



Trauma Solutions
THERAPY MASTERMIND CIRCLE

Brainspotting Glossary of Terms

Dr. David Grand



Activate (verb)

To intentionally bring attention to and intensify awareness of an issue or concern, leading to increased emotional and physical sensations. In Brainspotting, this process is typically used as the first step in preparing to locate a relevant Brainspot.

Activation (noun)

The heightened state of emotional or physical arousal experienced when focusing on a particular issue or concern. The term is used neutrally, without implying that any level of activation is inherently good or bad.

Brainspot

A specific eye position that correlates with activated neural networks that hold emotional or somatic experiences. Brainspots are used to access and process stored trauma or other psychological material.

Dual Attunement

A core principle in Brainspotting where the therapist simultaneously attends to two aspects of the client experience—the interpersonal relationship and emotional processes between client and therapist AND the client's neurophysiological responses and bodily experiences while focused on a Brainspot.

EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)

A psychotherapy approach, developed by Francine Shapiro that uses bilateral stimulation (typically side-to-side eye movements) to help process traumatic memories and other distressing experiences. Brainspotting shares some commonalities with EMDR, but focuses on specific eye positions, rather than eye movements, for trauma processing. *Brainspotting is based on the Uncertainty Principle which is absent in EMDR.* Brainspotting is an open model based on attuned frames of the client experience in contrast to EMDR's set protocols.

Felt Sense

A term coined by Eugene Gendlin referring to an internal, bodily awareness of a situation or problem that is initially unclear and experienced non-verbally. In Brainspotting, attention to the felt sense helps guide the identification of relevant eye positions and access deeper psychological material.

Focused Mindfulness

The state of present-centered awareness achieved during Brainspotting, where the client observes their internal processes without judgment.



Frame

The foundational structure in Brainspotting that combines relational and neurobiological attunement. The frame provides a safe, attuned environment that allows the client to explore deep neural processes while remaining grounded. It is flexible, with the therapist able to “step in” with more support, and sometimes “step back” based on the client’s needs.

Gazespotting

A variation of Brainspotting that utilizes the client’s natural tendency to look in certain directions when processing emotional material. The therapist notices and incorporates these spontaneous eye positions in the healing process.

Inside Window

A Brainspotting technique where the client identifies the eye position that produces the greatest felt sense of activation or resource. The client internally senses and reports which spot feels most relevant, without guidance from the therapist on where to look, allowing the client’s internal experience to lead the process. These spots are located first by exploring the horizontal (x) axis, then the vertical (y) axis.

Neuroexperiential Model (NEM)

A framework in Brainspotting that integrates neurobiological understanding with experiential, client-led therapy. The “neuro” aspect recognizes the role of the nervous system and brain in processing experiences, while “experiential” emphasizes the importance of the client’s lived, felt experience. The NEM encourages therapists to remain open to uncertainty, follow the client’s lead, and trust in the brain’s innate capacity for self-healing. It provides a flexible, integrative approach that can adapt to diverse cultural contexts and individual client needs.

Outside Window

A Brainspotting technique where the therapist tracks the client’s eye position across the visual field, attuning to and observing for involuntary reflexive signals (like eye twitches or blinks) to identify relevant eye positions for processing. These reflexes can also be observed in the face and body of the client.



Processing (noun)

In Brainspotting, processing refers to the client's internal experience as they observe and move through memories, thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations while maintaining focus on a Brainspot. The client observes their experience naturally and sequentially, without judgment, in a state of focused mindfulness. Processing is seen as the brain's way of reorganizing and integrating information, potentially leading to resolution of traumatic experiences or other psychological issues. Processing in Brainspotting is part of the Focused Mindfulness Processing.

SUDS (Subjective Units of Disturbance Scale)

A 0-10 Likert scale, used to measure the client's level of activation.

Tail of the Comet

A metaphor in Brainspotting that describes the therapist's role in following the client's lead in the healing process. Just as a comet's tail follows the head, the therapist aims to stay attuned and follow the client's journey, rather than directing the process. This approach emphasizes the therapist's openness to uncertainty and willingness to support the client's natural and intuitive journey.

Uncertainty Principle

The foundational idea in Brainspotting is that the therapist cannot know or control the client's healing process, but can provide a supportive frame for it to unfold. The Uncertainty Principle is based on the neurobiological imperative that the human nervous system consists of one to four quadrillion synaptic connections, which is essentially unknowable to an outside observer.

Visual Field

The extent of the observable world that can be seen by the eyes at a given moment. The visual field is where Brainspots are located with the client.

