

## **A metaphor and pictorial metaphor technique in therapy**

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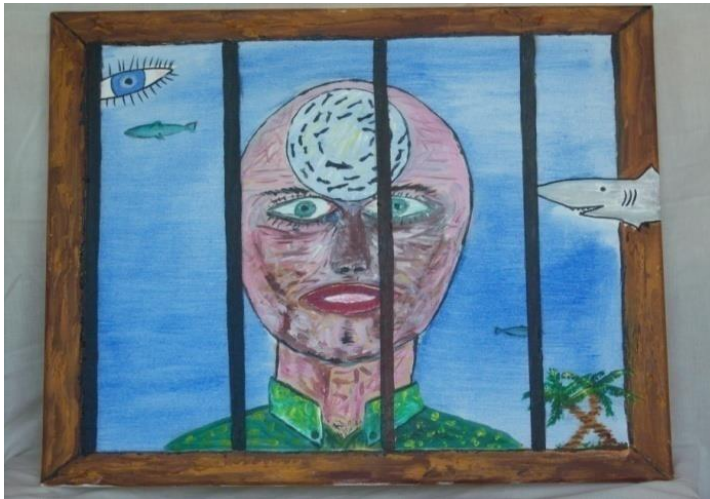
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# A metaphor and pictorial metaphor technique in therapy

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# Workshop Plan

2 hrs

## Working with Metaphor

**Step 1 (5 mins) – Introduction, ground rules and learning outcomes**

**Step 2 (10 mins) - Group exercise 1- What has been your experience of using metaphor in therapy? Case studies discussion**

**Step 3 (15 mins) - Lecture 1– Metaphor and pictorial metaphor**

**Step 4 (30 mins) - Group exercise 2- I-I practice following metaphor model and feedback**

**Step 5 (15 mins) – Lecture 2 pictorial metaphor case studies**

**Step 6 (30 mins) Group Exercise 3 - metaphor to picture - In groups of three look at case studies and draw out pictorial representation of the metaphors.**

**Step 6 (15 mins) – Whole group discussion/feedback/Evaluation/closure**

## ***Step 1 – Introductions, ground rules and outcomes***

By the end of the workshop the participants will have:

- An increased knowledge of the use of metaphor in therapy
- Had an opportunity to discuss and debate the use of metaphor
- Develop steps towards utilising metaphor to pictorial metaphor

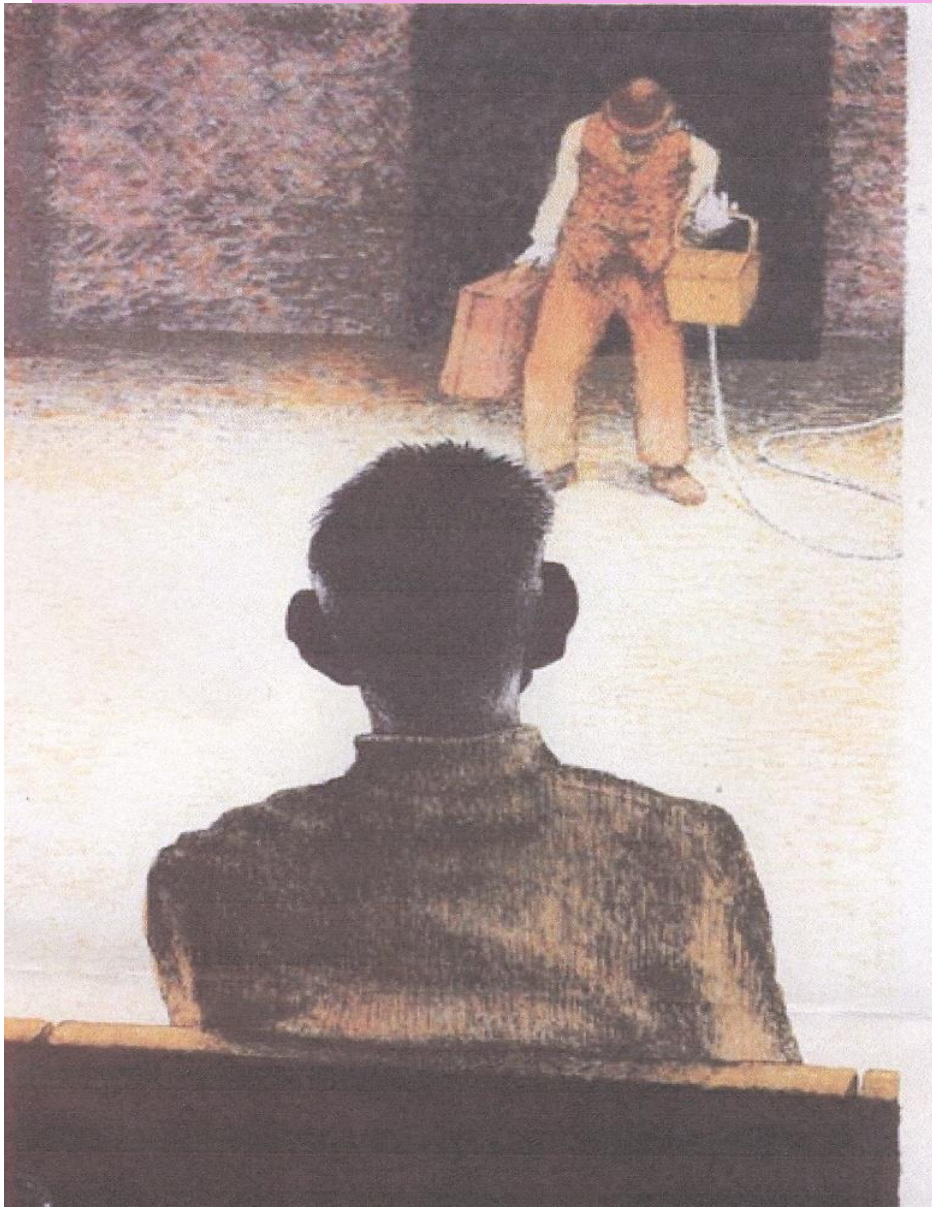


## *Step 2 - Exercise 1*

- Get into small groups, discuss your understanding of metaphors and see if you can come up with an example from your clinical work
- If you need a prompt have a look at the cue cards of 'metaphor examples'



# **NO MATTER-TRY AGAIN-FAIL AGAIN- FAIL BETTER**



Discuss .....

What has been your experience of using metaphor in your clinical work?

Describe the types of metaphor you have used...

How useful do you think using metaphor has been for your clients?

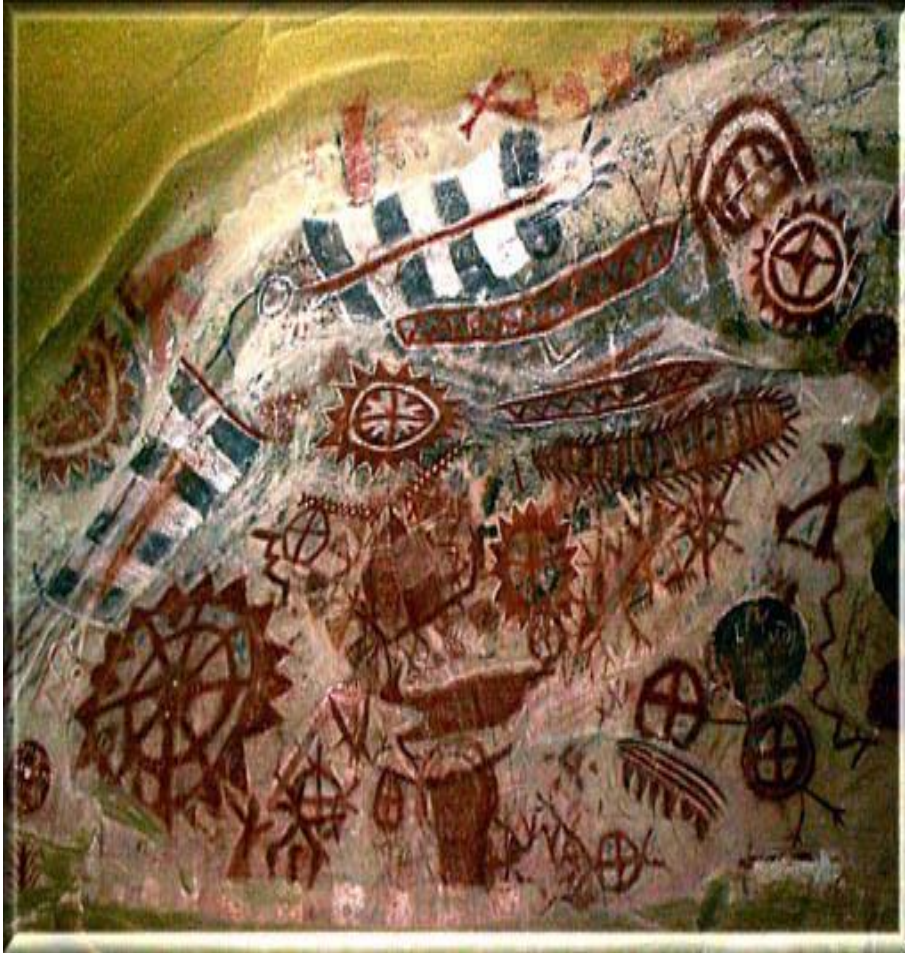
Can you briefly outline an example of a metaphor you have used/worked with and how you used it in practice ?

Do you recognise any of the case examples as being familiar to your clients stories?

## Step 3 - A little bit of theory...Metaphors and psychotherapy

- **Metaphor** (*μεταφορά* – *metaphora*)
  - "a transfer", in rhetoric "transference of a word to a new sense", is language that directly compares seemingly unrelated subjects.
- A metaphor is something relatively more concrete or conceivable which stands for something more elusive (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

# Metaphors tradition



Literature on metaphors seems to consist mainly of case studies and speculation' (Rowan and Thompson 2000)

However...

Metaphors have been an essential feature of human communication from time immemorial (Barker 1985)

Clients in successful therapies develop a core metaphorical theme in relation to the main issues of therapy (Angus 1996); McMullen 1989)



# Therapeutic relationship

## Common factors...

- share a relational and supportive component
- based on the therapeutic relationship,
- the technical component
- new learning experiences and opportunities

(Lambert, 1992)



# Therapeutic relationship

- ‘those aspects of the therapeutic environment that promote collaboration between the therapist and patient’

(Anderson et al, 2001 p.314 )

- The ‘quality’ of the alliance depends on the extent to which patient and therapist agree on the tasks to achieve these goals and the quality of the bond that develops between them.

(Keijser et al 2000 p 284)



# The metaphor of the 'Scaffold' and the 'ZPD'

- The metaphor of the scaffold has proven particularly useful in this effort. Scaffolding is described as a "process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal that would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).
- "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)



# *Why focus on metaphor...*

- Metaphor might be useful when treatment is impeded by the unwillingness of the clients to accept the ideas the therapist is trying to communicate (Barker 1985, p39)
- Natural metaphors that arise in therapy are used as educational tools. Metaphors begin to extend the boundaries of beliefs about thinking (Abbateiolo 2006)
- Metaphor therapy broadens the concept of cognition to include the imaginal and metaphoric forms of cognition. (Kopp 1995, p133)





# Some background - Metaphors

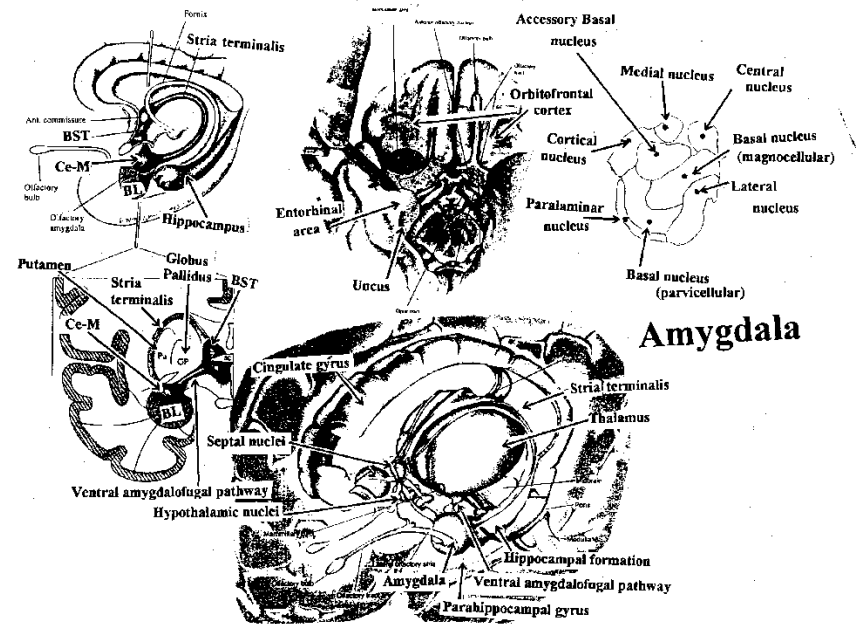
- Psychotherapy has been found to use metaphors extensively...
- facilitates **insight**
- provide new **solutions**
- enhances **communication**
- enhances working **alliance**

(Angus 1996 and McMullen 1985 in Levit et al 2000).



# A little bit of neuroscience... The Amygdala

- A tiny area at heart of limbic system is thought to be especially important in the processing of emotion in the right brain and is responsible for the emergency response system of the brain.
- Manages immediate response but also suggests to the cortex more balanced responses.
- Implicit earliest responses and memories are also stored here, within this store are implicit memory patterns of previous traumatic experience which informs the amygdala's response at moments of crisis



## *Implications for practice: every contact counts*

- Through revisiting experiences that went on to establish attachment in the early years of life new neural pathways and patterns of connectivity in the RH of the brain may be established
- Communication between hemispheres means that experience can then be put into words and processed by the left.
- Left right integration enables the patient to put feelings into words, to think about feelings in the mind rather than experiencing them in the body

# Ontological Metaphors



**Ontological:**

*'I feel like an empty cistern that must be invisibly refilled.'*

**Orientation:** They point to different directions; on top, over, under, in front, behind, here, there, past, or to come.

*'I was totally under pressure.'*

**Creative:** Compare abstract concepts, like love, freedom, death.

*'My husband is an octopus; he takes my vital space. I need a little room to grow.'*



# *Metaphor examples*

‘can act as a metaphorical ‘Thames barrier’, holding back the tide so to speak’ (Arden 2004)

A client ‘might be a ship of fools but you can be the captain’  
(Beard et al’s 1990)

‘one woman brought me a drawing of herself portrayed as a small figure of uncertain gender being crushed by an enormous boulder, and was surprised by her creative associations to it. Another brought me poems, which at times expressed very beautifully her yearning for a spiritual rebirth’  
(Buckley 2002, p92).

# Metaphor examples

- **Playfulness and the 'dance' of therapy:** 'A new therapist, when learning how to lead the dance for the first time, needs to concentrate on the steps. As their skill increases, they can then begin incorporating more creative steps in the dance allowing for greater expression, flexibility and flow. With time, experience and competence, if the therapist stumbles, misses a beat or misplaces a step, then they have developed the skills necessary to rectify quickly, easily and smoothly without distracting or ruining the dance'  
(Coulter and Rushbrook 2011, p9).
- **Depression:** 'Led to the deep sadness expressed in your dream of yourself as a frozen chicken (PATIENT'S METAPHOR) which provoked the depression which brought you to therapy.'  
(Ryle 2003)

# *Metaphor examples*

**The seven dwelling places.** ‘The first three dwelling places in The Interior Castle are focused outwards, and the ‘call from God is mediated through sermons, books, people and events in one’s life’. From the fourth dwelling place, ‘people allow themselves to be decentred’. The ego ceases to be the centre of life, and turns toward the Divine in a relationship with the Living God where ‘one’s responses are elicited by the reality of the Other’

(Dunn 2007, p17).

‘It may be that these patients were literally crushed during the abuse, but whether that was the case or not, the weight of the oppression they experienced psychically led, metaphorically at least, to a fight for breath’.

(Fawkes and Fretten 2003)

‘I now feel like the good seed from a bad apple’ and ‘I feel like a snake that has shed its skin’.

(Fitzsimmons 2000)

# Metaphor examples

- Metaphor of a 'mobile' to describe family connections.  
(Hepple 2012)
- **Film Metaphor:** 'AI: Artificial Intelligence' is a memorable futuristic fairy tale, which captures, metaphorically, the human child's universal search for perfect attachment, or ideal love and care.  
(Hubbuck 2008)
- 'The client requested in metaphor that I hold the door to the cellar open in order to allow the light in so that she would not get lost and trapped'.  
(Kellett 2004)
- **The wounded healer:** 'metaphor of the hero-innovator being eaten by the dragon for breakfast springs to mind'.  
(Winstanley 2013)



## *A final word....*

- 'metaphor is the best way to convey feeling and that without it therapists become prey to over-thinking'

(Dunn 1997)



# **Step 4 Group exercise**

## **In groups of three:**

- One observer, one therapist one client, role play following Kopps (1995) model...
- Either use a metaphor that you come up with spontaneously or use one of the case examples

# **Kopp (1995) Through the looking glass...**

Step 1: **Notice metaphor** (*willingness/therapeutic alliance*)

Step 2a: **Explore the metaphoric image** (client derived/shared understanding)

When you say ..... What image/picture comes to mind?

What do you see in your minds eye?

Could you describe?

Step 2a: **If client does not respond** (collaboration)

If I were seeing it (the metaphor) the way you see it what would I see?

May I tell you what image occurs to me?

Step 3: **Exploration of the metaphor as sensory image** (simplicity/use of ZPD)

What else can you see?

Describe the scene?

What else is going on?

What are the other people doing/saying?

What happens next?

# **Step 5 - The Case for** **Pictures/images**

- When trying to elicit automatic thoughts related to past events or situations ...it may be useful to use mental imagery to recreate the situation.' (Blackburn and Davidson 1995)
- Creating a picture of what the individual can imagine as a possible positive outcome can instil a sense of hope and provide a tangible road map to achieve their goals. (Dessaur 2010)
- Metaphors of this sort which can be seen as inherently integrative in that they coalesce a number of complex strands of thought into a single memorable image. (Holmes and Bateman 2002)
- ...the healing process seemed to reside in the image making and therapeutic alliance. (Hughes 2007)
- If pictures work use them (Ryle 2012)

# *Metaphoric Tradition*

There is a long tradition of illustrated literature--texts with accompanying pictures. William Makepeace Thackeray, a 19th-century English novelist illustrated his own works and whose pictures are more than merely decorative (Kennedy 1994).

- They provide visual explanation and ironic commentary on the text through a subtle system of related metaphors. (Kennedy 1994)



Mr. Osborne's welcome to Amelia

# ***Metaphors as Pictures***

‘Thinking in pictures is...only a very incomplete form of becoming conscious. In some way, too, it stands nearer to unconscious processes than does thinking in words, and is unquestionably older than the latter both ontologically and phylogenetically’ It follows therefore that thinking in pictures is a medium that can enable a client to express rich emotional material (Freud 1923/1960)

***Clients in successful therapies develop a core metaphorical theme in relation to the main issues of therapy*** (Angus 1996; McMullen 1989 in Levit et al 2000)

Little is known about how metaphors evolve over the course of therapy (Levit et al 2000)

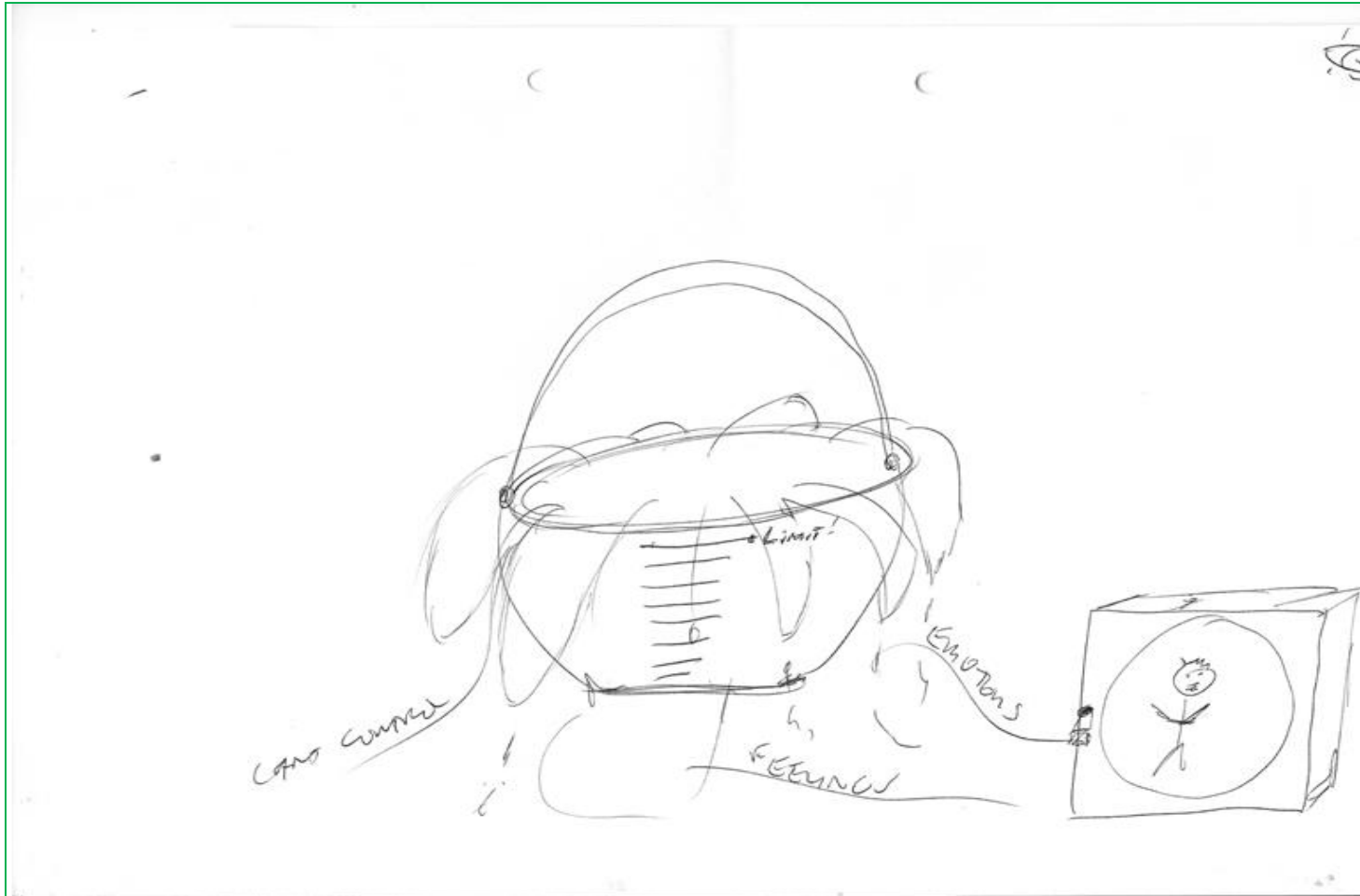
‘To understand the specific pathology of this disorder one should not look only for the possible metaphoric meaning of the anorectic behaviour, but for reflective Function itself- the compromised capacity of making mental representations; of metaphorisation’  
(Skarderund 2007)

# Image laden metaphor (Siegleman 1990)

- image laden 'novel' metaphor is usually born out of intense feeling...
- *'the need to communicate something never communicated in that way before, to make others see what you have seen, and often to state psychological states that can only be approximated in words'* (p6-7).



# For example: The Cauldron



# The ZPD and Grief

- Vygotsky's theory (1962), the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) is...

*'the difference between the child's capacity to solve problems on his own, and his capacity to solve them with assistance'*

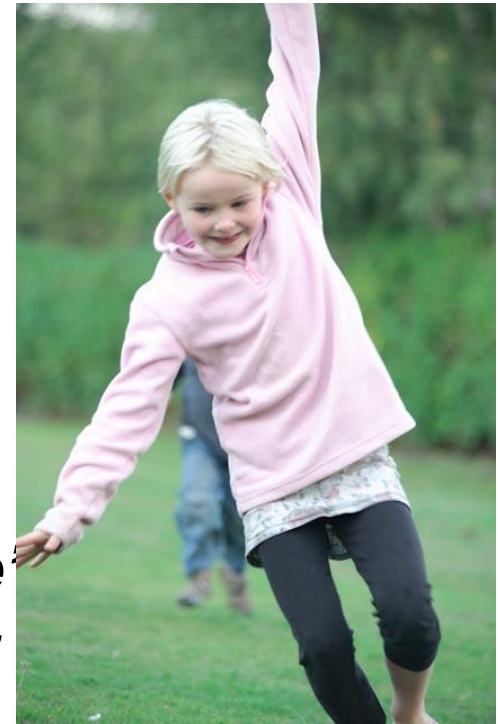
- This is our role in grief therapy to be the person providing a scaffolding process, providing non-intrusive intervention, or another peer who has already mastered that particular function (Kerr 2001).

# **Beth's ZPD example...**

..she produced a novel metaphor when describing her sudden loss of her 'Nana'...

- '***Dad***' she said through her tears...  
***'its like I have been given a jigsaw but there a bit missing, as if I have a hole in my heart that will never heal'...***

- '*My own heart ached for her*'... but we discussed how, of course her loss is an absence, but over time her missing piece of jigsaw would remain, but the hole would in fact become smaller. In this way she (we) were making meaning by using the metaphor to manage and understand her loss?



# Metaphors and endings

- Our dialogue was a ‘narrative and constructivist’ response...validating her metaphor but also enabling and extending the metaphor to a newer perspective that could generate healing capacity.
- In using her words and metaphors I was working in her emotional ZPD, as an adult to a nine year old, offering a ‘*scaffolding of support sequencing, planning, and pacing as well as tools and concepts which are handed over as the child acquires them*’ (Ryle and Kerr 2002).

# Metaphors and endings

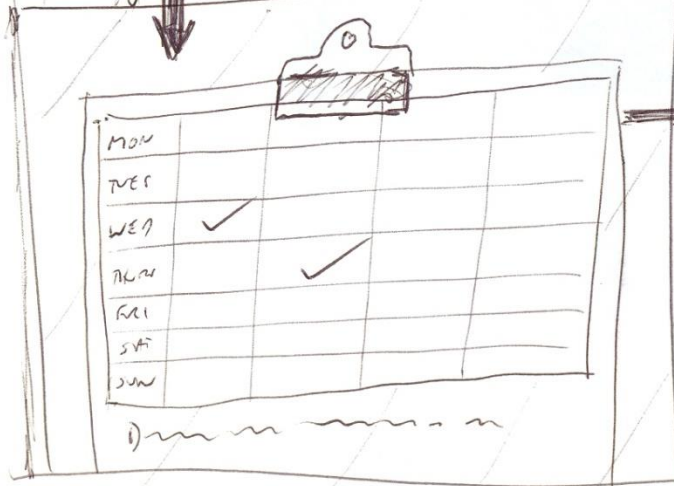


# E

PATIENT (E)

THE YOUNG (JUNG) ME

WORKING LIFE



SOCIAL LIFE

HOME LIFE (CONFESSION)  
ANXIOUS

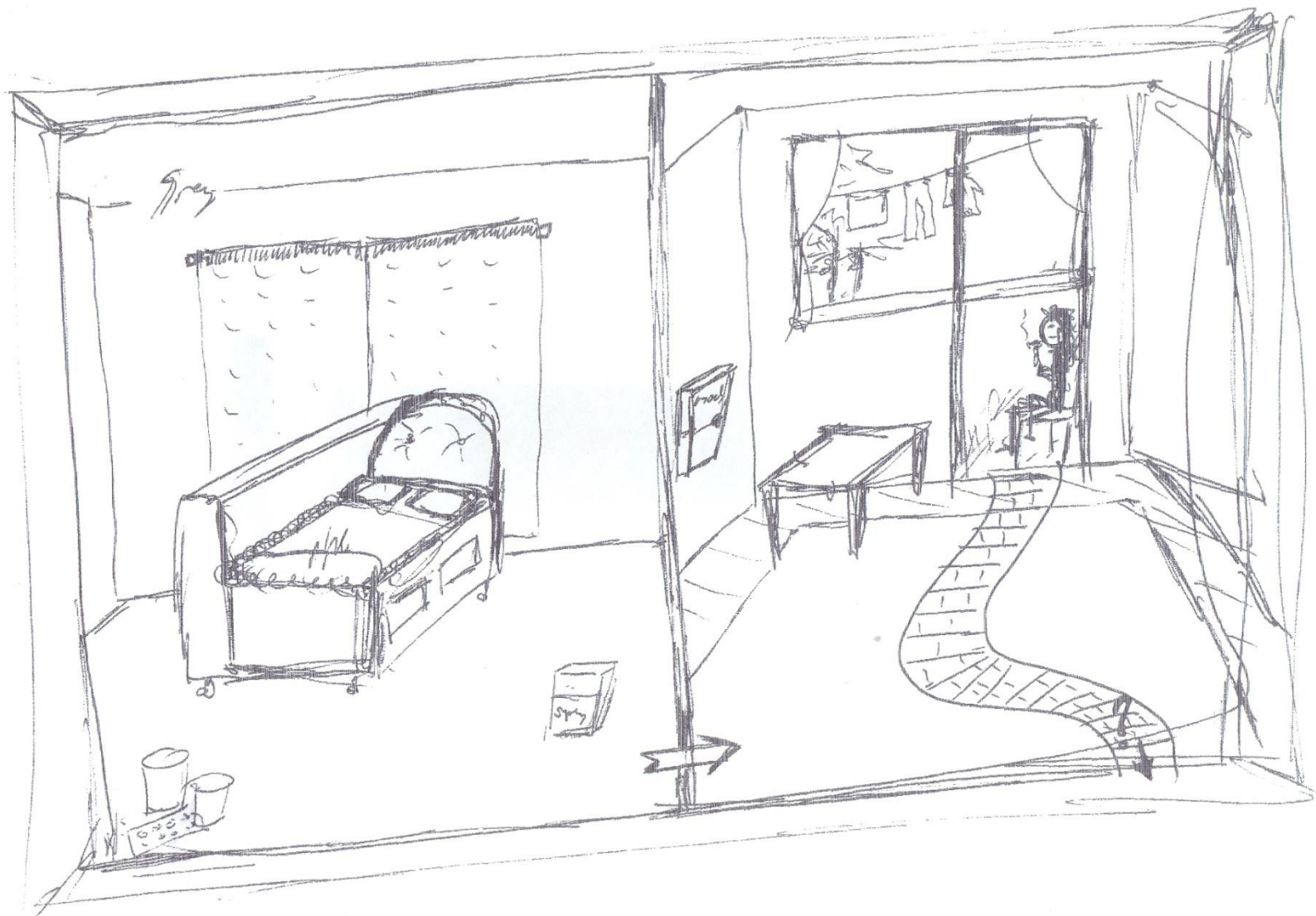


# G



P. 1. 2. 3.

G





J

PATICA (S)

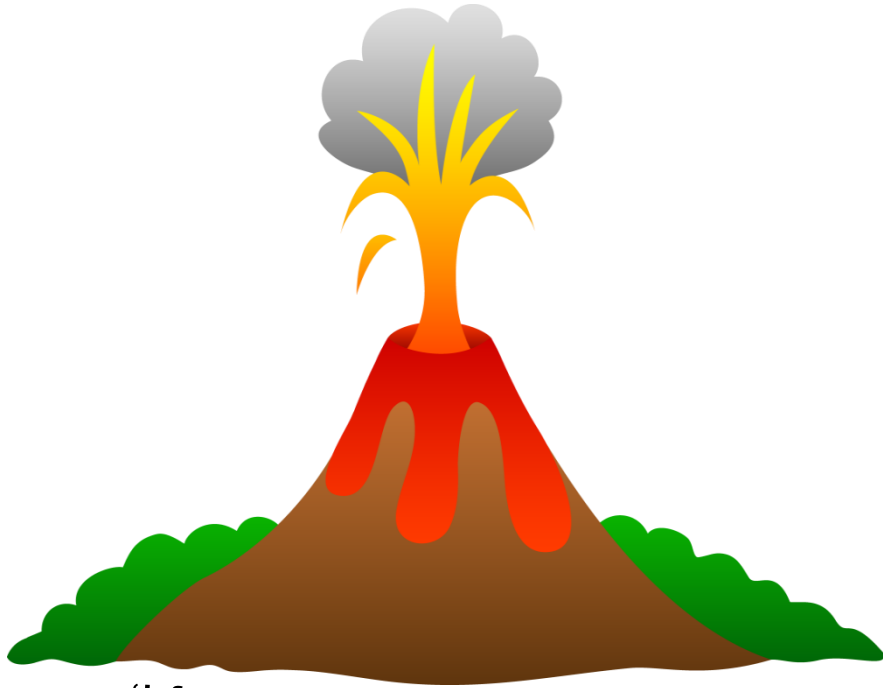


SOLAR

# Pictorial metaphor example (Volcano)

Feels like you are going to explode?

What if you could control the lava?



'I found pictures of a volcano's, one erupting and one where the flow was directed to one area. I used the metaphor anger as the volcano and being able to direct the lava as a way of controlling the anger. I suppose it was cheating a bit not drawing the picture but the visual 'ked.' (306)

# **Step 6 - Small Group exercise**

In groups of three set up a scenario with a client, a therapist and an observer using examples from earlier

The client describes a problem (imaginary or fictional) and uses metaphor in describing their experience.

The therapist is alert to this and looks to utilising the metaphor more directly in the session and towards developing a 'picture' that is shared with the client.

The observer makes notes on the process . See notes Kopp (1995) for guidance.

# **Kopp (1995) Through the looking glass...**

Step 4: Explore and define feeling in relation to the metaphoric image (accessible image/simplicity/non judgemental)

Drawing image – agree not to intrude but to create and explore

Step 5: Revision (ongoing/moving on)

If you could change the image in any way how would you change it?

What if the e.g. 'x' part of the metaphor were an '?'

What would the image look like if you were feeling better?

What do you need to do to get there, what shall I draw on the picture to represent this 'exit'

Step 6: Back to the tea party (work within the ZPD)

What parallel's do you see between the image of picture and original picture/metaphor?

# Step 7 – discussion/feedback/closure

Thank you for  
taking part in  
this  
workshop

If you want to  
stay in  
dialogue  
please  
contact me.

James Turner

[james.turner@sheffieldhallam.ac.uk](mailto:james.turner@sheffieldhallam.ac.uk)





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