



Faster, deeper, better outcomes.

THE DISRUPTION TRIANGLE

HOW THE DISRUPTION TRIANGLE WORKS

Note: Although this technique appears complex or challenging, in fact once you “get” it, it is remarkably easy and also very fast to do. This technique was one of the central techniques taught to children at Clarkson Senior High School years ago, and responsible for literally halving bullying rates within a week. The children were actually going up to their head teacher to get help to do it. Likewise I taught it to our elite SAS soldiers in Western Australia. It is a powerful technique, and it is also a technique which is popular and has a high compliance rate. So I hope you’ll agree it’s well worth mastering and implementing into your practice.

The Disruption Triangle was developed by Rex Steven Sikes, an NLP trainer, and originally called “the Resource Triangle”. Please don’t hold against it the fact that it was borne out of such a disreputable load of nonsense. We all know by now that much of NLP is spurious, however techniques and principles relating to conditioning are sometimes truly excellent, and this is one of them.

The reason that the Disruption Triangle works is that it provides excellent **disruption of reconsolidation of a conditioned response** and so is a bona fide **SDR Therapy technique**. At first it may seem a complicated technique, but in reality it is rather like riding a bike, all of the pieces come together with such elegance that once you “get it”, it makes perfect sense.

I explain the Disruption Triangle to clients by bridging with a metaphor. I tell them that every conditioned response has as its basis a “neurological recipe” which is a set sequence of electro-biochemical events. The Disruption Triangle works by literally “stuffing up the recipe” for fear (or any other negative feeling) by “adding in” other stimuli which are a total mismatch to a problematic conditioned stimulus.

By adding the wrong “ingredients”, over and over again, the conditioned response can be permanently extinguished. The beauty of this technique is that it does not in any way attempt to “fight” the problem, but simply triggers or activates the problematic state (extremely briefly), and adds “mismatching” states to it. So we are not setting up a challenge that might invite internal or overt resistance, and the client doesn’t need to apply willpower or order to “beat” his/her problem.

What types of problems can the Disruption Triangle be used for? Anything that requires a conditioned internal state in order to maintain the problem. This is very broad, because even a strong belief, although no “emotion” may be discernible, nevertheless has a component to it which is a somatic response. You can test this out yourself by simply stating as a fact “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ” and noting your bodily felt sensations. If you now state “ $2 + 2 = 5$ ” you will most likely perceive rather different felt sensations. This is similar to writing out a word correctly and then incorrectly. (And you are aware that these sensations are mediated by your nervous system, which is in turn mediated by the electro-biochemical events in your brain. In other words, there is a conditioned internal state attached to each

statement. It is difficult to conceive of any perception, emotion, attitude, belief or behaviour that is not accompanied by a conditioned internal state.)

So it is completely unnecessary that the client should feel any “emotion” in order to use the Disruption Triangle. There may be an emotional component, or there may not.

The Disruption Triangle is a deceptively simple *floor exercise*. It requires state management (imagining 5 or 6 scenarios that are in contrast to the problem state), but it also uses 2 quite clever Ericksonian hypnotic language patterns.

IMPORTANCE OF PRECISION AND ACCURATE EXECUTION

If the process is not done with accuracy, then it will not work (or not work very well) and may even be very unhelpful. This is why you would never just send the client home to try for themselves after a brief session. They’re unlikely to get a result, and may lose hope, or even as a worst case scenario, experience abreaction away from the safety of your office.

So I specifically ask the client not to use the Disruption Triangle at home until he/she and I are confident that the client has developed competence. Even then, I ask the client to at first only use it for extremely low-risk issues such as:

- Indecision over what to prepare for dinner, or over what outfit to wear
- Reluctance to do something that they actually do want to do
- Mild irritation at someone or something
- A belief that they hold which logically they know is false, but they nevertheless cannot shake
- A repetitive thought that gives them extremely minor anxiety/distress

A good analogy for this caution is a person learning to drive a car. The learner driver doesn’t enter the Indianapolis 500 in order to practice. It makes sense to start off as low risk as possible and that’s going to be a paddock, a car park, or a wide and empty street,

not a speed race. Only when there is demonstrated confidence and competence would we attempt a slightly more challenging scenario.

So I cannot stress enough how important it is to read through the steps carefully, list any and all questions or comments that you have, and use Founder Membership to discuss **before execution** and certainly before attempting to use it with a client.

When I teach this technique in live trainings, I leave a minimum of half a day to explain the theory, demonstrate and reverse demonstrate extensively before breaking the audience into supervised groups for practice. Long experience has taught me that there seems to be a lot of ways that people don't hear the detail, or misunderstand the detail, or make assumptions that are not correct, and that correction is always necessary in order to achieve competence.

Here are the steps to running the Disruption Triangle.

Step 1 - Disruption States

In this step you list 6 Disruption states that you will use during the process of running the Disruption Triangle. The term "Disruption state" refers to any conditioned internal state whatsoever that is **different** from the unwanted conditioned state (eg, stress). This Disruption state can be positive or negative - that has no bearing whatsoever, believe it or not. (This is not a positive thinking exercise. It is a technique to "disrupt" a conditioned pattern of behaviour or an attitude or a feeling that you don't want so that it just can't "run" any more.)

So it doesn't matter whether the Disruption state is positive or negative. The really, really, important thing is that the Disruption state is a **strong** one, that it is extremely easy for the client to access and even enhance, and that is also **different** from the unwanted

conditioned state. It should be extremely obvious that this will differ from one individual to another.

For example, one individual could use a state of intense anger to help eliminate a feeling of fear. For another person, his/her fearful feeling could also contain aspects of anger. The second person should not, in this case, use anger as a Disruption state.

Clearly, in that case it would be a very big mistake to use anger as a Disruption state because that would merely add to the stress, not be a disruptive factor to it. We want our Disruption states to completely *mismatch* the unwanted conditioned response.

So step 1 of the Disruption Triangle requires you to make a list of Disruption states which you'll be using in the floor exercise part (which is Step 3).

The list *might* look like this (each imagined experienced will involve as many of the senses as possible and will be intensified to the max):

- ◆ Standing on a beautiful hotel balcony, overlooking the ocean and a majestic sunset.
- ◆ Mud squelching up through the toes, maybe with accompanying stench if it's swamp mud!
- ◆ The thought of your lover, naked
- ◆ A ridiculous thought, like a dog with centipede legs
- ◆ Being on a beach in perfect conditions on your perfect day.
- ◆ The experience of hearing chalk on a blackboard.
- ◆ The funniest thing you ever experienced
- ◆ Remembering a massage
- ◆ Your favourite food
- ◆ A favourite piece of music
- ◆ The most exhilarating memory you have (Bungee? Hang gliding? Parachuting? Winning a prize?)

- ◆ The thought of your child's sleeping face
- ◆ Sitting in a spa bath and feeling utterly relaxed
- ◆ Stroking the fur of a much-loved family pet

When working with your client, double check this list to ensure that your client can imagine each item **very easily and very intensely**, and that each item has a **very different feeling** to the unwanted feeling/thought/belief you are going to eliminate. Skilled therapists will readily determine whether a state can be reliably accessed by observing the non-verbal feedback from the client. If the client *appears* to engage with the imaginal process, but physiologically remains “blank”, that particular scenario is unlikely to be effective in this exercise.

Note 1: This technique can be used very successfully with clients who have severe low mood and find imagined experiences difficult or even impossible, but in those cases it requires actual kinesthetic/gustatory/olfactory stimulation to achieve different states, or alternatively a far greater level of skill on the part of the therapist to firstly achieve a state the client can resonate with and hypnotically build that into a state which is at odds with the target state.

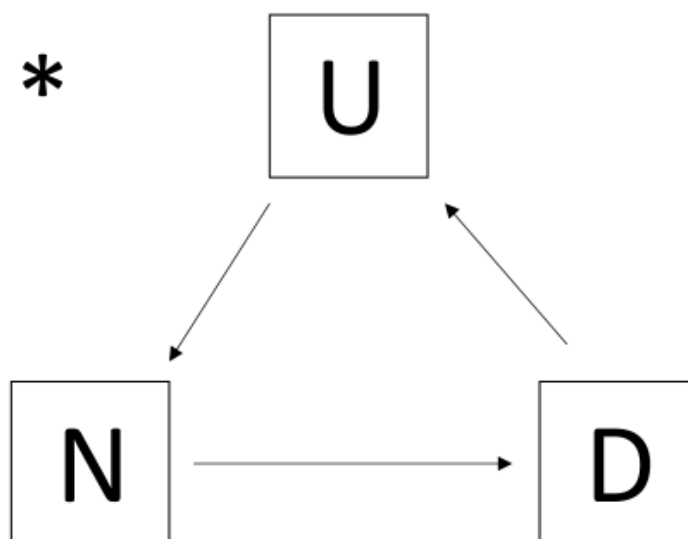
Note 2: Generally SDR Therapy is contra-indicated for severe unipolar depression, along with several other disorders. See the comprehensive SDR Training Program for the complete list.

Step 2 - Prepare the Floor Exercise

For this part you need 3 pieces of paper (any size, even “post-it” notes will do the job). On one of these write a large “U” on another “N” and on the other “D”. These letters stand for “Unwanted conditioned response”, “Neutral” and “Disruption state” respectively.

Lay these pieces of paper on the floor in the form of an equilateral triangle, point up. The “U” goes at the point at the top. The “N” goes at the lower left corner. The “D” goes at the lower right corner. The distance between the pieces is one stride length. You will be stepping from the “U” to the “N” to the “D” and back to the “U”, and then off to the side to the “starting point” marked by the big asterisk below.

The Set-up for the Disruption Triangle



Step 3 - The Process

Please don't even think about starting this process until you've read all the way through, studied it carefully, and are sure you understand exactly what I am telling you do.

This will include the timing of stepping from one point to another, what you think about and what you say to yourself at each stage.

If you do not do any of that exactly as I say, I guarantee you'll be wasting your time. Then you'll say "That stupid technique didn't work!" when really you simply didn't do the technique anyway!

Before you even start this exercise, decide exactly what it is you want to eliminate. Let's take the example of the feeling you get when you think of someone you dislike very intensely. What thought or thing is guaranteed to give you that feeling each time? Is it the sight of the person? Or is it merely the *thought* of the person even without the person being within a mile? Maybe it's their voice that does it to you, or your own self talk, replaying a mental "tape". That single **snapshot** of thought is the mental "trigger" that you use in order to expose the reconsolidation phase of your unwanted conditioned response, in order to start off the Disruption Triangle.

Make sure you use the exact same snapshot each time you go back to the "U". If you think of someone's face the first time, the general situation the next time, what someone said the next time, then you won't get a result, I promise you. **USE THE SAME IDENTICAL THOUGHT TRIGGER (SNAPSHOT) EACH TIME ROUND THE TRIANGLE.**

- 1 Before and after each "round" of the Disruption Triangle, you stand at the asterisk, which is the starting and ending point. You must be in a neutral state, so start counting back from 20 by 3's, or think about whether it will rain tomorrow, or something else you don't particularly care about one way or another).
- 2 Step over to the "U" (with it in front of you) and make sure you still feel absolutely neutral, before **briefly** allowing yourself to experience the mental **snapshot** into the

stress you've been feeling. When I say "briefly", I mean that as soon as you get the merest inkling of that stress coming back, you are going to get off that "U" and detach from the feeling, fast.

- 3 Leap (carefully!) off the "U" and backwards onto the "N". The reason I want you to do this rather quickly is to symbolise the speed and thoroughness of the detachment away from the target state that we're wanting to disrupt. People use different methods to succeed in getting that detachment back into a neutral state. Some people imagine that they've left their body standing on the "U" and right now they're looking at their own back. Some people imagine slamming a big steel door shut on the "U". Others just look out a window and absorb themselves in making cloud shapes. My own favourite is to ask the client to count backwards from 20 by 3's. If they're too smooth at that I ask them to count back by 2.25, whatever it takes to take their mind sharply away from that state. Find something that works for you quickly and completely because you must be able to snap right out of that "U" feeling. Once you know that you're feeling quite detached and neutral, select the first item from your "Disruptor" list and step onto the D.
- 4 Stepping onto the "D", *immediately* begin getting into the full sensory experience of the Disruption state you have chosen (REPEATING IMPORTANT POINT: make sure you **already decided** which Disruption state BEFORE you stepped on the "D"). Use all of your senses to intensify this experience to the max. Once you're certain you are intensely in the experience you say to yourself "I wrap this all around me (use your arms if necessary to get this "wrapping around" feeling) and you then step towards the "u" saying "and I take this back to where I had had that problem".....
- 5 Stepping back to the "U" ensure that you have the intense Disruption experience and then allow that to meld with the stress. For example, you may be imagining the

balcony scene from the list above, and as you are standing on the balcony, you imagine the trigger that got you into the “U” in the first place. Have those two sets of sensory experiences mingle *in the one scenario* as much as you can imagine, and as you do so, say to yourself “How does that **FEEL DIFFERENTLY NOW.**” Make sure that the bolded part of this sentence is said in a command tonality, not as a question. Do not under any circumstances analyse or attempt to “answer” this question, because while it has the appearance of a question, it is actually an embedded command that you may recognise as being Ericksonian language.

Step off the “U” over to the asterisk (your starting/ending position for each “round”) and ensure that you’re back in that neutral state before starting the process again.

Go ahead and repeat steps 1-5 above, each time ***selecting the next item on your list*** for your “D”. Each time round the triangle is called, naturally, a “round”. You’ll do perhaps 5 or 6 “rounds”, each “round” using a *different* scenario from your Disruption list.

Most negative responses, including stress and even rage or depression, can be eliminated within 6 rounds of the Disruption Triangle. You’ll know when the work is completed when you cannot step back from the “U” to the “N” because there is nothing going on any more around that thought.

Note: A common question is “can I use the same 6 or 8 Disruption states each time I have something I want to extinguish?” The answer is “usually yes”. Unless one of your Disruption states is similar to a new unwanted conditioned response, you can continue to use the same Disruption states each time.

Once you have successfully eliminated the feelings around a single snapshot, further investigate the imagined thought or scenario that constitutes the unwanted state, to see if there are any other thoughts that still produce stress for you. For example it may have been a remembered experience of someone saying something mean. Perhaps there is no way you can get any charge out of that any more. To really test this out, what happens if you imagine them yelling it? Getting in your face and screaming it? If there's a charge on that, this becomes your new "snapshot thought" to run the Disruption Triangle on again. Treat each of those in the same way, and you'll find it impossible to feel stress over this type of situation ever again.

As with planning the integration of any new technique into your practice, it is essential to practice on self and colleagues first. I recommend using this technique daily for at least a month, building confidence and competence in its practice and leaning on the professional support group for peer support. By then you will have a good appreciation of how it works, as well as its wider impact, and be better equipped to work effectively with your clients.

The Disruption Triangle does not suit every client and should not be imposed on unwilling clients. There are too many other SDR techniques that may be offered which the client may be feel more comfortable with.

In addition, although some clients may be quite willing to use the Disruption Triangle, they may nevertheless have difficulty using their imagination in this way. Some clients have the misconception that it is about being able to visualise, and that is not the case. Find the sensory representational systems that are easy for the client and use those. If the client cannot "imagine" in any of the representational systems, all is not lost. Simply have on hand a variety of stimuli and use those as Disruption states. Examples: the bristles of a hairbrush, an ice cube, chocolate (to smell or eat),

perfume, an evocative photo, a bell or tuning tine with a long after-ring, music (different types).

The reason our preference should be for states triggered imaginably is that it makes the technique more portable, and also with practice the technique can be run extremely rapidly because the mind can move faster than the “props” can be manipulated.

What next?

As a Founding Member, come and talk to me in the support groups and join the occasional live webinars (which are recorded for those who can't make it). I really want to help you make the very most of this very powerful and versatile technique.

In this SDR Training Program for Psychologists we take you step by step through a number of SDR Therapy techniques, one of which is essential for helping clients suffering from chronic pain because it quickly switches off actual chronic pain signalling, as well as being very useful for a range of comorbidities which typically affect those clients.

You'll find it at <https://psychologybestpractice.substack.com>.