

UNIT 8

Metaphors and Stories

Course Notes

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Metaphors and Stories

Frankl's writings and speeches are filled with *metaphors* and *stories*. These serve to illuminate a topic, but from a distance. Using them with clients can be very rich and powerful and is also a means of self-distancing for the client.

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which there is often a visual image. Frankl rather consistently thinks and speaks with such images. For instance Frankl (1988, p.94-95) appeals to an actual visual image to help his patient see solutions to his theological and faith concerns:

Just look above my head: On the wall behind my seat you will see the shield of Harvard University, and inscribed thereon you read veritas, which means truth; but as you also notice, this word is divided into three syllables that are distributed over three books, and we may well interpret this by saying that the total truth is not a universal truth, for it is not accessible to everyone. Man has rather to be satisfied with getting hold of one single aspect of the whole truth. So much more is this true of God, of whom truth is in turn no more than merely an aspect.

Note he uses the terms "centrifugal leisure" and "centripetal leisure" on pp. 73-74. *Centrifugal* use of leisure time provides an image of spinning out in circles at increasing speeds away from the centre of self. *Centripetal* use of time evokes a vision of moving more and more to one's centre, a calming, centring image. Now we have seen not only the power of a visual image, but also the additional power of motion in the visual image. The effect of movement is similar to the difference between viewing a snapshot and seeing a movie.

Framing good metaphors takes practice and connection to the client. The first guideline is that we need to establish a clear purpose. This requires listening carefully to others. Where are they confused? What are some of their goals, no matter how remote and unreachable they may seem? Another guideline is to study others' interests. We will be more likely to talk about winning with an athlete or to ask "Do you have any unfinished business?" to one who is familiar with meetings. We might ask a golfer "What's are the most important thing for you to do when you putt the ball towards the hole?"

For instance one lady during group work might tell the group how concerned she is because her family members rush away each morning to all their activities and return every night tired. They did not have the time or energy to talk with each other "and to be a family."

You could perhaps rephrase it this way:

"The image I get is looking down on a revolving front door which is spinning faster and faster, catapulting your family all over town every morning, and then tossing them, now asleep, back into their beds every evening. You are trying to find some meaning in all this."

Attitude Change - Unit 8

The following reading provides a good overview of the use of visible metaphor in a specific case.

Reading Attitude Change 8.1 Using Visible Metaphor in Logotherapy

Now complete Worksheet 1 to explore these concepts further.

Worksheet Attitude Change 8.1 A Personal Metaphor

First download the Word version of the Worksheet so that you can respond on that worksheet

If you are working in a group take time to share this with the group before you go on.

If you are working online send the responses to your supervisor by uploading them to the LMS

Wise people have used stories for millennia to open their listeners to a different view of life. The strategy is that the client will think about the story, will see their own predicament mirrored in the story, and moreover, would find the way out of it leading to self-discovery. Stories may be long or may consist of just a few lines. Frankl (1988, p. 50) refers to a four-line poem, translated by Joseph Fabry, to help his readers differentiate between a blow of fate, which must be accepted, and circumstances, which required action:

Calmly bear, without ado,
That which fate imposed on you;
But to bedbugs don't resign:
Turn for help to Rosenstein!

Frankl (1988, p. 89) refers to the "*Parable Method*" and uses a Hindu parable of the mustard seed. If you have access to your text you might refer to this story now. The teacher asks the lady to collect a grain of mustard seed from every house in the village in which there has been no suffering. She comes back empty handed.

Upon reflection on this parable, ask yourself "Why would this parable be more powerful than simply saying to the client, "Everybody suffers?"

In *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, Frankl (1978, p. 33) differs from Maslow concerning needs having to be fulfilled in a lower to higher order. To strengthen his point Frankl tells the story of the 1000 youths in the concentration camp who burglarized the library rather than the mess hall the night before their scheduled death. Their higher need for meaning took precedence over their basic bodily need for food, even on the eve of their death. Knowing that the story had confirmed his belief, Frankl said, "Who now would like to persuade me that Bertold Brecht was right when he proclaimed... 'First comes food and second, morals'?"

Attitude Change - Unit 8

Most Logotherapists seem to be story-tellers. Hiroshi Takashima (1984) often used stories with his clients. He combined his stories with a bit of humor as he worked with clients. When a ten-year-old girl was referred to him for lying (after being treated unsuccessfully by others) he gave her chocolates and told her some stories. One of the stories was “about an old man who came to borrow some money, giving as an excuse that he had lost his purse just as he was passing near the doctor’s office.” Dr. Takashima was aware that the man had borrowed money from others often and never returned it. Dr. Takashima felt sorry for him because he had other troubles, and he gave him the money he asked for. He also offered him tea. After several days the man returned, repaid the money and gave Dr. Takashima a box of candy.

After hearing this and other stories, the girl said, “Having heard the doctor’s talk, I have realized that it is not good to tell a lie and decided not to do so any longer”. The girl’s teacher said later that Dr. Takashima had called her and said good things about the girl. The teacher continued, “Recently you (the girl) have completely changed. You haven’t been truant from school and don’t tell lies any longer... The real cause that has resolved your troubles was the change in your attitude”.

This is a goal of story-telling – positive change in attitude. Why do stories often bring about a change in attitude when other methods do not? The ten-year-old girl, above, said that some of her counsellors had told her not to lie, and one had even scolded her. It was the story that had the effect of changing her.

Story-telling is an appropriate Logotherapeutic method because it treats its listeners with dignity.

Elisabeth Lukas (1984, p. 76) tells the story of a robber knight who regularly terrorized a village. No one resisted him, But when he fell off his horse one day, got caught in the harness, grabbed the horse’s tail (to avoid being dragged), and bobbed through town, the villagers all laughed at him. As their laughter rose, their fear fell, and his power over them was gone. This story explains the power of humor and paradoxical intention in a way that explanations could not.

The best way to build a repertoire of stories is to read widely. Start with fairy tales. Short stories and novels are other sources. So are coffee shops. When you hear a good story, write it down, or it may get lost. (It may still get lost, depending on your filing system!) You can also use past experiences in your own life.

The final reading in this section, by Guttman, provides a wealth of short stories. While it is focussed on a particular religious culture, its wealth of short stories and analysis makes it essential reading.

Reading Attitude Change 8.2 Hasidic stories for mental health professionals in logotherapy.

Medical Ministry

Attitude Change - Unit 8

Frankl suggests that medical ministry is part of logotherapy, but is first focussed on treatment of somatogenic cases rather than psychogenic or noogenic. On the other hand he defines medical ministry as a treatment that calls forth a patient's attitude to the unchangeable where no further treatment is going to assist. You have already accessed the chapter on medical ministry but it would be good to quickly revisit that to gather the main points again.

Reading Attitude Change 8.3 Medical Ministry (Text pp. 89-108)

We all experience medical ministry if we have any contact with palliative care for ourselves or those we know. Aged care is also a form of medical ministry.

What is palliative care? It is more than you think! Click here:

Attitude Change Poster 8.1

https://www.dropbox.com/s/2uq2mtk7eiud4r2/Palliative_Care_Is_More_Than_You_Think_Poster.jpg?dl=0

A positive response to palliative care was taken by Barbara Broom who founded Hub of Hope to support those in palliative care in all dimensions.

Attitude Change Video 8.1

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/y1jphakuffl5fl1/The%20importance%20of%20palliative%20care%20and%20spiritual%20care.mp4?dl=0>

Now complete assessment 1 before moving on to Unit 9.

Assessment Attitude Change 8.1 A short story and Your Story

When completed upload your assignment to the LMS.

If you are doing this course in a group your supervisor will negotiate submission of your assignment with the group.

Attitude Change - Unit 8

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