

ERICKSONIAN PRINCIPLES IN CLINICAL INTERVIEWING

Frank D. Young Ph.D., R. Psych.

1. GENERAL FEATURES OF THE ERICKSONIAN APPROACH

- positive set and expectancy
- acceptance, respect, and utilization
- motivation and engagement
- collaboration and discovery through experimentation
- solution-focused, now and future orientation
- active and interventive
- play, humor, metaphor, suspense of realities
- Co-constructivist epistemology.

2. ELICITATION AND OBSERVATION OF PATTERNS

- problem definition and context
- sequences of behavior
- sequences of attribution, meaning, "causality"
- families' creation of "realities" with rules, inductions, binds, levels of application of rules
- contextual constraints, the discovery of exceptions, soft testing for rigidities

- symptoms as metaphorical or indirect communication.

3. UTILIZATION TO JOIN FAMILY PATTERNS

- therapist adapts words, style, and gestures of client that are compatible with own style
- self-training to expand flexibility of metaphors, e.g., NLP translating a phrase into the client's representational system: "Say the same thing to a musician."
- metaphors not explained or interpreted
- utilizing client language, interests and motivations, beliefs and frame of reference, behavior, symptoms
- resistance as a form of relationship, finding the key to the pattern, then turning it.

4. MOTIVATIONAL PREPARATION

- - creating an atmosphere in which change can occur, setting the frame
- using the yes set, presupposition, illusion of alternatives, future projection with commitment to testify to future clients as to how they got better
- restraints, tasks to assess readiness and commitment.
- shaggy dog story or lengthy or difficult alternatives to create set of triggering relief
- utilizing resistance, the no set, developmental reframes and therapeutic challenges, contingency contracting, encouraging a response by frustrating it or prescribing it with positive connotation, e.g. silent member, absent member.

5. PATTERN DISRUPTION - BEHAVIORAL

- "If it's invariant, vary it."

- indirect communication increases interest, lowers disqualification, decreases performance anxiety, uses attribution (my friend John, The Reflecting Team, etc.)
- change features of the problem pattern (frequency, duration, intensity, sequence repunctuation or reversal, segmentation, addition and deletion of elements)
- change the problem context (time, location, in whose presence, meaning context, social pattern rearrangements, reinforcement contingencies)
- preventing behavior through management by exception, spreading of contextual markers.

6. DISSOCIATION AND SPLITTING - COGNITIVE

- surprise, novelty, disruption of sets, confusion
- use of space and position (chairs, structural groupings)
- therapist - consultant splits, reflecting team splits
- unconscious - conscious dissociation
- amnesia and control of information
- use of "as if" frame: "I wonder what this family would be like if the problem got worse/better?" subjunctive mood, talking about talking about, speculating on other pattern breaks.
- use of verbs versus nouns, collapsing and expanding time and space, general and specific.
- ambiguity: phonological: puns "disarming" syntactic "Hypnotizing hypnotists can be tricky." scope or punctuation: "I see you are wearing a watch very carefully that arm and hand"
- embedding of lesser included structures - phrases, clauses, questions, quotes.

7. MODELLING AND LEARNING NEW PATTERNS - BEHAVIORAL

- begin adjusting the corners of the frame, seed ideas round the foundation, interspersal, analogical marking
- changes are not random, but planned and graduated, therapy in stages.
- start small, then amplify the change "hole in the dam" "rigid man"
- emphasis on positive abilities, variations, learnings, options, a wide range of possibilities.
- working metaphorically. Change a peripheral problem isomorphic to central but defended issue.
- therapist indestructability, patience, persistence, and thoroughness as a model for communication and change e.g. "digestive interviewing" "leaving home" cases.
- transderivational search through vague referents induces client to search his own resources to derive meaning in therapy, use of mystical rituals to activate resource symbols and metaphors
- use of nouns as abiliites, nominalizations.

8. LINKING - COGNITIVE REFRAMING

- transplanting learnings from the greenhouse to the garden.
- creation of realities through contiguity, attributions (e.g. "romantic" man) label switching, implied causatives
- reattribution of meanings, motivations, necessity, loyalties, alignments, generally positive intent
- preparation through the use of metaphor anecdotes, etc.
- continuation of previous patterns of ambiguity, embedding, connecting, the apposition of opposites, use of polarities.

9. CLOSURE WITH CONSOLIDATION

- at first change, perhaps using dissociation, emergence from embedding with less possibility of client disqualification of change, use of distraction and confusion
- thanks and respect for sharing and experiencing options.
- ratification plus potential generalization
- interim use of challenge, optimistic skepticism
- relapse integrated as cue for further change and development
- allowing a remnant or symbol to ensure individuality and closure (e.g. tension under one toenail, Ritterman's client's symbolic gifts).
- staging of gradual, cue-activated change to prevent Ninevah Reaction (grief and shock at sudden positive change).
- anchoring, self-cuing and occasional self hypnosis to reinforce therapeutic learning consolidation.
- willingness to terminate so that client can continue developing on his own.
- goal is the coordination between conscious and unconscious functioning.