

Resistance Prevention in the Psychotherapeutic Process

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Abstract : Each Adlerian psychotherapist has their own skills to reduce patients' resistance during therapy. Those skills, however, are rarely researched because of their non-reproducibility. As we reported in ICIP 2008, the text analysis method, which was developed by one of the authors, was expected to be useful to analyze group process. In this study, employing a similar method, some techniques to reduce resistance in therapeutic conversations were examined.

Ten sessions of life-style analysis by an eminent Adlerian psychotherapist were recorded. Analyzing those records, it is observed that the therapist was intentionally changing the words of the patient into synonymous expressions to make him/her to accept interpretations more easily. In this way the clients were gradually prepared to recognize their immature private logic without traumatic experiences. In consequence the patient realized harmfulness of self-attachment (Ichgebundenheit) and began to develop community spirit (Gemeinschaftsgefuehl) through comfortable therapeutic conversations.

KeyWords : Adlerian psychology, Individual psychology, life-style analysis, text analysis, resistance prevention

Introduction

When we learn psychotherapy, we do so through trial and error, again and again. In this way, each Adlerian psychotherapist develops his/her own skills to guide the client in a cooperative and courageous way during therapy. These skills, however, are rarely researched and described because they are not reproducible.

In Lithuania in 2008, one of my colleagues reported about the counseling process in parent-study groups using the text-analysis method. We thought this method could be also useful to investigate what happens in psychotherapy sessions.

As we read the transcribed text of life-style analysis sessions of an Adlerian psychotherapist, we found him using words in a particular way before the stage where the client gains insight. In this study we investigated that.

Let us introduce some of the skills an experienced Adlerian therapist uses to reduce

the resistance of clients and guide them to insight in a non-traumatic way.

Materials and Methods

10 transcribed texts of lifestyle-analysis sessions were obtained with the permission of both clients and the therapist. All of the sessions were given by the same therapist. Each speech of the therapist was numbered as "Tn". For example, the 30th speech of the therapist was called "T30". The speeches of the client were labeled with "C" to distinguish them from those of the therapist.

Then from the text the following items were determined.

1. The present problem of the client.
2. The speech of the client on gaining insight
3. The speech of the therapist just before the insight
4. The point which therapist began operation in his speech.
5. Sequences of similar words or expressions between the start point of the operation and the insight.

Procedures

Here is an example of this procedure.

The present problem of this client was,

"I make a lot of mistakes at work because I am in a hurry. I want to be calm and stable."

The present problem usually appears in the first speech of the client.

Reading through the transcribed text, this client got insight just after T154. Let us look at the conversation around that part.

C: I usually write memos for myself at work so that I don't forget things. But more often than not, if someone is watching I make a mistake, or forget to write a memo.

T150: What are you trying to do by doing that?

C: I don't want to trouble my colleagues, and I'm scared of being scolded.

T151: But in your early memory you didn't mind others saying "Hay, your name tag is wrong!"?

C: No, I hated it.

T152: You hate it but you don't mind it?

C: I hate it but I don't mind it?? I'm confused...

T153: Yes, because that's what you have been doing - even now.

C: Ah, hah! I got it!

T154: Why don't you mind it?

C: Acting stupid gives me an advantage.

T155: What kind of advantage does it give you?

C: People say, "She is a bit stupid, but that's just her."

T156: Then you're excused, aren't you?

C: Yes, I am.

We regard T154 as the verbalization of the client's insight. This seems to be the purpose for her repeated inadequate pattern.

In which speech does the therapist begin the operation toward the client's insight? To find this we surveyed the text retrospectively.

Please look at the following transcription.

T112: (reading early recollection 1: When I was a small child, I was taking a nap at home. I sensed someone came into the room and looked at me. I felt happy to be loved.) What is the feeling?

C: Completely relieved.

T113: What makes you so relieved?

C: I'm not sure. I just feel happy.

T114: You feel so happy, because you are in what condition?

C: Because I am relaxed.

T115: Relaxed. Because you are doing nothing?

C: yeah...

T116: Would you like to do nothing? Don't you like... working hard?

C: No, I don't like to work hard.

T117: If it's possible, you would love to be idle, wouldn't you?

C: Yes. I want to do the things that I want to do, but I don't want to do things that I don't want to do.

From T112 to T114 are formal questions, but T115 is different. The client says "re~laxed". The therapist accepts it and offers "doing nothing". Here the therapist starts his operation. From here to the point of the insight, the therapist employs various synonyms.

The synonyms are underlined in the transcription above. Here we can see the sequence of

(C:)relaxed

→doing nothing

→don't work hard

→idle

We can also see a similar thing in another stream.

This is the conversation following on from the previous transcription.

T118: Hmm... For example?

C: I cannot clean up my house.

(omit)

T121: You aren't good at cleaning?

C: I'm not good at cleaning or planning.

T122: If you are good at planning, would you lose anything?

C: Lose something? I wish I could plan and arrange things.

T123: Really? But you loved taking a nap, here in this story, didn't you?

C: Yes, I loved taking a nap.

T124: If you worked, You wouldn't be loved, would you?

Here we can see another sequence.

(C:)cannot clean up

→not good at cleaning

→(C:)not good at planning

→if you are good at planning, would you lose anything?

→if you work, you wouldn't be loved?

In this way, we looked for the sequences of similar words or expressions between the start point of the operation and the insight.

Ten cases were investigated using this procedure.

Results

1) In all 10 cases, one or two sequences of similar words or sentences were observed.

We named these sequences "Metamorphosis" of words.

2) We recognized four types of "Metamorphosis."

These are the 4 types of "Metamorphosis"

I "Spitting in the soup" type

A: changing quality

B: changing quantity

II "Proposing a new dish" type

C: reinterpreting by Adlerian theory

D: proposing a new behavior.

A and B types aim to change the clients' private logic to be less valuable to him / her - so called, "spitting in the soup." In nine of the ten cases, either A or B, or both of them were used.

C and D types aim at proposing alternatives. We call this "proposing a new dish." This type of "Metamorphosis" was used in six of the ten cases.

One of the examples of a "spitting in the soup" type of metamorphosis is what we have already seen in a previous example.

(C:)relaxed
→doing nothing
→don't work hard
→idle

An example of a "proposing a new dish" type metamorphosis is as follows. This is an example of type C: reinterpreting by Adlerian theory.

(C:)cannot clean up
→aren't good at cleaning
→(C:)not good at planning
→if you are good at planning, would you lose anything?
→if you work, you wouldn't be loved?

Discussion

Alfred Adler talked about resistance by saying:

The so-called resistance is only lack of courage to return to the useful side of life. (Omit) we must never force a patient, but guide him very gently towards his easiest approach to usefulness. ^[1]

And R. Dreikurs wrote:

What appears as "resistance" constitutes a discrepancy between the goal of the therapist and those of the patient. ^[2]

Every Adlerian psychotherapist must have his/her unique skills to prevent or reduce such resistance.

In our investigation, we saw the therapist offer a word similar to the one which is used in the client's previous speech, prior to the stage of insight. If the client uses the new words once, the client can then use them in the conversation that fol~

lows. When a client uses the new word, inevitably the connotation changes. The therapist utilizes this change of connotation as a useful tool of therapy.

Metamorphosis is also found in Milton Erickson's technique. Jay Haley said,

It is characteristic of Erickson's hypnotic work that he attempt to gain a small response and then he builds upon it, amplifying that response until he has achieved the goal. He has often cautioned hypnotists about trying to achieve too much too quickly, rather than accepting what is offered and enlarging that. [3]

In the cases we looked at here, the therapist first accepts the words which client offers, and then re-presents them to the client with a small synonymous change. By using that repeatedly, the therapist can amplify the first small change step by step. It may be hard for a client to accept a big change at once. It is often much easier for them to accept a small change.

With the sequence of "Metamorphosis" aiming to "spitting in the soup" or "proposing a new dish", slowly and gradually, the client would prepare him/herself to give up his/her private logic. And they would also prepare him/herself to get a new alternative more easily. As a result, the client will not need a strong resistance at the stage of insight and will also have enough courage to enter the following stage of re-orientation. Using "Metamorphosis" of words, the therapist can help clients to get insight without strong resistance.

In such therapeutic relationship, there will be no more "client resistance". Between the two participants who have different roles in the session, there will only be "cooperation".

Conclusion

Heinz Ansbacher said,

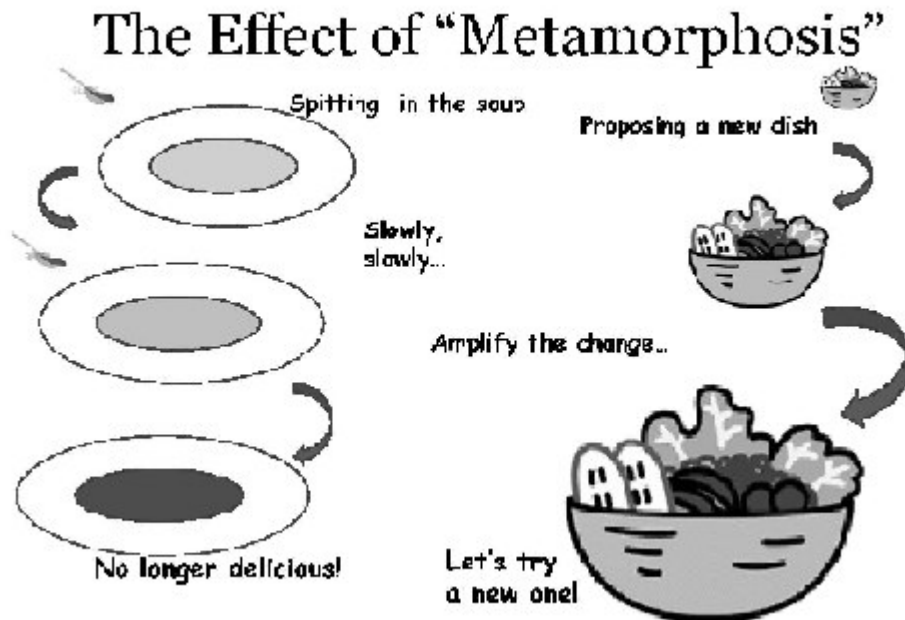
Psychotherapy is an "artistic", in the sense of creative, task in which the therapist brings his own creativity to bear to influence that of the patient. [4]

We have analyzed and introduced the logical structure of the artistic technique of an Adlerian therapist.

References

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