

## **A metaphor says more than thousand words.**

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Metaphors are expressions with a metaphorical, figurative meaning. They are based on a comparison. Metaphors are active and activating, often illustrative. They invite us to discussion and are therefore interactive. They stimulate someone to think in other perspectives and they result quit often in extra perspectives. They fulfill the role of an eye opener. Using metaphors in therapy will reignite the spirit that can enhance everyone's commitment to help people help themselves. Therefore they may be used as powerful tools in the treatment of persons who stutter and everyone who care about them.

You will learn:

That metaphors are a powerful, motivating and no threatening means to help clients gain insights, discuss problems and consider possible solutions.

That they play an important and potent role in therapy, helping people develop the skills to cope with there problem.

That they are designed for a specific goal, age and phase in therapy.

### **Definition**

Metaphor (from the Greek: *μεταφορά* - *metaphora*, "a transfer", in rhetoric "transference of a word to a new sense", from *μεταφέρω* - *metaphero*, "to carry over, to transfer") is language that directly compares seemingly unrelated subjects. Metaphors are defined as comparisons without the use of the words "like" or "as", (From Wikipedia).

It is an implied comparison between two *different* things that share at least one attribute in common. It is an association between two unlike things A vs. B achieved by borrowing the language that refers to thing A and applying it to thing B.

In general and simple terms, a metaphor is something that stands for something else.

A therapeutic metaphor is a type of conceptual metaphor mostly presented as a story to an entire aspect of a situation, related by a therapist to a patient/client. The purpose is to highlight, to generate, in an effective way, aspects and insights that otherwise your client might not be able to perceive as clearly in this current situation, or to suggest new outlooks. Metaphors generally have some point the therapist wants to make, or have some parallel with the client's situation.

### **Structure**

A metaphor always contains at least two parts:

- the thing stated
- the thing compared to

and communicates on at least two levels:

- the surface meaning  
(the story if you want to)
- the deep structure meaning, in other words: the symbolic meaning.

### **Function**

In therapy a metaphor serves many crucial functions. A therapist may use metaphor to:

- invite the client to view the world in on other perspective
- to generate new insights.

He may use it

- to guide thinking and behaviour
- to stimulate active participation
- to bypass self defeating beliefs

## **Metaphor delivery**

Metaphors can be presented in form of anecdotes, stories or visualizations. From the client's point of view a metaphor can be either indirect or direct.

In an indirect metaphor the client simply hears a story unfold and listens as the metaphor develops. He may mentally walk through the situation described in the metaphor or listen as something happens.

In a direct metaphor the client is the main protagonist and takes an active role in dealing with the metaphor environment.

## **Metaphor types**

Metaphors can be classified into broad categories. Some metaphors are very general, others are much more focused and specific.

- **Control metaphors**

are based on the idea of 'control' of a situation, a (mechanical) process, ... linked to the client's problem. The client is encouraged to change the level of control in the situation, the process and thus the level of control of his problem.

- **Reframe metaphors**

are stories, which parallels the client's experience in some way. The client identifies with the events in the metaphor but transfers the meaning from the metaphor and applies it to his / her own experience. In this way the meaning of the experience is changed. By reframing the meaning the client is open for change .

- **Revelation metaphors**

These are metaphors in which the client is taken to a places to discover the answer to the problems. The idea is that the person already knows the solution to this/her problem and just needs permission to allow it to come out. Some revelation metaphors are like cognitive modelling. The client is helped to reveal his / her problem as an image, and then given the tools to change that image.

- **Idyll metaphors**

These metaphors are designed to help the client to relax, to relieve stress or to escape from chronic anxiety, most of the time by means of guided visualizations.

- **Fantasy metaphors**

Most metaphors involve some element of imagination and fantasy but some are entirely fantasy.

- **Anthropomorphic metaphors**

The therapist tells a story which appears to have nothing to do with the client or the problem. The stories are often based on anthropomorphised animals and told in a very simplistic almost childish manner. The tales usually have some distress done to the young animal; the animal tries to overcome the problem and is on the verge of giving up when some wiser animal suggests the solution. The idea is that the client will draw parallels with the issues in the story and will adopt the suggested solution. These metaphors are designed to teach indirectly and thus sidestep any client resistance.

- **Introspection metaphors**

Those metaphors have no message, no obvious point, or no ending, or perhaps several possible endings. The client is left to mull over the elements of the metaphor and to decide for him selves, which elements relate to his problem, or to construct a story that connects the elements, or to create an ending by him self.

## Examples

### The farm

It is a reframe type of metaphor, delivered in a direct way.

That means that the client is the main protagonist and that he/she takes an active role in dealing with the metaphor.

Step1: The client's situation

- You live at the country.
- You and your family like milk and you all have the custom to drink a glass every day
- Your neighbour across the street is a farmer.
- He sells milk. So you buy the milk at the farm.

Step 2: Conditions the client can't change.

- Every day, life long, you have to buy milk at that farm.
- Every night there is full moon and no clouds.
- Every day and night there is a man at the path to the farm.
- One intention: to beat you up badly.
- The man is bigger and stronger than you are.

Step 3: Ask if the client has a problem here?

Step 4: Client's task: solve this problem. Find as many solutions as possible.

Step 5: Discuss the solutions with focus on  
temporary / permanent  
realistic / not realistic.

Step 6: End up with the insight that most if not all the given solutions are temporary, not permanent and that in this story struggling, postponement and avoidance are not going to solve the problem.

Discuss an end to the sentence: "This problem is solved when the solution is ..."

A problem is solved when the solution is realistic and permanent.

A permanent solution in this metaphor: Become as skilled or more skilled than the man, so the guy can't dominate you anymore!

Step 7: Find an answer to the question: "How to become more skilled?"

The answer:

- Go for power training, defence techniques and mental coaching.
- Confront yourself with the man over and over again; even you know he beats you up.
- Try to find out about his techniques and how strong he is.
- Go to the centre, on a regular basis - as much as possible, and tell your coach about it.
- He needs the information to optimize the mental training, the training in defence techniques and the power training.
- You will make progress and in time you will become more self-confident and skilled.
- It will become more difficult for the man to beat you up.
- After time you will become as good as the man or even better.
- Over time you will become more skilled than the man
- In that case: you have a permanent and realistic solution.

Step 7 Home task: What is the relation whit stuttering?

Step 8 The relation: The man = moment of stuttering, the farm = speech situations, the training = therapy, the coach = therapist.

What is the message? Avoidance, postponement or struggle are not permanent solutions. Training and non avoidance are. I have to act. I have support of my therapist (my coach). I need him/her and he/she needs me.

From the ages of 11 year children have the capacities to be the protagonist and to take an active role in dealing with the situation in this metaphor. They have the capacities to discuss the solutions. They have the capacities to learn about reactive stuttering behaviour like struggle, postponement and avoidance.

Phase in therapy? After the identification of overt and covert stuttering behaviour.

### The small runners.

Other example given in the lecture: The small runners.

It is a combination of a control type and reframe type of metaphor.

This metaphor is based on the idea of 'control' of a situation, a (mechanical) process, ... linked to the client's problem. The client is encouraged to change the level of control in the situation, the process and thus the level of control of the client's problem.

### The story

In our head lives a friendly, very small king. He is the king of many little runners.

So many that no body is able to count them. They all live in our head.

Every small runner has a specific task and responsibility.

They are responsible for the fact that we can do many things with our body.

Every one of us has small runners for all the muscles we have in our body. The muscles of our legs, feet, arms, fingers, head, mouth, tongue, lips, voice, ...

When we want to run, the friendly king demands all the small 'leg runners' to run to the muscles of the legs. As soon as they arrive they demand the muscles to act, to move. As a result you start running.

When I speak I move several parts of my body. So do you.

Do you know the parts? (Most of the time the child gives a proper answer. If not you help the child to identify lips, tongue, jaws).

When I want to speak, the friendly king in my head demands the small 'lip runners', 'tongue runners', 'jaw runners' and 'voice runners' to start running to the muscles.

That is not an easy job for the runners because there are so many of them and they all have to arrive at the muscle just in time. Not too early but also not too late.

Most of the time they do a very good job. But not always. Sometimes they are a bit too slow, sometimes they run too fast, sometimes they fall on their way to the muscles, or they have an accident because they are so many small runners running at the same time

What happens when you want to say the word 'HI' and the 'jaw runners' run too fast and arrive before the 'voice runners' arrive at the voice muscles?(You give a demonstration/let the child give a demonstration)

If you want to say a word like lemonade?

What happens if the 'tongue runners', who have to demand your tongue to go to the bottom of your mouth so the /e/ can come out,

are running too slow or when they fall on their way to the muscles of the tongue.

(You give a demonstration / let the child give a demonstration)

What is the relation with stuttering?

A simplified explanation of the aetiology of stuttering. An simplified answer to the question: How comes I stutter? (Reframe metaphor)

What is the message?

It may happen that some of the runners are too fast, too slow or that they stumble on their way to the muscles. Don't make a big deal out of it.

Be friendly to all the small runners. Give them the time to run from your head to the muscles of your tongue, lips, jaws, ... when you want to say something. Take your time. Resist pressure. (Control metaphor)

From the ages of 6-7 years children have the capacities to hear a story unfold and to listen as the metaphor develops. The child may mentally walk through the situation described in the metaphor or listen as something happens. They have the capacities to understand the message of this metaphor.

Phase in therapy?

Most of the time in the first months of therapy.

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