The confusion technique

Destabilization

The Confusion Technique

- Associative methods
- Dissociative methods

In Hypnosis and Therapy

- Part of every induction
- Part of the process of experiential change in therapy

Why use Destabilization in Therapy

- Without destabilization, there is no drama
- Utilize arousal
- Make things memorable.
- You can catch more flies…
- A little nonsense now and then…
- Moves the person internal.
- To change mood and perspective
- It creates fascination; energizes; playful.
- It is experiential, not didactic. Feel the therapists attempt to influence.
- People dislike uncertainty states.
History of the confusion technique

- Erickson’s first example
- 1963 paper
- Wolberg example

Common examples

- Jokes
- Psychological “games” Eric Berne—Transactional Analysis
- Con+gimmick-response-switch-“x”-payoff
- Suspense movie
- Art/poetry
- Advertising

Methods

Hard confusion
1. Using pairs of opposites (E.g., Conscious/unconscious and understand/misunderstand.)
2. Overload
3. Negation
4. Boredom

Soft destabilization
1. Misspeak
2. Switch sets quickly
3. Pivot on a word
4. Indirect suggestion
5. Nonverbal methods
6. Disrupt a pattern
7. Homonyms
8. Divided words
9. Double Dissociation
10. Stuttering

Multiple Level Communication

- You can…respond to my voice.
Hard Confusion Using Opposites

- Conscious-Unconscious
- Understanding-Misunderstanding

The attitude of the therapist

- No surgery without anesthetic
- Best when it is a “utilization,” not a technique.
- How to use confusion without being confused.
- Only use the methods that you would want to have used on you.

Exercise

- Pace
- Disrupt/Destabilize
- Pattern

Groups of five: Go around four times, and then make complete sets yourself.

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