Reflexive Questioning as a Means to Enable Intimacy with Couples

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Clinical Interviewing

- Assessment vs Therapy
- Questions vs Statements
  - Statements set forth the interviewer’s views
  - Questions bring forth the client’s views
- Complexities of linguistic communication
  - Questions can embed statements
  - Statements can embed questions
Dimensions in Questioning

• Open vs closed questions
• Who, what, where & how questions vs “why” questions
• Effects of questions & their answers
  – information conveyed to interviewer
  – altered experience of interviewee
Dimensions in Questioning (cont’d)

• The interviewer’s “power” in the interviews
  – In formulating a question
    • The question defines the domain of a legitimate response
  – In the process of asking the question
  – Contextual expectations
  – Impositional vs invitational manner
  – Conveyed by context, tone, cadence, non-verbal expressions, etc
4 Major Types of Questions

1. Lineal questions
   – Clarify sequences over time
   – Intent is to develop a sequential understanding for interviewer

2. Circular questions
   – Clarify here and now situation and relationships
   – Intent is to develop a contextual understanding for interviewer
4 Major Types of Questions (cont’d)

• 3. Reflexive questions
  – Intent to influence client therapeutically
  – Open space for alternative meanings that are healing or enhanced understanding that supports wellness
  – Selectively mobilize own knowledge and competencies
  – Invitational (less impositional)
4 Major Types of Questions (cont’d)

• 4. Strategic Questions
  – Intent to influence client correctively
  – Close space to accept the interviewer’s views as preferred
  – Impositional (less invitational)
Effects of Different Types of Questions

• Lineal questions
  – Conservative effect on interviewer
  – Judgmental effect on both

• Circular questions
  – Liberating effect on interviewee
  – Accepting effect on both
Effects of Different Types of Questions (cont’d)

• Reflexive questions
  – Generative effect on client
  – Creative effect on clinician

• Strategic questions
  – Constraining effect on client
  – Oppositional effect on both
Types of Reflexive Questions

- Future Oriented Questions
- Observer Perspective Questions
- Unexpected Context Change Questions
- Embedded Suggestion Questions
- Normative Comparison Questions
- Distinction Clarifying Questions
- Questions Introducing Hypotheses
- Process Interruption Questions
Sequences of Reflexive Questions

• Co-constructing hope
• Co-constructing responsibility
• Creating conditions for child acceptance of a step parent
• Deconstructing shame and guilt
• Opening space for apology, forgiveness and reconciliation
Co-constructing Hope

• A Working Definition of Hope
  – Living a preferred future in the present

• Sequence of Questions
  – Bringing forth preferences (interests, desires and/or passions)
  – Opening space for future possibilities

• Possible Complication
  – Fostering unrealistic hopes
Co-constructing Responsibility

• A Working Definition of Responsibility
  – Living consistently with an awareness of whether one likes or dislikes the consequences of one’s own actions
Co-constructing Responsibility (cont’d)

• Sequence of Questions
  – Search for positive intentions in taking action
  – Open space for awareness of a difference between intended effects and actual effects of actions taken
  – Bring forth an awareness of one’s own feelings about the actual effects
  – Invite reflection on alternative actions
Child Acceptance of a Step-Parent

• Bring forth an awareness of the effects of the quality and strength of the step relationship on the partnership

• Open space for an acknowledgment of differential attachments between the child and step-parent vs natural parent

• Co-construct a means to promote growth in the step relationship and diminish the parental imbalance in attachment
Bifurcation Questioning

• Example of reflexive questions that empower

• A means to co-construct awareness of alternatives and self as agent in making choices

• A branching structure in the question
  – Past choices
  – Present options
  – Future possibilities
Internalized Other Interviewing

• Reflexive questions that deepen understanding of and empathy for the other
• Based on a view of the self as constituted by an internalized community
• A means to selectively disclose and affirm another’s understanding and feelings about the relationship and the self
Additional Reflexive Questions

- Grounding Questions
- Externalizing Questions
- Internalizing Questions
- Agency Questions
- Re-construction Questions
- Audience Questions
- Interpersonal Pattern Questions
Additional Reflexive Questions (cont’d)

- Motivating Questions
- Responsibility Questions
- Re-emotioning Questions
- De-construction Questions
- Endurance Questions
- Self Reflexive Questions
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