



# The Therapeutic Use of Metaphor

## - Trauma Resolution

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# AGENDA

- Context - Questions/Handouts Etc.
- Introductions
- Trauma resolution metaphor model - Grove's Metaphor Model incl. DVDs
- Case Studies inc Clean Language
- Neurological Links
- Research
- (If time) Further Thoughts on Current Research on general use of metaphor in therapy
- Questions - Ending

# Introductions

Hopes/Fears/Needs for the  
workshop?

Handouts/H&S/Timings

Question



# Warning

Not the universal answer

Some clients don't get it - AS/BPD

Time is needed in the session & before you consider working this way

Can't be forced on clients

Best if it is the clients metaphor

However...can be very positive

& flexible in terms of usage

# David Grove

- The late New Zealand Counselling Psychologist
- Pioneered the use of metaphor specifically in counselling and psychotherapy in the 1980's, particularly for working with clients who have suffered a trauma.
- Found that his clients often used personal embodied metaphors to describe their painful emotional states and traumatic memories (knots in stomach etc).
- Discovered that the metaphors had form and structure that had a consistent internal logic.

# GROVIAN MODEL OF TRAUMA

## RESOLUTION

- DVD & DISCUSSION  
(see handout)



**BREAK**

# CASE STUDIES - finding your own way

- Examples - (see handout)
- *Knife in Chest*
- *Monster inside*
- **Clean language** case study - see handout

# METAPHOR & TRAUMA

"Massive trauma cannot be grasped because there are neither words nor categories of thought adequate to its representation; knowledge of trauma is also fiercely defended against, as it poses a momentous threat to psychic integrity...Metaphor is also mentioned as yet another form of knowing and addressing trauma."

Laub & Auerhahn (1993, p.273)

# **Current Research - Modell (2009)-Metaphor—The Bridge Between Feelings And Knowledge - Dr Gary Modell Neurologist Toronto**

- Metaphor can be thought of as the currency of the emotional mind.
- It is now generally accepted that metaphor is fundamentally embodied and is not simply a figure of speech.
- We now know that metaphor is the expression of a yet to be determined neurophysiological process that has been secondarily coopted by language.
- I suggested that metaphor unconsciously categorises emotional experience, establishing similarities and differences between the past and the present.
- Metaphor enables access to the unconscious and fosters empathic contact with the other.

# NEUROLOGICAL LINKS

- Siegel, *Mindsight*. Implicit v Explicit memory.
- Implicit - memory that enables us to ride a bike. First 18 month we encode implicitly. Encodes perceptions, emotions, **bodily sensations**, as we get older behaviours like bike riding. *Encoding without awareness*. No hippocampus participation. Reactivated implicit memory is fully conscious - it just lacks the sensation of recall.
- Explicit - ability to recall the day we were taught to ride the bike. When we retrieve explicit memory we do have the feeling that we are bringing something back from the past into our awareness.

# The Hippocampus

- Limbic region "*search engine of memory*"
- Left side - facts, Right Side - self related episodic memory. (Time-lines and clusters).
- Works closely with the amygdala - couples the details of the experience with emotional tone & meaning of the event.
- Images & sensations stored in implicit form - not been integrated by the hippocampus.
- "We have to assemble these implicit pieces into explicit form in order to be able to reflect on their impact on our lives"  
Seigel, (2010, p.155)

# Trauma & memory

- During extreme trauma cortisol is released, blocking the hippocampal function.
- Which blocks formation of explicit memories (alcohol, blackouts etc..)
- Encoding of explicit memory is heightened by adrenaline release which increases feelings and bodily sensations relating to the trauma.
- Free-floating implicit memory fragments surface as flashbacks.
- Case study - woman's trauma had settled into back pain. 16 years of trauma memory.
- "In my mind, attachment betrayals and traumatic experiences produce impairments to integration. In the domain of memory, this results in implicit puzzle pieces remaining in disintegrated form." Seigel (2010, p.161)

# Research

- The results of a large study conducted among Southern Sudanese refugees in Cairo, Egypt. “Illness talk” and body metaphors are the focus...The use of embodied metaphors to understand and cope with their current and past traumatic experiences was echoed in narratives that were non-illness related. Understanding the role that the body plays in experience and communication within a given cultural context is crucial for physicians and others assisting refugees." Cocker (2004, p.15).



# Research

- van der Kolk & van der Hart (1995) emphasize trauma's neurobiological basis. They argue that trauma is fully embodied; that it literally gets under the skin and is 'engraved' on the brain. ...(Caught by images: on the role of visual imprints in Holocaust testimonies).

# Research

- Buk,A. (2009).The mirror neuron system and embodied simulation: Clinical implications for art therapists working with trauma survivors.
- Focus is given to the continuum of dissociation as a survival response to overwhelming trauma, the relationship of dissociative processes to implicit memory, the mirror neuron system, and embodied simulation.

# QUESTIONS?

Decision on further Grove DVD or more general use of metaphor?



# Metaphor - A definition

Greek word *metapherein*, to transfer. Metaphor is defined in Costello (1991, p.52) as the “application of a word or phrase to an object or concept it does not literally denote, suggesting comparison to that object or concept”. *Meta* - above/over, *phorien* - to carry from one place to another.

- **Some History .....**
- **FREUD/PSYCHOANALYSIS** - "Thinking in pictures 'stands nearer to unconscious process than thinking in words" (1923)
- Nash (1962, p.25) found that “Freud not only illustrated by metaphor, he also conceived in metaphor”. Freud’s model of the human mind is itself a metaphor. There are no actual parts of the brain which could be labelled the “super-ego”, “ego” or “id”. Metaphor in Freud's work is not mere literary decoration it is a necessary part of his formulation and exposition of his scientific theories".

# Carl Jung's Iceberg Model - Conscious, Subconscious, Collective Unconscious.





Roger's metaphor of likening human growth towards self actualisation to the growth of potatoes in a dark cellar.

Berne's symbols for Parent, Adult and Child in his Transactional Analysis model is clear examples of the use of metaphor. Inner-child, past-lives etc ..need to be considered.

Ericksonian story-telling approaches are metaphor based. CBT & Human Givens encourage story telling & metaphor.

# Metaphors in Therapy - Some Quotes

- Gregory Bateson patterns within a person that connect are *1st order* and *2nd order* are external - between people and things. Metaphors link the two orders.
- Bateson in Combs & Freeman(1990, p.30) (subconscious) **mind is all metaphor....**"We can never definitely know anything about external reality. The best we can do is seek more & more workable metaphors for it."
- (p.68) "The indirectness of metaphor allows clients to try out a new perceptual frame without having to decide consciously whether to accept or reject it."
- Patterns that connect are *not* logical. (Kopp, 1995)



# Metaphors in Therapy - Multitude of types?

- Simple or complex
- Direct or Indirect
- Embedded in story/riddle
- Neutral/Moralistic
- Ordinary/Heroic

# Cont....

- General/specific
- Client/Therapist generated
- Surface/deep
- Nature (eg. weather, location, pathways etc..)
- Spiritual
- In Body/External

# Classifications of Metaphor (JL)

- Transferential
- Spoken
- Therapeutic

# Transferential

- Übertragung - Freud - English = Transference  
- Greek = Metaphor.
- Standing in for someone, something, or a concept, client & therapist?
- Nurturing Parent etc.....
- Tone, language, action - all metaphoric?

# Spoken Metaphor

- Rapport Building
- Empathy - joint construction of metaphors - what's it like in that dark hole?
- Common Language
- Creative, playful, builds pictures, ego-states, can be part of the therapy, can lead onto 'therapeutic metaphors'.

# Therapeutic Metaphor

- They usually have an element of hope/change.
- Can be client led (Kopp).
- Can be therapist led - example relationship wheel, "from the shelf".
- Can be surface (See Kopp) or deeper - eg Grove's work.
- There are 'down-sides' - AS, BPD, Logic, Ungrounded Child Ego States-driving home as a child! etc., and *forced* metaphor.

# Richard Kopp's Metaphor Therapy

- See case study handout, "live case study".
- Kopp listens for the metaphors the client relates about their lives and suggests they can change their metaphor to get what they want.
- 6 Step process:-

# Richard Kopp's Metaphor Therapy

- 1 - Notice client's metaphors.
- 2 a - Therapist invites the client to explore the metaphoric image. "Could you describe the .."
- 2 b - If they don't understand or describe literally the therapist might ask "If I were seeing you hitting your head against the wall as you see it in your minds eye, what would I see?" Or therapist report the image that they see. Gets the client seeing (or feeling) it.



# Richard Kopp's Metaphor Therapy

- Step 3 - The therapist invites the client to explore the metaphor as a sensory image. Setting/environment, action/inaction. "What else is going on, &/or what happens next?" VAKOG.
- Step 4 - The therapist explores the client's feeling or experience associated with the metaphor. "What is your experience of?" Therapist leads client through the experience using non-leading questions, clean language and none of their own metaphors.

## Metaphor Therapy

- Step 5a - metaphoric transformation, "if you could change the image in any way how would you change it?"
- Step 5b -the therapist may suggest a change, e.g. "What if there was a bridge across that river, what would that look like?"
- Step 6 - the therapist invites client to bridge back to original problem. "What parallels do you see between (the metaphor) and the (original situation)?" E.g. Bridge = online job applications. You may not need to do this, the clients usually do this themselves.
- There is a simplified version in Battino (2004, p. 170-6)

Questions?

# Case Study Early Memory Metaphors (Kopp)

"The Coach"

# Early Memory Metaphors (Kopp)

- Early recollections can be used as a transformative metaphor.
- Looking for personal memories about particular episodes in one's life, not autobiographical facts (with no accompanying imagery) or generic personal memory (not relating to a specific moment)

# Early Memory Metaphors (Kopp)

- ER's can function as metaphors for life situations, or current problems.
- An ER that is recalled when a client is feeling strong feelings or symptoms in relation to a problem is likely to be a metaphor for that problem.
- Kopp's 7 stage process to elicit this experience.

# Early Memory

## Metaphors (Kopp)

- Step One - Therapist asks "Where in this are you most stuck?" "Which part of this is the biggest problem to you?"
- Step 2 - "Can you remember a recent time when you felt this way?" "Form an image in your mind so that you begin to feel now in your body the way that you felt then." "Are you feeling those feelings, where in your body?" Encourage them into embodied feelings.

# Early Memory Metaphors (Kopp)

- Step 3a - "What is the first early childhood memory that comes to mind right now? Something specific that happened only once, preferably before the age of 7 or 8 years old." ( I may not refer to the age.)
- 3b - if the client offers a report rather than a memory the therapist may ask "can you remember one time that this occurred?"
- 3c - If nothing "take your time, something will come" - 30 seconds "something later in your childhood?" 30 seconds more "that's ok sometimes it is difficult to recall early memories perhaps in one of our future sessions....."



# Early Memory Metaphors (Kopp)

- Step 4 - therapist writes down the words of the ER (I may not do this) take them through it using clean language ("what happened next?") until memory is complete.
- Step 5 - After the ER has been described the therapist may ask "What stands out most vividly in that memory?" Identifies the core memory image. (this may be obvious to both of you.)
- Step 6a - "How did you feel at that moment, the one that stands out most?"

# Early Memory Metaphors (Kopp)

- Step 6b - "Why did you feel that way" or "Why did you have that reaction?"
- Step 7 - "If you could change the memory in any way - how would you change it?" -  
"Describe what you would have liked to have happened instead?" (You may get resistance - "I can't change the past" - or idealised ERs - which is a metaphor for how life 'should' be.)

# Early Memory Metaphors (Kopp)

- Step 8a - The therapist repeats the ER and the changed ER and asks "what parallels do you see between the memory and/or changed memory and the current situation?" (again you may not need to do this - the client may spontaneously do this) or..
- Step 8b - "I would like to tell you the connections that I see, let me see which ones fit for you".

Any Questions?

- Groves & Panzer (1989) ascertain that when a client internally accesses their 'matrix of experience' through the language of metaphors, symbols and memories and the therapist utilises 'Clean Language' the client will enter into an alpha state (an altered state or conversational trance state.)
- The 'healing' is to mature the internal metaphor to the external, which can have a useful purpose.

On David Grove ...

Sullivan & Rees (2008, p.13) comment on Grove's work "Rather than people *having* metaphors, it's as if they *were* their metaphors. And when these changed, they did too." This is a powerful assertion, and if true, could have significant impact on the therapeutic process, which after all is about *change*?

*Review handout, inc. Clean Language.*

# Pilot Study Quotes

"I think that clients respond to metaphors very easily it's almost like it makes perfect sense to them and often I find that I wonder where it comes from I often don't know where it comes from. When the metaphor comes in it feels like it's spot-on it's the exact language in in the moment it's kind of pure."

It feels like when we start off we are both separate and it feels like with certain clients metaphors just seem to just fly in. Its difficult to explain it feels like there is a coupling of the two energies combined that create something new and different."

# Pilot Study Quotes

"I would find that drawings come in very quickly for metaphors. Pictures just come in my head. And I built this and it grows, and then the client says something, and I get another picture."

"Because in my mind a different kinds of metaphor there are different ways of using them. We can consciously use them as abstract things to take people on journeys to unlock memories."

"Maybe there is another way, in that metaphors that are created in the session, that didn't exist before, and somewhere in the world of the symbolic that comes to represent something."



# Research - Interim Thoughts ....

- Rapport & Empathy & Gauge
- Safe container for trauma?
- Playful child ego-state
- More common than you might think
- Some clients don't bring them
- Off-the-shelf metaphors
- Care is needed with deeper work
- Subconscious process
- Match neural pathways?
- Can be very powerful - provide hope for change.



Any Questions?

# References/Further Reading

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"Good name"



**ANY QUESTIONS?**