

Let's Talk about Positivity

Working with the client on remaining positive can have its pitfall, are you aware of them?

Positive thinking or, as I like to call it *fulfilment thinking*, is about getting the client to seek all the options and opportunities open to them to move from their 'A' to their *realistic* and *authentic*, 'B'. For best results the process should be encouraged in the first instance without 'editing' (a process of factoring in the things that might happen if they were to try) and something that is often a default position for many clients. By doing this the client can prioritise their next steps by looking at the options and opportunities in a constructive rather than an unconstructive or sometimes even destructive way.

Positivity (fulfilment) is not about getting rid of all negative thoughts that the client might have, neither is it about suppressing the emotions associated with the negative thoughts because negative thoughts and their associated emotions can be useful in the helping process. Discontent (negativity) is an important acknowledgment of where the client is and the efforts they are going to have to make to make the journey from A-B. Rather, acknowledging negativity is about creating balance and recognising what I call 'the rises and falls in life' and how we can, when directed and supported to do so effectively, learn constructively from our experiences; the positive as well as the negative experiences in life. It's my assertion that all clients want to be fulfilled, some of them simply don't know how to be fulfilled and some simply don't understand what fulfilment thinking actually means and if you don't understand the meaning of something how can you recognise what you have to do to attain it.

However, there is always a caution attached to *pushing* the client to be fulfilled as it takes the client away from being authentic in their approaches to life and living by creating a set of unrealistic ground rules for moving forward by suppressing what is really going on for them and how they truly feel. Pushing the client too hard to be fulfilled might end up with an end outcome of actually causing harm. So, rather than working from their own perspective of what they need and want, the client turns their attention to feeding you what they think you want. Apart from being unsustainable because the helper becomes an extrinsic motivator, it can breed and perpetuate beliefs around being a failure. If the client's thinking and emotions about their

concerns are not congruent their behaviours are unlikely to be congruent as well. What's the alternative? The acceptance of discontent rather than suppressing it.

Accepting is about saying that the issue or concerns are simply what they are. This is then followed on by a period of encouraging permission to sit with the negativity (discontent) to firstly acknowledge and then explore how the discontent is hindering the movement from A-B. There is no denial or watering down of the existence of discontent but an acknowledgment of it as a potential barrier to moving forward. Acceptance can only be achieved with realistic goal setting and realistic goal setting is about assisting the client in choosing options that feed into their expectation of how they are going to feel when they have reached their goal. It's a way of keeping them motivated to continue the journey especially when times get tough! Acceptance is also only possible when there are periods of reflection and reflection is about the internal dialogue that the client has about themselves, their situation and the progress they are making.

Suppression on the other hand, is about papering over the cracks. It's about forcing emotions and discontent down into the depth of a person's essence and then encouraging them to build a life around it in the hope that the discontent will fail to surface at an inopportune moment in the future.

There are mechanisms that can be employed to move from discontented (negative) thoughts and emotions to more self fulfilling (positive) emotions and thinking, and this starts with identifying what the thoughts are and acknowledging that they are what they are. This stage may take some time as any disclosure is based on feeling secure in the surroundings and an element of trust for the 'helper'. The next step is to move discontented thinking and emotions along the continuum to fulfilment by getting the client to connect with emotions in a way that helps them to see what the future might be like if they could only find the courage to move forward. There are a number of ways of doing this and a number of mediums that could be used to support those ways of doing it, visualisation being one and anchoring of emotions being another. Throughout the process there should be a system employed of both rating and checking commitment as well as a system that allows for appropriate termination of the process that is both transparent and client led.

For more information on working with clients and exploring fulfilment and discontent you can contact us on info@discoveryourbest.co.uk.