

Using Metaphors for Exploration, Extension & Engagement

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What is a metaphor?

- a figure of speech in which two unrelated ideas are used together in such a way that the meaning of one lends definition to the other.
- a visual image that uses **IMAGINATION** to capture new connections and possibilities
- metaphors can provide insight into **EMOTIONS** and how people are conceptualizing their situation

Metaphors Can Originate As A Form Of “Biomimicry”

- Learning through careful observation of nature
 - Indigenous learning
 - Innovation (eg. George de Mestral – velcro)
 - Physics of Living

Metaphors: A Foundation for Life and Career

- Wide usage of metaphors – stickiness; refines thinking and emotions
- Metaphors as guiding images for the future (preconscious / unconscious)
- Change happens when we change metaphors
- Creativity is enhanced through the use of multiple perspectives (metaphors)

Frustration Metaphors

- banging one's head against the wall
- one step forward, two steps back
- slippery slope
- up a creek without a paddle
- running around in circles
- caught in a maze

Turning on the Metaphor Switch

- Learning to identify the metaphors that are being used by ourselves and by others
- Viewing the world through a metaphoric lens
- Expanding the range of metaphoric possibilities

Research on Metaphors

- Thibodeau PH, Boroditsky L (2011) Metaphors We Think With: The Role of Metaphor in Reasoning. PLoS ONE 6(2): e16782. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0016782
- <http://dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0016782>
- (Dept. of Psychology, Stanford Univ., U.S.A.)

Clients often come forward with a
“crisis of imagination”.

What is needed is a helping approach that
is consistent with the challenge
being presented.

An Imagination Foundation

We all have imagination

Negative imagination can become “worry” and
“fear”

Positive imagination creates “possibilities” and
“hope”

Creative Thinkers

- Creative thinkers get variation by conceptually **combining dissimilar subjects**, which changes their thinking patterns and provides them with a variety of alternatives and conjectures. (THE PROCESS OF METAPHOR MAKING)

M. Michalko (2011). “Creative Thinkering”.
Novato, CA: New World Library.

Albert Einstein

- Described the creative thinking process as **“combinatory play”** which is the blending of images in the same mental space. (METAPHOR MAKING)
- **“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.”**

Working with Metaphor

1. IDENTIFYING

2. ELABORATING

3. EXTENDING

4. ENGAGEMENT BY RESHAPING: (hopefulness,
relationships, responsibility, direction, potency)

5. ENGAGEMENT THROUGH APPLICATION

Responding to Client Metaphors

- Active Listening and Summarizing using metaphors
- Encouragement eg. from doormat to wall hanging
- Challenging Perspectives (immediacy)

Counselor Initiated Exercises

- Perspectives of Others
- Parallel Imagery
- Physical Representations
- The Collective

Elaborating Metaphors: Playing Tennis

- Keep your eye on the ball
- Be sure to follow through
- Use your legs not just your arms
- Be aware of where everyone is on the court
- Don't over hit
- Have a strategy but be ready to improvise
- If it isn't working do something different
- Get yourself in position for the next ball
- Play your ball to the openings (make the others do the running)
- Try hard and don't give up easily on hard to reach balls
- Wait for an opportunity to go to the attack

The Metaphor Spectrum

- Stepping inside a variety of metaphors
- Enhancing flexibility and creativity through the process

Choosing a Career Metaphor

Career Craft

Career Management

Career Development

...

The Need for a Backswing

- The “backswing” is a focused and measured effort designed to generate energy and promote a launch forward.
- *Helping Others* often requires a backswing – it requires collaboration, energy, review, creativity, setting a direction, learning, release, and follow through.
- Illustrations: throwing a ball or using a ball launcher; jumping from a standing position – long jump

METAPHORIC CASE SUPERVISION

- Describe the problem using a metaphor
- Put self into the image (Direction, Optimism, Responsibility, Relationship, Potency)
- Timeline
- Perspectives of Others
- Miracle Question

Limitations

- Images outside of experience
- Cross cultural misunderstandings
- Mixing metaphors
- Over use

Benefits of Using Metaphors

- Non threatening
- A way to express empathy and build the relationship
- Creates engaging and memorable (sticky) interactions
- Serves to refine perspective
- A way to externalize problems
- Evokes emotional and physical responses / not only intellectual responses
- Brings into play the preconscious and unconscious
- Builds creativity through use of multiple responses

Self Care

- If there are problems when flying in an airplane the oxygen mask comes down and you are instructed to put on your own mask before trying to help others. If you are gasping for air you aren't in any shape to help others.
- Apply this same principle to the work you are doing with others.

*“Most people never run far enough
on their first wind
to find out they’ve got a second.
Give your dreams all you’ve got
and you’ll be amazed at the energy
that comes out of you.”*

William James (1842-1910)

~ Thank You ~

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