

Directions for the Amber Light Technique

Warm Up

1. Think about the issue you have identified which is causing conflict and Write what that is at the top of the template.

Serious Play

Green: Keep going

2. Choose a figure to represent yourself. Place it on the green light marked "START". Choose another figure to represent the other person or thing in the relationship. Bend and shape the figures to show how you both are feeling when things are going well. Project yourself into that picture and then record your feeling beside the green light in the space provided.
3. What Constructive role are you playing when you're in "green"? Record the role.
4. What role is the other person/thing playing when you're in green? Record the Counter role.

Red: Stop

5. Close your eyes and think about being in the red light; that place when you and the other person or thing are playing Fragmenting roles; roles that are diminishing and damaging to both.
6. Choose a figure to represent yourself. Place it on the red light marked "STOP". Choose another figure to represent the other person or thing in the conflict. Bend and shape the figures to show how you both are feeling when things are bad; past the point of no return. Project yourself into that picture and then record your feelings beside the red light in the space provided.
7. What Fragmenting role are you playing when you're in Red? Record it in the space provided.
8. What role is the other person/thing playing in this situation? Record the Counter Role.

Amber: Warning: Prepare to stop

9. Before you get to red, there is an amber light...a warning sign. The concept of the amber light is similar to the 'aura' for people suffering from epilepsy. A few seconds before the epileptic attack comes, the person perceives some kind of signal (subjective or objective) that announces that the epileptic attack is at the door. This is what you will be looking for as we metaphorically stretch out the time between Green and Red.
10. Choose a new figure to represent you and another figure for the other person/thing in the relationship. Place them on the path near the figures you placed on the green light.
11. Use your figures to move along the path towards the red light; red being the end result that you *do not* want. Be aware of what is being played out in the interaction between you and the other. When the roles begin fragmenting, you are likely to experience a physical symptom; a warning sign. E.g. Butterflies in the stomach, clenched teeth and so on.
12. If you need to, go back to Green to slowly "walk" the path a few times until you have enough time in the Amber Light to re-live and identify the emotional and physical symptoms alerting you to the fact you are headed for Red. The Amber Light technique is of immense importance as it provides us with a recognisable physical signal that enables us to take control of what might otherwise become uncontrollable. Record the physical symptom(s) you identified and the role played in the space provided.

Share and Go

When we find we are beginning to lose control, it is a good idea to stop what we're doing and detach ourselves physically from the situation. We need time out to compose ourselves, put our mind in order, look rationally at what is happening, and then come back with a well thought-through constructive role to play. This may only take a few minutes, which can be occupied with some simple mechanical tasks such as excusing ourselves to go to the rest room or offering to make the other person a cup of coffee.

It's a good idea to keep a journal to record how well we are doing in recognising our Amber Light and how well we are modifying our responses accordingly. In the journal we can note down the conditions and circumstances surrounding the following three possible outcomes:

1. I didn't recognise my Amber Light.
2. I recognised it but I couldn't stop it in time to modify my behaviour.
3. I recognised it and was able to modify my behaviour.

Recognising warning signals and responding accordingly is a neo-cortical function. For that reason it is vital to be aware of the conditions that can interfere with our ability to exercise control E.g. Drugs, alcohol, caffeine, nicotine (or withdrawal from the lack of caffeine/nicotine), fatigue, hunger, illness, weather or circumstances (large crowds, family gatherings, tight spaces, loud noise etc.)