

Session Report

Profile of Client:

Gender: Female Age: 25

Race: Caucasian

Marital status: Married Children: 2, ages 2 and 4

Session date and time: Sunday August 31, 3-3:55 p.m.

1. Basic Content of Session

I felt the most prepared and confident about the direction to take this session. That made a big difference. After class discussion, feeling stuck last week, and comments from last my report, I decided that this week I wanted to back up and ask a different magic wand question. I felt like we were just focusing on one specific goal and not seeing it in the big picture. I asked her if there was a bigger vision she had for her life in general, not just regarding her husband's deployment. I asked if she could wave a magic wand, what would her ideal life look like. She still focused in on growth in her relationship with God, but she explained it as more of a vision and I asked her questions to describe what that picture would look like. By asking the magic wand question in this way, she moved beyond just the daily Bible study goal to using the phrase "growth in her relationship with God," which I had not hear her say. She was a lot more open and shared more freely about God in a more personal way this week as she described how she would like her life to look. I asked her to describe what there would be more of and what there would be less of. She painted a much fuller picture than before.

After I asked her the questions regarding vision, we moved to stage 2, task 1. I asked her to brainstorm all the possible ways she could see herself reaching her goal to grow in her relationship with God. I have not taken any notes during sessions, but today I decided I would jot down her brainstorming ideas. It proved to be a good idea. I asked if she was a writer, but she did not seem to be too eager, so I wrote. She came up with a few and then turned the question to me. I was careful to make one suggestion and then ask her if she could see that working for her or if she had any other ideas. She shared at least five general ideas with several sub-points. This was the most time we had spent in the brainstorming section. Last time I think I must have asked her the main area and then we just focused there. Task 2 is to choose realistic goals. She still wanted to focus on her daily Bible study. I suggested that we start with a weekly goal though. This week she is still on the goal of finding the Bible study to use.

Task 3 is to find incentives. I asked her about the motivation for her goal and she mentioned being an example to her children and husband. For her, part of the incentive is not just for herself, but for how it will impact her family. She elaborated a little in this area, but our time was running short.

I mentioned that as we continue to move forward, she will need to be thinking about obstacles that might hinder her from reaching her goal and ways to overcome those obstacles. She said she was already thinking of a few, so we talked about that briefly and decided to return there next session.

We both felt like the time had gone by very quickly this session. This was the most focused session and it seemed like we got a lot accomplished. It required more assertiveness on my part to stop her from talking if it was unrelated and redirect her to

our task at hand. She would bring up other goals and then I asked her if she still wanted to focus on the goal of her relationship with God. If so, I reminded her that the life-management skills she learned for that goal could be applied to the other goal she was mentioning. This helped her see that I was not totally avoiding the other goal, but focusing on one so that she could learn how to apply it to others.

The main questions that guided our sessions were:

1. *Omitted for confidentiality reasons...*
2. What would your life look like if you waved a magic wand and had your ideal life?
3. What are all the possibilities you can think of to help you reach your goal?
4. What motivation or incentives are there to reaching your goal?
5. We touched on—What obstacles might stand in your way from reaching your goal?

2. Techniques/Skills Used

- I had the Egan Model out as a guide, and while I am sure you don't always do this, it was helpful with this client at this stage.
- I effectively used the "prompt and fade" technique during the brainstorming time without sharing too much.
- I used the ABCDE technique of REBT to challenge her on some of her thinking about spiritual growth.
- I was more confident to ask probing questions and challenged her to think harder to come up with more possibilities. I used
- SMART goals as we laid out her homework.
- At the end I complimented her for her great work, as she had painted a clear picture of her vision, brainstormed possibilities and begun thinking through incentives and obstacles for her goal. I did this by "affirm, ask", placing an affirmation of what she just said before asking the next question.

3. Strengths:

1. Focus: Except for her first little sharing time (which I should have interrupted sooner), I stayed on track and followed closely to Egan's model through each part of stage 2.
2. Control of session: After our initial starting point, I stopped her rabbit trails and reminded her that for the sake of our time together, we were going to focus on the one main goal she had mentioned.
3. Assertiveness: For the first time I was also able to help her see the bigger picture- that what she is learning is a life management skill that can be applied to anything in her life. We brainstormed a number of possibilities, with me being more assertive in having her come up with more than a couple options.
4. Exhibited enthusiasm: I used a lot more affirmation, which got her more involved in brainstorming ideas. I increased my tone of voice to match her level of enthusiasm even though it is not natural for me. I was more animated trying to talk with my hands like she does to emphasize points and keep her engaged.

4. Weaknesses:

1. Boundary issue: Professional/friend: This felt much improved from last week, but I still see this as a weakness. I could tell at the end, after we had been "focused" for a long time and had wrapped things up, I sort of transitioned into a more friend mode and felt myself lighten up and talk more casually I think.

- *How to improve:* I addressed this topic in last week's session report. I still plan to meet with my friend Debbie this Thursday Sept. 4 at 1:00 pm. I had 3 specific questions prepared to ask her, as stated previously. Another idea for me is to "coach" myself a little before/during the session. This would mean telling/reminding myself verbally/nonverbally that "I am the counselor, not my client's friend. I will be professional." This could take place in my preparation period, especially in the car immediately before session (2:50-3:00 Sunday Sep. 7). I would also need to make a mental note to coach myself again right as the session is closing. That is where I felt myself drift. My cue for this mental reminder could be when we set up the next appointment. This would be at about 3:50 p.m. Sunday Sept. 7. The details would be simply telling myself in my head "Remember to stay professional, not the friend." This might seem silly, but another way I could improve this weakness would be to dress up (ideally a skirt) and wear whatever I wore to church that morning when I meet with my client. This helps me feel more professional. There really is not much TDD (time, date details) for this one. I will have already been dressed up from the morning, so it just requires me not to change into more casual clothes. I will have already ironed clothes by Sunday morning and be set by 9 a.m.
2. Self-disclosure: I do not think I shared much at all throughout the session, except when I followed the "prompt and fade" technique once during brainstorming. However, at the end when I felt "of the clock" so to speak, I found myself adding, "I totally understand or I am still learning this too." She knew about another life goal I am working on, so when she brought that up, it was hard to not comment personally. I tried to keep it short. I am still learning the boundary in this area.
 - *How to improve:* I will take your suggestion to not self-disclose for the remainder of the sessions (unless I find it is **absolutely** the best option). I will definitely have to remind myself of this rule. During my preparation time (2-3 pm Sunday Sep.7) I will review this session report and re-read how I plan to improve my weakness (i.e. this step). During the session (3-3:50 pm Sunday Sep.7) I will stay attentive to myself whenever I start with "I." I will need to train myself to be sure to ask a question or turn the "I" statement immediately into a question if I forget. i.e. if I already start with "I...", I could turn the statement into: "Finally, I will write a big "I" with a no-smoking sign around it on the top of my session notebook to remind me when I look down for notes to keep from talking about myself.
 3. Advice giving: I caught myself using the phrase "I'd encourage you..." so I know I did this at least once during session. I think I had already given my comment/advice about obstacles possibly and then to try to cover it, I added "I'd encourage you to think about obstacles."
 - *How to improve:* I will continue to be attentive to myself when I start to say "I encourage you..." I have discovered that this is my phrase to signal that disguised advice is coming. During the session, Sun. Sept. 7 3-3:50 pm, I will commit to stopping myself if I do catch myself saying "I encourage you" and instead ask a question that encourages my client to think further on the topic, such as "What other possibilities would help you reach your goal?" or "What people in your life would be good resources for you to draw on?" This will help her come up with it instead of me telling her.

4. Stating clear objective at start of session: While I did feel much more focused this session, the Egan Model lying out was not enough to help my client fully understand our focus. After my client shared the vision, I think I needed to jump in give a summary statement of where we were heading to help her stay on track. This could have avoided the one main rabbit trail.
 - *How to improve:* I need to continue to have a thorough prayer and preparation time immediately prior to session (2-3 pm next Sunday Sep.7). This includes time for personal prayer to clear my heart and mind, reading Ps. 139 if needed to remind myself of God's presence with me, and reviewing my session report for questions/goals. In addition, I need to be more direct at the start of session with a summary of last week's time and a preview of the direction I feel we need to explore for that session . With the way my client can go off topic so quickly, I need to almost immediately start session with this focus I think. I could also ask my client to summarize last session to start things out. Then I could add to it if need be and then paint the picture of where we need to go next.

5. What God would say to my client

Child, I am so proud of you! I am thrilled that your primary goal is to grow in your relationship with Me. There is nothing in life more important than that. As you draw closer to Me, you will find the contentment and peace you are seeking. I am so pleased to see the progress you have made in challenging yourself to think through the process that will help you reach your goal. Keep up the great work. I know you will be rewarded for your hard work in this process to reach you goal. I look forward to seeing how this life-management skill will flow into other areas of your life you long to follow through in as well.

6. Specific Scripture or character from Scripture I could use to illustrate God's truth

Jeremiah 29:13 "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD."

Matthew 7:7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

Hebrews 11:6 "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that **he rewards those who earnestly seek Him.**"

Psalms 63 (for an example of someone with the same goal of growing closer to God) – **David** "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water..."

7. Ethical issues:

- 3.05 Multiple Relationships
 - (a) A multiple relationship occurs when a psychologist is in a professional role with a person...or (3) promises to enter into another relationship in the future with the person or a person closely associated with or related to the person.
 - I can see myself struggling with maintaining a professional role and not a familiar role as friend. While the lines are not finely drawn here, I wonder if I am leading my client into believing that we may start a friendship. I will remedy this next time

by 1. Exuding a professional persona – I'll dress professionally instead of casually, keep notebook/pen in hand, and stay off of personal topics even before and after session.

- 6.02 Maintenance, Dissemination, and Disposal of Confidential Records of Professional and Scientific Work

(a) Psychologists maintain confidentiality in creating, storing, accessing, transferring and disposing of records under their control, whether these are written, automated or in any other medium.

- I realize that I often put her file into my bag which is in my car, at work, laid around campus. I need to be sure that I take her file out and put it in my locked file cabinet at home. I will set an alarm on my phone to remind me to retrieve it before session and also to remind me to put it back.

- 2.06 Personal Problems and Conflicts

(a) Psychologists refrain from initiating an activity when they know or should know that there is a substantial likelihood that their personal problems will prevent them from performing their work-related activities in a competent manner.

- I am going through a separation right now, so at times, I find it difficult when she talks about her spouse. I also find it hard to focus as sometimes I cry on the way to session. I am going to set time aside before session to pray and listen to music. These lift my spirits and recharge me so I can be focused for session. I will be sure not to have any phone calls with my spouse the day of session. This will be an area of prayer as well.

- Imposing Values.

- While my client and I share the same faith. I struggle with imposing my version of spirituality on her. I find that I want to give her advice and challenge her in ways that are not to help her achieve her goals, but are an effort to be more like me. One particular area I see this is when she talks about praying. Since this is a hot topic for me, I am going to focus on the question "What works for you" to help me keep from giving her advice.

8. How to specifically move my client forward (Goals for next session)

1. I think my client needs motivation. I could have her brainstorm several incentives and something that is immediate as well as long-term.
2. My client's plan does not account for obstacles – We need to probe about obstacles that could stand in the way and uncover possible solutions to overcome those obstacles.
3. My client to pull the chosen strategies together into a plan, including someone to be accountable to after we stop meeting. This plan is not likely to keep going without having someone to keep her on track.
4. My client has not identified resources that could make her spiritual journey easier. I'm sure there are groups at church and in the community where she could have a regularly scheduled event (aside from just Sunday church) and people who are also invested in intentional spiritual growth.

9. Specific Questions I will ask/do next session:

1. What other incentives are there for pursuing your goal? What is an immediate incentive you can create that will help you stay committed to your goal?
2. What obstacles do you see that could hinder you from meeting your goal? For each obstacle, brainstorm several ways that you can overcome that obstacle.

3. Focusing on your more specific goal (having a daily Bible reading time- under the overarching goal to grow in your relationship with God) what are some strategies that will help you reach and commit to that goal? Or “Now that you see the gap between where you are and where you’d like to be in your relationship with God, what do you need to do to bridge the gap?” (from Egan, 305)
4. What about your life would have to be adjusted now in order to create the time for your new goal?
5. What people are in your life that will be encouragers and accountability partners to lean on?
6. Of the previously brainstormed strategies, which one best fits you and the resources you have available? Or “Which strategy/ies will be most useful in helping you get what you want?” (Egan, 313)
7. In moving toward making the plan:
 - Of the previously mentioned strategies, which order (sequence) of actions will help you reach your goal?
 - Which actions are most critical? (Egan, 325)
 - What is the time frame needed for each action step?
 - How can you effectively build in the social support for on-going encouragement and accountability?
8. One question I hadn’t asked was “What keeps you from making commitments?” I am not sure if I will ask this or not. I might ask this along with the obstacle question since one obstacle is follow through which she has already mentioned.

10. What feedback proved most helpful to you?

- A better understanding of the ‘Magic Wand’ question.
- To be able to continue with the ‘What Else.’ However, I still need to work on this for the next session as well as I will have to probably use it again.
- That I am imposing my values by saying “you should consider doing... instead” and “Don’t you think God wants...” but that these can be used to help a client determine their own values by asking “what do you think God wants” and being OK with their answer unless it directly conflicts with scripture.
- Getting, proverbially reminded to ASK not ADVISE to make sure that my client develops the best plan for her rather than my ideas for what would work for me.