Pain Management Issues: An Integrative Approach

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Assisting the Patient/Client Who Experiences Physical Discomfort

- Discussion of the role of neurotransmitters and other biochemical correlates to the experience of discomfort is for another day as are the use of electrical devices and medications.
- Mental health professionals are typically non-physicians, so an understanding of the physical condition related to the discomfort is important and necessary. Communication with a treating physician is also advised with appropriate informed consent from the individual.
- This presentation is designed to be practical for clinicians.

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It is important to do your homework before initiating treatment related to physical discomfort.

Careful analysis of the patient’s story regarding the history and development of their uncomfortable condition is mandatory before beginning a treatment approach.

What conditions or circumstances caused, preceded, or sustains the pain?

Was there a traumatic incident? Might there be secondary-gain associated with the discomfort or concern associated with feeling better?

Understanding what happened and what was going on in the person’s life at that time provides valuable information about constructing a treatment approach.
Pain Management Issues: An Integrative Approach

- Is the “pain” the most appropriate target for treatment?
- Often it is not! However, this is often what the individual wants you to address and eliminate.
- Pain is a signal that indicates, “Something is not right.”
- Pain may also function as a distraction, which can interrupt or mislead the best intentions of patients, physicians, and therapists.

- Make a strong effort to reframe the experience and verbalizations of “pain” to “discomfort”
- Inquire about their physical sensations in terms of degrees of comfort.
- Consider asking, “What is your current level of comfort or discomfort using a zero to ten point scale where zero equals comfortable and ten equals the highest degree of discomfort?”
- The term “pain” is negative, and serves no beneficial purpose for the individual.

- What conditions or circumstances caused, preceded, or sustain the pain?
- Understanding what happened and what was going on in the person’s life at that time provides valuable information about constructing a treatment approach.
- Consider asking, “How will your life be different when you are more comfortable?”
- This information will shape your primary treatment approach!

- I strongly recommended that all events connected to the onset of the discomfort be addressed and treated before addressing the discomfort directly.
- The causative events can be addressed and treated using your energy psychology model of choice.
- My preferred treatment model over the past 13 years is Heart Assisted Therapy (HAT) (Diepold, 2018).
The Artistic Metaphor

- The artistic metaphor stems from the work of psychologists Joyce Mills and Richard Crowley (1986*), in their work with children.
- This three-step process acquires information and accesses resources from the left and right sides of the brain to facilitate unconscious resources.
- This exercise is an enlightening process for the individual, and a way for the therapist to understand more precisely what needs to happen to aid the healing process.


Material needed:
1) Three (3) pieces of blank paper
2) A box of crayons

Each sheet of paper is presented individually

The Artistic Metaphor

Experience the Artistic Metaphor

On the first sheet ask the individual to draw a picture of "The Problem".
On the second sheet ask the individual to draw a picture of "what the problem would look like if it were all better".
Now display the two drawings in front of the person.
On the third sheet ask them to draw a picture of "what would have to happen for picture number one to become picture number two".
The Artistic Metaphor

• It can be helpful to make several photocopies (preferably in color) of the *third drawing* showing what needs to happen to facilitate healing and/or increased comfort.
• Invite the person to strategically place them where they will often see them and thus continue to nudge their unconscious mind to move in the desired direction (e.g., the refrigerator, the bathroom mirror, one on the car seat, and near the remote control for the television).

Pain Management Issues: An Integrative Approach

• Actual direct treatment of residual physical discomfort is the *final step*.
• There are many ways to influence the perception of comfort or discomfort. For example:
  1. Meditation/relaxation/mindfulness approaches
  2. Hypnotic approaches
  3. Visual healing imagery approaches
  4. EP approaches and Heart Circuits (HAT)

Pain Management Issues: An Integrative Approach

Brief demonstration of Heart Assisted Therapy?

1) Demo Treatment of causative event
2) Demo “Heart Circuit” to enhance comfort and healing

The “Heart Circuit” From HAT

• For use when treating discomfort directly and/or to foster healing.
• Always begin with the 9 Self-Regulating eart-Breaths (9 SRHB)
• Have person place top hand on the specific body area while keeping the bottom hand on the heart.
• Invite person to free their mind or imagine their respirations gently passing through the body area directly under their hand.
• Continue until there is a change in the respiration.
Constructing a Healing Imagery Experience

• My preference is to individualize the healing imagery experience using information the person has shared verbally and via the Artistic Metaphor.

• Healing imagery is another tool to provide relaxation and hope while inviting the body to heal and to become more comfortable.

1) Begin all healing imagery experiences with the 9 Self-Regulating Heart-Breaths (This re-boots to NO)

2) Invite person to close their eyes

3) Invite them to imagine themselves going to a special place of healing... and in this healing place find a comfortable place to sit or lie down

4) Invite them to “just notice” the support they have all around them... (Surroundings, people, faith, etc.)

5) From here the therapist can develop a healing metaphor based on knowledge of the individual

• While there are many ways to construct a healing imagery experience, here are the steps I have found to be helpful:

(e.g., “permit yourself to attend to a healing white light/ energy/ God’s grace that is all around you...and invite it to engulf your entire body...and to fill your body... flowing abundantly into all the areas that can benefit...and especially around and into that area of your concern... just notice how it flows, the shifts in brightness and vibration, and even changes in color as your body selects exactly what is needed for healing, restoration, and comfort...”)
**Constructing a Healing Imagery Experience**

- Now add the information from the artistic metaphor drawn by the individual in picture number three, and invites the individual to experience this process as keenly as possibly (i.e., across the five senses).
- The therapist can quietly allow time for this process and occasionally make supportive suggestions related to the imagery. The length of time is flexible.

- When it is time to finish the imagery exercise, invite the individual to permit this healing process to continue even after it passes from their conscious mind, daytime and at night, awake or asleep...
- Then invite them to now become ready to leave this special place of healing knowing they can return here again easily and continue the healing process already begun.

- An audio recording is helpful and beneficial, especially for the severely distracted individual who requires the structure and support of the therapist’s voice.
- Having the audio recording of the imagery exercise, which is tailor-made for them, makes it easier for compliance and thus the benefit.

- Now invite them to allow their attention to shift and become aware again of the current surroundings (e.g., office, home) then comfortably open their eyes, and close with another set of the 9 Self-Regulating Heart-Breaths.
- The therapist can invite the individual to repeat this exercise on their own on a daily or as needed basis. However, I recommend that the therapist give consideration to audio record this exercise for the individual.
Constructing a Healing Imagery Experience

• I have found that using the free online program by Audacity works very well and is easy to use. In this way the therapist can record the audio of the healing imagery exercise using your computer then download it (usually a WAV or MP3 file) to a flash drive provided by the individual for home use.

• I have personally developed and use a variety of healing imagery experiences over the years that can be tailored to the individual’s needs and circumstances.

• I also incorporate a specific type of music to facilitate the process and hence increase compliance with doing the imagery.

• It never made sense to me how piano or flute music, or rain or waterfall sounds, fit into a healing imagery in which these sounds would be foreign and therefore distracting if not jarring.

• I wanted something that could fit nearly all internal imagery experiences and facilitate the flow.

• The possibilities are many...know the individual as they will teach you what is helpful and important to them!

• Time to experience a healing imagery exercise!
Pain Management Issues: An Integrative Approach

Thank you!