

Using, creating, and delivering METAPHORS



Why use metaphors

- Rapid increase in contextually sensitive knowledge
- Can avoid pliance if the metaphor is apt because the vehicle can be examined for evidence
- It increases our sensitivity to parts of the context we were missing.
- Which leads us to reconsider the way we conceptualize the world

VEHICLE

Function:

Counter-productive

**Struggling in
quicksand**



Conditional Relation



Sinking even more

Most effective behavior:

*Increasing contact with the
sand, not struggling*

TARGET

Function:

Counter-productive

**Struggling with
anxiety**



Conditional Relation

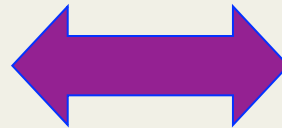


Feeling even more anxious

Most effective behavior

*Feeling the emotion, not
struggling*

Relation of equivalence



How to choose and build metaphors

- Target the right function
- The dominant feature of the vehicle must fit the focus of the target
- The missing events or functions need to be dominant in the vehicle
- The metaphor must fit the clients background (culture and history)

Creating a metaphor by working backwards experientially

- Start with the problems themselves. Try to feel them from the inside out.
- What would the step you hope for feel like?
- Staying in touch with all you know of the client, their background, and your formulation ...
- What does this remind you of?
- What does the problem now feel like

Building a metaphor for this client

- Target the right function
- The dominant feature of the vehicle must fit the focus of the target (experiential short cut – go there)
- The missing events or functions need to be dominant in the vehicle (experiential short cut – go there)
- The metaphor must fit the clients background (think of what the client does, says, cares about ... and remember the function)
- What pops up?

Clinical example

Therapy is a metaphor

- To augment generalization, use the therapeutic relationship to model what is missing
 - **Present tense**
 - **Mix vocabulary from the two situations**
 - **Evoke observation, description, tracking**
 - **Augment shared functions in target (life) and vehicle (therapy)**

Amanda

- 35 year old woman; divorced 1 year ago; one 5yo daughter who lives with father because she is too busy with work (lawyer in a big firm), which was also partly a reason for divorce.
- Wonders if she should quit her job for a less demanding job, so she can be more available for her daughter, and find a new partner -- but worries she will get bored and not use her full potential.
- Lately, she experiences social interactions with colleagues, friends, and family as superficial, empty.
- She is very anxious about making the right choices in her personal life. She is successful at making difficult decisions at work, but in her personal life, she finds uncertainty unbearable.
- Speaks 4 languages (English, Spanish, French, Portuguese)
- Loves adventure/outdoor activities that are challenging and bring high emotions
- Took theater classes in college. Participated in a few plays as lead actress.
- Loves dancing

“I can’t keep living this way. I just want to know what I should do with my life. I want to be sure I’m doing the right thing. It doesn’t even matter what it is. I just want to be sure before I make any decision.”

Delivering metaphors

- How to deliver experiential metaphors
 - **Deliver as a role play** (e.g. “imagine you step in quicksand”)
 - **Use present tense** (e.g. what do you feel in that moment?”)
 - **Mix vocabulary from the two situations** (e.g. “and when you sink in your anxiety...”)
 - **Evoke observation, description, tracking** (e.g. “what do you feel?” “what happens next?”)
 - **Augment shared functions in target and vehicle**

Deliberate Practice Plan

- One thing you have learned about yourself as a therapist
- One thing you have learned about your client(s)

- One thing you would like to try
- When will you do it? How often?
- How will you know if you did it?
- How will you know it is working?

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Wrap Up