

Spiritual Direction: Holy Active Listening

Spiritual direction is not so much what you do rather is more something you are. It is all about compassionate presence. Listening to understand and not just to respond. At its core is comprised of compassion, holy curiosity, and presence. A spiritual director listens, inquires, and holds the space for the seeker to encounter the Divine wisdom within.

Compassionate Hospitality: You Are Welcome Here, Yes, All of you.

A Blessing Called Sanctuary (by Jan Richardson)

You hardly knew
how hungry you were to be gathered in,
to receive the welcome
that invited you to enter entirely—
nothing of you found foreign or strange,
nothing of your life that you were asked
to leave behind or to carry in silence or in shame.
Tentative steps became settling in,
leaning into the blessing
that enfolded you, taking your place
in the circle that stunned you
with its unimagined grace.
You began to breathe again,
to move without fear, to speak with abandon
the words you carried in your bones,
that echoed in your being.
You learned to sing.
But the deal with this blessing is
that it will not leave you alone,
will not let you linger in safety, in stasis.
The time will come when this blessing
will ask you to leave,
not because it has tired of you
but because it desires for you to become
the sanctuary that you have found—
to speak your word into the world,
to tell what you have heard with your own ears,
seen with your own eyes, known in your own heart:
that you are beloved, precious child of God,
beautiful to behold,
and you are welcome and more than welcome here.

What is in your tool box?

Listen - Inquire - Hold Space

Attitude: Unconditional Positive Regard

“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.”

— **Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy**

“People are just as wonderful as sunsets if you let them be. When I look at a sunset, I don't find myself saying, “Soften the orange a bit on the right-hand corner.” I don't try to control a sunset. I watch with awe as it unfolds.”

— **Carl R. Rogers, A Way of Being**

Neurolinguistics: Matching and Mirroring:

Mirroring is the simultaneous ‘copying’ of the behavior of another person, as if reflecting their movements back to them. When done with respect and discretion, mirroring creates a positive feeling and responsiveness in you and others.

Matching has a built-in ‘time lag’. For example, if a directee uncrosses her legs and leans slightly forward while speaking, you should wait for a few seconds and then discretely adopt the same or similar posture.

Matching and Mirroring

- **External Communication cues:** Posture, Gestures, Mannerisms, Body language
- **Language and vocal patterns:** Tone, Inflection, Speech rate, Sensory language (Visual, Auditory, Feeling, Kinesthetic, Thinking)
- **Energy Level:** Energetic, calm, etc.

Motivational Interviewing: Central components of the Underlying Spirit of MI:

- Collaboration- The spiritual director functions as a partner or companion, collaborating with the client’s own expertise and experience.
- Acceptance- The spiritual director communicates....
 - *Absolute Worth- Prizing the inherent value and potential of every human being.*
 - *Accurate Empathy- The skill of perceiving and reflecting back another person’s meaning.*
 - *Affirmation- The spiritual director accentuates the positive, acknowledging a person’s strengths and efforts.*
 - *Autonomy Support- The spiritual director accepts and confirms the client’s irrevocable right to self-determination and choice.*
- Compassion- The spiritual director acts benevolently to promote the directee’s welfare, giving priority to the client’s needs.
- Evocation- The spiritual director elicits the client’s own perspectives, metaphors and ideas.

Three Fundamental Processes of MI:

Engaging- establishing a mutually trusting and respectful helping relationship.

Focusing- clarifying a particular direction or belief

Evoking- eliciting the person's own motivation, feelings, commitment and journey

OARS: 4 Strategies of motivational interviewing

Open-ended Questions

- Open questions gather broad descriptive information
- Facilitate dialogue
- Require more of a response than a simple yes or no
- Often start with words like “how” or “what” or “tell me about” or describe”
- Usually go from general to specific

Affirm- the spiritual director accentuates the positive, seeking and acknowledging a person's strengths and efforts.

- Must be done sincerely
- Supports and promotes self-efficacy
- Acknowledges the difficulties the client has experienced
- Validates the client's experience and feelings
- Emphasizes past experiences that demonstrate strength and success to prevent discouragement

Reflect - the skill of “active” listening whereby the spiritual director seeks to understand the client's subjective experience, offering *reflections* as guesses about the person's meaning.

- Reflective listening begins with a way of thinking
- It includes an interest in what the person has to say and a desire to truly understand how the person sees things
- It is essentially hypothesis testing, clarifying
- What you think a person means may not be what they mean
- Repeating – simplest
- Rephrasing – substitutes synonyms
- Paraphrasing – major restatement
- Reflection of feeling – deepest

Summarize- a reflection that draws together content from two or more prior client statements.

- Summaries reinforce what has been said, show that you have been listening carefully, and create linkages the client may not have seen on his/her own.
- Summaries can link together client's feelings with actions and events

Miller and Rollnick, Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change, Guilford Press 2002

Appreciative Inquiry: the act of exploration and discovery, asking questions; open to seeing new potentials and possibilities thru conversations that progressively focus on appreciating, envisioning, designing, sustaining.

“When used consistently, the appreciative approach becomes more than a development tool. It becomes a creative way of being in the world- a way of being that deliberately attends to what is life giving and learning how we can grow these life giving realities. It is about creating and growing what is truly important rather than narrowly focusing on solving the next problem.” (Voyle p.7)



“At the heart of the universe is a heart of love that embraces us and accepts us unconditionally. This heart of love is the source of our existence. This loving heart created us for a purpose and has given us every resource we need to fulfill that purpose.” (Voyle, p. 5)

- Appreciative Inquiry sees the gift of the other
- Appreciative Inquiry trusts one's intuitions and inner wisdom- but test it out
- Appreciative Inquiry listens to the hearts unfolding and honors the struggle
- Appreciative Inquiry hears the hearts struggles in the words spoken
- Appreciative Inquiry honors the defended heart and appraises it
- Appreciative Inquiry affirms the inherent wisdom of the other

Sample Appreciative Inquiry Questions:

Tell me about a time when you discovered an inner source of strength and used it to get through a difficult time? Describe the quality in detail. How did it make itself known to you? What did it enable you to do? What did you learn about yourself?

Describe a time when you felt a presence in your life that quietly and gently assured you that you were not alone and provided you with the support, encouragement, understanding and love you needed during a challenging time. How did you feel the presence? What did it feel like? What need did it fill at the time?

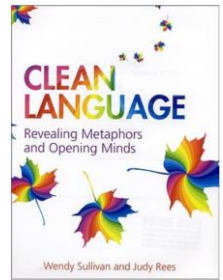
When did you experience spiritual growth born of adversity? What was the event? What did it challenge you to do? How did it change how you see yourself? How did you experience a sense of inner guidance? Tell me about any dreams or synchronicities.

References: Hammond, Sue Annis. The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry (Third Edition). Bend,: OR: Book Publishing, 2013 Voyle, Robert and Kim. Core Elements of the Appreciative Way: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry for Work and Daily Living. Hillsboro, OR: Clergy Leadership Institute, 2006. <https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/learn/appreciative-inquiry-introduction/>

Clean Language, Revealing Metaphors and Opening Minds

by Wendy Sullivan and Judy Rees, Crown House Publishing 2008

“Being “Clean” is the practice of keeping your advice, opinions and assumptions to yourself, and listening deeply, observing with your full attention on the other person’s words and non-verbal signals. The intent is to assist the person in discovering their own hidden wisdom, the hidden meaning in the metaphors they choose to describe a situation.” (Sullivan and Jones pg.8) *Clean Questions: (And) What kind of ____ is that ____? (And) Is there anything else about ____? (And) Where is ____?*



Example:

Directee: I want to feel trusting.

Directee: Strong but flexible

Directee: It’s what I want more of all the time.

Directee: In my chest.

Directee: In the center.

Directee: I’m beginning to feel it right now...

Director: What kind of trusting?

Director: And is there anything else about the “strong but flexible” of that trusting?

Director: And when you feel strong but flexible trusting, where do you feel it?

Director: Whereabouts in your chest?

Director: Is there anything else about the strong but flexible trusting in the center of your chest?

Adapted from (Sullivan and Jones pg.16)

Metaphor is at the heart of the Clean way of thinking. That’s part of what gives Clean its ability to facilitate long-lasting understanding between people. Metaphors provide an important road into the deeper, more profound levels of a person’s psyche. (Sullivan and Jones pg.19)

Narrative Therapy

Change your story...change your life.

“The problem is the problem, the person is not the problem.” – Michael White and David Epston

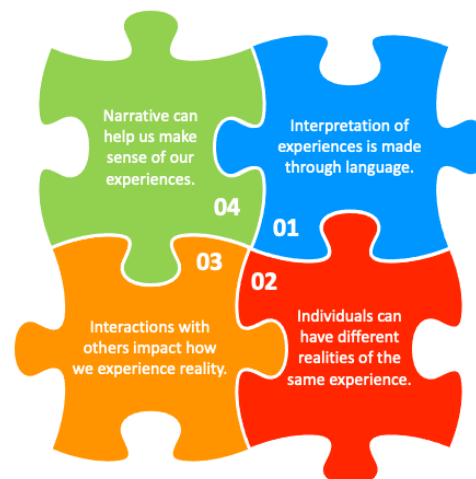
One of the most basic therapeutic principles in narrative therapy is that we find meaning and healing through telling stories. Helping your client develop their story gives them an opportunity to discover meaning, find healing, and establish or re-establish an identity, all integral factors for success in therapy.

This technique is also known as “re-authoring” or “re-storying,” as clients explore their own experiences to find alterations to their story or make a whole new one. The same events can tell a hundred different stories, since we all interpret experiences differently and find different senses of meaning (Dulwich Centre).” Source:

<https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/narrative-therapy/#what>

NARRATIVE THERAPY

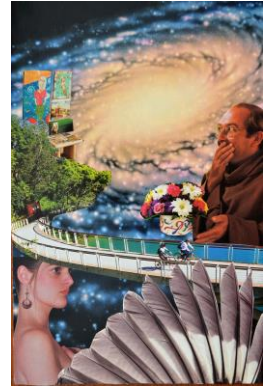
Key Principles of Narrative Therapy



Using Image

Have a variety of images available for directees to choose from. These might include:

- Landscape images that can help map where a person is in their current journey.
- A collection of collages to allow the directee to select the one which has the most energy for them at a given moment then open conversation about the images contained on the card and what they evoke, or series of collages to represent an unfolding timeline of their journey. Three cards might be past, present and what yet to be revealed.
- Use a card or image and have the person tell a story about the card or image. Work the story as you would a dream. If this were my card....
- Choose a collage or other image that seems in some mysterious way related to a dream or life situation and let the images speak.
- Choose a collage or image and do a form of the “6 magic questions” to see what arises.
- Use the created collages in a form of Visio Divina. Engage the image in a similar way to Lectio Divina.



Focusing

- Focusing, a form of "felt-sensing," is a practice of allowing our bodies to guide us to deeper self-knowledge and healing.
- <https://focusing.org/felt-sense/what-focusing>
- <https://focusing.org/sixsteps>
- 1. **Clearing A Space:** Take a moment just to relax . . . All right—now, inside you, I would like you to pay attention inwardly, in your body, perhaps in your stomach or chest. Now see what comes there when you ask, "How is my life going? What is the main thing for me right now?" Sense within your body. Let the answers come slowly from this sensing. When some concern comes, DO NOT GO INSIDE IT. Stand back, say "Yes, that's there. I can feel that, there." Let there be a little space between you and that. Then ask what else you feel. Wait again, and sense. Usually there are several things.
- 2. **Felt Sense:** From among what came, select one personal problem to focus on. DO NOT GO INSIDE IT. Stand back from it. Of course, there are many parts to that one thing you are thinking about—too many to think of each one alone. But you can feel all of these things together. Pay attention there where you usually feel things, and in there you can get a sense of what all of the problem feels like. Let yourself feel the unclear sense of all of that.
- 3. **Handle:** What is the quality of this unclear felt sense? Let a word, a phrase, or an image come up from the felt sense itself. It might be a quality-word, like tight, sticky, scary, stuck, heavy, jumpy or a phrase, or an image. Stay with the quality of the felt sense till something fits it just right.

4. **Resonating** Go back and forth between the felt sense and the word (phrase, or image). Check how they resonate with each other. See if there is a little bodily signal that lets you know there is a fit. To do it, you have to have the felt sense there again, as well as the word. Let the felt sense change, if it does, and also the word or picture, until they feel just right in capturing the quality of the felt sense.
5. **Asking:** Now ask: what is it, about this whole problem, that makes this quality (which you have just named or pictured)? Make sure the quality is sensed again, freshly, vividly (not just remembered from before). When it is here again, tap it, touch it, be with it, asking, "What makes the whole problem so ?" Or you ask, "What is in this sense?" If you get a quick answer without a shift in the felt sense, just let that kind of answer go by. Return your attention to your body and freshly find the felt sense again. Then ask it again. Be with the felt sense till something comes along with a shift, a slight "give" or release.
6. **Receiving** Receive whatever comes with a shift in a friendly way. Stay with it a while, even if it is only a slight release. Whatever comes, this is only one shift; there will be others. You will probably continue after a little while, but stay here for a few moments.

IF DURING THESE INSTRUCTIONS SOMEWHERE YOU HAVE SPENT A LITTLE WHILE SENSING AND TOUCHING AN UNCLEAR HOLISTIC BODY SENSE OF THIS PROBLEM, THEN YOU HAVE FOCUSED. It doesn't matter whether the body-shift came or not. It comes on its own. We don't control that.

Silence: When in doubt go into silence. If you can't improve upon silence, then don't.



Holy Listening Practice Session

Divide into dyads.

There will be two sessions in this practice so each person has the opportunity to be the speaker and the listener.

Each session will last for 9 minutes and then you will switch places.

Speaker:

Choose one of the following to reflect upon during your time of speaking.

- What gives you joy?
- How do you nurture your spirit?
- Reflect on a time when your experience of the Holy was absent.
- Tell about a time that created a deeper yearning to experience the presence of the Holy.
- Share something that is heavy on your heart.

Close your eyes for a few moments to contemplate the prompt. Notice your immediate response to the prompt. Go deeper. Trust your intuition. Allow your inner voice to come through. Then begin speaking.

Listener: Hold the speaker with compassion and holy curiosity being as fully present as possible.

This is a time of dialogue, a flow of meaning thought words so new understandings can emerge. It is not a time of discussion, which is an analysis in search of an answer.

- Prepare yourself to listen. Be aware of the sacredness of the speaker.
- When listening, suspend assumptions.
- Listen with your heart.
- Listen for understanding, not agreement or belief.
- Attend to your own inner life, noting your own thoughts, feelings, sensations, and desires as they arise. Discern what your inner life might contribute. Does it relate to the presenter? Will it assist the presenter in deepening their own reflection? If not, remain silent.
- Ask clarifying questions or respond, helping enlarge his/her experience in a way other than asking a question.
 - Noticing: This is what I notice....
 This is what I hear...
 I am struck by....
 - Experiencing: As you speak about.....I feel.....
 When I hear you say.... I get an image of....

When time express gratitude to each other and then switch roles.