

Title: "Okay to Use Recent Event as Target for Teaching Demos/Practice Exercises?"

December 15, 2026

Greetings all,

Just a quick note to share my thoughts regarding a question I get from trainers and from groups going through the training videos together: Is it okay to use a recent upsetting event as the initial target for teaching demos and/or practice exercises?

The first and most important point, which provides context for all of the comments that follow, is that if a person has persistent upset about a recent event in their adult life it is almost always because the recent event is triggering deeper, earlier memories. With this reality as context, I deliberately avoid recent adult life events as initial targets for demonstration sessions because:

1. If the recipient and facilitator just stay with the recent event because they are unaware of deeper, earlier memories, then tangible benefit will be minimal because the session won't address the underlying trauma that are the real source of most of the distress. Demonstrations or practice exercises focusing on recent upsetting events will therefore often be disappointing/unsatisfying.
2. If the underlying memories are intense and highly defended, the recipient and facilitator will often spend the whole demonstration/practice exercise fighting with blockages, and never get to the deeper roots. The overall experience will therefore often be confusing and/or unsatisfying.
3. If the recipient and facilitator understand that there are usually deeper, earlier, underlying memories, and deliberately pursue this possibility, it often takes a while to connect with the recent event, focus the negative thoughts and emotions, lean into the negative thoughts and emotions, follow them to the underlying memories, and then work through the underlying memories. This is not a problem with ongoing therapy work, where you can use multiple sessions if you need to. However, with the space usually available for demonstrations and practice exercises, you will often run out of time.
4. Finally, if the recipient *does* go to earlier, deeper underlying trauma, you have no idea where she'll end up. She might end up in moderately intense traumatic memories, in which case the demonstration/practice exercise can be very encouraging (if there is enough time to find the underlying trauma and then also work through it). But the recipient might also end up in underlying trauma that is bigger/messier/more intense/more complicated than what you want for a demonstration/practice exercise.

Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

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