*The Bicycle Factory Metaphor*

This is a metaphor I have developed to help clients maintain their behaviour changes after therapy has finished. I use it towards the end of therapy. It will work well for any situation where on-going management of a condition is required (e.g. chronic illness) or where you want to emphasise the continued commitment to skills practice.

“Imagine a small factory that makes hand built bicycles… There are various work stations on the production line, some people are welding frames together, others are painting them, others are assembling wheels and components, others put the pieces together, and there is even a person who comes around with a tea trolley and biscuits at break times.

There is also a person in this factory that is called the manager. Now, what kinds of jobs does the manager do?

*Give the client some time to generate the manager’s tasks, if needed you can prompt: Generating sales, ordering parts, making sure people get paid, making sure things run smoothly etc.*

Now importantly, the manager doesn't actually make the bikes, but he or she has an overview of the whole place.

*You can emphasise the hierarchical relation that you are transforming here by using hand gestures to indicate the manager seeing from up above the factory floor and looking over the whole production line. In fact, incorporating that into the mental imagery of the metaphor will likely enhance those hierarchical relating functions.*

The manager has this overview so they can see trouble brewing and intervene, they can continue to work at the persistent, on-going management of the whole process and by their continuous attention they keep things running well.

Now; imagine that in this factory everything is going extremely well. Orders are up, bikes are being made and shipped, quality is good, everyone is getting paid and are contented workers, there is even a choice of biscuits on the tea trolley. And imagine if our manager looks at it all and says, “Things are going so well, I am going to take 6 months off and go to the Bahamas.” What do you think things will look like by the time the manager comes back?

*Give some space for the client to generate the problems that will have arisen, if needed you can prompt: parts not being ordered, no tea and biscuits, no one has been paid, arguments, no sales etc etc.*

So; this treatment we have been doing is not like some other treatments you may have had. For example, if you have an infection, you might go to the doctors and get a prescription for an antibiotic. You are expected to take the treatment, but once the course is finished, you don't need to keep doing anything. This treatment is not like that. You have been learning how to live life *with* your difficulties, and the continuous, flexible attention you’ve been paying to that is like the manager’s careful attention to the factory.

Now; when the manager has their factory ticking over nicely, they can afford to perhaps only work part time, just keeping an eye on things each day and spend the rest of their time relaxing, but they will need to give the factory some attention regularly and not let things slide.

How does this land for you?