Use of Metaphor in Counseling

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The Metaphor:

Aristotle: a Metaphor is the process of giving a thing a name that belongs to something else.
Juliet is the Sun…

1. A therapeutic metaphor is defined as a technique of storytelling which provides an individual with information that instigates new productive behavior (Cameron-Bandler (1985), Gordon (1978), Zeig (1980))

2. Metaphors are more than a way to talk about an experience. Metaphors are our experience. People see themselves in the stories they hear and become part of the story to make sense of their world. “I am all covered up in work!”

3. Opens the door to discovery: compare what we know to what we do not know...so we can know
   Elvis: Love is not love it is “being all shook up!”

4. Metaphor is a story or analogy used to capture the person’s attention. It is designed to be very general allowing the person to pull specifics from it based on their own personal life experiences. By using “It is like…” or “as…” we are setting up a comparison…does not have to be rational connection…and we do not comment on the comparison.

5. A metaphor helps the person get from where they are to where they want to be.
   E.g. climbing the hill in Jones county...
   the hill…I did not want to keep walking my bike up hill…Daddy told me
   To go as far as I possibly could each day…probably I would begin to find I got
   further up the hill each day…however, some days I may not get as far as before as that is the nature of learning and doing something…
   Use with person who anxiety makes them give up or avoid new situations they so want to be in…
Metaphors:

6. Metaphors serve as powerful levers capable of shifting perception and experience, thereby transforming people's behavior and approach to their problem in living.
   e.g. recent episode of Almost Human… girl terrified in hostage setting, guy says This is like when I was a kid, dad took me ice fishing.

7. Tell the metaphor in general terms… client applies the specific from their own life experiences:

8. Metaphors bypass the conscious mind where the resistance to change lies.
   Produces a trance like state though the person is not in trance… they can now receive and work with the metaphor to make behavioral and life stance changes to their life.
   **Metaphors work outside the conscious mind in the unconscious.**

9. Client gives us a metaphor:
   E.g. Anxiety is like *Big Black Bowling Ball in the belly*… wants to come up or go down pushing you to stay home from school…

10. Therapist gives the client a metaphor:
    E.g. *Lady in a capsule*… protects you from emotional pain of connecting, however, it limits you feeling and perceiving your spouses emotional needs… you get the everyday living needs and respond, but…

11. Do not ever explain the meaning of your metaphor!!!!!!

12. Metaphor helps the therapist and the client co-create a context for change. Erickson in early years was authoritarian, and last 10 years worked to co-create with client.

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**Example of a Metaphor: show new way of thinking**

[YouTube1.mp4](G:\Al Vernacchio_Sex needs a new metaphor. Here's one ... – YouTube1.mp4)
Some ways one can use metaphor therapeutically: Stephen Roberts, Ph.D.

Remember, people take from general stories and parables what they specifically need based on their history and life experiences…

1. **To make or illustrate a point…**
   - e.g. its like living in a cacoon. Plus and minus

2. **Used to directly or indirectly suggest a solution**
   - e.g. I used to go to work with Daddy. Watched him labor over really large A/C units and at times he would just sit on the edge of unit and think, and think and sometimes talk until it would dawn on him what he could try next…

3. **Used to introduce a new perspective…**
   - e.g. Story of one of Ansel Adams prodigies, Fred Picker, went to photograph Stone Hinge…Adams taught that the scene will tell you where to place the camera…

4. **Used to sow the seeds of increased motivation to change**
   - e.g. Riding the bicycle up that long hill

5. **Used to maintain and control the therapeutic relationship**
   - To me, this is more about using metaphor to help us not get lost in their story or presentation to the point we begin to teach, push, let our anxiety show….
   - Metaphor is sort of like flying above the whole situation giving new or different insights and perspectives to help the client get and stay in charge of their lives.
   - Metaphor is used to structure and propose a new reality for clients to get them out of bondage to their current way of living.
   - Therapy often has an overarching metaphor like problem and goal statement that let’s you draw couple back to topic… “remember those school years…”
   - “You know, we have talked so often of what it is like when you are in recovery vs. out of…”

6. **You can reopen a metaphor later and add to it or change it…**
   - ill. Above…in recovery, shows like when you show that 10 yr. old boy face…anxious, hoping you invite me out of time out, and I do not use anger over my fear to intimidate you or manipulate you into letting me out of timeout….”

7. **Used to give embedded directives**
   - e.g. story of salesman reading books and listening to tapes, attend seminars… because Beth he took responsibility for becoming more informed and his confidence grew and Beth his performance increased… all the while that man read books and one day he began to think he may write a book himself.
8. Used to bypass a client's resistance to something new

9. Used to reframe and/or redefine a problem…
   e.g. to a couple…you folks are disagreeing so much, and the more
   I listen, I find myself jumping in between you and giving direction
   You know, it just occurred to me, Bill are you being triggered
   by certain things Molly says?

The Structure of Integrated Narrative Psychotherapy (INP)

- *What are the stories that the client tells?* (Narrative Therapy Part)
  - Scripts and Themes
- *What are the stories that the client is drawn to?* (Jungian Part)
  - Movies, Music, TV, Sports, etc.
- *How can a therapist use stories to facilitate therapeutic change?* (Ericksonian Part)
Narrative Family Therapy

- Narrative Family Therapy sees dysfunctional families as having **thin narratives**, which a therapist helps them to **thicken** and thus see new solutions.
  - i.e. “my father never loved me”
- Narrative Family Therapy sees context as essential to understanding people and the importance of their language.
- “A beginning is an artifice, and what recommends one over another is how much sense it makes out of what follows.” – Ian McEwan

The Importance of Story

- Storytelling is one of the oldest crafts cultivated by humans.
- Though often told for simple entertainment, storytelling has also had a major place in moral and religious instruction since the beginning of time
- In our modern culture, the consumption of story in the context of movies, TV, books, and music shows how central it is to our being
Techniques of Integrated Narrative Psychotherapy

- **Narrative Therapy Techniques** (Personal Narratives)
- **Jungian Techniques** (Broad Narratives)
- **Ericksonian Techniques** (Intervening Narratives).

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David Grove and the Child Within: [www.cleanlanguage.co.uk](http://www.cleanlanguage.co.uk)


**Major Concepts:**

1. Trauma wounds are stored in the body in the form of metaphor…Child Within
   - T-1 = moment in time just before the worst
   - T = moment in time of the worst when trauma is happening
   - T+1 = moment in time after trauma and child within is safe to grow up

2. Developed concept of Clean Language vs. unclean language to access the metaphor
   - Example: lady in counseling…childwithin…pain in belly…age 4
A Case history

A client had a fear of public speaking. He would always perform well at the event, but his anxiety would affect his work and relationships for a week beforehand.

Using only Clean Language questions, and repeating his own words back to him, the coach helped him explore and develop the metaphor -- the equivalent of exploring the current reality in coaching. The following transcript of the session is not reproduced in full.

Client: I get nervous for a week beforehand.
Coach: And when you get nervous for a week beforehand, that's like what?
Client: It's like the nauseous feeling before going on a rollercoaster at a fair.
Coach: And when it's the nauseous feeling before going on a rollercoaster at a fair, what kind of nauseous is that?
Client: It's being in one's shell, with the volume turned down.
Coach: And is there anything else about being in one's shell with the volume turned down?
Client: Dark shadow surrounding. Underwater, under the sea, pressure.
The coach continued to explore the metaphor, using Clean Language questions, then asked: And what happens next?

Client: I am seeing light at the surface, and sunshine.

The coach continued to explore, using various Clean Language questions, and the metaphor moved through:
- Gravitational pull from above
- Like when you’ve been scuba diving
- There is pressure on your chest from the water
- I can hear people talking — a dull quiet sound through the water
- I need the gravitational pull

Then the coach introduced an intention question: And what needs to happen for the gravitational pull?

Client: The pressure needs to turn
Coach: And can the pressure turn?
Client: There is a pressure wave, I can move it. It can take me to the surface
Coach: And what happens next?
Client: The sun's coming out. Serene, relaxing and enjoyable. It feels great. I am on the surface and the sun is reflecting on water. All is quiet. The dull, quiet sound through the water has gone.