



The use of metaphor in therapy

Dr Jonathan Lloyd

Introductions

Group Introductions – including hopes and fears for the day, why you are here & describe yourself as a therapist metaphorically

Agenda

09:30 – 09:50 Introductions

09:50 – 10:00 Definitions

10:10 – 11:00 Models of Therapy and their use of metaphor (including negative aspects)– what the literature tells us.

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break

11:15 – 12:00 Findings - a brief discussion including standing-in-for discussion.

12:00 – 12:30 Therapist Generated Metaphors including practice.

12:30 – 13:00 Lunch

13:00 – 13:30 Client Generated Metaphors including exercise.

13:30 – 14:00 Clean language – DVD and demonstration

14:00 – 15:30 Co-constructed/moving metaphors/plus practice

15:30 – 16:00 Conclusion

Some Definitions

METAPHOR

Overarching definition of metaphor: "as the phenomenon whereby we talk, and potentially think about something in terms of something else".

The term metaphor is derived from the Greek word metapherein, to transfer over. The etymological roots of the word are meta meaning beyond or over, plus pherein meaning to bring or bear.

In this context a metaphor is something that is brought or carried over or beyond.



Similes make use of the same cognitive mechanism as metaphors and have a rational or logical element to them. For example, ‘she smiled *like a* Cheshire Cat’



Examples of a British culturally specific **metonym** includes 'the Crown' meaning the monarchy. An example of a metonym perhaps with a with a more universal application would be 'plastic' meaning credit cards. They stand-in-for.



Deep Metaphors are defined as:

"consistent, recurring images of a life story that give coherence to, and aid in, the interpretation of the events of that life....and are used by clients to both circumscribe and frame possible solutions to the problems in their lives"
(Mallinson et al., 1996, p.2).

Cryptophors, are carriers of hidden meaning and are of particular relevance to counselling and psychotherapy (Cox & Theilgaard, 1987).



Introducing...



Association
for Character Education

Sir Anthony Seldon





Why so useful?















Metaphors in Therapy

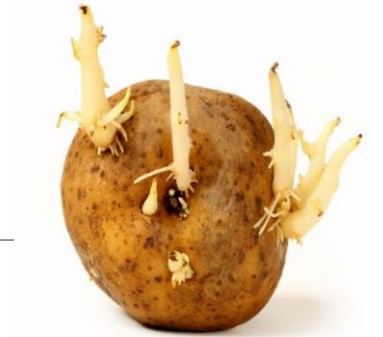


- All the Waterfall reasons, defence by-pass, can be developed/potential movement, often contain an element of hope.
- Pervasive, that's how most people describe their life
- Used to describe models of therapy
- A method of bringing unconscious material to conscious awareness
- Can bridge cultures (but can also develop barriers)
- Improves empathy, rapport and mutuality
- Are imported/exported from/to therapy culture

The Metaphors of Therapy

- Inner-Child
- Journey, Boundaries etc..
- PAC
- Id
- Super Ego
- Waking the Tiger
- The Road less Travelled
- The Chimp Paradox
- The Broken Mirror

MODELS & METAPHOR



Person Centred

The absence of the promotion of the specific use of metaphors in the traditional person-centred literature is probably due to the authentic person to person “therapy as relationship encounter” (Rogers, 1962, p.185) stance which takes precedence over techniques and theory (Wyatt, 2001). It is about “a way of being” (Rogers, 1980, p.227).

CBT

Stott et al. (2010) explain the importance of metaphors in CT and CBT: "Cognitive Therapy has, as a central task, the aim of transforming meaning to further the client's goals and help journey towards a more helpful, realistic and adaptive view of the self and the world. Metaphor should therefore be a powerful companion" (p.14).

Issue led



Psychodynamic

NOTHING
UNSAFE
• GETS IN •



The use of metaphor in psychotherapy enhances the exchange between the unconscious and conscious realms (the entrance hall and the drawing room) as the metaphor can bypass the client's censoring defences. Metaphors allow the client: "safe access to hitherto buried (*and guarded*) experience" (Cox & Theilgaard, 1987, p.69).

Working with dreams can be an fundamental element of a Jungian Analyst's work with their client and can indicate unconscious wish fulfilment and latent transferential issues (Sharpe, 1988). Sharpe (1988, p.7) suggests that dreams indicate the individual psychical product of the individual:

“The dream-life holds within itself not only the evidence of instinctual drives and mechanisms, by which those dreams are harnessed or neutralised, but also the actual experiences through which we have passed...dreams are like individual works of art.”

Deep metaphorical visualisations that clients access during therapy, referred to in Rice (1974) as *evocative reflections*. I find that symbols, dreams, imagery, visualisation are all metaphoric messages from the unconscious that help us conceive the world in a meaningful and safe way, and connect our emotions with the visual.

Negative Aspects

Potential pitfalls with using metaphors;

1. overvaluing
2. undervaluing
3. literalizing
4. an appealing metaphor may stand in the way of a less elegant more appropriate description
5. focusing on metaphors may take us away from deeper social meanings

Negative Aspects

Potential pitfalls with using metaphors;

1. oversimplification can follow metaphors
2. the 'poorly timed' metaphor introduced by the therapist when the client is silent and 'creatively reflective' is regarded by some (C&T) as ill placed and contaminating
3. metaphors should have a therapeutic insightful element and not involve a "string of avoidance" .
4. a client may not wish to engage with metaphors, particularly if it has been introduced by the therapist, factors may include low self-esteem or a difficulty to visualise
5. metaphors can be used by clients as a way of avoiding conflict or as part of a power struggle with their counsellor

There may also be difficulties relating to certain mental health issues, for example, the following of client generated metaphors with those with Psychosis or Borderline Personality Disorders can make them become extremely anxious as they may experience metaphors as a form of direct revelation of a concrete, and often ruthless reality. I would add that a significant percentage of clients on the Autistic Spectrum can also struggle with the non-logical viewpoint that metaphors engage.

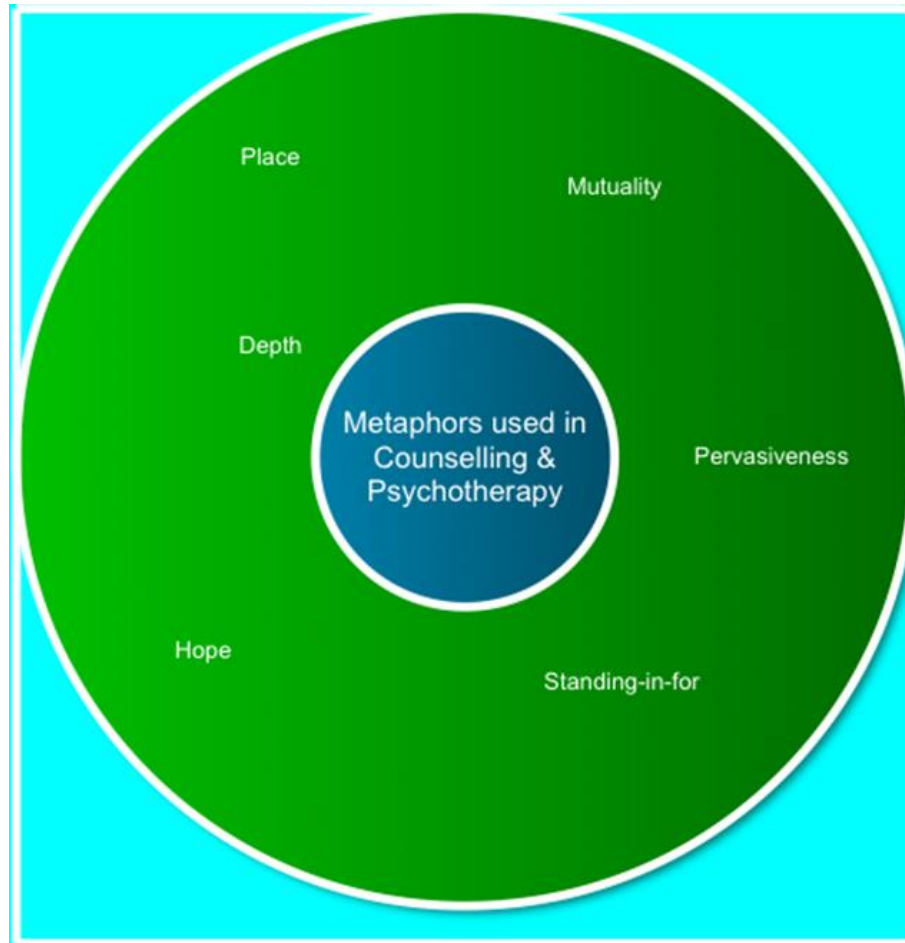
Milioni (2007) points to the danger of the therapist using the client's metaphor as a 'silencing device'. In such cases the client's world-view is closed down in favour of the therapist's interpretation.

Cox & Theilgaard (1987, p.61) metaphorically describe this potentiality: "If the therapist is too predatory he may damage the humming bird with the lasso".



FINDINGS

A BRIEF DISCUSSION







I am like....

I am like the wind
I am the train on the
tracks
that runs and runs and
runs

I am from you
me
us
them

I am like the glue that
binds
the magnet that repels
the missing in the fog

I am like my child
I can play
I can smile
can cry
I can find strength from
here

I am like a bird
I can fly
I can drift
as high as the cloud
I can burrow deep into the cloud

I am always there
ready
on the shelf
in the dream
in this moment

I am like the creator
I can change
colour
shape
Your world and mine

I am like the gift
the chameleon pathway to your mind

I am like the knot in your gut
I rest in your heart
I rest in your neck
like the blade in your side
I hold the dreams you cannot tell

I am like
what you are like
change me you
our hills caves and dance floors

I am like the monster sleeping in the dark
that can lead to doors
doors hiding smiles behind

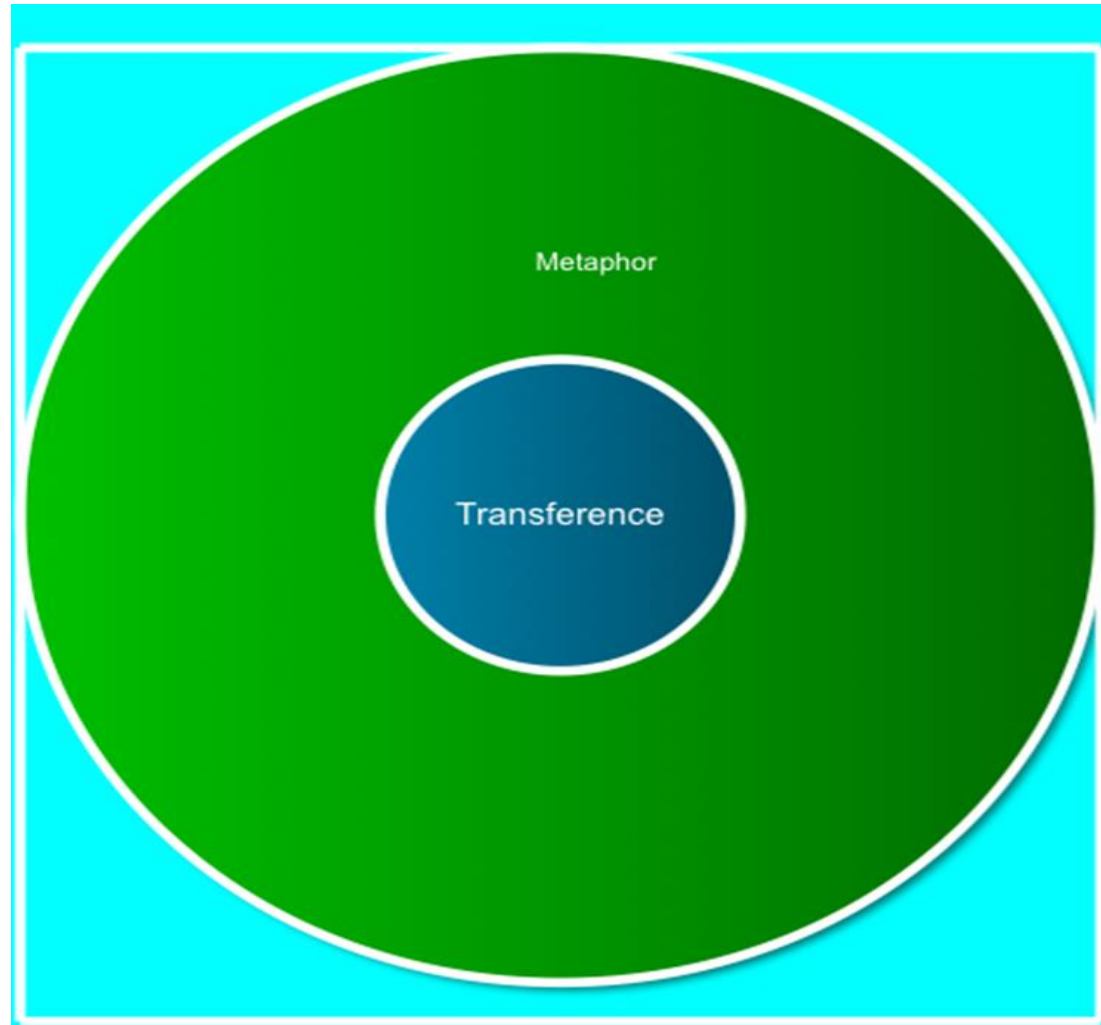
I am like the crack in the cult
the safe dungeon
the shiny hub
the frozen rose

I am like the tissues in the box
I am hope

I am like.

STANDING IN FOR – THE METONYMS OF THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

The therapist is a metaphor for a lover, a care-giver, a teacher, a maiden, a shaman. You are a shape shifter, a chameleon, "whoever your client needs you to be. While still being yourself".



Standing-in-for – Discussion



ORIGINATION & DEVELOPMENT

Therapist Generated
Client Generated
Co-Created

Therapist Generated Metaphors – see following slides

‘Bank Metaphors’ or ‘off-the-shelf’ metaphors include:-

Castles

Trains

Wheels

Rivers

Trees (& Plants)

Desert Islands

Poems/Literature/Films/TV/Radio/Plays – cultural metaphors?

Shapes (Tomkins)

“Attend. Witness. Wait.

Discern, formulate, potentiate, and reflect mutative
metaphorical material.

Attend. Witness Wait.” C&T.

The Black Parrot

By Dorothy Nimmo

*Kill the black parrot. Choke the sodding bird,
it never said a kind thing or a true word,
or if it did that wasn't what I heard.*

*I only heard it squawking in my ear
things no-one in their right mind wants to hear
that made me cold with shame and white with fear.*

*Behave yourself. Control yourself. You know
you don't think that, you only think you do.*

You can't just please yourself, I told you so.

You're being selfish. It's for your own good.

You must. You must not. But you know you should.

If you try harder, I am sure you could.

I'm disappointed in you. Never say I didn't tell you.

But you had your own way, you'd not be told. There'll be a price to pay.

Where was it polly learned that canting word?

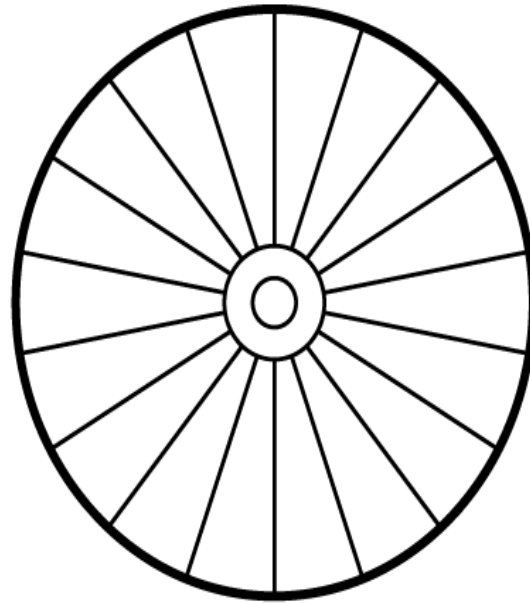
It's time to wring its neck, the stupid bird.

What made us think that was the voice of God?

1. Nimmo (1993, 3-4)



Wheel of Relationship



Tree of well-being



Experiential

In small groups discuss any metaphors that you introduce to clients and the context in which you will introduce them – any ‘case-studies’?

Client Generated Metaphors



Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.233) note “In therapy, much of self-understanding involves consciously recognising previously unconscious metaphors and how we live by them”.

Further, as Ricoeur (1986) recognises, the metaphor needs to be isomorphic to the problem, the story and the situation of the client himself so that he can recognise himself in it and find out new ways to perceive his difficulties.



Samuel Beckett's 'Happy Days'





Experiential – Mrs Potter



"Mrs. Potter's Lullaby"

Well I woke up in mid afternoon cause that's when it all hurts the most
I dream I never know anyone at the party and I'm always the host
If dreams are like movies then memories are films about ghosts
You can never escape, you can only move south down the coast
Well I am an idiot walking a tightrope of fortune and fame
I am an acrobat swinging trapezes through circles of flame
If you've never stared off into the distance then your life is a shame
And though I'll never forget your face sometimes I can't remember my
name

Hey, Mrs. Potter, don't cry

Hey, Mrs. Potter, I know why

But, hey, Mrs. Potter, won't you talk to me

Well there's a piece of Maria in every song that I sing

And the price of a memory is the memory of the sorrow it brings

And there is always one last light to turn out and one last bell to ring

And the last one out of the circus has to lock up everything

Or the elephants will get out and forget to remember what you said

Oh and the ghosts of the tilt-o-whirl will linger inside of your head

Oh and the Ferris wheel junkies will spin there forever instead

When I see you, a blanket of stars covers me in my bed

Hey, Mrs. Potter, don't go, I said

Hey, Mrs. Potter, I don't know, but

Hey, Mrs. Potter, won't you talk to me

Well all the blue light reflections that color my mind when I sleep

And the lovesick rejections that accompany the company I keep
All the razor perceptions that cut just a little too deep
Hey, I can bleed as well as anyone but I need someone to help me sleep
So I throw my hand into the air and it swims in the beams
It's just a brief interruption of the swirling dust sparkle jet stream
Well I know I don't know you and you're probably not what you seem
Aw, but I'd sure like to find out
So why don't you climb down off that movie screen
Hey, Mrs. Potter, don't turn
Hey, Mrs. Potter, I burn for you
Hey, Mrs. Potter, won't you talk to me
When the last king of Hollywood shatters his glass on the floor
And orders another
Well, I wonder what he did that for
That's when I know that I have to get out cause I have been there before
So I gave up my seat at the bar and I head for the door. Yeah.
We drove out to the desert just to lie down beneath this bowl of stars
We stand up in the Palace, like it's the last of the great pioneer town bars
Aw, we shout out these songs against the clang of electric guitars
Well, you can see a million miles tonight
But you can't get very far
Aw, you can see a million miles tonight
But you can't get very far
Hey, Mrs. Potter, I won't touch and
Hey, Mrs. Potter, it's not much but
Hey, Mrs. Potter, won't you talk to me [3X]

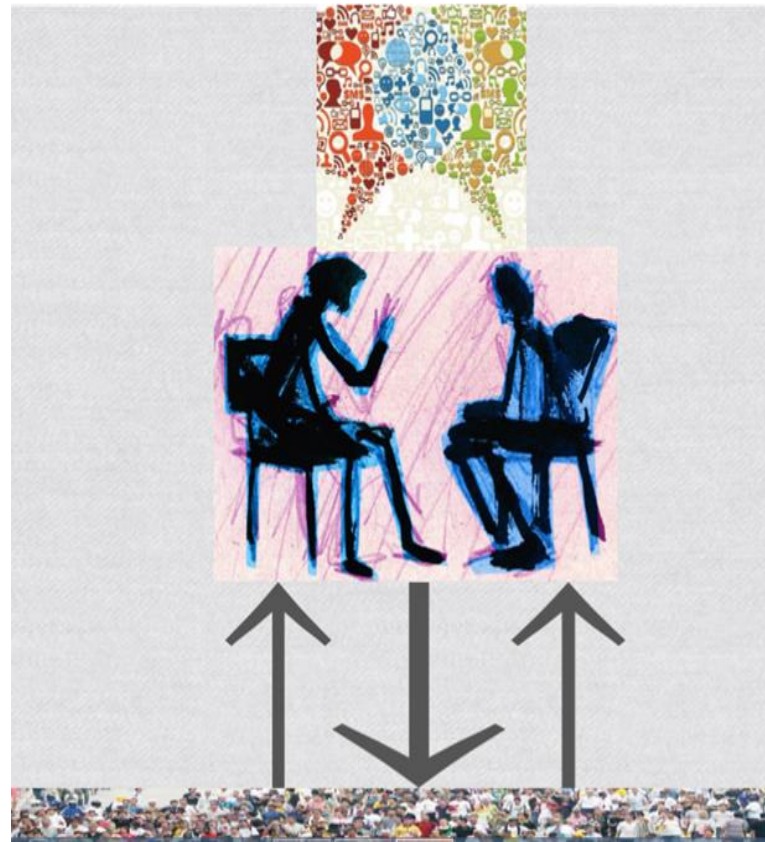
Clean Language

David Grove DVD (10 mins) & Explanation

Example of working with Mrs Potter metaphors

Experiential of working with each other.

Social & Cultural Aspects of Metaphors in Therapy – The Co-Created/Moving Metaphor



“The meaning of metaphor is revealed within a personal and cultural context, within a society of utterances”

(Hobson, 1985, p.60)

Cox & Theilgaard (1987, p.49): (Client) “because I don’t begin. You induce beginning in me”.

“It is the impact of the inner world of the patient on that of the therapist and vice versa which promotes movement”.

I would tentatively offer my view on this phenomenon that metaphors arise from the therapeutic relationship and for them to be therapeutically useful they need to be mutually understood and developed (they need to impact on each other’s ‘inner world’). Counselling and psychotherapy is about dialogue and conversation in a given context (Hobson, 1985). Even in person-centred circles it is now accepted that the therapist inevitably influences what is said, it is a co-constructive, contextualised process (Worsley, 2002).

“the reflection of being and object of reflection are defined through each other, they are co-constituted. We are actively involved in any experience and what we experience is co-constructed by us and by the object/person that we encounter – any experience of relationship says as much about me as it does the other, it is a co-constructed relationship.”

(Van Deurzen & Young, 2009, p.208).



Time to practice

Deep metaphors

Co-constructed/Client
Generated/Therapist Generated

Mutual Development

Moving

State?

References

A full list of references is available along with a copy of the thesis by emailing me at jonathan@calmminds.com

Or call 0161 439 7773

Conclusion

Feedback

Final Questions

Future workshops

Hopes & Fears