

Two-Chair Decisional Balancing

Two-chair decisional balancing (Engle & Arkowitz, 2008; Pugh & Salter, 2018) serves as either a motivational or exploratory dialogue which aims to examine both sides of an individual's ambivalence. This might be with a view to better understand the nature of the individual's indecision, resolve ambivalence, or strengthen commitment to change.

Process of dialogue:

- 1). The facilitator introduces two chairs: one which represents choice or perspective 'A' (e.g. the advantages of changing jobs) and one which represents choice or perspective 'B' (e.g. the disadvantages of changing jobs).

Facilitator: "Let's imagine this seat represents the advantages of changing jobs [introduces chair one] and this seat represents the disadvantages of changing jobs [introduces chair two]."

- 2). The individual is asked which perspective currently feels strongest.

Facilitator: "Which of these two perspectives feels strongest or most live in you right now?"

- 3). The individual is asked to move into that chair and speak from that perspective.

Facilitator: "Move to that chair and speak from that perspective. [Individual changes seats]. So, what does this side see as being the advantages of changing jobs?"

- 4). Once the perspective has been presented, the individual is asked to change seats and respond from the other chair.

Facilitator: "Now that we've heard about the advantages of changing jobs, let's hear from the other side. Change seats and speak as the disadvantages."

- 5). The client moves back-and-forth between both chairs, responding and counter-responding, until the dialogue reaches a conclusion.

Facilitation notes:

- Encouraging the client to attend to and articulate their emotional experiencing in each chair often provides valuable information about the nature of the indecision and the best course of action (Facilitator: "As you describe the advantages of changing jobs, how do you feel? Speak from that excitement.").

- If the dialogue does not succeed in resolving indecision or concludes in a 'stalemate' between the polarised sides, a third chair is invited into the dialogue (e.g. which represents the individual's values, 'wise self', or compassionate mind).
- Inviting the individual to imagine which persons (past or present) would stand behind each chair can provide valuable information about sources of influence in their lives.

Further Reading:

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

Engle, D., & Arkowitz, H. (2008). Viewing resistance as ambivalence: Integrative strategies for working with resistant ambivalence. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 48, 389-412.

Citation:

Pugh, M. & Bell, T. (2020). Two-chair decisional balancing: Facilitation guidance. Retrieved from www.chairwork.co.uk.

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