

Metaphoric Symbolised Imagery (MSI)TM : Building Resilience presentation on 4 August 2015 – reviewed by Juliana Triml

Peter Richard-Herbert gave us a theoretical overview of the Ego State Therapy (founded by Paul Fedem early in the last century) that aims at building resilience.

According to this theory, personality has several parts and when a part was traumatised, there is strong possibility that some problems arise for the person. Peter developed a process he named Metaphoric Symbolised Imagery (MSI) in the 1990s, but it was only after becoming familiar with Professor Gordon Emmerson's Ego State Theory, that he could place it in a theoretical context.

This technique draws also on neuroscience while it uses the unconscious process of association and archetypal symbolism. During the process the client is presented with a series of imagery that aim to facilitate transitions and to develop client's coping abilities.

MSI can be combined with most modern counselling styles and therapeutic applications. Peter noted that he used this technique successfully to resolve issues related to panic attack, phobic reaction, obsessive compulsion, depression and many forms of anxiety. The process of associations, metaphor and symbols aims to deal with the underlying issue rather than a simple removal of symptoms.

Failure to deal with the underlying issues, as we know, is likely to resurface with similar symptoms in different or similar circumstances.

As the name suggests, the process includes three basic elements: Metaphors, Symbols and Imagery.

Use of **Metaphors** invites the client to resolve ambiguity that surrounds him/her.

Similarly, associations with **Archetypal Symbols** tend to suggest that here is more to an understanding or explanation than its obvious immediate meaning that can be defined by words and the mind (it is sub-linguistic). Hence, the unconscious seems to "understand" more than the mind does and the client is gently provoked to engage and discover the content of their unconscious.

And **Imagery** (as in Jung's concept of dreamwork), when presented in a way that allows client to fill relevant details, invites to exploit his/her perceptions to evoke feelings while using all or some of the five senses (smell, taste, touch, visual, auditory).

Thus, imagery permits direct connection with client's memories and experiences, including repressed unconscious material.

Peter noted that he finds it important to take case history at the beginnings and to check on client's resources for support. Then he may take the client on a guided imagery walk, speaking in vague terms and asking the client for clarifications.

After explaining the basic theoretical underpinning, Peter invited a volunteer to demonstrate some of his techniques (confidentiality agreement was then made).

He commenced by mapping the parts related to issues the volunteer wanted to increase and those he wanted to decrease. It was interesting to observe how the volunteer gradually described his insights on the issue and his perceptions of it. While some parts moved easily, other parts would not move. While the issue did not "go away", it was this person's change in his perception and understanding of the issue that made it a lesser problem for him, as the volunteer stated after the brief 10 minutes demonstration.