



Clear Thinking Issue 111

How to build self esteem in others - ebook

Learn subtle communication secrets to avoid the usual mistakes that make others argue harder for their weaknesses.

“...a charming and very user-friendly book full of practical and workable methods” - Bill O’Hanlon

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Magical Therapy: 3 ways to use the miracle question

*How magic can help your clients make changes they believe are impossible – by **Mark Tyrrell***

Imagine that tonight as you sleep a miracle occurs in your life. A magical momentous happening that has completely solved this problem and perhaps rippled out to cover and infinitely improve other areas of your life too... think for a moment and tell me... how is life going to be different now? Describe it in detail.

What’s the first thing you’ll notice as you wake up in the morning?

The miracle question is a great ‘thought experiment’ and also a creative way to devise good therapeutic goals.

The miracle question basically asks people to make believe, however fantastical it may be in their particular circumstances, that their life *has already dramatically changed for the better*.

Instead of focusing exclusively on how insoluble their problem is, and how difficult life is because of it, it switches attention to what will happen *after* the problem is dealt with – focusing on the desired future rather than the undesired present. It jumps right over the mechanics of how, exactly, the problem will be solved into the mechanics of how will

they live when it *is* solved.

It's a neat and rather fun way of bypassing rigid constraints, black and white thinking, and unshakeable beliefs that "things can't possibly change!"

Here are three pointers to help you release the magic in your therapy sessions.

1 Use the miracle question to find out more

If by some magic a miracle occurs tonight as you sleep, and when you wake up you no longer feel the need to be obsessively vacuuming, what, can you imagine now, will your day be like?

You can use the MQ (or a suitable variation) to glean not just information about *what this person really wants* in their future but also very useful information about *how their problem manifests right now*.

For example, our OCD client might respond to the question above:

Well, I wouldn't wake up with that dreadful knot of fear in my stomach.

Okay, so they still put this in negative terms, but they have nonetheless given you valuable information about what they have been experiencing. This gives you another marker against which to measure future progress – them waking up feeling more positive and calm.

So use the MQ to find out about where they are now.

2 Use the miracle question wisely

No therapeutic technique is appropriate in all circumstances. And when we do choose to use any particular technique we should be able to adapt it to fit the character and circumstances of individual clients.

If people are grieving the passing of a loved one or are living with cancer, asking them about a miracle might elicit responses like:

Well, my husband would still be alive, wouldn't he?

or

This cancer would never have happened!

The miracle question might not be such a great tactic in such circumstances. Instead you could ask simply:

What will be a sign that you're feeling better in the days to come?

However, if someone is depressed and miserable because of the way they are living, then you can throw caution to the winds. They might tell you:

I'd have money... good friends... I'd be fitter and slimmer...

These are things you can genuinely start to help them work towards.

So it pays to remember to combine common sense with your miracle questions.

3 Use the miracle question imaginatively

We want people to *feel* the answer to the miracle question – to *experience* it and not just to *think* about it. This helps to make the imagined future more real to them, and not just a theoretical construct. This is why we encourage students on our courses to use hypnosis to enhance its effects.

So rather than getting someone to answer straight away, get them to 'go inside' for a few moments and really 'see and feel' the miracle. Ask them to *imagine the answer* rather than tell you in words.

For example:

Okay, now, just using total fantasy here... If by some very real magic you were to go to sleep tonight and a miracle happened while you were sleeping, and when you wake in the morning you and your life are in an altogether happier place, as if the problem has been swept away... just imagine how that will feel now with your eyes closed... how will it be?... what will you do?

When you've given them some time to carry out this process, you can ask your client to tell you in detail what they have noticed and imagined. This will:

- give *them* a flavour and a 'blueprint' for how things might be different
- give *you* an idea of how to manage their expectations and develop a strategy for your future therapeutic work.

Using the miracle question is a wonderful way to bypass the usual worries about *how* things could change (which can be tackled later in the therapy) and switch to a motivational focus on *what* your client really wants changed.

Sometimes people need a little coaxing to enter into the spirit of miracle questioning. And sometimes we all need encouragement to see miracles that have already occurred or are happening right now...

Lift depression fast online training course

People who have become stuck in depression for any length of time rather readily become convinced that there is no way out, that things are never going to change, and that they might as well resign themselves to being miserable for the rest of their lives.

If you ask them what they can do to improve their situation, they are likely to look blankly at you. *Improve?* What are you talking about?

They are often prime candidates for the miracle question approach. Which is why using the miracle question effectively is a vital component of our [Lift depression fast online training course](#). But of course it is only one part.

This rich and varied course aims to give you a whole range of powerful techniques and approaches to help you make a difference to your depressed clients. Quickly.

The next [Lift depression fast online course](#) starts on Tuesday 15 March and our generous Early Bird discount is open right up until 22 February. There are only 25 places on each course, so it's a good idea to book your place early.

Come to think of it, what a great New Year resolution that would make!

[Read all about the lift depression quickly online course here.](#)

See you in a fortnight.

[Mark Tyrrell](#)

Co-Founder

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