

Isomorphism Exercise

The purpose of this exercise is to conduct some pre-work – with a client or willing friend – to elicit information that can be used to construct a hypnotic metaphor. Transformational stories can be particularly powerful when they are tailor-made to the individual. For this exercise, the key is to probe and search for information about the person's problem/situation that could then be incorporated – utilizing isomorphism – into your metaphors.

The following steps will take you through the exercise:

Designing your Hypnotic Metaphors using isomorphism.

Step 1. What is the problem theme?

- Ask your client – or friend – about the problem/situation. Get them to do a “brain dump”. The key for this part is to get the person to free-flow. Tell them not to analyze the situation, but just to go by their intuition.
- Once they have had a chance to describe their problem/situation, pan the camera back and ask the question: “What is all of this an example of?” You can also ask yourself this question too and notice what your intuition says. The purpose of this question is to elicit the “theme” of the problem. Once you have this theme write it down in the box below:

Problem Theme:

Step 2. What are the characters and their relationship?

(Please note: this step might not be relevant; it depends on the situation)

- Having now listened to the client's situation, what characters are present? Is it just them, or does it involve more people?
- Also, what is the relationship between the client and the other people?

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Step 3. The Solution (and outcome).

- Now that you have information about the client's situation it's time to think about potential solutions. You can either ask yourself the question, "What could be a potential solution to this?" Or you can ask the client this question.
- Another alternative to this question is, "What do you think would allow you to move beyond this problem?"
- The solution can take many forms. Generally, it is one of the following: change in their thinking; shift in their feelings; change in the way they behave.
- At this stage, you can also probe for the outcome - how their life would be different as a result of taking on board the solution. E.G. The relationship with their boss would get better.

(Please note: it isn't always necessary to elicit the outcome. Personally, I like to keep this vague - and sometimes unspecified - so the client can arrive at his or her own outcome over time.)

- Once you have an idea of the solution - and potentially the outcome - write some details in the boxes below:

The Solution:

The Outcome:

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Step 4. Design your metaphor.

- Now it's time to design your metaphor. What stories could you use to draw parallels to the elements of the client's situation? You don't have to include everything but you do want to have elements that can be used as a comparison to what is currently going on for them.
- Start off by looking at the "problem theme" and ask yourself: what stories do I know that have a similar theme to them?
- Then ask: "What happened in the story and how did the situation move towards a resolution?"
- At this stage you can add in some artistic license. Also, if you can't think of a story that fits then you can create one of your own that contains the main elements of isomorphism.
- You can also use more than one story.
- When designing your metaphor, you can either figure out the story from the client's situation, or you can look at your story database and see if you can tweak a story – or several stories to fit.

You can jot down some details of the story in the box below. Remember, your aim is to craft a story that draws parallels with the client's problem and also offers a potential solution.

Your Isomorphic Story: