

Future Selves Dialogues

The Future Selves Dialogue serves as either a motivational or exploratory dialogue which aims to examine the longer-term consequences of decisions or courses of action. This might be with a view to facilitate decision-making, resolve ambivalence, or strengthen commitment to change.

Process of dialogue:

1). The facilitator introduces a chair representing the individuals' Future Self as if action 'A' has taken place (e.g. changing jobs).

Facilitator: "Let's imagine ten years have passed. This seat [introduces a chair] holds the future version of yourself who decided to change jobs."

2). The facilitator asks the individual to imagine the salient characteristics of their Future Self.

Facilitator: "What do you imagine that version of yourself would look like? How would they be sat in their chair? How do you think they would be thinking and feeling right now?"

3). The facilitator invites the individual to change seats and embody their Future Self.

Facilitator: "I'd like you to move to that chair and speak as that version of your self. [Individual changes seats]."

4). The facilitator proceeds to interview the Future Self.

Facilitator: "It's nice to see you again. Tell me about how your life has been for you since we last met and you decided to change jobs. How are things going with your career / relationships / health...?"

5). After interviewing, the Future Self is invited to share any words of advice.

Facilitator: "Future Self, if you could travel back in time and give your past self any advice or guidance, what would it be?"

6). The dialogue is repeated with the individual's second Future Self, as if action 'B' has been taken (e.g. not changing jobs).

Facilitation notes:

- Inviting the client to imagine and then embody salient characteristics of their Future Selves helps ensure that the dialogue is as immersive as possible and shouldn't be rushed.
- Prior to the dialogue, it is often helpful to ask individuals what questions they would like the facilitator to put their Future Selves.
- Future Selves dialogues can be elaborating by constructing a second, two-chair dialogue between the individual's Current Self and Future Self.
- A speedier (and less evocative) version of this dialogue involves the individual imagining their Future Selves in different chairs and describing their lives in the third person (Facilitator: "Imagine your Future Self in this chair, as if you had changed jobs and 10 years have since passed. What is his/her life like? What advice would (s)he give you?").

Further Reading:

Pugh, M. (2019). *Cognitive behavioural chairwork: Distinctive features*. Oxon, UK: Routledge.

Pugh, M. & Salter, C. (2018). Motivational chairwork: An experiential approach to resolving ambivalence. *European Journal of Counselling Theory, Research, and Practice*, 2, 1-15.

Citation:

Pugh, M. & Bell, T. (2020). Future selves dialogues: Facilitation guidance. Retrieved from www.chairwork.co.uk.

For further chairwork guidelines and facilitation notes
visit www.chairwork.co.uk