

THE MIND OF THE THERAPIST

A 4 hour workshop

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Abstract

Many influences, conscious and unconscious, guide our choices, in terms of what and how to respond, both consciously and unconsciously, to our clients' stories, and their patterns of behavior. The Mind of the Therapist is a model to help us understand our decisions in our co-creation of effective therapy.

The workshop helps us to explore what really guides us as we intervene. For example, one major determinant is our organizational context of work, what our mandate is, what our client population is. This factor can be both enabling and constraining. Also, a primary factor is our main models of treatment and how they are blended in our particular style of therapy. Another key factor is the self of the therapist, our personal history and learning style, especially the scope of what we consider relevant in a therapeutic environment. This workshop will also generate exercises intended to increase creativity and humor in the design and delivery of interventions.

Please bring a case vignette to illustrate how you prefer to do therapy with one of your favorite interventions. This workshop is designed to be informative and fun. See you there!

OUTLINE: 10:30 – 12:00

Overview: What is Mind?

The Mind of the Therapist: mission, goals, objectives, focus, methods.

Your motivation and mission as a therapist. Why do you do it? What do you get out of it?

Your model as a therapist.. How do you organize what you think about and what you attend to in therapy?

What are the prime ingredients in your therapeutic blend?

What are the unconscious trends that affect your countertransference, and how do you deal with them?

A model of intervention values: Effective, Efficient, and Elegant

Effective: nodal points in the system

Efficient: sequential parsimony

Elegant: a difference similar enough to be ecological but different enough to inspire wonder about positive possibilities, curiosity, humor, creativity, and enabling framework

1:30 – 3:30 Models in Motion

How does your model function on the firing line?

2 ambiguous case vignettes and your response to them: what interventions, targeted to what points in the system, in what form, in what sequence, toward what objectives?

What have we learned, about each other, and ourselves? What has opened up for us as patterns of possibility and growth, and curiosity and future development?

What are the new questions I will be taking back to my practice to make it more fun for me and my clients?

How can I rejuvenate my sense of personal co-constructivist creator in my world?

QUESTIONS FOR EXAMINING THE MIND OF THE THERAPIST

CONTEXT

The Mind of the therapist is defined as the decision model that guides our every utterance as a therapist, our small interventions in what we attend to and how in the course of therapy we select our responses to guide the process of therapy. This can include both conscious and unconscious influences on our process.

As family therapists we are inclined to believe that context is a major determinant of behavior. I am inclined to think that it is an interactive process of reciprocal shaping, like a soft-sided luggage piece both compresses its contents, and in turn is reshaped by bulges from the contents within.

Nevertheless, we ought to begin with an understanding of how our current context both constrains and enables our creativity and fulfillment as a therapist.

What is your current living context, relationships, family, life cycle stage, that enables and constrains you, and how? Likewise, for your professional working context? The population you work with? Specific clients within your population? What are your favorite clients, ones that light up your day? What are the downer clients, the ones you dread? Why?

YOUR MISSION

Beyond context is the first of the inner factors that shape your life as a person, and as a clinician.

This is your mission.

Steven Covey's notion of the flow from Mission Statement to values to goals to objectives to methods to energy and time management commitments.

What is your personal mission statement? How is this reflected or modeled in the therapy that you do?

CORE VALUES. By what 3 core values will your life be known? How are these values reflected or modeled in your clinical work? What factors enable or constrain the expression of these values?

GOALS. What are your personal goals? How are these reflected in your clinical work? What would you be doing in life if you weren't a psychotherapist? What holds you back? What critical event would have to happen to enable you to start towards these goals?

METHODS AND MODELS. What is your primary therapeutic model, the one you rely upon, especially at crucial stuck points? How does this model help you to offer triple E therapy: Effective, Efficient, and Elegant?

OBJECTIVES AND PLANS How could you plan to assign time and energy to develop your skills in this or related models to actualize your goals? From where could you create this time and energy? Can it fit the overall model of your time-energy ecology to make this investment? What might you have to let go of to free up this energy and proper attention to these goals?

FLOW IN THE PROCESS OF LIVING AND WORKING CREATIVELY

Erickson's idea of how to plow a field: Create a design, then develop it. Concepts of Flow, to ensure every thing you do is emerging from a field of creativity and passion.

CONCEPTS OF FLOW

- Task can be completed, chunked small enough.
- Containment, absence of interruptions.
- Clear goals.
- Immediate feedback to ensure the observed is indicating genuine movement rather than mere fluctuation.
- Sufficient attraction to the task that you are removed from the tedium of everyday life.
- A sense of self-control in the face of challenging circumstances and tasks.
- As the ego dissolves, the sense of transpersonal Self and unity with others expands.
- A profound sense of time distortion as you become totally absorbed in the moment.

How would you try to change the way in which you do work and therapy to integrate the concepts of Flow into your life and that of your clients?

Given these factors, both known and unconscious, what guides your behavior at every point in the therapy process? Let's see what happens where the rubber meets the road, in some case vignettes where there is minimal information. Your response does not have to be perfect, brilliant, or anything like that. It merely needs to reflect who you are in a way that could match both where the client system is and where it has potential to be.

CASE EXAMPLES FOLLOW

Small subgroups discuss their approaches to each of 2 case vignettes with a narrative line or client statement, to which the therapist offers a response and its rationale or designed purpose. Sharing in this manner helps to flesh out the lines of approach discussed and exchanged earlier in the seminar, giving living examples to the other members of the group as to how we work and think from The Mind of the Therapist.

DISCUSSION, QUESTIONS, AND SUMMARY.