

METAPHOR

When I was beginning to learn about Hypnosis I was told of the power of metaphor in transformation. I was told of the amazing results that were realized when metaphors are employed. I was told a lot about metaphor except what it was and how to use it.

Metaphors often include analogy or simile and occur daily in our lives. Discovering the ease of use of metaphor is like the first day of class when we begin to recognize new learning as sunshine in our life. Often the metaphors will offer their lessons in ways that are not at first clear or defined. Imagine if you will, how easily you might accept another telling you how you can make those changes that have in the past seemed so difficult. Another consideration might be a story or anecdote that reminds you that the things you have been struggling with in the past can be released by simply noticing a fresh perspective.

- METAPHOR:**
- 1.) A figure of speech in which a term is transferred from the object it ordinarily designates to an object it may designate only by implicit comparison or analogy, as in the phrase *Evening of Life*.
 - 2.) Figurative language; allegory; parable: "The prophets used much by metaphors to set forth truth."

- ANALOGY:**
- 1.) Correspondence in some respects, especially in function or position, between things otherwise dissimilar.
 - 2.) A form of logical inference, or an insistence on it, based on the assumption that if two things are known to be alike in some respects, then they must be alike in other respects.

SIMILE: A figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared, the comparison being made explicit typically by the use of the introductory : *like* or *as*: "Like ancient trees, we die from the top." (Gore Vidal)

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Gardening

Years ago, I learned from a client the power of using their own stories to create an outcome that freed them to excel. The client was addressing weight issues and at the second or third session she said “I can’t do this. I have no patience.” During our intake she had stated that she liked gardening, so I spoke with her about my incredible knowledge of the subject. I told her that I do all my gardening at the grocery store. The vegetables are always fresh, the flowers are trimmed and there is no dirt. I told her that I was certain gardening was pretty simple (you don’t need a college education to do that!) and suggested that it was probably important to put the seeds in the ground and then cover them and water them. Then I would be able to go back into the house and in the morning, like Jack and the Beanstalk, there would be whatever I had planted and it would be in fully grown. Right?

Well, let me tell you, I discovered quite a bit about gardening that day. Apparently there is something to do with loosening the ground all around the plant and fertilizing, pruning, weeding, and MUCH more! There is sunlight and shade, temperature, dampness, more trimming, fertilizing, and it takes weeks, months even years to grow some stuff!

When she was finished (and I’ll tell you that I was particularly tough to teach that day)I repeated the highlights as I remembered them and she was kind enough to correct me when I mis-spoke. I had to admit to her that gardening wasn’t as easy as I had previously said. I even conceded that it must take a lot of care and attention to grow what you wanted to have and get the sizes of healthy plants that would best suit the yard and your desires. In conclusion, I wondered if gardening required a lot of patience and whether she would ever feel that she could grow her body slim and healthy just as she could take an overgrown garden and get it into shape. Her eyes filled with tears of joy and the session was over.

This is an example of allowing the client to access resources they already possess but haven’t recognized and use them toward success. I challenged her belief system and got her to tell me HOW she knew to be successful. Drawing from her the most effective story that included all the resources she needed to use to create what she wanted. By telling me how mistaken I was, she became involved, passionate and very clear about all the things that would be required to grow her garden. Please notice that the story was hers.

HUMAN MIND IS METAPHOR MIND

What is metaphor? Let us start with a dictionary definition:

metaphor: Gk fr. *metapherein* to transfer; fr. *meta-* beyond or over + *pherein* to bear: a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them; *broadly:* figurative language...

—Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

Now also, from Wikipedia:

"In language, a metaphor is a rhetorical trope where a comparison is made between two seemingly unrelated subjects. Typically, a first object is described as being a second object. In this way, the first object can be economically described because implicit and explicit attributes from the second object can be used to fill in the description of the first. Some (particularly in cognitive linguistics) see metaphor as a basic cognitive function, while others prefer the term analogy for this concept. However, metaphor is not always used for practical description and understanding; sometimes it is used for purely aesthetic reasons."

The famous psychiatrist and master hypnotherapist Dr. Milton Erickson employed metaphor extensively in his hypnotic language patterns and in assigning his clients "tasks". For instance, some people who came to see Erickson were told to climb a nearby mountain - a fairly rigorous hike - and when they got to the top, to see something special, something of significance. Erickson was well known for this type of "ordeal therapy". To be successful, therapy and hypnotic work must, I believe, involve the client in a participatory manner. There must be commitment. By following the suggestion of taking the hike, the client is metaphorically agreeing to do the work. Sometimes our clients may lack a "greater vision"... their day to day existence has become too short-sighted, without a compelling future. Here, the metaphor of looking out at a panoramic view from the top of a mountain and seeing something of unique personal importance, could be interpreted in an open-ended way as finding the particular goal or inner meaning in the client's life.

"Metaphor is a literary device which includes simile... Anytime one thing is likened to another or spoken of as if it were another thing, metaphor is involved. 'We seemed to have reached a *dead end* in this discussion.' 'Your smile is like the *summer sun*.' Such phrases are in common use; in fact, they are so common that we often fail to recognize metaphorical phrases as metaphor.... Metaphor helps us use understandings or experiences we have had already to make sense of new experiences.

"Erickson assumed that people already have the abilities, or know-how, to solve the problems that have been troubling them. They have developed and mastered these abilities in certain contexts, but are not currently using them in contexts in which the problem occurs. The task of therapy, then, is to transfer this know-how across contexts from the one(s) in which the patient currently has it to the context in which he does not. This is accomplished by using metaphor in its various forms."

—William Hudson O'Hanlon (*Taproots*)

When to communicate directly and when to communicate metaphorically? Using metaphor is a face-saving way for the client to entertain novel experiences, learn new behaviors, and respond (or not) to directives contained or implied in the story. It is also a fail-safe way for the therapist to instruct the client indirectly in a way that avoids arousing the client's resistance because the client is ultimately the judge of what the story means, how it is interpreted, and what kind of response will be forthcoming. If the material in the metaphor is not relevant to the client's needs, it will most likely be discarded and if the material is so relevant as to be stressful for the client, it can be consciously dismissed as "just a story" while the unconscious is free to respond in a meaningful way. Metaphor, however, rarely constitutes the entire treatment. There is usually a portion of the work in which direct communication is involved, especially in the intake and assessment phase as well as feedback phases following a primarily metaphorical session.

Another way of saying this is found in a paper by H. Stephen Schweitzer, Ass't Professor of Counseling Psychology, Univ. of Oregon entitled "Ericksonian Sport metaphors in the Treatment of Secondary Erective Dysfunction:

Zeig (1980) summarized a number of Erickson's reasons for using anecdotes, which also apply to metaphor: (1) anecdotes are nonthreatening; (2) anecdotes are engaging; (3) anecdotes foster independence because the client needs to make sense out of the message and reach a self-initiated action

for which he is responsible and can take credit; (4) anecdotes can be used to bypass natural resistance to change; (5) anecdotes create confusion and promote hypnotic responsiveness; and (6) anecdotes tag the memory, making the presented idea more memorable.

Metaphor is found in the great spiritual traditions of the world, as well as their literature (the Bible, The Tao Te Ching, The Koran, etc.) The act of Holy Communion is one of huge symbolic and metaphoric import. Another source of teaching metaphors is Aesop's Fables... "The Tortoise and the Hare", is a great example of the use of metaphor for purposes of comparison. Here, two distinct personality types compete, with the winner living slow and stable over the loser's fast and impetuous lifestyle. "The Grasshopper and the Ant" is another. Fairy Tales abound with metaphor... Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Sleeping Beauty, Alladin's Magic Lamp, etc.

Let us look next to the teachings of Native American ceremonial healer Joseph Rael (Beautiful Painted Arrow), who says in his book "Ceremonies of the Living Spirit":

Puns, metaphors, parables, and stories are the teaching tools of the spiritual teacher in every tradition, including mine. Metaphors connect the world around us with the metaphysical, giving us a window on the infinite. A metaphor is not simply a figure of speech... metaphor is energy that is in a state of action, breathing life into ceremony. We work with metaphor in order to find the essence of everything we encounter in the material world, in perceptual reality.... When traditional Native American people look at material reality, we are looking not for scientific truth, but for the metaphors. To look at a thing as metaphor is to ask, "What principal idea is it expressing?"

Exercises:

1) Construct a metaphoric story around the principal idea of an ordinary day to day experience taking on transcendent meaning.

2) Make up a short metaphor using the principal idea of

- a) growth
- b) change
- c) dreaming

3) Use the any of the following in a metaphor that would apply to a hypnosis client you have worked with:

- a) a garden
- b) a cave
- c) a stream
- d) a journey
- e) a computer

SAMPLE METAPHOR STORY

And that reminds me of a story...

"This story takes place along time ago, and is about a young girl from Morocco whose father was a spinner. He became prosperous in his craft, and took her with him on a voyage in the Mediterranean. He wanted to sell his thread, and told his daughter that she should also look for a young man who would make a good husband. But a storm caused the ship to founder near Egypt, killing the father and casting the daughter ashore. Miserable and exhausted, barely able to remember her previous life, the girl wandered in the sand until she met a family of weavers. They took her in and taught her how to make cloth. Eventually she became contented. But after a few years she was captured on the seashore by slavers who then sailed east to Istanbul and took her to its slave market. A man who made ships' masts went to the market to buy slaves to help him in his work, but when he noticed the girl, he took pity on her, bought her, and took her home to serve his wife. But pirates stole the cargo he had invested in, and he was unable to buy the other slaves. He, the girl, and his wife had to make the masts themselves. The girl worked hard and conscientiously. The mast maker found her to be so capable that he eventually granted her freedom and made her a partner in his business, which she came to enjoy.

"One day he asked her to accompany a shipment of masts to Java. She agreed, but off the coast of China the ship was struck by a typhoon. Again she was washed up on a strange seashore, and again she cried out against fate. 'Why do these bad things keep happening to me?' she asked. No answer came. She got up out of the sand and started walking inland. There was a legend in China that a foreign woman would appear and make a tent for the emperor. Because nobody in China knew how to make tents, the whole population,

including one generation of emperors after another, wondered about this prediction. Once a year, the emperor sent out emissaries to every town to bring all foreign women to the royal court.

"In due course, the shipwrecked woman arrived before the emperor, who asked her through an interpreter if she could make a tent. 'I think I can,' she said. She asked for rope, but the Chinese had none, and so, recalling her girlhood as the daughter of a spinner, she asked for silk and spun it into rope. She asked for thick cloth, but the Chinese had none, and so, recalling her life among the weavers, she wove the kind of cloth used for tents. She asked for tent poles, but the Chinese had none, and so, recalling her life with the mast maker, she made tent poles. When she had all these things ready, she tried to remember as best she could all the tents she had seen in her varied life. At last she put together a tent. The emperor marveled at the construction, and at the fulfillment of the old prophecy, and offered her whatever she wished. She married a handsome prince, remained in China surrounded by her children, and lived to a happy old age. And she realized that although her adventures had seemed terrible when they were happening, they turned out to be essential for her ultimate happiness."

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Stories to tell, Metaphors to use ...

... When your client's belief system includes Angels or Light Beings.

Okka Holthuis

I often ask my clients if they have a best friend and maybe they can remember a situation when they asked their best friend for a favor. Maybe to take out the trash, or to watch the dog or cat for a weekend while they were gone for a trip, or even to watch their beautiful baby while they had to do something. Most of my clients remember such a situation, have a best friend they trust, and they go along with me that when your best friend agrees to do whatever favor you have asked, you don't doubt at all that whatever it was you asked for will be taken care of; you just KNOW and trust – as you would do the same for your best friend. Can you imagine how it would feel, when you have agreed on mailing a letter and buying some stamps for your friend and she calls you several times to remind you to do this? Would it be annoying, at least a bit?

Now, what would change when expecting Angels to be like your best friends? Maybe they are a little different in appearance (at times) and perhaps the way they respond to our request might be surprising, as their resources are sometimes not so obvious to us. However, I wonder what would change? How would it be to expect their help with as much certainty as you expect the support of your best friend? What would be different when you were able to expect the response as immediately and promptly as you would from your best friend?

I tell my clients to put their Angels to the test, starting out with something easy, where there is not much attachment. For example, finding a parking space for them right where they want it to be; so far all of my clients came back with surprising results. And you can ask your Angel friends whatever you would like, big or small. My advice would be to be careful what you ask for, it might come true.

Metaphors for Healing..

Michael Ellner 6/5/06

That reminds me of a story:

An elderly carpenter was ready to retire. He told his employer-contractor of his plans to leave the house-building business and live a more leisurely life with his wife enjoying his extended family. He would miss the paycheck, but he needed to retire. They could get by.

The contractor was sorry to see his good worker go and asked if he could build just one more house as a personal favor. The carpenter said yes, but in time it was easy to see that his heart was not in his work. He resorted to shoddy workmanship and used inferior materials. It was an unfortunate way to end a dedicated career.

When the carpenter finished his work, the employer came to inspect the house. He handed the front-door key to the carpenter. "This is your house," the employer said. "My gift to you." The carpenter was shocked! What a shame! If he had only known he was building his own house, he would have done it all so differently.

So it is with us.... We build our lives, a day at a time, often putting less than our best into the building. Then with a shock, we realize we have to live in the house we have built. If we could do it over, we'd do it much differently. But we cannot go back. You are the carpenter. Each day you hammer a nail, place a board, or erect a wall. "Life is a do-it-yourself project," someone has said. Your attitudes and the choices you make today, build the "house" you live in tomorrow.

Build wisely with your whole heart and soul

LOVE

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered. Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.

Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies.

Succeed anyway.

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.

Be honest and frank anyway.

The biggest person with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest person with the smallest mind.

Think big anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.

Build anyway.

People really need help but may attack if you help them.

Help people anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you might get kicked in the teeth.

Give the world the best you've got anyway.

Mother Theresa