



Understanding Our Strategies for Self-Redemption

When a distressing emotion, such as anxiety is presented, we can make that the focus of the treatment. As we engage our clients, it is important that we are attuned to our own psychological states. Begin with examining yourself and ask the question, “How do I feel toward my client’s anxiety?” Your awareness of yourself will help you stay curious to understand your client’s anxiety and resist the temptation to judge or fix it.

In this process of exploring the strategies, the primary focus is helping clients better understand the unconscious objective of the anxiety. The anxiety may persist and intensify in order to prevent the re-experiencing of Core Hurts that reinforce the shame messages in the View of Self (VOS). So, the underlying drive for the strategies are the shame messages a person holds.

To begin exploring, focus on the client and use the following steps:

Locate the strategy. As you stay curious, ask how the client experiences his or her anxiety. You can ask any or all of the following:

- Where in your body do you experience the sensations of the anxiety?
- Are there any images, inner voices, or thoughts that come up for you that represent the anxiety?

Create space to explore the strategy. Maintaining curiosity, ask how the client feels toward the anxiety.

- If the client answers that he or she hates it because it has made life so unpleasant and disruptive, then get the client to tell you more and ask something like, “What is it like for you when the anxiety takes over?”
- As the client shares his or her experience, validate the client for his or her dislike of the anxiety and say something like, “It really makes sense that you don’t like the anxiety or wish it would go away.”

Often validating his or her experience is enough for the dislike of the anxiety to relax and allow the client to become more curious about the anxiety. Then, you can move to the next step.

Explore the role of the strategy. Ask the client about the role that the anxiety plays.

- What do you think would happen if you didn't feel anxious?"
- The client may answer something like, "If I don't feel anxious, I will take more risks and will open myself up for more hurts." Or, "If I go to this work event and socialize, I may say the wrong thing and they might find out just how incompetent I am."

In the above responses, the anxiety is warning the client about the possible re-experiencing of Core Hurts and/or triggering messages contained in the VOS.

Validate the experience. First, you validate the client's experience and say something like, "It makes sense why the anxiety is there. It wants to keep you from the risk of potentially experiencing shame, more specifically, the sense that you are incompetent. In a way, it's protecting you from that. Does that sound right?"

- If yes, you help your client to give some validation to his or her anxiety by asking, "How do you feel toward the anxiety now that you know what its role is? Can you have some appreciation for it?"
- If yes, the client may experience the anxiety decrease in intensity. Then you can continue to explore by asking, "I'm wondering if you have memories of when you experienced the shame of incompetence. What was that like?"
- After the client shares a memory, ask again how he or she feels toward the anxiety now and continue to validate it. The memories contain reasons for why the anxiety reached its intensity to protect the client. The more you and the client validate the anxiety, the more it will decrease in intensity.

Transitioning from Strategy to View of Self

A core purpose in exploring the strategies is to uncover the internalized shame of the VOS, making it possible for the client to experience the love and power of Christ to transform the VOS and heal the Core Hurts.

In general, when working with Strategies you can incarnate the grace and mercy of Christ by staying curious and compassionate towards your client. When the anxiety alleviates, then the client can start to feel the incompetence itself, thus accessing the VOS. Then, you can facilitate an encounter with Christ.