

BREAK IT DOWN TRAY

Start With The End In Mind

Clients often set huge goals for themselves with lots of oughts and shoulds. They may not realize how many steps go into achieving the goal. We want to set our clients up for success as much as possible and this includes celebrating the wins for clients of all ages.

For example, I recently had a 14 year old client in my office. She was overwhelmed with all of the virtual school work and felt like it was useless. In our discussion and from the sandtray, we were able to map out what the exact steps she needed to take to tackle the homework. The first step - open her laptop.

What she realized by doing this tray is that she could do that one thing - a 'laughable' goal of simply opening the laptop. By doing this, she quickly gained a sense of mastery and was able to move onto some of the actual work.

For this tray, you're going to start with the end in mind.

1. Instruct your client to make a tray about their issue that they feel is too overwhelming, big or scary to face. For many of my teenagers, this is may be obtaining a drivers license or asking a person out on a date. There's just too many things and so they don't do any of it.
2. Then in the same tray or a different tray, have the client identify the one step that needs to happen BEFORE obtaining the goal. For example, with the drivers test, the client would need to take the actual driving portion. So, then the client puts a miniature to represent the driving portion of the test.

3. Then instruct the client to choose a miniature to represent the action or step that has to be taken before the step that was just placed in the tray. Using the same example, the client would then place a miniature to represent the practice that he would need to do with his parents to get ready for the driving test. **PRO TIP: Have your clients make each step as detailed as possible. This will help you identify and overcome any hidden obstacles.**

4. Do each preceding step in the tray, allowing the client to choose one miniature or several to identify what needs to be done to be successful. Work backwards until you get to a point where the client feels that she can do something as simple as download an app for the drivers test or open a laptop.

Encourage clients to take a picture of the tray to help them remember there is a process when the feelings of overwhelm arise. **PRO TIP: Take pictures of each step yourself after the client leaves so you can have an action plan and goals for your work with the client, making it easier to identify how they are moving towards goals.**

Documenting this through pictures helps you remember what the client identified as doable and will aid in keeping up with goals. This technique can be used with school-aged clients up to adults and even in family or couples sessions. Pull this out when you hear your clients use words such as ought, should or express feelings of overwhelm and a loss of direction.