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Identity is culturally constructed. We acquire our own identity through shared understanding of cultural practices i.e. the positioning of own gender, race, class and status etc, it is a positioning and classification of 'self' within these repertoires of cultural practices that we gain our identity.

The positioning requires us to choose, mix, join and connect from these repertoires and social conventions. A 'sense of self' is gained through this positioning process as we go about creating a coherent narrative or story of what our identity should be. In other words, 'self' emerges from storying, from putting together a coherent narrative from the 'stock' of cultural conventions and practices (Mackay, 1997).

Put it in the counselling context, clients come with their perceived identity, from which their sense of self is derived. Through storying about life experiences, they actively and selectively create a 'self' of themselves drawing on the available cultural conventions, so they are not reflecting on own life experiences, rather they are constructing them (Bruner, 1987). How they construct them depends on the context they are in and what they want others to see. Understandably, in the context of counselling, it is most likely that clients would construct stories that are problem saturated, and they position themselves in the role of victims through their formulation of a story.

If 'self' is a construction, the fluidity of self-construction can then be deconstructed and reconstructed, the story can be retold, reformulated and re-authored drawing on the same generic conventions or from the stock of cultural narratives.

At this point, a Solution Focused practitioner plays a role of a co-creator with the client to assist in the re-authoring of the client's story, in re-creating a 'self' that is preferred and in re-constructing an identity that is edifying (Holyoake & Golding, 2010). The few familiar tools that the SF practitioner would use to assist in these are Problem Free Talk, the Pre-session Change, Scaling and the Miracle Question etc.

Problem Free Talk can be seen as a direct way to help clients to re-write the past experiences, moving

them away from the problem-saturated story to a story that is problem-free. Through talking about experiences that are not problem orientated, the client is actually constructing a story in which they act in a problem-free context that they identify themselves as someone surrounded by things, events and people that are not connected to any of the problems they bring with them, meanwhile they recognise one side of 'self' – a self that is unburdened, free from fears and stresses.

To ask the client to describe 'pre-session change' is to ask client to draw their attention to a story line of change in their life experience. The selective story telling is a deliberate action in focusing on a narrative from which a story can be built on, extended and elaborated, by which the client identifies himself or herself as being in the story performing a pro-active role, storying about a competent self.

As for the scaling technique, it helps clients to formulate a coherent story of past, present and future experiences, that enables clients to construct a story in which the clients play a role of a victor, an over-comer and a visionary, another story of a competent self.

In the Miracle Question, the clients actively construct a story of their preferred future. They see themselves in this story as someone who is free from the given problems, who participates in daily activities from a renewed perspective. Through storying, they begin to feel, sense, visualise and realise what self is like in the context of the story. In other words, the person who is constructing the story is also doing the feeling, sensing and realising. No doubt, it is a powerful and emotive story that they are telling.

The techniques described here, together with all other SF techniques, are tools that assist clients in creating a self in a problem-free context through storying, so as to help the clients to adopt a new script for a new story of self that moves away from the self-defeating story that has been dominating them.

In the new story, they adopt a new role, a new identity, and a sense of new self that have emerged from their identification with the person whom they are storying around.

#### References:

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