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METAPHORICAL ASSOCIATIVE CARDS IN THE SITUATION OF CHOICE*Svetlana TOLSTAI**Universitatea de Stat din Moldova*

In this paper, we propose to review the possibility of metaphorical associative cards using in the situations of choice. The value of choice, its role in the formation of the essential person's characteristics is the topic of non-classical humanistic-oriented psychological theories and concepts. Working with time line allows modeling and investigating any processes in the past and future, finding solutions with cards metaphorical images, creating for the client a special reality, which can be subsequently embodied in his life.

Keywords: *metaphorical associative cards, situations of choice, solution, psychological counselling.*

CARDURI ASOCIATIVE METAFORICE ÎN SITUAȚIA ALEGERII

În această lucrare ne propunem să analizăm posibilitatea utilizării cardurilor asociative metaforice în situațiile de alegere. Valoarea alegerii, rolul ei în formarea caracteristicilor esențiale ale persoanei este subiectul teoriilor și conceptelor psihologice non-clasice. Utilizarea cardurilor metaforice în lucrul cu linia timpului permite modelarea și investigarea oricăror procese din trecut și viitor, găsirea soluțiilor pentru situația de alegere, creând pentru client o realitate specială, care poate fi ulterior încorporată în viața lui.

Cuvinte-cheie: *carduri asociative metaforice, alegere, soluție, consiliere psihologică.*

Introduction

Metaphorical associative cards are unique tools and assistants of a practical psychologist. In professional circles cards are known under different names: "O card", "projective card", "therapeutic card" etc.

Metaphorical associative cards (OH cards, projective cards) have already more than 20 years of history. The first deck of cards was created in 1975 by Eli Raman, a Canadian professor of history of arts. He wanted to bring art out of galleries and make it closer to people. Deck of cards were named «OH» (interjection in English indicating surprise). Together with the therapist Joe Schlichter there were developed rules and principles of the use of cards as a psychological tool [1].

In 1983, Ali Rahman met Moritz Egetmeyerom, who saw in "OH" cards a long-expected tool which can push the client to frank talk about himself and his problems. Today the "OH" cards are translated into many languages, including Russian, and besides them there are 17 unique decks of cards that can be used, either on their own or in any combination with any other decks of associative cards [2].

Cards create an atmosphere of safety and trust. It can encourage people to self-knowledge, self-discovery and creativity, and to improve their communication with others. Also it can help to understand the psychological causes of events, happening with a person, and to find a solution in difficult situations. Ease of cards application, it allows you to use them without special training for personal growth, an interesting family entertainment, or for games in a friendly company.

Concept and argument

OH-cards are a whole family of metaphorical associative cards that form its own, unlike on any other cards genre. These cards have no assigned values, to each other as in the Tarot. Each player during the game defines for himself the meanings. Although each deck is unique, it can be combined with all other decks of metaphorical associative cards, opening up new opportunities for creativity and making the infinite space for our imagination's game [3].

Each deck of associative cards is a set of picture cards or word cards. Some decks are presented in two parts, some are just single. Cards do not have names and numbers. Besides images there is nothing in them. The Word *cards* can be understood precisely as images, because even in the case of its interpretation, there is no clear "line of reading", it is still individually in each case. Cards are not connected with each other, each of it is an independent world, separate from the others. Only specific particular combination of two or more cards in the hands of one person acquires a special meaning and importance.

Every picture in the deck is abstract, there is a picture or a word, and its reading does not require any special knowledge, understanding of the meanings. Everyone can interpret the card as he/she sees it. Associative cards are a tool of self-knowledge in the client's hands. He takes out cards by himself, and he reads them. The consultant shall perform only a supporting role, directing the client's movement, helping him to formulate requests and decrypt responses [4].

As you can see, associative cards are a totally different system, designed essentially for the same reasons as many other projective techniques. Aims are simple – self-knowledge, to analyze the choice of paths in life, an attempt to understand the present. Only the methods are different. Associative cards can become a very powerful diagnostic tool, which allows you to work only on your client's own. It's a kind of communication with subconscious. Metaphorical associative cards allow you to bypass rational thinking, remove protection and the internal resistance, to create the conditions for dialogue between person's outer and inner world.

The application range of the "OH" cards in group and individual work with adults and kids is enormous. Cards are easy to use in family therapy, psychodrama, gestalt, existential, and art therapy, transactional analysis and psychosynthesis, just for fun with friends and family. Post-traumatic syndrome, working with psychosomatic diseases and dependencies, parent-child problems, and problems of marital relations, relations in groups, business counseling, clarification and solving conflicts, personal growth - this is an incomplete list of areas where the use of cards, addressing through it to your imagination, fantasy, the associations flow can be very effective [5].

In this paper, we propose to review the possibility of using metaphorical associative cards in the choice situations. The value of choice, its role in the formation of the essential person's characteristics is a topic of non-classical humanistic-oriented psychological theories and concepts. The majority of authors distinguish in the situation of choice some psychological characteristics such as: - the uncertainty; - the situation in the sense; - experience of freedom; - identity, actualization of "Self" as a result of the choice.

When we are facing a fateful choice, it would be desirable to be able to look into the future and see how the events will develop at a particular decision. But, alas, such a picture of the future, both immediate and long-term, is not available. And we always need to choose something. Life forces us for the constant process of making decisions of varying degrees of complexity and importance.

Many people, finding themselves in an uncertain situation, where the selection of the future path of development is needed, are in confusion. They do not know what they prefer, they are afraid to make a mistake, so they let the situation take its course and hope that it can be somehow resolved by itself. Although this position is also a kind of decision-making and it can be defined as waiting. However, waiting, you can miss a lot [6].

Metaphorical cards allow you to access a complete picture of the client's own "I", his personal myth about the world and about himself in it, and also about a subjective image of the situation from the client's perspective. Cards help to clarify and realize the actual experiences and needs of the client, his incomplete internal processes. Cards illustrate the picture of any interpersonal relationship or a picture of human relationship with any ideas and images from the outer or inner reality [7]. Working with time line allows to model and investigate any processes in the past and future, finding with cards metaphorical images of solutions, created for the client a special reality, which can be subsequently embodied in his life.

The "Persona" deck is very suitable for solving the problem issues in situations of vital choice. You can hold to the following algorithm:

1. To solve the problem issues clients are asked to select cards corresponding to two different states, "I am in the situation" and "I'm not in the situation." Cards can be selected purposefully (it is important to consider not only a portrait likeness but the similarity of conditions). You can choose blindly. This is a more complex layout, more difficult to describe, but there client's unconscious processes can appear more clearly.

2. It is not recommended to limit the client's choice only by situations 1 and 2. Ask him/her to continue his/her research and choose another 2 cards: "I am here and there - in both situations at the same time" and "I am neither there nor there - the third version."

3. After the description of each card, it is important to ask about client's state, the emotional response, about the body and cognitive sphere manifestations. Good question: "How do you feel in this card?"

4. In conclusion of the work it's good to ask a question: "In what state do you want to go now? What state is closer?, etc."

Let's consider the examples of how this technique works [8].

The client and the request: Consultation was requested by a 37 years old woman. Talking about her family life, she emphasizes the fact that she is tired of the relationship with her husband and in recent years she is increasingly thinking about the divorce. So, she didn't want to talk about the specific issues (according to the client "it makes no sense"), because at the moment she is more interested in the question: "What can divorce give her?" Then, she has formulated the question: "What happens if I go away from my husband?" And held out the first card blindly from the deck.

Situation #1 "We broke up". Client (hereinafter K) "middle-aged woman, good looking, well-groomed, but arrogant. Although, I think it is just outside ... Inside tears, offense, self-pity and the emptiness. Gloat and envy towards other families. If it's me, I don't like myself in this state. I'm feeling bad in it. " After that, she is taking blindly the next card, for the question "What happens if I stay?"



Card for situation #1

Situation #2 "We didn't break up". To: "A wise and kind woman. She even looks good. Wearing stylish, expensive clothes, jewelry. I think she knows her worth! Her look is calm, she is confident in herself. I think because of her composure and confidence, she has won the love of many people. They always come to her to take an advice. But she had suffered this skill, she suffered a lot and made mistakes, until came to understand that love and understanding are the most important things in life. So, she is not wasting her energy, especially in relationships. I would like to be like her. Imagining myself calm and confident, I am feeling peaceful. This woman gives me a warm feeling".



Card for situation #2

Then I ask her to take another and answer the question: "What will happen to me if we leave things as they are? To live together and be separated at the same time..."

Situation#3 "Didn't break up and broke up in the same time". K: "Something vague, no face, no character, no life ... As if in a dream. In the dream, there is a lot of good, it is possible to dream, to dream, but not to live. But I want to live. Here nothing happens. It's a feeling of serenity and insensibility, and I want to run away. "And the last variant: I propose to find an answer for the question "What will happen with me in a new relationship?"



Card for situation #3

Situation #4 "Me in a new relationship". K: "Oh, she is a cold, business woman. Very similar to the first card, but more rigorous. Her job is the main thing for her. She does not believe in love, there are some hobbies, she even did not forget how to flirt, but there is only the physiology... no senses ... I do not know if she was crying into her pillow at night, but she definitely has no emotional satisfaction. Perhaps she has a different understanding what, "happiness" means, and perhaps she rejected for herself such combination as "personal happiness". No, I guess she never cries into her pillow. The question of close relationships with men is closed for her forever. And she is calm. Yes, man – it is for sex and a passing fancy, instead there are no deep wounds. She thinks a lot of herself, taking care of herself, she is calm and confident."



Card for situation #4

On the next phase the was client invited to return back to all four states and try to feel, in which she feels in the most comfortable way. She (client) eventually chose situation #2 "We didn't break up".

K: Perhaps the calm and confidence, then when you are loved is my favorite. In this state I felt very comfortable. Of course, I will not be lost alone ... and maybe I can even find someone ... I don't think there will be much love, and I'm not ready to renounce of these feelings. And then, when I talked about the woman (2nd card), I understood the main thing: to love and to understand. Do I love my husband? Now I find it difficult to answer unequivocally ... Somehow a lot of things happened and I do not know how to answer, because now I really want to figure it out, and to be honest, first of all with myself. I'll think about it .. But I understand ... I think this is not enough. I cannot say right now, what my husband doesn't like in me ... I know him so bad ... We have so little frank talks ... Time has come..."

Author's commentary: It's really good when in the office of a psychologist something is redefining, when something new opens to the client. Maybe in a "normal" conversation, we also could discuss all possible options and to analyze client's state in different situations. It would take a little more time. Cards kind of "revived" her feelings, with their help it was possible to keep under review all four states and choose the most acceptable. The client left with a serious intention to talk with her husband, get to know him better and let him know her. During the work with projective cards there is no clear pattern of layouts, but at least, it is not so important, because here it is possible to develop in a creative way. Further we will consider another example of work with the «Persona» deck in a situation of choice.

Thus, the cards help to formulate the problem, to express what is difficult to say, to help realize the causes of the problem and find solutions. The cards allow you to see the complete picture of client's own "Self", his personal myth about the world and about himself in it, as well as a subjective image of the situation from the client's perspective. Metaphorical associative cards can quickly and evidently get the necessary amount of information for qualitative work with the client, identify their problem, clarify and understand the client's actual experiences and needs as well as their incomplete internal processes.

Conclusion

The work with the visual images can greatly reduce the client's conscious censorship, it is easier to work with the internal subconscious conflicts. The cards give us the opportunity to see the clear picture of any interpersonal relations or of person's relationship with any ideas and images from the outer or inner reality.

Using the cards to address the traumatic situation through the metaphor avoids additional retraumatization and creates a safe context for research and modeling solutions. The cards trigger internal processes of self-healing and finding the own unique way out of the crisis. "OH" cards have all the advantages of projective techniques, significantly expanding the therapeutic arsenal of a psychologist or therapist.

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