# The Butterfly Hug.

## Lucina Artigas & Ignacio Jarero

The Butterfly Hug was originated and developed by Lucina Artigas during her work performed with the survivors of Hurricane Pauline in Acapulco, Mexico, 1998 (Artigas et al, 2000; Boel, 1999; Artigas, Jarero, Mauer, López Cano, & Alcalá, 2000; Jarero, Artigas, & Montero, 2008).

For the origination and development of this method, Lucina Artigas was honored in 2000 with the Creative Innovation Award by the EMDR International Association. In Francine Shapiro's 2001 EMDR text, she wrote that "The Butterfly Hug has been successfully used to treat groups of traumatized children in Mexico, Nicaragua and Kosovar refugee camps" (Shapiro, 2001, p. 284). The Butterfly Hug had become standard practice for clinicians in the field while working with survivors of man-made and natural catastrophes.

# The Butterfly Hug Script.

The "Butterfly Hug" (BH) provides a way to self-administer Dual Attention Stimulation (DAS) for an individual or for group work.

*The Butterfly Hug.*

Say, *"Please watch me and do what I am doing. Cross your arms over your chest, so that the tip of the middle finger from each hand is placed below the clavicle or the collarbone and the other fingers and hands cover the area that is located under then connection between the collarbone and the shoulder and the collarbone and sternum or breastbone. Hands and fingers must be as vertical as possible so that the fingers point toward the neck and not toward the arms.*

*Now interlock your thumbs to form the Butterfly's body and the extension of your other fingers outward will form the Butterfly's wings.*

*Your eyes can be closed, or partially closed, looking toward the tip of your nose. Next, you alternate the movement of your hands, like the flapping wings of a butterfly. Let your hands move freely. You can breathe slowly and deeply* (abdominal breathing), *while you observe what is going through your mind and body such as thoughts, images, sounds, odors, feelings, and physical sensation without changing, pushing your thoughts away, or judging. You can pretend as though what you are observing is like clouds passing by."*

For reprocessing purposes this exercise can be done from 1 to 3 minutes. Watch to make sure that the participants are following along with you. If not, check to find out what is going on and then return to teaching The Butterfly Hug.

# Uses for This Method.

To install the Safe/Calm Place:

Say, *"Now, please close your eyes and use your imagination to go to a place where you feel safe or calm. What images, colors, sounds, and so forth do you see in your safe place?"*

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After the answer, say, "*Please do the Butterfly Hug 6-8 times while you concentrate on your safe or calm place.*"

When working with the EMDR-Integrative Group Treatment Protocol (EMDR-IGTP), the Emotional Protection Team (EPT) members are spaced around the group so that they are able to hear the participants' answers. Sometimes, participants will say their answers out loud, giving the members of the team the chance to respond to each individual as needed. It is important to observe the participants to make sure that they are able to follow the directions of the EPT and to imagine the safe or calm place. Members of the EPT can be alert and quietly go up to a participant to help as needed.

The following is optional.

Say, *"Now, please take out your paper and draw the Safe/Calm Place that you imagined. When you are finished, please do the Butterfly Hug 6 to 8 times while looking at your drawing."*
Say, *"You are welcome to take your picture home and you can use it with the Butterfly Hug whenever you need to feel better."*

Make sure to notice the participant's responses. There is no talking during this time so that the participants are not taken out of their process. As with any other Bilateral Stimulation (eye movement, tapping, sounds), sometimes the mind associates to negative material, therefore, it is important to monitor the effects.

Once the patients or clients (children or adults) have learned the Butterfly Hug, they can be instructed to take this method with them to use between sessions, whether to modulate any highly disturbing affect that arises when the self-soothing techniques are not effective, to reground with their safe or calm place or simply to help them get to sleep more easily.

Note: Field observations and client reports show that if an internal trigger (e.g. flashback, nightmare, etc.) or external trigger (e.g. aftershocks, sudden confrontation with the aggressor, etc.) elicit a high level of distress (SUD=6-10 out of 10), self-soothing techniques do not work fast enough or do not work at all for certain clients (Jarero and Artigas, clinical observations and client reports over a decade).

Say, *"Now that you have learned the Butterfly Hug you can use it anytime that you are having disturbing feelings and your soothing techniques do not seem to be effective, or you want to go back to your Safe Place. You can also use it to get to sleep more easily. Do you have any questions before we stop for today?"*

There are many other uses for the Butterfly Hug such as the following:

- To anchor positive affect, cognitions, and physical sensations associated with resources from any of the Resource Development Protocol/s or "guided images" produced by the technique of "guided imagination" and BLS are appropriate. Do the BH 6 to 8 times.
- During the EMDR Standard Protocol, some clinicians have also used it with adults and children to facilitate primary processing of a fundamental traumatic memory or memories. Instead of the clinicians being in charge of the bilateral stimulation, the client is asked to do the Butterfly Hug for 1 to 3 minutes during the Reprocessing Phases 4, 5, and 6. It is thought that the control obtained by the patient or client over his or her contralateral stimulation may be an empowering factor that aids his or her retention of sense of safety while processing traumatic memories.
- During in vivo exposure, use the Butterfly Hug to process the experience. For example, in the Quiche's region of Guatemala, the persons that are witnessing the burial of their relatives use the Butterfly Hug to be self-comforted and to cope with the experience.
- In the EMDR Integrative Group Treatment Protocol (EMDR-IGTP) used to work with children and adults who have survived traumatic events, to process primary traumatic memory or memories including the death of family members. During this process, the children and adults are under the close supervision of mental health professionals who form the Emotional Protection Team (Adúriz et al., 2009; Jarero et al., 1999; Jarero et al., 2006; Jarero et al., 2008; Jarero & Artigas, 2009; Jarero & Artigas, 2010).

- With Palestinian children from a refugee camp city in Bethlehem, the EMDR Integrative Group Therapy Protocol with the Butterfly Hug appeared to foster resilience for eight children exposed to ongoing war trauma (Zaghrout-Hodali, Alissa, & Dodgson, 2008).
- Use of the Butterfly Hug in session with the therapist can be a self-soothing experience for many trauma-therapy clients. For instance, the therapist might say, *"Would you like to use the Butterfly Hug while you are telling me what happened?"*
- Some professionals use the Butterfly Hug simultaneously with their client as an aid to prevent secondary traumatization. It is thought that the Adaptive Information Processing system stimulation could facilitate the adaptive processing of the information the professionals are receiving.
- Other professionals have used this method as a substitute for touching clients and they might say, *"Please give yourself a Butterfly Hug for me."*
- Professionals report that they have used the Butterfly Hug with clients with debilitated egos because it produces less abreaction than other bilateral stimulation techniques.
- Teachers in a Guatemalan school for child victims of parental violence tell the children that they can feel Father God's love through the Butterfly Hug.
- During the Pasta de Conchos mine tragedy in Mexico in 2006, a paramedic stabilized and saved the life of a mine engineer who was having a heart attack using the Butterfly Hug.
- For Laub and Bar-Sade (2009), the Butterfly Hug "*becomes an attachment cue as it is connected to the soft touch of mommy or daddy or a good loving hug* (p. 292)."

- Roy Kiessling (personal communication, 2009) mentioned:

  On occasion, when a child wants a hug from a parent, I introduce the Butterfly Hug to the parent in the following way: "*As you are holding your child sitting in your lap, cross your arms in front or behind, depending upon whether your child is facing or his/her back is towards you, then, hug and tap.*"

- With very young children, Kiessling has the parent do the following*: "Hold your baby with his/her head against your chest or looking over your shoulder. Using your thumb and little finger of the hand resting on your child's shoulder, tap alternately on his/her shoulders.*

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