a lot of trauma, this can set everybody else on fire. So we want to provide some additional coaching regarding how to formulate and tell the Immanuel story:

*First round:* Start at the point you first perceived God’s presence with you (as opposed to starting at the beginning of the pain story). With the help of the group, give a blow by blow account of everything from the moment of perceiving God’s presence forward. Tell each thing God did, and your reaction to it. Describe every detail you can get words for, especially your emotions, body sensations (if this is helpful), and anything you perceived to change as you engaged with God regarding the healing work. After these pieces have all been well developed, put them together and tell them as a story. If there are concerns about triggering others, leave the story like this, and tell it to at least three people as soon as (reasonably) possible after finishing the exercises.

*Second round:* (if there are minimal concerns regarding triggering others): Tell the story again, *slightly* expanded, with a *little* bit of context regarding the pain part of the story (how things were before God showed up). As soon as (reasonably) possible after finishing the exercises, tell the story to at least three people.

For additional explanation regarding the Immanuel story, see chapter fifteen, “Formulate and Tell the Immanuel Story,” in the draft version of the new book (available as a free download from the “Getting Started” page of [www.immanuelapproach.com](http://www.immanuelapproach.com)).

**7. Closing prayer** (optional, depending on context see detailed discussion essay for additional explanation):

**8. Repeat steps 1 through 7 with another member of the group:** If time permits, the group can return to step 3, and then repeat steps 3 through 7 with another member of the group.

**Summary regarding the “Safety net” intervention (going back to the initial positive memories, appreciation, and interactive connection with the Lord):** When encountering any of the difficulties below, the recipient can go back to the positive memories, appreciation, and interactive connection from the beginning of the exercise, and then get help from Jesus in that positive context. This simple but effective intervention can be a resource and/or “safety net” in various ways at various points throughout the exercise.

- If the recipient is not able to perceive the Lord’s presence in the traumatic memory, even after asking “what’s in the way?” and trouble-shooting;

if the recipient should become stuck at any point in working with the traumatic memory, and especially if the recipient becomes stuck and has lost her interactive connection with Jesus;

or if the recipient is able to perceive the Lord’s presence in the traumatic memory, but does not experience a strong enough connection to be able to receive the help she needs;

– for each of these situations, coach the recipient to go back to the positive memory starting place

and re-establish connection with Jesus in that context. From the positive memory place of restored connection with Jesus, coach the recipient to ask Jesus for help and specifically ask Him about the traumatic memory. Then if time permits, the recipient can go back to the traumatic memory and apply the new guidance/help she just got from Jesus. Repeat as many times as necessary.

- At the end of the session, if you run out of time before the recipient has fully resolved the traumatic memory, help her return to her connection with Jesus from the beginning of the exercise. After she has reestablished this positive, safe connection, coach her to spend time focusing on Jesus and appreciating both the positive memory and the Lord's goodness until she feels grateful and peaceful.

**For a one page handout of this exercise for individuals to use while practicing this exercise please see [www.immanuelapproach.com/exercises](http://www.immanuelapproach.com/exercises).**