

Directions for the What If? Technique

The What if? technique is designed to give the client the opportunity to practise (simulate) new or poorly developed roles and behaviours. It can be a nice follow-up to the If You Only Knew technique wherein the client has deemed it necessary to confront/respond to another person in a different manner. It may also be a useful exercise following the Role Cascade technique through which the client has identified the Point of Power and a more appropriate response to play in relation to a Counter Role.

After “Desired” and “Feared” outcomes are verbalised and portrayed on the template using figures and props, the coach assists the client practise Constructive role(s) in the “Simulation” box. To this end, the coach is allowed to manipulate the figures on the stage (and speak) as the “other person” in the dynamic. In this way, different possible scenarios and interactions can be rehearsed and practised. The coach can also play the role of the protagonist sometimes (Role Reversal) and ask the client to play the role of the other person in the dynamic.

Through repeated and consistent simulation, a client can create, play and develop “new” desired roles in response to varied verbal and non-verbal cues and responses. Simulation stimulates mirror neurons in the brain making desired actions and constructive roles more likely to be accessed and demonstrated in real life.

Warm Up

1. Briefly describe the situation and circumstances involving the person you’re wishing to confront/ engage/ respond to in a more appropriate way.
2. Ideally, what do you want to happen as a result of this interaction?
3. What is your greatest fear/reservation about authentically interacting with this person in real life? What are the possible consequences?

Serious Play

Desired Outcome

1. Depict your desired outcome on the upper right box on the template using figures and props.
2. What role are you playing? What are you doing and how are you feeling while doing it? Record the role in the space provided.
3. What role is the other person playing in this ideal interaction? What is s/he doing and how is s/he doing it? Record the Counter role in the space provided.

Feared Outcome

4. Depict your most feared outcome in the upper left box of the template using figures and props.
5. What role are you playing? What are you doing and how are you feeling while doing it? Record the role in the space provided.
6. What role is the other person playing in this dreaded interaction? What is s/he doing and how is s/he doing it? Record the Counter role in the space provided.

Meeting Place

7. Where would be a good place to meet this person? A place where you both would feel comfortable? Where are you exactly? Describe your surroundings. Are there others there?
8. Look again at the Ideal Role you depicted in the right box. Choose another figure to represent you and place it in the simulation box. Bend and shape the figure to show how you are feeling as you get ready to play the Constructive role you want to play at the meeting.
9. Choose another figure to represent the person you will be interacting with in this situation. Bend and shape that figure to show the constructive role you are hoping s/he will play in relation to you. Then place it in the simulation box.
10. If there are relevant others in this scenario who are likely to be present, choose figures to represent them (one figure can be used to represent a group of people if more convenient). Use props to represent other relevant elements e.g. pressing deadlines, unfinished projects, time crunches, budget concerns etc.

11. Let's begin. Imagine this person will forget what you have said, once you have finished speaking. What would you like to say to this person? Use both hands to manipulate either of the figures while you're doing this. Who is likely to begin the interaction? Play out the situation the way you would like it to go.

Maximisation

12. (*Use Maximisation unless it is not appropriate*) Remember there are no consequences for being totally honest so say what you really want to say. Scream at them if necessary, hug them tightly, do whatever is necessary to make them listen to you.
13. In reality, what effect might that have on the other person? What role are you playing? What role is the other person playing? Do you want that to be the dynamic in reality? If it is, is it the same as the picture you depicted in the "Desired Outcomes" box? If it isn't, modify the original scene and name the desired role and counter role.

If You Only Knew

14. Look at the "Desired Outcome" you created and then use the figures in the "Simulation Box" to tell the other person your feelings and ideally what you want in this relationship. Say "If you only knew...."
15. Tell the other person, how their actions and behaviours have negatively affected you in the past. Say, "If you only knew how...."
16. (*Role Reversal*) What would you hope the other person would say back to you? Project yourself into the shoes of that person and reply to the figure representing you.

Strategic Role Play Simulation

17. Let's work through the "Feared Outcome" scenario now. I'm going to play the counter role. During the process we may stop to analyse the role(s) you are playing. What constructive role are you aiming to play? Who is likely to start this in real life? Briefly describe a likely scenario.

The coach then plays the counter role, moving and speaking through the figure. It isn't always necessary to speak. Sometimes just a small movement e.g. turning the head away from the protagonist is more effective than saying anything.

If the client hesitates to respond at some point, lost for words, ask for a soliloquy...then talk about roles. If appropriate map the role cascade.

Repeat the simulation as many times as is necessary to assist the client develop the new, desired role.

When a role is particularly difficult to play, ask the client if s/he has ever played this role before. If s/he has, ask him/her to keep that picture (and the feeling) in mind as the role is played in this situation.

Keep referring back to the desired outcome.

Share and Go

What have you discovered from this process? If you'd like to, write down any insights gained in the space provided.

If time permits, do the Anchors technique

You now have a picture of the way you'd like the next interaction with this person to unfold. You also know that in real life, the other person may respond in a way that you do not like. What role(s) are you going to play? Keep the picture of that in your mind whenever you begin interacting with this other person.

Possible Follow-up technique

The Amber Light technique may be helpful to determine what triggers contribute to the client defaulting into a fragmenting role and what physical warning signs alert the client s/he is heading towards the point of no return.