

The confusion technique

Destabilization



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The Confusion Technique

- Associative methods
- Dissociative methods



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Confusion Defines

- Undifferentiated arousal
- A disharmony that will resolve in a stable harmony
- Discontinuity



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In Hypnosis and Therapy

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



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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.
- Arousal is memorable—at least what follows when the arousal is sufficient but not overwhelming.



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History of the confusion technique

- Erickson's first example
- 1963 paper
- Wolberg example
- Example with Dee/Don and Sheri



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Common examples

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



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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



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Multiple Level Communication

- You can...respond to my voice.



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Hard Confusion Using Opposites

- Conscious-Unconscious
- Understanding-Misunderstanding



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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.
- Be strategic--goal-directed



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Exercise

- Pace
- Disrupt/Destabilize
- Pattern

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



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