

The ball (part 1) and the mud (part 2)

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Purpose

On their way to reach their goals, sometimes people can have a tendency to generalize that their whole life is going wrong and is awful and terrible. It is a very common predicament but, for most of us, these thoughts only last for a few moments or hours. This strategy is useful to go through doubts and fears.

Description

This is a very simple strategy that will help your client get over a moment of crisis or doubt. You will help him/her to realize that the moment is going to pass and that he/she is going to be better very soon because they are capable of resolving the problem themselves. The strategy starts as a metaphor and uses space to put distance between the situation and the person. You will just need a sheet of paper and a pen.

As in many processes, a big goal will often bring doubt and fear at times. The purpose of this strategy is to help people get over a crisis, quickly and easily.

Process

The ball (part 1)

You will know to use this strategy when you hear your client making generalizations or saying, for example, 'It's always

the same, everything's going wrong, it is not going to work'. Take a paper and a pen. Ask the person to tell you about which part of his/her life is going wrong. For example:

- What about work?
- Do you have a problem at work?
- Yes? Tell me how big the problem is.

When you have the answer, draw a dot on a piece of paper and ask your client whether the dot is big enough (considering that the entire page is the client's whole life). Ask your client to validate the size of the dot you draw on the piece of paper each time they describe a problem. Keep going for as long as you feel your client has more to say. By the end of this part of the exercise, you will generally have as many dots on the page as your client has problems. Now screw the piece of paper up into a ball. Tell your client that this action is a metaphor for his/her state of mind at the moment. Tell your client, that despite the problems, there are in fact plenty of things that are okay in their life. Unfold the paper, flatten it out and show them that in fact a vast majority of his/her life is going well and that it is not all bad. Ask them to acknowledge this fact and then ask them which problem they want to start working on first.

The mud (part 2)

Ask your client to tell you about a problem they want to work on. Ask them to describe very precisely what they are feeling about the problem and to imagine that there is a small pool of mud surrounding their chair that represents the problem. When your client has clearly expressed what the problem is, ask him/her to get out of the chair and step out of the mud that is surrounding their chair. Tell them to be an observer of this person having this problem (meta-position). Help your client to literally get out of him/herself and to look at him/herself. It can take some time to achieve if he/she has never done it before. Ask your client, as an observer, to tell you what he/she sees, what he/she can do to help, what advice he/she can give to this person having this problem. When you are happy with the advice he/she has for him/herself, ask

your client to sit back in the chair and hear the advice. Can he/she hear it? How does he/she feel? Can they see that the mud has dried up or has drained away? Repeat the process as many times as necessary until you get a satisfactory progress in terms of feeling. This strategy can be used separately as 'The ball' (part 1) or 'The mud' (part 2) or together, for maximum results to help a client in a state of doubt.

Pitfalls

None.