



When a client gets stuck

Being stuck is part of the creative process

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Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to generate options using a creative process.

Description

The impulse to create is one of our most basic impulses. In creativity there is a process and an end product. The process demands courage, will, originality and perseverance. By writing an essay, or completing a project, people are engaging in a creative process that will have an end product, which will be publicly graded. Not surprisingly, students often get overwhelmed by this process. By having too much, or too little information, they run out of time, cannot see the wood for the trees, cannot face the blank page, or cannot think clearly: they are temporarily stuck. This activity recognizes that being stuck is part of the creative process. Materials required are flip chart paper, blue tack, felt tips and gentle music.

Process

As Gordon (1975), suggests, being stuck is a stage of incubation and vital to the process of creativity. In my experience, the creative mind is more likely to be released and solutions found if we allow ourselves to play, by getting on the floor and drawing with colour on large sheets of

paper. Visual learners enjoy working in this way, as do many other learners who feel blocked. It is also fun, and learning happens more readily when people enjoy themselves. Non-intrusive music supports this process. The exercise also recommends some familiarity with neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) techniques as discussed by O'Connor and Lages (2002).

I have identified three steps for this strategy:

1 Visualizing both being stuck and being unstuck

If your client is finding the process of writing an essay or completing a project difficult, ask them to divide the flip chart paper vertically into two. On one half they should draw an image of how they are now; on the other, how they imagine they will be when the work is completed, when the problem is solved. In NLP this is called the 'desired state'. They should spend some time considering the feelings created by both images and write these under each image.

2 Blue sky

Ask your student or client to have a blue sky moment, where they talk about all possible ways in which they could move to the desired state. These can be sketched at the top of the sheet, using either words or images. For example, asking for help could be an option. A picture of a tutor or line manager would summarise the idea. Positive and negative consequences of each option should be explored and one or two options chosen.

3 Decisions and action

To conclude, ask the student or client to record what their chosen options are, and when they are going to take action. Then check out their commitment to take action.

Pitfalls

Working in this way can be threatening if participants are primarily auditory learners, or if they are not comfortable with using visual media and colour.

Bibliography

- Gordon, R. (1975) 'The creative process: self-expression and self-transcendence', in Jennings, S. (ed) *Creative Therapy*, London: Pitman Press.
- O'Connor, J. and Lages, A. (2002) *Coaching with NLP: A Practical Guide to Getting the Best Out of Yourself and Others*, London: Element, HarperCollins.