Best Practices for Using Metaphors in Multicultural Counseling Effectively

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- https://www.youtube.com/c/MotivationandGrowth
Participants will:

1. Identify the creative use of metaphors, similes, and analogies in communication and counseling

2. Explore how to use biblical metaphors, similes, and analogies in the counseling setting effectively

3. Describe specific metaphors, similes, and analogies to use in a multicultural counseling setting
We’ll have some time for questions at the end of the presentation.
Learning Objective 1

Identify the creative use of metaphors, similes, and analogies in communication and counseling.

I’m walking on eggshells!

My life is going down hill very fast!
The Initial Challenge
To decipher

How are you feeling?
• Reflect Feeling
• Empathize

"I AM UP AGAINST THE WALL"

My cup is empty!

I feel like I’m in a thick fog

"I am up against the wall"

My cup is empty!

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My cup is empty!
A creative way to understand the client’s world, feelings, situations, frame of reference, and experience.

Phenomenological Interpretation
Counseling is “TALK THERAPY”

- People (our clients) use metaphors, similes, and analogies to:
  - Describe their situation
  - Conceptualize their life struggles
  - Express their emotions
  - Convey their perception of reality
  - Share their subjective perspectives
  - Try to make sense of their life

- “Metaphors help our minds find familiar patterns and build bridges between what is new and what is unknown by absorbing new ideas into already familiar concepts”

(Killick, Curry, & Myles, 2016, p. 2).

Figures of Speech

Metaphors

Similes

Analogy
Comparison of two things

**Analogy**
- Type of argument
- More complicated and lengthy
- Points out similarities between two things

**Simile**
- Comparison of two things
- Uses words ‘like’ or ‘as’
  Ex. He is as hungry as a horse.
- Figure of speech
- Type of analogy

**Metaphor**
- Directly states the comparison
  Ex. Time is a thief.
• **ANALOGIES** = A is to B as C is to D
  - I’m as busy as a bee

• **METAPHORS** = A is B
  - My life is a roller-coaster

• **SIMILES** = A is like/as B
  - We fight like cats and dogs
  - They shall be as white as snow
Allows us into the client’s world
An example
What do you hear from clients?

- I broke down
- I’m crushed
- I’m in the pit
- I'm trapped
- I’m hitting my head against a wall
- I’m running in circles
- My life is a roller-coaster
- My mother is like an octopus
- I’ve been crying like a baby lately
- I’m completely lost

What does the client mean?
Client-Generated Metaphors, Similes, and Analogies

• “provide a lens into the internal world of clients that combines their emotional reactions and experiences in an understandable manner and creates a bridge so clients’ internal worlds can be shared with the counselor”

• (Wagener, 2017, p. 153).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One’s image of self</td>
<td>I’m a teakettle about to explode!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One’s image of others</td>
<td>My husband’s a locomotive barging into the house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between self and self</td>
<td>My life is a barren wasteland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One’s image of situations</td>
<td>I keep beating myself up.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship of self to another</td>
<td>Dealing with him, I’m trying to tame a wild lion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship of self to a situation</td>
<td>I’m slowly sinking in quicksand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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“provide a tool to further guide and support clients in the pursuit of their goals”


Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT)

- Passengers on the Bus
- Thought Train

Cognitive Defusion
Metaphors and CBT

- ‘Black-and-white thinking’ and ‘mind-reading’

- Blinders and dark glasses
  - A metaphor to educate clients about depression

- Traffic lights
  - A metaphor for children

- The seeds of change
  - A metaphor to help clients contemplate the nature of change

“information about people’s private, subjective, and personally meaningful experiences may be efficiently represented as metaphors within the creative imagination.” p. 6

Using metaphors “An extremely efficient manner of increasing a client’s experiential awareness and acceptance” p. 10

Metaphors To Deal With Trauma

• Helps minimize anxiety-provoking feelings when clients are recounting the experience

• Helps clients reframe the traumatic experience by looking at it from a different angle

Metaphors To Deal With Trauma

- Helps “[deactivate] the defenses without heightening the anxiety by allowing patients to defocus on the issue itself and focus in the metaphoric domain”

(Wirtztum, Van der Hart, & Friedman, 1988, p. 278).

Example of Metaphors used by Veterans to Describe their experience with PTSD

- “PTSD in Control (Having Survived Trauma)”
- “Controlling PTSD (Surviving PTSD)”
- “Veteran in Control (Survivor’s Mission)”

Example of Metaphors used by Veterans to Describe their experience with PTSD

- Describe the physiological effects of PTSD:
  - being easily “set off”, “suffocating”, being “on guard”, “hiding”, being in “combat mode”

- Describe the effects of PTSD on one’s disposition:
  - being a “Tazmanian Devil”, being overly “mission oriented”, being a “zombie”
  - overly identifying with the warrior - relying on “Colonel” persona and being a “Spartan Warrior”

- Describe PTSD itself:
  - [PTSD] “tears away” and “breaks down”, PTSD as a “load”, PTSD as “baggage”, PTSD as a “battle”

Learning Objective 2

Explore how to Use biblical metaphors, similes, and analogies in the counseling setting effectively

What are some metaphors, similes, or analogies in the Bible?
A Few Metaphors, Similes, Analogies in the Bible

- “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer” (Psalm 18: 2 NIV)
- Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path (Psalm 119:105 NIV).
- “You are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13)
- “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14)
- “Be born again” (John 3)

- The Church is the Bride of Christ
- The Church is the Body of Christ
- The Church is the Family of God

A Few Metaphors, Similes, Analogies in the Bible

The Lord is my Shepherd

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed,

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden is a field.
Jesus
“I am” Sayings in the Gospel of John

I am the bread of life  
I am the light of the world  
I am the door  
I am the good shepherd  
I am the resurrection and the life  
I am the way, the truth, and the life  
I am the true vine  

John 6:35  
John 8:12  
John 10:9  
John 10:11  
John 11:25  
John 14:6  
John 15:1
An example for using metaphor within a Christian counseling setting

“Counselees who have been abused as children may, for example, have erroneous perceptions of God (Gingrich, 2013). Counselors may find that God is viewed as unsafe, particularly if the counselee’s abuse was at the hands of his or her father. Therefore, introducing the metaphor of God as father can potentially tease out an underlying belief that no one is safe, particularly father figures. The counselee’s assumption may fit better with a metaphor of God as judge. Changing the metaphor to Jesus the Good Shepherd may help the counselee’s perception to shift to a more accurate, realistic one.”

(Sbanotto, Gingrich, Gingrich, 2016, p. 197)
Using metaphors to help strengthen a client self-identity

- I am a child of God – 1 John 3:1
- I am a new creation – 2 Cor. 5:17
- I am God’s masterpiece – Eph. 2:10
- I am more than a conqueror – Rom. 8:37
- I am an ambassador – 2 Cor. 5:20

- Explore how client’s self-concept
- Help client replace negative self-concept with new identity

Learning Objective 3
Describe specific metaphors, similes, and analogies to use in a multicultural counseling setting
Potential Challenges when using Metaphors in Multicultural Counseling

Potential Strategies when using Metaphors in Multicultural Counseling

- Universal Themes
- Christian Culture
- Similar Language Christianese
- Bible-specific Metaphors
- Psychoeducation
- Religious Coping

Using biblical metaphors with Christian clients from diverse backgrounds

The Advantage of Christian Counseling:

- Common “Christian culture”
- Clients are open and receptive to Scriptures and Christian concepts
- Clients may be familiar with biblical metaphors
- We help client find meaning from a biblical perspective

Wounds and Scars

• “In many cases, a healed wound may leave a scar as a reminder that successful healing has taken place. Although the scar may be ugly, annoying, a topic of conversation or not as favorable as regular tissue, it is still an image of success signifying that a wound has healed.”

Peter D. Ladd

Country/Culture-based Metaphors
Country/Culture-based Metaphors

What if the lawn is dead?
Working with a Metaphor in Counseling

- **When clients kill the analogy/metaphor**
  - Counselor can expand/explore
    - “what makes you think it’s dead?”

- **Assessment**
  - Let’s you know what the person feels, thinks about the situation

- **Counselor can provide hope**
  - E.g., Landscaping companies revives dead lawns
Exploring a Metaphor in the Counseling Process

- What is it like to be in the hole?
  - dark, lonely, scary,

- How do you feel in the hole?
  - Trapped, alone, forgotten

- What have you tried to do to get out of the hole?
  - “. . . “ (self-medication)

- How did your attempt help you?
  - “. . . “ (not effective)

- What would your next option or attempt be?
  - “I am here . . .”

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Thank you

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