

TECHNIQUE TO CHANGE INTERNAL PICTURES

THE PROJECTIONIST

I use this technique for clients who are visual and have symptoms caused by their negative internal pictures.

You can tell this by their language and eye movements.

Words such as –“I can see it...”; “It looks like...”; “I can imagine...”. All these indicate that internal pictures are occurring in relation to the problem. It is helpful to verify this by asking the client.

If the client looks up while describing the problem it is likely that he is looking at internal pictures. Again verify by asking.

Examples of clients who could benefit from this technique are—Clients with a fear of flying and pictures of a plane crash in their mind; clients with nightmares; worriers who have pictures of doom and gloom in the future.

Almost any client who is using imagination to maintain their problem.

This technique will give the client some control over these negative pictures. It is based on the concept that you ask the client to imagine the troublesome picture, and transfer it to a cinema screen in their mind.

You then guide the client to learn about the projectionist who is showing that film. The client negotiates with the projectionist to stop showing the problem film, and show one that the client would like to see.

For example if the client is scared of flying because they have plane crash pictures causing terror, the aim of the technique is to change them to pictures of a safe journey, and happy holiday when the plane has landed.

The technique requires the therapist to use his creativity, as every client is different. Using clean language and negotiating with the projectionist may be difficult at times, depending on his temperament.

The following is a case history of a client I treated, followed by some notes about my procedure.

Case History

Four years prior to seeing me, Mrs.C was stuck on a chair lift for two hours when skiing. It was snowing and she thought she would die. She has been unable to go skiing since; feels panicky at the thought, and remembers the incident very vividly.

Let us use “C” for Mrs.C and “B” for the therapist (me).

B“You have told me about your frightening experience on the chair lift, and the feelings you now have preventing you from skiing.”

“Would it be alright to explore some of the mechanisms in your inner world that are maintaining the problem?”

C “Yes that would be fine. I am happy to do anything that would help, as I really miss my skiing, and my husband and children are very sad that I am not with them.”

B “Good. I would like you to put your feet on the floor, rest your head on the back of the chair and close your eyes. I am only going to give you one instruction, that is –not to try, just let whatever happens to happen. I will be guiding your imagination so that it will change the way you feel about skiing.”

“Firstly I would like you to see that picture that causes you to feel anxious when you think of skiing. When you can see that picture just nod your head.

After a few seconds C nods her head.

B “Could you describe that picture to me?”

C“Yes, I can see it very clearly, even after all those years, I am stuck on the chair lift, it is very cold and I am freezing. I am terrified no one will know I am here and I will freeze to death. I am getting panicky just at the thought.”

B“Good. I think that is a very important part of the problem”

“I would like you to imagine you are in a cinema. You are the only person there and the picture you have just described is on the screen. When you are there nod your head.”

C nods her head.

B” Good. I would like you to get up from your seat in the cinema, and walk to the back where the projection room is. When you are there nod your head.

C nods her head.

B "Good, I would like you to open the door of the projection room. You will see the projector and the person who is operating it. Tell me about that person."

C "He is dressed in overalls, is quite tubby, and has grey hair."

B "I would like you to ask him if you can have a chat with him."

C "He says yes."

B "Good, now I would like you to ask him what his name is."

C "He says his name is Herman." She laughs. "I don't know anyone called Herman."

B "That's good. The stranger this is, the better it is. It means you are doing very well; you are in your inner world where your problem is stored, where we can resolve it. If you remain rational, then your creative part can't help. Your creative part thought of the name "Herman".

"Ask Herman if he is showing the film on the screen."

C "He says he is."

B "Ask him if he knows it is upsetting you."

C "He says he didn't know. He is only showing the picture to protect me."

B "Ask him when did he first become a projectionist."

C "He says when I was sitting on the ski- chair and felt I would die of cold."

B "Ask him what his aim is."

C "He says to keep me alive, and stop me going back to that place where I could have died."

B "Ask him if he knows you are safe now."

C "He seems a bit confused by that question. All he knows is that he has to protect me."

B "Tell him you are now safe and do not need protection. What he is doing is causing restrictions and is not helping."

"Tell him the lift started to move and you were saved and that everything turned out alright."

Tell him you would like to go skiing with your family, it is perfectly safe. You would like him to show films of you having a lovely time in the snow with your family.”

“Ask him if he has any films like that.”

C” He says he has. He is sorry he has been upsetting me and would like to help.”

B”Good. Ask him to get rid of the film he has been showing, and put on some happy ones about skiing.”

C sits quietly for a little while then says “He has done that. They are much better. They are of me and my family having a wonderful time in the snow. I feel so much calmer when I see those.”

B”Good. I would like you to thank Herman, and spend some time every day in the projectionists room with him, making sure those films are being played. Let him know you are going to do that, and when he agrees, slowly and comfortably come back into the room.

I would then have a chat with C to discuss her experience, answer any questions, and direct her to make it a priority to spend time with the projectionist.

Notes about this technique

- 1 This technique is another example how Parts Therapy can be employed. The “projectionist” is another part of our inner world acting to protect us.
- 2 It is important to go at the client’s pace, allowing time for his imagination to construct the scenario.
- 3 If the client is surprised at the name of the projectionist (as C was), this is a good sign showing that they are in a trance, and not constructing the scene consciously.
- 4 The response of the projectionist is very relevant to the outcome of the procedure.

With C and Herman, he was very amenable to listen and change. Often this is not the case and the character is angry, frightened of losing his job or just will not communicate.

These cases require diplomacy, negotiating in a way that will allow the character to change, with your support. You need to be sensitive to his needs as well as achieving the client's needs.

- 5 Sometimes the character says he is only following orders. In this case I ask to see the boss, and negotiate by presenting up to date details in the hope he will change.
- 6 It is important that the client spends time every day being in a trance and communicating with the projectionist. I often make a C.D to reinforce this, and ask them to play it daily.

I want them to review the day and be aware of the films being shown and how they are affected by them. When communicating with the projectionist, the client discusses the effect of the films. I ask him to praise the projectionist when he shows better films. I am a strong believer that praise is a very good thing to help motivation.

- 7 I see the client in a week to discuss how they have been, and any difficulties they may have. During this session we visit the projectionist, answering any questions he may have; discuss the client's feelings and thoughts about the process, and praise both client and projectionist. I often make a new CD to update what has been occurring.
- 8 It is very important to be flexible, use your imagination, be prepared to veer off on different trajectories to follow the projectionist's responses. If you are led down a different pathway follow it, use clean language and don't allow your own views and beliefs to get in the way. These techniques are not meant as scripts.
- 9 Realize that the client DOES have the resources to overcome their problem. Our job is to guide and support to help them find these resources.

IT IS NOT THE PATIENT WHO IS THE PROBLEM
IT IS THE PROBLEM THAT IS THE PROBLEM!