

Spiritual Direction: Holy Active Listening

Spiritual direction is not so much what you do rather is more something you are. It is all about compassionate presence. Listening to understand and not just to respond. At its core is comprised of compassion, holy curiosity, and presence.



Spiritual Directors International offers the image of three chairs as a visual reminder of who is present during spiritual direction. In one chair a seeker sits, desiring a deeper relationship with God, a Higher Power, or Ultimate Reality. In a second chair, a spiritual director listens, inquires, and holds the space for the seeker to encounter the true Spiritual Director in the third chair.

The Third Chair.

You are a Spiritual Director.

I sit in my chair
you in yours.

I have come to see you
with a longing
that mystifies me.

You draw my attention
to the third chair
in the room:

You invite me to see
with the eye of my heart
the Source
of my longing:

the Eternal, invisible, loving, guiding,
challenging, insistent
Mystery
in the third chair.

—Jennifer (Jinks) Hoffmann

<http://www.sdiworld.org/about-us/purpose-and-history/three-chairs>

Tools for Holy Listening

Attitude: Unconditional Positive Regard

“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.”

— Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy

“People are just as wonderful as sunsets if you let them be. When I look at a sunset, I don't find myself saying, "Soften the orange a bit on the right hand corner." I don't try to control a sunset. I watch with awe as it unfolds.”

— Carl R. Rogers, A Way of Being

Neurolinguistics: Matching and Mirroring: body language, communication style, energy level

Motivational Interviewing: Collaboration- Acceptance-Compassion- Evocation

- **OARS: 4 Strategies of motivational interviewing**
 - **Open-ended Questions:** Often start with words like “how” or “what” or “tell me about” or describe”
 - **Affirm-**Sincerely accentuate the positive, seeking and acknowledging strengths and efforts.
 - **Reflect** - the skill of “active” listening, clarifying, offering *reflections* as guesses about the person’s meaning.
 - **Summarize-** creates linkages the client may not have seen on his/her own.

Appreciative Inquiry: the act of exploration and discovery, asking questions; open to seeing new potentials and possibilities thru conversations that progressively focus on appreciating, envisioning, designing, sustaining.



Clean Language: Revealing Metaphors and Opening Minds

Being “Clean” is the practice of keeping your advice, opinions and assumptions to yourself, and listening deeply, staying with the persons metaphors and language without projecting upon it. The intent is to assist the person in discovering the hidden meaning in the metaphors they choose to describe a situation.

Narrative Therapy: Change your story...change your life.

This technique is also known as “re-authoring” or “re-storying,” as clients explore their own experiences to find alterations to their story or make a whole new one.

Using Image: Working with image as a vehicle to elicit deeper wisdom.

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Haden Verbatim Process

Requirement: Write and present two verbatims to your small group for processing.

- Format: 2 pages total:
 - 1 page of dialogue between you and a spiritual directee accompanied by your own inner dialogue that is happening during the session.
 - 1 page of reflections completed by you after the session.
 - Format is available of the SD Course Resources page of the Haden Website.
 - Password: *seeker*
- Provide enough copies of the verbatim for your group members and the verbatim facilitator.

Verbatim Process: Very much like group spiritual direction or dream group. It is an affirming process.

- You will not always be with your mentor. Having a variety of mentors facilitate the verbatim process allows you to benefit from the knowledge and approach of many.
- Begins in silence and has silence interspersed throughout to encourage deep listening.
- Holds the Directee and SD Student Director in Holy presence.
- Begins with a focus on what the group perceives in regards what is happening with the Directee. Then shifts focus to what is happening with the spiritual director during the session.
- Ends with affirmation.

Finding potential directees for your verbatims: Let it be known that you are in SD training and need to do practice sessions. You may find someone in a yoga class, at church, a professional colleague, friend or family member.

VERBATIM REFLECTION

A designated leader will be responsible for guiding this process. The method calls for a disciplined discussion. It would be helpful if all individual participants have read the verbatim prior to the group session. Please follow the time allowed for each section. The undergirding assumption is that this process will not exhaust all possibilities.

1. **Silent Prayer** (2 minutes)
2. **Clarification of information and any verbal additions to the written verbatim by the presenting student director.** The presenter may share how they felt when he/she worked with the directee. What was the presenter's prayer for this person? Himself/herself? The group may ask questions of the presenter for clarification only. (Allow 3- 5 minutes)
3. **Silence** (2 minutes) then the student director and a volunteer read the verbatim dialogue out loud.
4. **Focus on Directee: Group reflects on the session focusing on what they perceive as the presence and movement of God in the directee's life.** The presenting student director only listens; he/she does not respond or answer questions. Some helpful questions to stimulate reflection follow. (Allow 15 minutes)
 - a. Where is this person in his/her journey?
 - b. What issues you discern that God is raising in this person's life?
 - c. Do you observe **transference** from the directee to the director?
Transference" refers to certain unconsciously redirected feelings, fears, or emotions from a directee towards the spiritual director that actually stems from past feelings and interactions with others and is transferred into the current relationship.
 - d. Do you observe elements of directee's shadow, dark or bright?
 - e. Do you observe Complex energies?
 - f. What images arise as you visualize this person on their journey?
 - g. Can you name/identify persons, saints, events, doctrines or themes from the Tradition and Scripture that relate to and inform this person's story?
 - h. Have you read anything that would help this person?
 - i. Do you discern the Spirit's movement in this person's life?
5. **Silence** (2 minutes)
6. **Focus on Director: Group reflects on the session focusing on what they see the director doing in the session.** Presenting student director listens. (Allow 25 minutes)
 - a. How do you see the Spirit at work through the director?
 - b. What theological truths and assumptions are supporting this session?
 - c. Are there ways in which the director's response could deepen and expand the directee's experience?
 - d. Do you observe **counter-transference** from the director to the directee? *Counter-transference refers to certain unconsciously redirected feelings, fears, or emotions from the spiritual director towards a directee that actually stems from past feelings and interactions with others and is transferred into the current relationship.*
 - e. Have you read anything that you could recommend to the director that might be helpful for him/her in reflecting on this session?
 - f. What images arise as you visualize the director journeying with the directee?
 - g. From the director's point-of-view, can you relate this encounter to the Tradition or Scriptures?
7. **Silence** (2 minutes)
8. **Final reflection and response by the presenting student director** (allow 5 minutes)
 - a. What has been helpful during this process? What do you feel as been overlooked?
 - b. In retrospect, how does the student director perceive the presence of the Spirit in the directing session? In the group case study reflection?
 - c. Describe any new insights about the work of a spiritual director?
9. **We close the group case study with our verbal affirmations for the work of the student director.** We briefly express what we have appreciated about the process. We express our gratitude to God in a closing prayer.

Holy Listening Resources

Neurolinguistics: Matching and Mirroring

Mirroring is the simultaneous 'copying' of the behavior of another person, as if reflecting their movements back to them. When done with respect and discretion, mirroring creates a positive feeling and responsiveness in you and others.

Matching has a built-in 'time lag'. For example, if a directee uncrosses her legs and leans slightly forward while speaking, you should wait for a few seconds and then discretely adopt the same or similar posture.

External Communication cues: Posture, Gestures, Mannerisms, Body language

Language and vocal patterns: Tone, Inflection, Speech rate, Sensory language (Visual, Auditory, Feeling, Kinesthetic, Thinking

Energy Level: Energetic, calm, etc.

Motivational Interviewing Overview

Simple definition: Motivational Interviewing is a collaborative style for strengthening a person's own motivation and commitment.

The four central components of the Underlying *Spirit* of MI:

Collaboration- The spiritual director functions as a partner or companion, collaborating with the client's own expertise and experience.

Acceptance- The spiritual director communicates the aspects below:

Absolute Worth- Prizing the inherent value and potential of every human being.

Accurate Empathy- The skill of perceiving and reflecting back another person's meaning.

Affirmation- The spiritual director accentuates the positive, acknowledging a person's strengths and efforts.

Autonomy Support- The spiritual director accepts and confirms the client's irrevocable right to self-determination and choice.

Compassion- The spiritual director acts benevolently to promote the client's welfare, giving priority to the client's needs.

Evocation- The spiritual director elicits the client's own perspectives and motivations.

Three Fundamental Processes of MI:

Engaging- establishing a mutually trusting and respectful helping relationship.

Focusing- clarifying a particular direction or belief

Evoking- eliciting the person's own motivation, feelings, commitment and journey

OARS: 4 Strategies of motivational interviewing

Open-ended Questions

- Open questions gather broad descriptive information
- Facilitate dialogue
- Require more of a response than a simple yes or no
- Often start with words like "how" or "what" or "tell me about" or describe"
- Usually go from general to specific

Affirm- the spiritual director accentuates the positive, seeking and acknowledging a person's strengths and efforts.

- Must be done sincerely
- Supports and promotes self-efficacy
- Acknowledges the difficulties the client has experienced

- Validates the client’s experience and feelings
 - Emphasizes past experiences that demonstrate strength and success to prevent discouragement
 - **Reflect** - the skill of “active” listening whereby the spiritual director seeks to understand the client’s subjective experience, offering *reflections* as guesses about the person’s meaning.
 - Reflective listening begins with a way of thinking
 - It includes an interest in what the person has to say and a desire to truly understand how the person sees things
 - It is essentially hypothesis testing, clarifying
 - What you think a person means may not be what they mean
 - Repeating – simplest
 - Rephrasing – substitutes synonyms
 - Paraphrasing – major restatement
 - Reflection of feeling – deepest
 - **Summarize**- a reflection that draws together content from two or more prior client statements.
 - Summaries reinforce what has been said, show that you have been listening carefully, and create linkages the client may not have seen on his/her own.
 - Summaries can link together client’s feelings with actions and events
- Miller and Rollnick, Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change, Guilford Press 2002*

Appreciative Inquiry Overview

Spiritual Guidance is a Gift.

“When used consistently, the appreciative approach becomes more than a development tool. It becomes a creative way of being in the world- a way of being that deliberately attends to what is life giving and learning how we can grow these life giving realities. It is about creating and growing what is truly important rather than narrowly focusing on solving the next problem.”(Voyle p.7)

“At the heart of the universe is a heart of love that embraces us and accepts us unconditionally. This heart of love is the source of our existence. This loving heart created us for a purpose and has given us every resource we need to fulfill that purpose.” (Voyle, p. 5)

- Appreciative Inquiry sees the gift of the other
- Appreciative Inquiry trusts one's intuitions and inner wisdom- but test it out
- Appreciative Inquiry listens to the hearts unfolding and honors the struggle
- Appreciative Inquiry hears the hearts struggles in the words spoken
- Appreciative Inquiry honors the defended heart and appraises it
- Appreciative Inquiry affirms the inherent wisdom of the other

Sample Appreciative Inquiry Questions:

Tell me about a time when you discovered an inner source of strength and used it to get through a difficult time? Describe the quality in detail. How did it make itself known to you? What did it enable you to do? What did you learn about yourself?



Describe a time when you felt a presence in your life that quietly and gently assured you that you were not alone and provided you with the support, encouragement, understanding and love you needed during a challenging time. How did you feel the presence? What did it feel like? What need did it fill at the time?

When did you experience spiritual growth born of adversity? What was the event? What did it challenge you to do? How did it change how you see yourself? How did you experience a sense of inner guidance? Tell me about any dreams or synchronicities.

References: Hammond, Sue Annis. The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry (Third Edition). Bend, OR: Book Publishing, 2013
Voyle, Robert and Kim. Core Elements of the Appreciative Way: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry for Work and Daily Living. Hillsboro, OR: Clergy Leadership Institute, 2006.

<https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/learn/appreciative-inquiry-introduction/>

Clean Language, Revealing Metaphors and Opening Minds

by Wendy Sullivan and Judy Rees, Crown House Publishing 2008

“Being “Clean” is the practice of keeping your advice, opinions and assumptions to yourself, and listening deeply, observing with your full attention on the other person’s words and non-verbal signals. The intent is to assist the person in discovering their own hidden wisdom, the hidden meaning in the metaphors they choose to describe a situation.” (Sullivan and Jones pg.8)

Clean Questions: (And) What kind of ____ is that ____? (And) Is there anything else about ____?

(And) Where is ____?

Example:

Directee: I want to feel trusting.

Director: What kind of trusting?

Directee: Strong but flexible

Director: And is there anything else about the “strong but flexible” of that trusting?

Directee: It’s what I want more of all the time.

Director: And when you feel strong but flexible trusting, where do you feel it?

Directee: In my chest.

Director: Whereabouts in your chest?

Directee: In the center.

Director: Is there anything else about the strong but flexible trusting in the center of your chest?

Directee: I’m beginning to feel it right now... *Adapted from (Sullivan and Jones pg.16)*

Metaphor is at the heart of the Clean way of thinking. That’s part of what gives Clean its ability to facilitate long-lasting understanding between people. Metaphors provide an important road into the deeper, more profound levels of a person’s psyche. (Sullivan and Jones pg.19)

Narrative Therapy

Change your story...change your life.

“The problem is the problem, the person is not the problem.” – Michael White and David Epston

One of the most basic therapeutic principles in narrative therapy is that we find meaning and healing through telling stories. Helping your client develop their story gives them an opportunity to discover meaning, find healing, and establish or re-establish an identity, all integral factors for success in therapy.

This technique is also known as “re-authoring” or “re-storying,” as clients explore their own experiences to find alterations to their story or make a whole new one. The same events can tell a hundred different stories, since we all interpret experiences differently and find different senses of meaning (Dulwich Centre).” Source: <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/narrative-therapy/#what>