

Title: "What About Safety-Net Memories with Tiny Splinters?"

January 12, 2026

Greetings all,

Just a quick note to share my thoughts in response to a question I often get regarding safety-net memories: What should the facilitator do if she is helping the recipient to set up the safety net and the recipient describes a beautiful positive memory, but the memory includes a tiny splinter?

For example, I got an email from a trainer describing the following scenario: One of the recipients in a training practice pod had a beautiful positive memory in which she hiked up a mountain trail to a breathtakingly beautiful waterfall, and she easily perceived Jesus' presence and established a good connection with Him in this memory. But the memory had a tiny splinter. She was hiking with her sister, who was physically incapable of getting all the way to the top of the trail, and she had some brief, mild sadness about needing to leave her sister at an especially steep spot before hiking the last little bit to the waterfall.

The trainer wanted to know whether it would be ok to use this memory for the safety net, or whether the facilitator should coach the recipient to find another positive memory with absolutely no splinter component. Here are my thoughts:

1. If you deliberately look for them, you will be able to find a splinter or two in almost every positive memory. So the real question in most situations is actually, "Are there any splinters that are significant enough that they might hijack the positive memory if the safety net needed to be deployed?" Another way to ask this is, "If we needed to use this memory as a safety net, is the splinter small enough and does the recipient have enough discipline/maturity skill to be able to stay with the positive content and not allow the splinter to derail/hijack the safety net intervention." In my own work, I am aware of small splinters in most (all?) of my positive memories, especially if I let weak associations lead me from aspects of the positive memory to painful content in other memories. But it is usually very clear to me that I would be able to stay focused on the positive content, and deliberately direct my focus away from the small splinters, if I needed to use the positive memories for safety nets.
2. If you know the recipient fairly well and know that they have pretty good judgement and self-awareness, you can include them in the discernment: "I'm noticing that there is a little sadness about your sister not being able to make it all the way to the waterfall. If we needed to use this memory for the safety-net intervention, would you be able to stay focused on the positive content? Or does the negative piece feel powerful enough that it might derail the safety-net intervention? Also, I want to check to make sure this little splinter doesn't have a big brother laying right next to it – is this sadness about your sister not being able to make it to the waterfall closely associated with any much larger painful experiences?"
3. If I were the recipient in the scenario described above, I would definitely be fine with the positive memory of hiking to the waterfall.

4. If in doubt (for example, you are concerned that the negative component is pretty strong and/or you are concerned about the recipient's discernment, self-awareness, and mental discipline/ability to focus on the positive), help them find another positive memory, with no visible splinters (or only *very* tiny splinters).

These thoughts are also now included in the Cumulative FAQ Document, available from the FAQ page of our IA website: <https://www.immanuelapproach.com/faqs/>

Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

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