

One of the oddities I come across regularly in my psychotherapy practice is that people know a lot more than they think they know in terms of helping themselves. It is as if people are unfamiliar to their deeper potential and dismiss what could otherwise be important avenues of self-help. Even when some of their potential is obviously manifest in their life, there seems to be great reluctance in owning their unique abilities and talents.

There are many ways to help people recognize and utilize their potentials and strengths. When I work with people I generally try and help them develop their intuition and help them to access their ability to observe themselves. Both are very valuable tools and resources that people often overlook and don't pay enough attention to. The following are two simple but effective techniques which can be employed to help develop intuition and observation. Let us examine an intuition development technique to begin with:

It is often the case that when I ask people what they make of their own behaviour they often respond with "I do not know". Sometimes, people do not know and that is ok. However, often the response is a cover-up for not wishing to look foolish and/or a lack of confidence (among other possible explanations).

An interesting phenomenon occurs in situations like these when people are forced to guess as to what may be going on. In case you are wondering, there is no actual forced applied, but we might say that there is little bit of pressure put on to get the client to take a guess.

Often when they do guess they are spot on in their interpretations. It's not infallible by any means, but the phenomena is consistent enough to warrant further exploration by the client. Aside from encouraging the guess it also encourages people to take risks with themselves and contact parts of themselves that they have some reluctance in connecting with fully. It enables them to know in a less linear fashion than they are accustomed too.

The whole trick is to get people to take a chance on themselves. Usually if they can continue to take the risk of guessing confidence builds over time.

A way to further build on confidence is to create a guessing journal. Primarily the journal is used to keep track of correct and incorrect guesses. Ideally it should go into specifics so that we can better discern what works, when it works, and in what situations it works. In a similar vein, we track what does not work.

An example may be, "my intuition does not work well when I am anxious". Over time we

might be able to discern that overthinking situations is not what it is cracked up to be. We could notice that our intuition seems to work best when there is a full embodiment of it and it is noticeable in the body.

It is important to not fall into the trap of taking my word for it, but rather to adopt a let's try it for ourselves approach. This experimental approach to life where we become the experiment and the experimenter is particularly suited to any sort of psychological or spiritual depth work. One of the major points of taking a guess is to own our expertise as opposed to relying on the therapists or spiritual guru's expertise.

We can easily use this technique with ourselves. All we should do is be willing to take a risk to put our guesses to the test. Embrace the fact that we will be wrong at times and that Ego will be in the way. If we can do this on a consistent and persistent basis then we can develop another way of knowing with a relatively simple technique.

Another technique I regularly employ is to ask the client to swap roles with me. I will role play the problem they present with and they in essence become the therapist. A variation on this is to ask the client what they would do or what advice they would give if they were the therapist and their situation was occurring to another human being.

The advantage of this technique is that it forces the client to take a step back from their own situation. It is the objectivity and the fresh perspective we are looking for.

If we think back on our own experiences, there are times we are overwhelmed and feel supremely stuck. Often this occurs because we become too enmeshed with the problem and can no longer see the problem with any degree of objectivity. A new perspective often comes about when we start to disengage from the problem. For example, when I ask a person what they might advise if they were the therapist, they frequently come up with remarkably good insights and suggestions. Not always, but often.

Playing our own therapist is a remarkably useful resource that we can utilize more frequently in our lives. If we are overwhelmed emotionally or our thoughts are racing, accept and embrace that fully. Sometimes it's good to write down what we are experiencing until we have enough space between it and us that we can move more easily into role playing a therapist.

The key here is to develop an attitude of non-judgemental observation. We observe

ourselves and the situation as non-judgementally as we can. It is important to not be overwhelmed then. From that non-judgemental space, we make assertions and decisions about our lives. We want to be connected to our emotions, body and thoughts but we do not want to be overwhelmed by them. Experientially it should feel like a very adult state of being. If you are really role playing a therapist well it should feel very adult.

Try not to confuse seriousness with being a therapeutic adult. We can be playful in the role of a therapist as well. The main emphasis though should be on healing, where we are trying to tap into our own inner therapist.

Like most things in life, the more we practice this role-playing technique the more comfortable we become with it. Our degree of competence in the role rises as we gain more experience being our own therapist.

The big caveat being that our ego can become so inflated that we start to believe that our own advice is the end all and be all of life. Part of what we need to do is to manage our egos to the point where we can develop confidence in knowing how to proceed, but also be very wary of falling into the trap of egomania.

The two techniques presented here offer an opportunity to expand our ways of knowing in the world. They both require a little bit of discipline in that we should persist with them to get the maximum benefit from them. They are very effective techniques in therapy, but can just as easily be amended to being self-help





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