

HpO Gizmos: Unpacking Metaphors

Using **metaphors** may help to examine a situation or issue through new eyes and provide valuable insights into how to effect change. After developing a metaphor this process provides a structured approach to discuss and reflect on the metaphor. Different metaphors provide insights into different facets of a situation, as such, you may wish to use several metaphors to gain different perspectives and find novel ideas. One strategy is to have teams select different metaphors for the same challenge and then compare results. This process can be very effective when an issue seems to be 'stuck' or there is strong emotional involvement with the issue. Using metaphor can depersonalise sensitive issues and look at the assumptions and beliefs under the surface of the situation.

Process:

1. First define the situation or challenge you wish to examine and agree on a metaphor for the situation [see **HpO Metaphor Gizmo**].
2. List all the characteristics that the metaphor has in common with the issue. Decide whether they are positive or negative attributes.
3. Explore how the characteristics of the metaphor might be applied to this situation or challenge and pose the question, "*How might I/ we counter negative attributes or enhance the positive attributes they have in common?*"

Example: **Challenge:** Locating policies. **Metaphor:** *finding policies around here is like a treasure hunt*

Characteristics of this metaphor	+ve /-ve ?	What does this reveal about the situation?	How might we counter/ enhance this?
You need to search widely	-ve	Takes time and effort to find information	Develop new storage systems or processes to document where things are located
You need to gather clues	-ve	There is a range of people and places to help you	Working together as teams to pool information

CHALLENGE:

METAPHOR:

Characteristics of this metaphor	+ve / -ve ?	What does this reveal about the situation?	How might we counter/ enhance this?