

# A METAPHOR YOU: CUSTOMIZING STORIES AND ICONIC IMAGES FOR YOUR CLIENTS

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Metaphors will be discussed in terms of where and when to use them. Several formats will be presented with demonstrations and opportunity for skill training in small practice groups.

## 1. Conceptual Basis of Metaphors in Therapy:

Therapeutic issues or problems, even when pervasive, are often embedded in contexts so thoroughly that solutions are seemingly unavailable. By using metaphors and stories, the listener is led into a context of dissociation in which parallel processes may be considered and creative solutions may emerge. The key is having dissociation with optimal emerging similarity and coping modelling so that the client is encouraged to make the intuitive leap to resolution. The story or metaphor can also contain interspersal messages or images that are *analogically marked* for unconscious embedding.

## 2. Demonstrations of Therapeutic Metaphors.

Participants generate quick examples of stories to show that life cannot be controlled, but it can be managed, that detachment to outcome with love of process can be a helpful orientation, motivation through obstacles, managing difficult transitions, the wisdom of surrender, etc. If time permits, several videotape examples can be presented.

## 3. Exercise (groups of 3):

The client presents a summary of a stumbling point that seems to prevent growth or solutions from emerging in a problem context. The therapist can begin with a few empathic statements, and then say something like, "That reminds me of a story..." leading in to a metaphor that can be somewhat isomorphic with their situation.

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