

Thee Metaphors Transcript

Dr. Richard Nongard:

Welcome aboard. This is the first of two tutorials where I'm going to be sharing with you some of the classic ACT therapy metaphors. So in ACT therapy, students are trained to use specific metaphors. These metaphors almost always teach a lesson in how the mind works, how sensations are experienced, how we project into the future, how we can break relational frames, how we can put some space between us and diffuse from our thoughts. These metaphors of course can be used in any way, though. They can be used in hypnosis. They can be used in traditional therapy. They can be used in conversational hypnosis. They can be used as teaching tools. What I want to do in this video is share with you three of the classic traditional ACT metaphors. And then in the next video, I'm going to share with you three more so you'll have sort of a foundation of six ACT metaphors that are traditionally used in ACT therapy.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

Now you can use these metaphors. You can use your own metaphors. You can add to the list, that book, the big book of ACT metaphors has a zillion different metaphors in there. And so there's no rule that you must use these metaphors, but these metaphors really do a good job at helping clients to understand the experiences that we're helping them to create. In our Zoom room, I actually did a session with you titled Hands As Things. I'm going to do that again and I'm also going to provide you a script for this. As a matter of fact, what I'm going to do is I'm just going to have this whole video transcribed as well as the next video so you'll actually be able to have the scripts that I use in transcript form for both this video, as well as the next video. So you can print those out. You can use them in your sessions. You can adapt them to the clients that you work with.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

Now, I'm going to share these metaphors with you as if I were doing a hypnosis session with you. Recognize though that we can use these metaphors in any part of the hypnotic process. I can use these metaphors as part of the pre-talk to explain to somebody something. I could after my induction and deepener as part of suggestive therapy, have my clients experience the metaphor and I can guide them through the metaphor as part of the hypnosis session. I often find that using a metaphor or a story immediately following the deepener serves to additionally deepen trance states and focus and absorb the client as well as teaching concepts that are going to be help helpful to them long after the session is over. And of course, hypnosis doesn't end when they open their eyes and we count to three.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

We can use the metaphors after our hypnosis session to explain suggestions and things that we've done in the process and how the process is going to work. So all of these metaphors are really pretty valuable. One of the metaphors that I do use frequently in my pre-talk is the hands as things experiential metaphor. Again, I did guide you through it in our Zoom room, but I want to guide you through it as if you're my client in the office. So sit across the desk from me here, we're doing the pre-talk, I'm finding out what brought you in, I'm listening to your concerns. Once you say that you came here to quit smoking, and of course you have some thoughts about that. One of those thoughts is of course, what if I am near my friends and they're smoking cigarettes? Or what if I live with a smoker? Or what if I have withdrawal and I find it difficult?

Dr. Richard Nongard:

Sometimes our sensations, the smoker might tell me they quit smoking before and they had horrific withdrawal. It was very difficult and distressing to them. Again, sensations can be things, et cetera. So what I might explain to you is what you've just told me is that you often find these intrusive thoughts that make you question whether or not you can truly succeed at stopping smoking, or as I like to call it, start breathing fresh air. The answer to that is of course, yes. And I'm really glad you came here for today's hypnosis session. As a matter of fact, many other people have sat in that same chair and become non-smokers also. So I have full confidence that you'll do really well.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

Let me share with you a metaphor or a strategy that can really help you to see how we're going to experience hypnosis. You see hypnosis is about changing, not only our behaviors, but our subconscious associations and the actions that we take in regards to what other people are doing and how it impacts us, or what happens when we have an urge or a sensation. And so take your hands, go ahead and you can do this and place them over your eyes. Let your fingers be a little bit separated so you can still see the video here, or you can see me if you're sitting across the desk from me. And do you notice how with your hands over your eyes, you can still see the room around you, but certain things are blocked. Notice that there's gaps, gaps between your fingers, and you can feel your fingers touching your nose. You can feel your hands touching your face, but you kind of quarter still see between those gaps. Often, our thoughts are obscuring our viewpoint, our desires.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

You came here because you desire to quit smoking, but that fear is obscuring that view of you as a non-smoker, it's keeping you from seeing the bigger picture of our hands, our thoughts. Our thoughts can sometimes stand in our way of seeing really what's most important to us. And so with your hands on your face, ask yourself what thoughts keep going through my mind that are keeping me from being able to see every new option I have as a non-smoker and how this new life is truly important to me? Look through the gaps in your fingers. What is in view? What is restricted? What is clear? If you were to go about the tasks of the day with your hands in front of your face, what do you think you might miss?

Dr. Richard Nongard:

You see, if you continue to hold on to these fears or these thoughts, they'll obstruct your view of clear breath, and clear life and the happiness that you can create by being a non-smoker. So in our session today, when we actually sit and [inaudible 00:06:59] furniture and we do the hypnotic process. One of the things that we're going to be focusing on is helping you to realize that our thoughts are things, and we can choose to remove those thoughts that previously to this point may have kept us from being able to take action and become a non-smoker. But by coming here today, I know that you will fully be able to do this and to succeed, removing the thoughts that have clouded your viewpoint in the past, the sensations that have clouded your viewpoint in the past, and maybe even the emotions that have clouded your viewpoint in the past and let you see the new world of being a non-smoker. So again, this is how I might use this metaphor as an experiential process in a pre-talk.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

The next metaphor is a metaphor that is often used called the beach ball. It's not particularly long, but it

helps my clients to see that they can co-exist with thoughts, feelings, or sensations, could be urges, impulses, desires, hurts, fears, wants, et cetera. So I will often use this after my deepener. So five, four, three, two, one zero, and then I'll go into this metaphor, the metaphor of the beach ball. And it's not a particularly long metaphor, but it's a really good explanation that we can co-exist with things that, to this point, we have found intolerable. There's an expression in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, just for today. The full expression actually comes from a short piece titled, just for today, I could do anything for 24 hours even if the thought of doing it is thoroughly appalling to me.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

In other words, I can coexist with difficulty. This is part of acceptance, and acceptance and commitment therapy. So with my pain control clients, I have often used this metaphor, the metaphor of the beach ball to really help them see that they can, while again, diffuse from the physical pain that brought them to my office. And so go ahead and close your eyes down. With your eyes closed down, imagine that I've done a hypnotic induction, bring yourself in that resource state that we call hypnosis. I've even done a deepener. Five, four, three, two one, zero, and you're doing perfect. I'm glad you came here today to learn some new ways of dealing with hypnotic pain control. Without a doubt, the pain that's brought you to my office has been distressing for you. And even though people have told you, perhaps that it's all in your head, or it's not as bad as it needs to be, that pain is very real to you. And it's my belief that anything that we say is pain is actually painful to us.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

One strategy for being able to control our pain is to recognize though that even if we continue to have pain, we also can have comfort. I don't know if you've ever played in a swimming pool with a big, giant volleyball, a beach ball. It's often kind of fun in the pool to take that ball and to put it under water, but because of the pressure of the water and the air in the balloon, it always pops back up. I've played with a beach ball with my kids when they were small. And I have to confess, even when my kids weren't in the pool, it's fun to push it down and watch it pop back up. One of the things that's interesting about this floating ball though, is that we sometimes like the floating ball can not stop a pain, stop an awareness, stop a sensation. I know, for you, trying to stop those sensations has probably been a lot like trying to keep the beach ball under the water.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

And so rather than fight the sensations, just hold the ball, hold the pain, be present with it, enjoy the pool, enjoy the life, enjoy the sun, enjoy the comfort that is in other places within the body. Recognizing of course, that it's often easier to be present with our pain and to accept pain as the first step and being able to take control over the pain. We'll never be able to get that air-filled ball under the water and because of your physical condition, it might not be possible to never experience pain. But what is possible is to avoid the suffering that it has caused. After all, if we just let our pain float to the surface, like the beach ball that floats to the surface, then it's just a ball or it's just pain and it holds no power over us.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

At this point, of course, I would continue on with my direct or my indirect suggestions, but because this is an example, go ahead and open your eyes, take in a breath. Can you see how that beach ball or the

metaphor of trying to struggle, holding that ball under the water could be useful with some clients in moving them towards acceptance? I've had chronic pain. I've had multiple orthopedic surgeries in my feet. I have lived with chronic pain for many, many years. And when I quit trying to fight my pain or eliminate my pain, and rather let my pain simply rise to the top and let it be present with me in the pool, I've discovered that the limitations that I imposed on myself are limitations that I no longer have to experience. And the result has been that when pain is less important, paradoxically, it is less painful.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

The third metaphor is the metaphor of the playground bully, and it really teaches how a person can respond to their thoughts, their sensations or their feelings. A lot of our clients come to us, let's say they come for anxiety, or panic or fear. It's their emotions that they're responding to in non resourceful ways. So again, I've used this as an explanation after a session, I've used this in a session, I've actually used this as a pre-talk as well. But go ahead and close your eyes down again. And imagine. Imagine that you're in my office and that we've done an induction and we've done a deepener three, two, one, zero. Now I'm sharing a metaphor with you. The metaphor of the playground bully. Our minds are a lot like a school playground with a high fence. The playgrounds are of course, designed to keep people from the outside, from coming into the school yard. But sometimes there's a bully on the playground. That bully on the playground is a classmate of ours. It's someone who we have to share space or time with, even though it might not be so pleasant to do.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

In fact, there might be a couple of bullies, and these bullies are a lot like our thoughts, our feelings or sensations that are trying to distract us from doing the things we actually enjoy, or the things that we actually want. And imagine one particular bully is shouting at you or mocking you, or in some way or another, trying to capture your attention and engage you in the [inaudible 00:15:14] because we're all fenced in together. The challenge is, of course, to learn how to accept sharing this space with the bully on the playground. Likewise, we cannot actually escape our thoughts. We have over 50,000 thoughts a day. Learning how to co-exist with our sometimes non resourceful thoughts can be a whole lot easier than trying to get rid of the bully on the playground.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

Imagine three kids, three of your friends on the playground with you, each one, responding to the bully in a different way. The first one being distressed, reacting to the bully, giving the bully the attention the bully wants, causing the bully to carry on, which of course leads to engagement with the bully and distraction from the things that are most important.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

The second kid challenges the bully, the second kid stands up to them. Hey, I'm not stupid. I'm actually a smart kid. I did really well on my math test. And I happen to know you didn't. Perhaps eventually the bully will give up in light of the confrontation.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

But it's the third kid who responded by simply acknowledging the bully's presence, looking at the bully, and then choosing to, without comment, without interaction, walking away and engaging with the

friends who are far more enjoyable.

Dr. Richard Nongard:

When you have distressing thoughts, distressing feelings, distressing situations, I wonder if you'll choose to respond like kid number one, kid number two, or kid number three. And of course at this point I would continue on with my hypnosis session. Now having given the subconscious mind a choice, and if your eyes aren't open, take in a breath and open your eyes. The metaphor of the schoolyard bully. These three metaphors are classic metaphors in ACT therapy. They are stories that you can adopt, that you can elaborate on, that you can share with your clients. Like I said, I've got a transcript of this, so that you'll be able to actually have the script for these different metaphors and you can adapt them to your sessions and use them in ways that you think would benefit your clients.