

Separating the problem and the person: insights from Narrative Therapy

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The Story so far ...

- Wanted to change way we work with People Who Stutter (PWS)
- Listen and learn from PWS
- Experience of Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Psychology
- Value PWS' expertise
- Collaboration

Story so far....

- Some knowledge of Narrative Therapy (NT) being applied with PWS
 - DiLollo, Neimeyer & Manning (2002)
 - Logan (2006)
 - Leahy & Warren (2006)
 - Manning (2010)
- Free To Stutter....Free To Speak in 2009
- Accessible to Speech & Language Therapists

Our Experience

- Initial application to deeper understanding
- Fits well with Stuttering Modification and Avoidance Reduction Therapy
- Behaviours and meaning/ hopes/dreams/ ambitions/identity
- Sense of agency

Our Experience

- Addresses the complex nature of stuttering.
- PWS develop understandings that lead to acceptance (McCormack 2011).
- Simple at one level.... Rich and complex

Overview

- Brief introduction to Narrative Therapy
- Explain externalising conversations
- Give examples from child who stutters
- Map externalising conversation with 18 year old PWS
- Specific language or terms/jargon

What is Narrative Therapy?

- An approach to counselling and community work
- Developed by White & Epston (1990)
- Centres people as the experts in their own lives
- Views problems as separate from people
- Assumes people have many skills, strengths, values

Narrative Therapy

- Begin with dominant, problem saturated narrative
- Externalise the problem, give it a name, draw it, avoid totalising
- Look for unique outcomes, sparkling moments as entry points into alternative narrative
- Highlight strengths and resources
- Re-author

(White 2007)

Externalisation

- “This is the process by which we separate the person’s identity from the problem for which they seek assistance” Morgan (2000,17)
- Objectifies it
- Experience an identity that is separate from the problem
- Naming: the name for the problem comes from the client
- The problem is the problem *Not the person*

Purpose of Externalising Conversations

- Separate the problem from the person
- Position the person as expert on the problem- through rich/detailed description
- Place problem in time & other context
- Allow for acknowledgement of effects
- Enable the person to position themselves outside and in opposition to the problem
- Relate this to wider values/ hopes and dreams

Steps in an externalising conversation

- Recent and particular experience of the problem – Naming and describing the problem
- Describing the effects of the problem’s activities across various domains
- Evaluating the effects of the problem’s activities
- Justifying the evaluation

Cormac

- Nine year old boy
- Referred last spring for therapy
- Onset at reportedly seven and a half/eight years of age
- Attended group summer 2011
- Came for review following difficulties in school in December 2011

Questions to aid externalising

NAMING

Mr Angry



Questions to aid externalising

EFFECTS OF THE PROBLEM

The effects of Mr. Angry

- He is mean, because he makes me stutter
- Makes my tongue stick out
- Makes me block
- Makes me get nervous before talking

Effects of Mr. Angry in school

- Tries to make fun of me
- I know the answer but I don't want to say it
- I put in the wrong answer so I don't get stuck
- Sometimes act like I am thinking then when I am ready to say it I say it
- In the yard I don't do it all because I am not worried about him, just concentrating about what I am playing

Questions to aid externalising

Taking a POSITION on the problem

Cormac's Position on Mr. Angry

- I feel angry at him
- I hate him
- I want to make him the size of a peanut
- I want to give him 'some heat'

Questions to aid externalising

JUSTIFYING THE POSITION

Cormac's Justification

- I want to say what I have to say even if I get stuck
- I like to talk

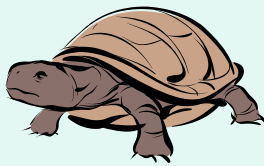
Statement of Position Map 1

HOPE/VALUES WHY?	I want to say what I have to say even if I get stuck I like to talk
POSITION - WHERE DO YOU STAND ON THIS?	I feel angry at him I hate him
EFFECTS ACROSS	Makes me get nervous before talking
DOMAINS OF LIVING	
CHARACTERISATION OF PROBLEM/ NAMING	Mr Angry

TIME →

(Based on White 2007)

Awkward Turtle



Laoise

- 18 year old girl
- Secondary school student
- Has had stuttering therapy since 10
- At 12 became very self conscious and covert
- Family tragedy- no therapy for almost 3 years
- Returned aged 17 on Father's request

Externalisation Conversation

Took place during therapy

- On return from visit to cousins
- Had not talked to cousins' friends who had visited
- Viewed this as a problem as would have liked to talk

Statement of Position Map 1

HOPES/VALUES WHY?	
POSITION - WHERE DO YOU STAND ON THIS?	
EFFECTS ACROSS DOMAINS OF LIVING	
CHARACTERISATION OF PROBLEM/ NAMING	Awkward Turtle – leader: Feel frozen, fear, anger. Avoidance tags along

TIME →

(Based on White 2007)

Statement of Position Map 1

HOPES/VALUES WHY?	
POSITION - WHERE DO YOU STAND ON THIS?	
EFFECTS ACROSS DOMAINS OF LIVING	Not expressing who I am, being quiet & shy . Holding me back. In choices, who I talk to/don't talk to. Asking questions in class. Socially, feel like crap. Reading in school. Wondering what others think of me.. Avoidance
CHARACTERISATION OF PROBLEM/ NAMING	Awkward Turtle - leader: Feel frozen, fear, anger. Avoidance tags along

TIME →

(Based on White 2007)

Statement of Position Map 1

HOPES/VALUES WHY?	
POSITION - WHERE DO YOU STAND ON THIS?	Want it to shrink it - a lot - three quarters.
EFFECTS ACROSS DOMAINS OF LIVING	Not expressing who I am, being quiet & shy . Holding me back. In choices, who I talk to/don't talk to. Asking questions in class. Socially feel like crap. Reading in school. Wondering what others think of me.. Avoidance
CHARACTERISATION OF PROBLEM/ NAMING	Awkward Turtle - leader: Feel frozen, fear, anger. Avoidance tags along

TIME →

(Based on White 2007)

Statement of Position Map 1

HOPE/VALUES WHY?	Being more comfortable in who I am. Going to college. Going up to people and telling them who I am. Doing presentations.
POSITION - WHERE DO YOU STAND ON THIS?	Want it to shrink it - a lot - three quarters.
EFFECTS ACROSS DOMAINS OF LIVING	Not expressing who I am, being quiet & shy - Holding me back. In choices, who I talk to/don't talk to. Asking questions in class. Socially I feel like crap. Reading in school. Wondering what others think of me. Avoidance.
CHARACTERISATION OF PROBLEM NAMING	Awkward Turtle - leader: Feel frozen, fear, anger. Avoidance tags along
TIME	→

(Based on White 2007)

Take Home Points

- Collaboration with PWS
- The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem
- Centre the individual knowledges/personal stories of PWS
- Externalisation and Re-Authoring are key processes in NT

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