

BEST PRACTICES FOR USING METAPHORS IN COUNSELING EFFECTIVELY

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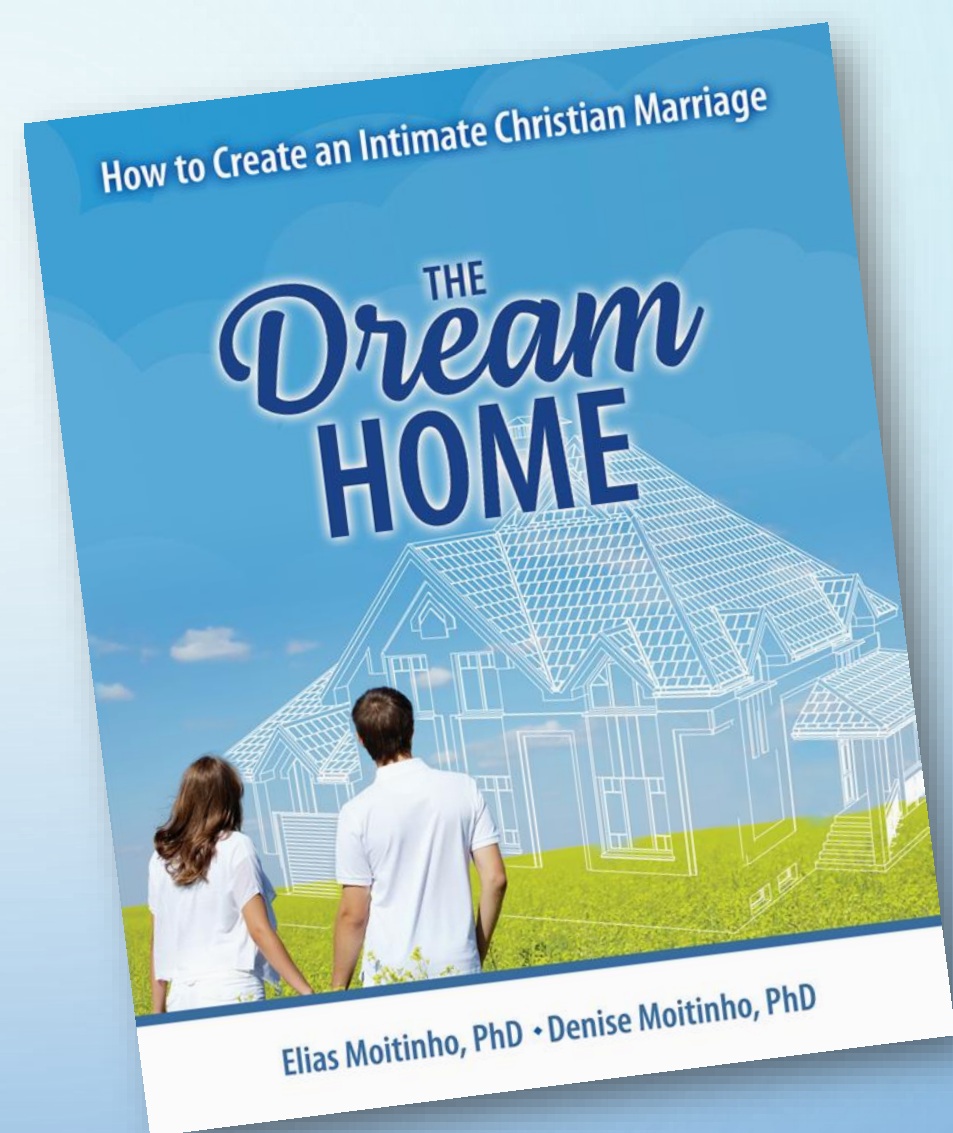
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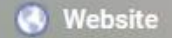


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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

PARTICIPANTS WILL:

1. Identify metaphors, similes, and analogies and their use in communication
2. Explore how to use metaphors, similes, and analogies in counseling effectively
3. Describe specific metaphors, similes, and analogies to use in counseling sessions

**WE'LL HAVE SOME TIME FOR QUESTIONS
AT THE END OF THE PRESENTATION.**



**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**

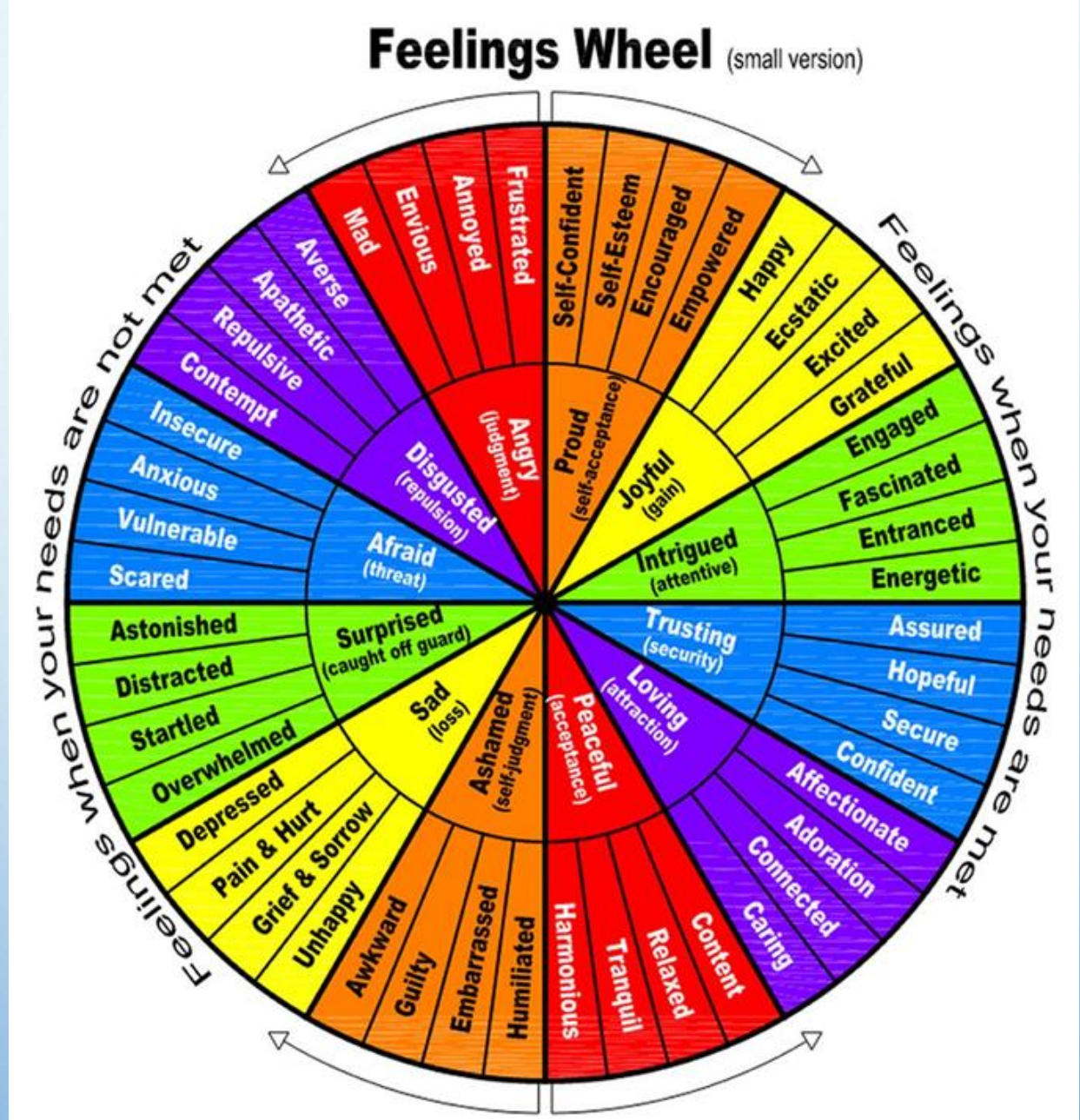
**"I AM UP AGAINST
THE WALL"**

**I feel like
I'm in a
thick fog**

**My cup is
empty!**

FIGURES OF SPEECH

A creative way to understand the client's world, feelings, situations, frame of reference, and experience.



Phenomenological Interpretation

COUNSELING IS “TALK THERAPY”

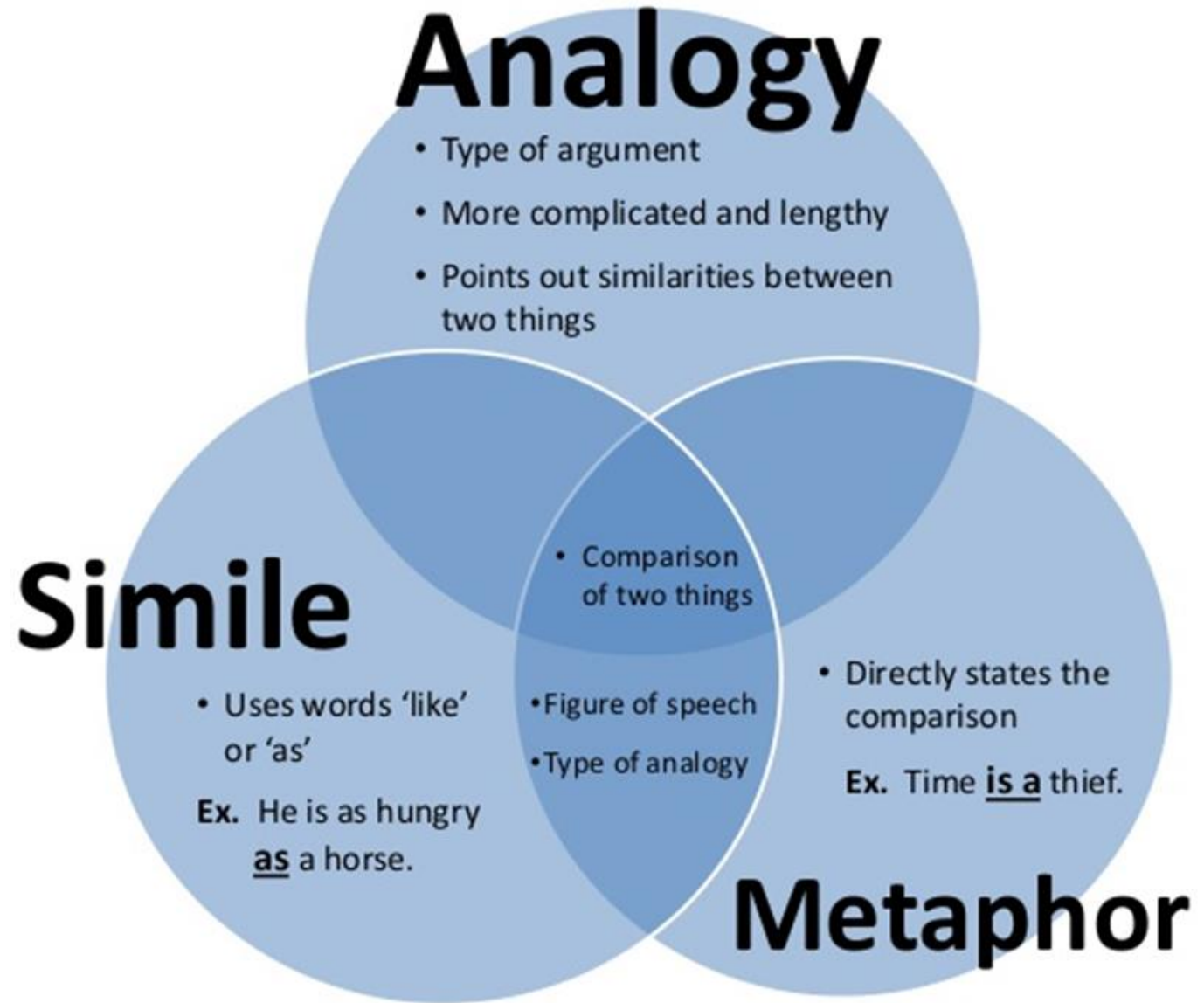
- People (our clients) use metaphors, similes, and analogies to:
 - Describe their situation
 - Conceptualize their life struggles
 - Express their emotions
 - Convey their perception of reality
 - Share their subjective perspectives
 - Try to make sense of their life
- “Metaphors help our minds find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



Comparison of two things



METAPHORS

SIMILES

ANALOGIES

- **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

Metaphors, Similes, and Analogies allow us into the client's world



AN EXAMPLE

- **SPRING**

- Freshness, Hope, Anticipation

- **SUMMER**

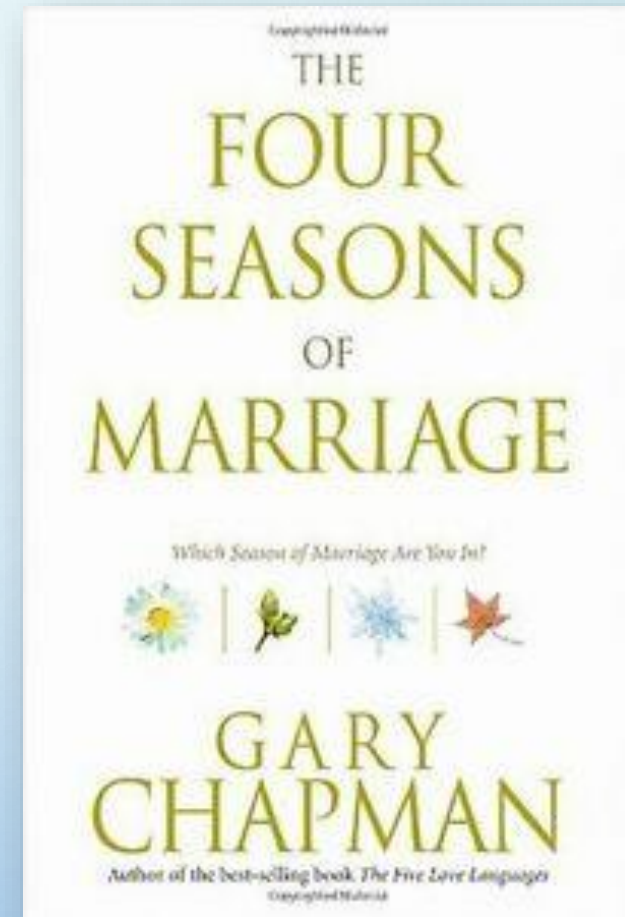
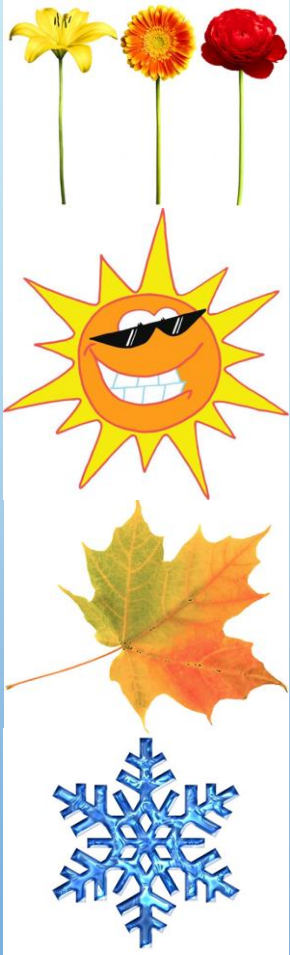
- Comfortable, Quiet, Enjoying life

- **FALL**

- Uncertainty, Negligence, Fears

- **WINTER**

- Discouraged, Separated, Dissatisfied



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)

Client-Generated Metaphors

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
One's image of self	I'm a teakettle about to explode!
One's image of others	My husband's a locomotive barging into the house.
Relationship between self and self	My life is a barren wasteland.
One's image of situations	I keep beating myself up.
Relationship of self to another	Dealing with him, I'm trying to tame a wild lion.
Relationship of self to a situation	I'm slowly sinking in quicksand.

From:
Eckstein, D. & Russo, N. (2012)

Eckstein, D. & Russo, N. (2012). Six types of counseling related metaphors: Theory and case study demonstration. International Florida Adlerian Society 17th Annual Conference; Kopp, R. & Eckstein, D. (2004). Using early memory metaphors and client-generated metaphors in Adlerian therapy. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 60(2), 163-174.

Counselor-Generated

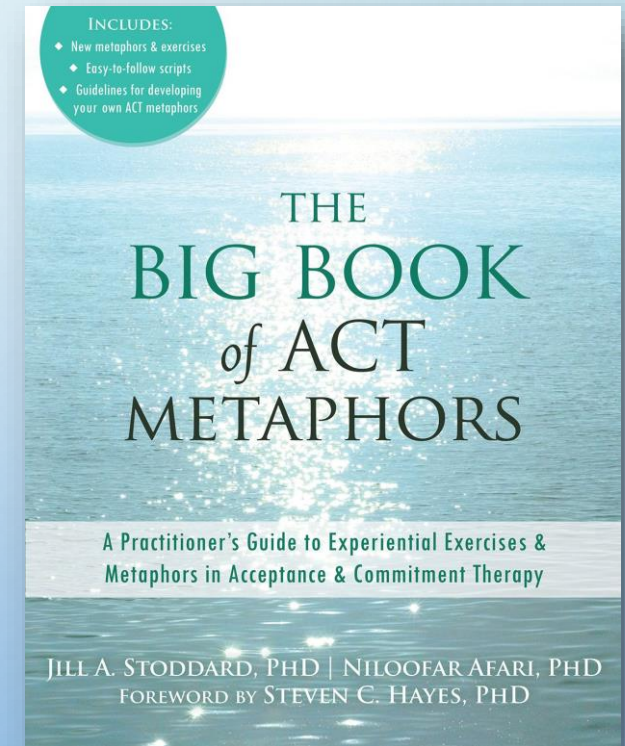
Metaphors, Similes, and Analogies

“provide a tool to further guide and support clients in the pursuit of their goals”

(Wagener, 2017, p. 153)

ACCEPTANCE COMMITMENT THERAPY (ACT)

- **Passengers on the Bus**



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

**Using
metaphors,
similes, and
analogies in
counseling
effectively**



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”

WORKING WITH A METAPHOR IN MARRIAGE COUNSELING

A Marriage is
like a lawn.

Yes!

But, what if the
lawn is dead?



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
 - Client: “I’m stuck in the mud”
 - Counselor “what happened?” “How did you get stuck?”
“How do you feel being stuck?”
- **Counselor can provide hope**
 - E.g., Landscaping companies revive dead lawns

EXPLORING A METAPHOR IN THE COUNSELING PROCESS

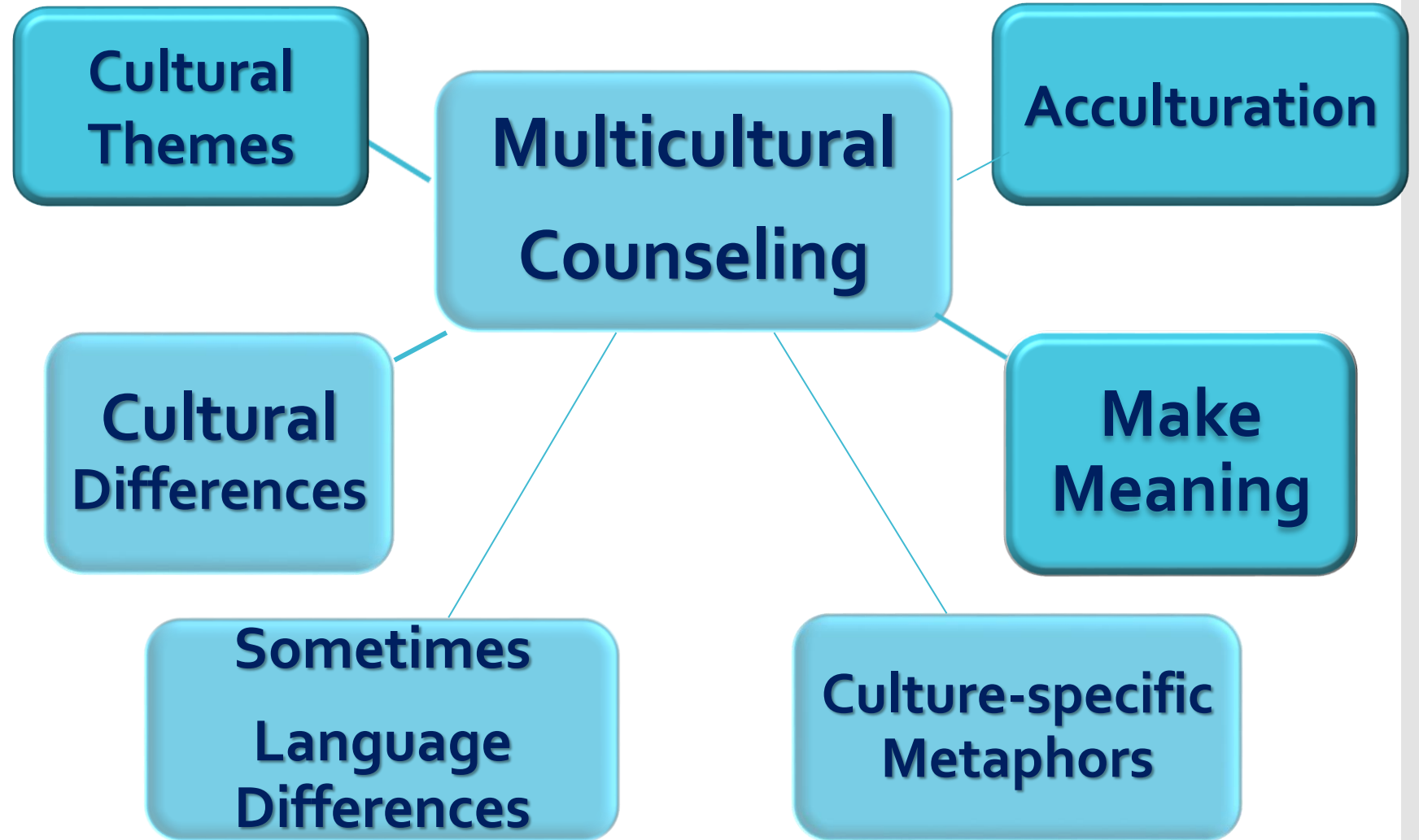
- **What is it like to be in the hole?**
 - “dark” “lonely” “scary” “depressing” “helpless” [Assessment]
- **How do you feel in the hole?**
 - “Trapped” “stuck” “alone” “forgotten” [Assessment]
- **What have you tried to do to get out of the hole?**
 - “drinking” “getting into relationships” [self-medication]
- **How did your attempts help you?**
 - “they made me hurt even more” [not effective]
- **What would your next option or attempt be?**
 - “I am here . . .” [last resort]

Take a look at this source:

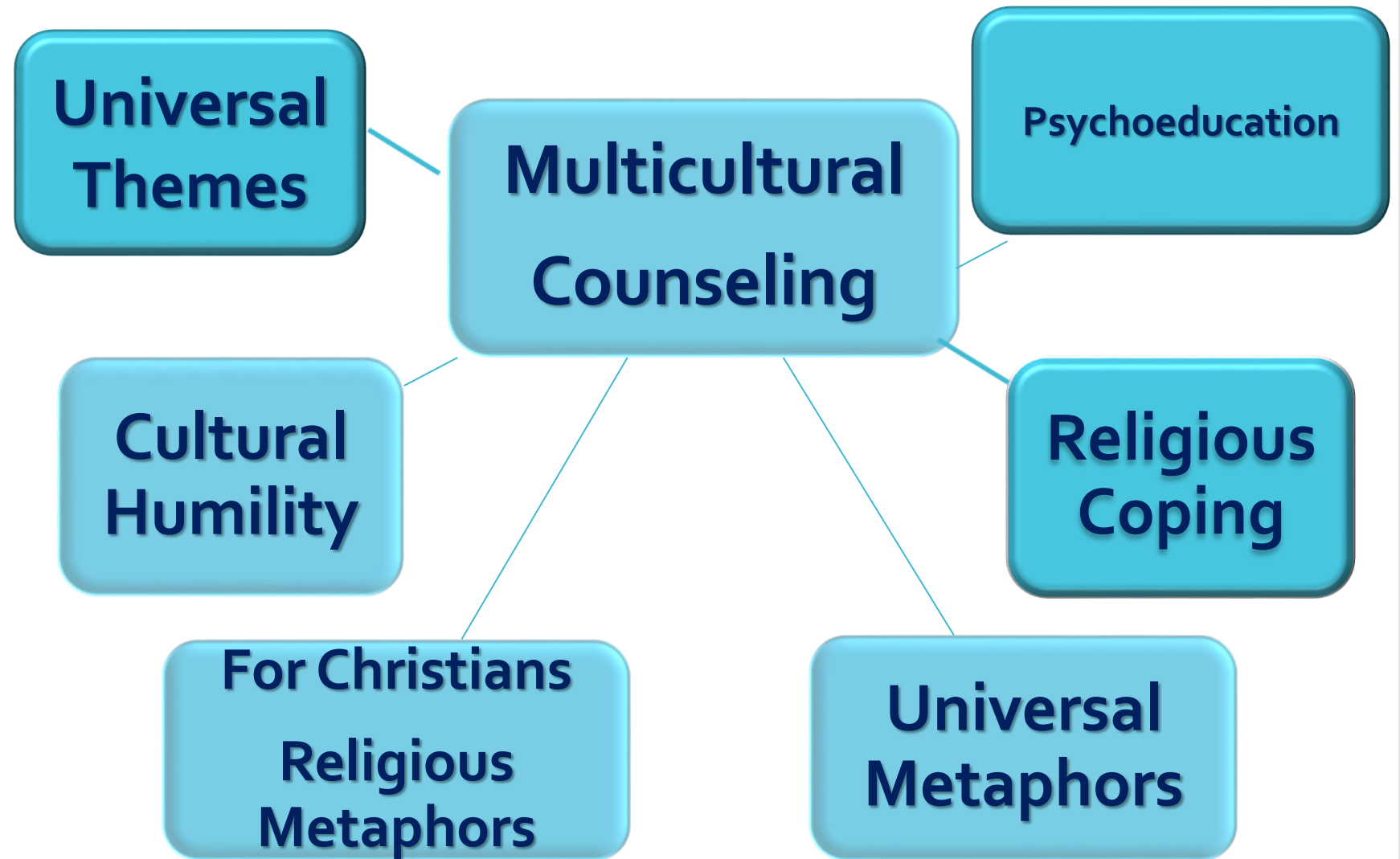
Pinter, P. Slowly Digging Out of Depression's Darkness: A metaphorical description of my personal inner battles. Retrieved from https://www.chabad.org/theJewishWoman/article_cdo/aid/3568752/jewish/Slowly-Digging-Out-of-Depressions-Darkness.htm

Potential Challenges in Using Metaphors

Multicultural Counseling



Potential
Strategies
When Using
Metaphors
**Multicultural
Counseling**



COUNTRY/CULTURE-BASED METAPHORS



UNIVERSAL METAPHORS

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

A FEW CHRISTIAN METAPHORS, SIMILES, ANALOGIES POPULAR IN AMERICAN CULTURE

Broken Heart

The Writing is
on the Wall

The blind
leading the blind

Scapegoat

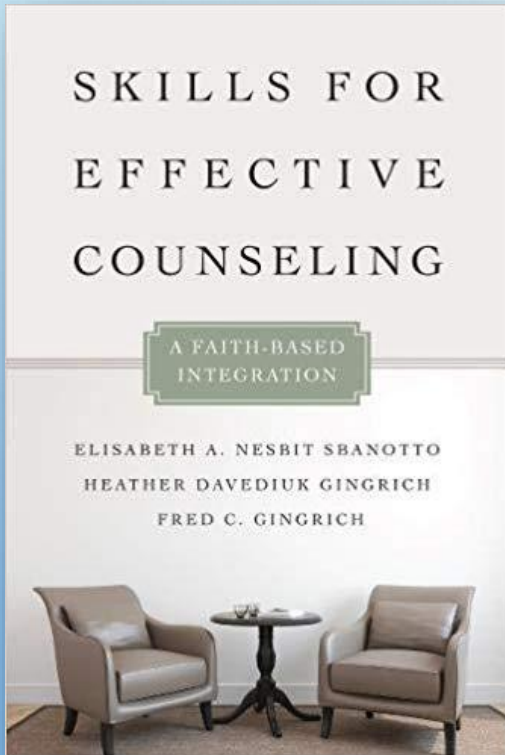
The Lord is
my Shepherd

AN EXAMPLE FOR USING METAPHORS WITH RELIGIOUS/CHRISTIAN CLIENTS

“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 RELIGIOUS/CHRISTIAN 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
- Explore how client's self-concept
- Help client replace negative self-concept with new identity

*Thank
you*



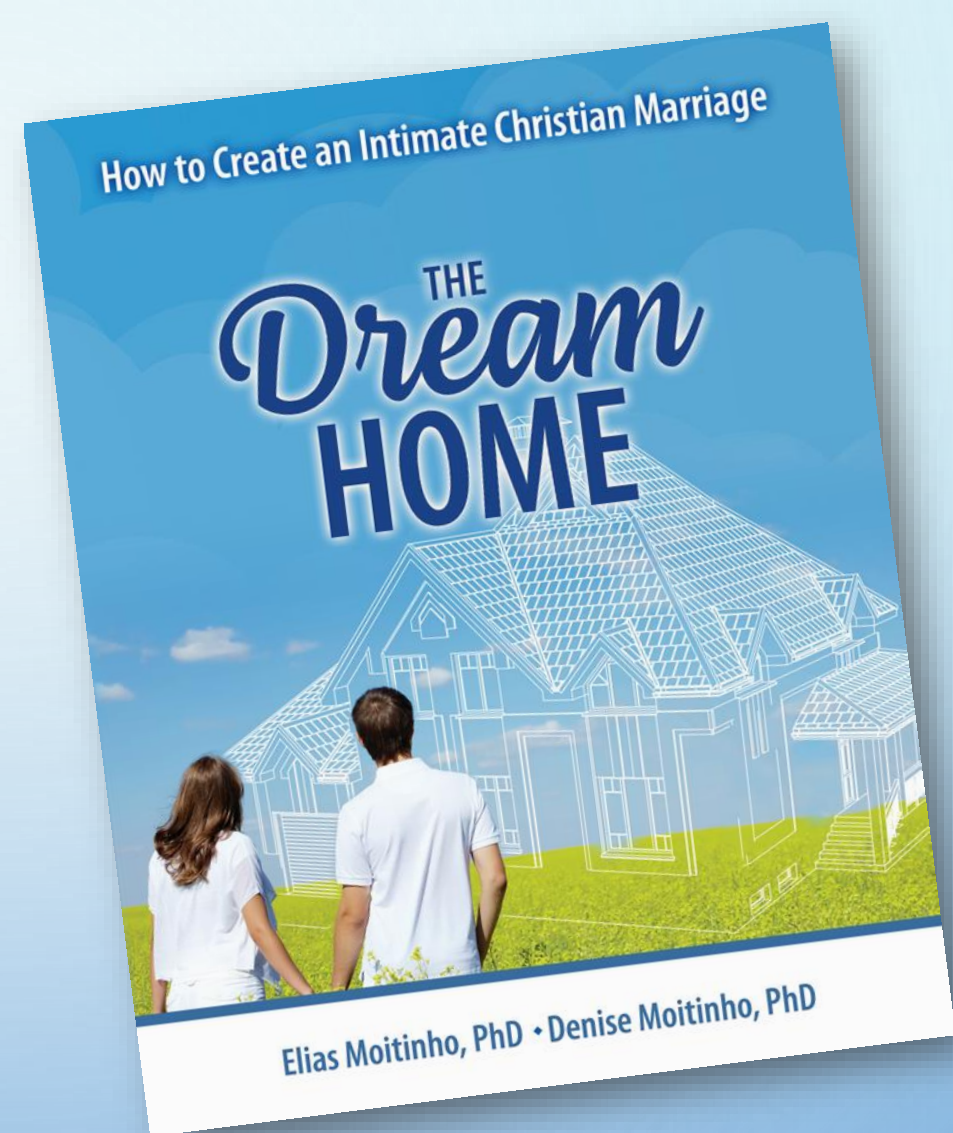
Q & A



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