

The GEM Process to Help Clients Find their Sparkle the Adlerian Way

Susan Zimmerman, LMFT

Mindful Asset Programs (MAP), 14530 Pennock Avenue, Apple Valley MN 55124

Put Sparkle in Lifestyle Analysis with GEM

Four GEM Steps:

1. Gather Essential Memories
2. Gain Enlightened Meanings
3. Generate Empowered Movement
4. Grow Encouraged Mindfulness



A gem is anything prized for its value. When memories are processed with GEM steps, they become "gemories!"

They're prized for their value in reframing old meanings that may have been hurtful into new, enlightened, helpful ones.

Clients experience the GEM process as a treasure map to discovering precious valuables about themselves.

The GEM process can also be remembered as the 4M's:
Memories – Meanings – Movement – Mindfulness

GEM Step 1 – Gather Essential Memories

1. Gather Essential Memories

Gather means "to summon up or draw close to." *Memories* that stand out vividly may be remembered because there was some significant meaning applied to them by the client. In that regard, they're *essential* for growth.

Such memories often hold the key to clients' unconscious beliefs, those they're unaware of until they're unlocked. Memories can be great assets.

Gathering them is considered an essential first step because meanings given to vivid recollections have guided client thoughts, feelings, and behaviors like an unconscious road map. Sometimes they're overdue for a new key to unlock, modify, reframe, and redirect mistaken beliefs that were formed earlier in life. This opens up new possibilities for wellness.

The GEM steps can be thought of as a treasure map to the valuables that lie inside our clients that have not yet been discovered.

Specific or thematic memories are viewed as very short clips like a video. They're seen as a brief, temporary glance in the rearview mirror to help clients visualize a new, more empowering perspective as they go forward.



Step 2 – Gain Enlightened Meanings

2. Gain Enlightened Meanings

Here, clients explore meanings they may have given the memory at the time it happened, even if from a pre-language early recollection.

Enlighten means "to inform or impart special knowledge or spiritual insight to." Clients are guided to have self-compassion as they gain insights from noticing the inaccuracies embedded in past meanings.

Clients further explore mistaken beliefs in old meanings they've had from the past, then gain enlightened new meanings (their sparkle).

Clients begin to reconstruct mistaken beliefs into new and positively encouraging ones. By gaining enlightened meanings, they're able to formulate new behavioral goals they now feel empowered to act on.



Step 3 – Generate Empowered Movement

3. Generate Empowered Movement

Generate means "to bring into existence; originate; create; produce." *Empowered* means "to enable, give authority, permission or power to." *Movement* in this step means "to take action, to try new behaviors."

GEM Step 3 is vital for using the insights and enlightened meanings gained in Step 2 to originate and engage in new behaviors.

Clients create new possibilities and self-permission for actions they can practice that fit their corrected interpretations of past memories.

AHA is an acronym for "Action Honoring Awareness," which clients can easily remember to help them continue to practice new behaviors.



Clients picture the lighthouse to continually visualize shining light on important new insights and commitments gained in the GEM process.

Awareness is important, but without gaining new Action that Honors it, therapeutic progress is stifled. **AHA** honors Adlerian movement!

Step 4 – Grow Encouraged Mindfulness

4. Grow Encouraged Mindfulness

This is the maintenance step of the GEM process. It's the philosophy of pursuing lifelong therapeutic growth through encouragement, emotional intelligence, and mindfulness. Being *encouraged* (and learning to self-encourage) inspires confidence, spirit, or courage.

Mindfulness integration helps clients shut off their "automatic pilot" and be more present moment-to-moment in their lives. It helps prevent habitually repeating old patterns and instead make healthier intentional choices that lead to improved well-being overall.

Mindfulness is an excellent addition to Adlerian therapy. It's encouraging, non-judgmental, and compassionate. It helps clients integrate and maintain what they've learned from the Adlerian process guided by the GEM steps, and to continue pursuing therapeutic progress.

"Mindfulness is the miracle by which we can call back our dispersed mind and restore it to wholeness so that we can live each minute of life."

– Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*

Abbreviated GEM Story

Gather Essential Memory (child's recollection):

I'm Pat and my mother died when I was six. I remember it was the first time I'd seen my father cry. He seemed to be hiding in his room with the door mostly closed yet open a crack. I entered his room crying out, "Daddy," and he yelled at me to stop crying, get out, and close the door. When he came out of his room later, he didn't say anything about it. He was never as nice to me after that and he quit tucking me in at bedtime.

Gain Enlightened Meanings (child & adult meanings applied):

[Old mistaken meanings] – I'm bad and unlovable. It's never ok to cry. If I feel sad I should hide it & not talk about it. If I talk about it, I'll be rejected.

[New empowered meanings] – My father was grieving and didn't know how to be emotionally available to me as a single parent. It wasn't because I was bad or unloved. I am loveable and feel loved by my father, even though he didn't show it in ways I would have preferred at the time. There were other ways he showed his love. It's healthy to cry when I'm sad, grieving, or disappointed. It's helpful to share emotions with trusted people and when I do, I feel encouraged and accepted. I am strong.

Generate Empowered Movement (new behaviors created):

I'm open with others and share feelings in appropriate settings with people I can trust. I allow myself to cry while alone and sometimes when talking with others. If they seem distant, it's not rejection. It's their own discomfort of some kind, which I may or may not ever know. I'm able to encourage myself at times when others are unavailable for me.

Grow Encouraged Mindfulness (self-compassion & presence):

I try to catch myself at my old patterns that still come up at times. If I feel afraid to talk, instead of being quiet or leaving, I check to see if the fear is based on real danger, or just old doubts about rejection. If the feeling of uneasiness is coming from my old doubts, I'm compassionate. I trust myself to share appropriately. I remind myself that feeling afraid doesn't mean I need to hide or be silent. I honor my awareness with action, being kind to myself as I move forward. **AHA!** *Gemories* to the rescue!

GEM Summary Notes

Use GEM process to link emotions and actions, for example:

- Feel fearful => Reluctant to take action => feel like a failure
- + Feel brave enough => Plan ideas, take action steps => confident
- Feel inferior => Stay hidden, don't try => lonely, isolated
- + Feel equal enough => Show up, try, doing best => connected, good

GEM's a strong reinforcement tool to use *after* trauma recovery work has been done utilizing trauma therapies. It's not designed as a trauma therapy method for severe trauma, but is useful with difficult memories. Therapists use discretion and client knowledge to determine readiness.

Focus on helping clients "find their inner sparkle" with the gem images. It can be useful to give them a souvenir gem to keep (as found at craft stores) as a therapeutic reminder of their progress.

Movement from "Memories to Gemories" strengthens therapeutic progress of a processed memory using the GEM steps. Gemories contain new, sparkling messages of hope for the future!

As in Pat's story, encourage clients to write out their GEM stories and find new treasures each time.

Writing reinforces their progress.
New gems keep shining through!



GEM Testimonials

"The GEM structure Susan developed is a wonderfully creative way to move through Adlerian principles and maintain the integrity of the process. I see it as an extremely positive framework for clients, as the GEM steps help them remember what they're learning and continuously improve. It's a helpful tool for the therapist, also, to have a visual structure to help nurture and guide clients toward empowered movement. I love the creativity of GEM's image, with its sparkling encouragement always at the heart of the discussions. I'd like to see this shared in the NASAP community."
– Miriam Pew, April 16, 2010

"So many things this gave me: Validation of my feelings; defining feelings I've had but didn't know what they were; knowing I'm not alone; it all helped bring out strengths but in a gentle way." – JC

"Thank you so much for the great time at the Retreat Center and for your wonderful GEM guidance. I've been talking about the GEM training since Thursday." – RB

"The GEM process is very empowering. It helps reveal and break down hidden barriers that get in the way of fully pursuing goals and inner fulfillment. The training allows you to be able to continue with the GEM process using the tools provided in the exercise manual. Great sharing, conversations, and feedback!" – WP

"Since doing the GEM exercises I have had breakthrough thoughts for both my business activities and my personal planning. Great insights continue to come that help me build on my success and leave my old struggles behind." – WGE

"I love this process and am eager to see it out in the world." – FR

Contact information



Susan Zimmerman, LMFT
14530 Pennock Avenue
Apple Valley, MN 55124
susan@MindfulAssetPrograms.com
www.MindfulAssetPrograms.com
952-432-4666

