

Choosing A Focus

Chairwork can be used to help individuals identify a focus for sessions or therapy/coaching more generally. This enables a deeper exploration of the nature and relative priority of presenting difficulties, as well as establishing a helpful 'working distance' from these issues.

Process of dialogue:

1). The facilitator introduces chairs which represent each of the individual's presenting concerns.

Facilitator: "It sounds like there are a few things on your mind at the moment. The first is longstanding worries about your health [introduces chair 1], another is how your worries are effecting your marriage [introduces chair 2], and, lastly, you want to be better organised with your finances [introduces chair 3]. Is there anything else?"

2). The facilitator explores the individual's attitudes and feelings towards each of these concerns.

Facilitator: "What are your thoughts about each of these concerns? [Gestures to the chairs]. What feelings come up in you as you look at each of them? Do any strike you as being more or less of a priority?"

3). [Optional]. The facilitator invites the individual to reverse roles which each concern. The facilitator then proceeds to either (a). 'interview' each problem, or (b). facilitate a dialogue between the individual and each issue.

(a). Interview method - Facilitator: "I'd like to get to know each of these concerns a little better. Can you move into the seat of your worry? [Individual changes seats]. So, you're Matthew's anxiety about his health. Tell me about yourself and your place in his life..."

(b). Dialogue method - Facilitator: "Change seats and be 'worry'. [Individual changes seats]. So, Worry, tell Matthew about yourself. [Gestures to the individual's original chair]. What are you about? [Client proceeds to speak as 'worry']... Ok, switch back. [Individual returns to their original chair]. So, you've heard what 'worry' has to say for itself. What do you say in response?"

4). The facilitator invites the individual to reorganise the layout of the chairs to determine their relative size, significance, or priority.

Facilitator: "We've gotten to know each of these concerns a little better. How do you think we ought to arrange them? [Facilitator invites the individual to play with positioning of the chairs]."

Facilitation notes:

- This method often serves as a helpful (and non-threatening) introduction to chairwork and the dialogical process
- Objects aside from chairs can also be used to represent the individual's concerns, such as pillows, figurines, or imagined items.
- This method is easily adapted to the exploration of therapy goals or personal values.

Citation:

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