Narrative Therapy / Counseling
Therapeutic Strategies and Question Examples

Externalizing

- Perspective that is taken, not just a technique
  - Shown in the use of language about the problem, not the problemed person
- Locates the problem within the cultural meanings that were impacting the person rather than in some internalized pathological condition
- Invite them to work together against the problem
- The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem
  - Problems are manufactured in a social, cultural, and political context
  - Problems we encounter are multi-sourced
  - Problems developed over a long period of time
  - Problems come together through the medium of human language to construct and produce our experience
- Through this process people begin to see themselves as authors, or at least co-authors of their own stories. They begin to move toward a greater sense of agency in their lives

Some Externalizing Questions:

- How long have you known ________?
- How do you know ________ is nearby?
- What does ________ look like?
- How do you know ________ has entered the room?
- How do you feel when ________ is around?
- Are there times when you are embarrassed (or proud) to be seen with ________?
- Where are you allowed (or not allowed) to take ________ with you?
- Tell me about a time you were able to avoid ________.
- Tell me about your biggest disagreement with ________.
- Are there any buttons ________ knows to push to get a rise out of you?
- Where does ________ have a grip in your life despite your attempts?
- How might ________ get the upper hand?
- Can you recall a brief moment with ________ was not influencing your thoughts?
- Have there been times during our conversation ________ hasn’t totally controlled or dominated our time together?
- Are there small areas of your life that ________ hasn’t occupied yet?
Have you had any dreams recently that have not been tainted by _____?

How does _____ tend to affect your relationship with others?

What are some tricks you have used to gain the upper hand from _____?

What are some special qualities of yours that have helped undermine the influence of __?

How does _____ feature in your school life? Life beyond school?

When _____ in present, what happen to your dreams for the future?

Are you satisfied with the way _____ is influencing your life?

With couples or families:

What does ______ have you believing about your sense of trust?

In what ways does ______ influence the relationship(s)?

How can you better protect your shared dreams from the risks of ________?

What actions might you take as a couple / family that might shrink the effects of _____?

Unique outcome / sparkling moment

These questions invite people to notice actions and intentions that contradict the dominant story

- These can pre-date the session, occur within the session itself, or might happen in the future

A shift in the relationship with the story or the problem

From here we begin constructing the alternative story or description

Counselor may have to point out these moments

- Clients may not notice or place value on these deviations from the problem story

Stance of curiosity and persistence is essential in developing the alternative story

Builds on abilities currently being used by the client that may not yet be noticed or connected to this story

Some Unique outcome / sparkling moment Questions:

- Have there been times that you have thought you might step out of _____’s influence?
- Did you give _____ the slip to come here and have this conversation?
- Can you imagine a time you might defy ____ and give yourself a break?
- Given everything ______ have going for it, how did you protest against it pushing you around?
- How might you stand up to ______ and refuse it’s requirements of you?
- Was it easier than you thought, doing what you did?
- Could your coming here be considered a form of disobedience against _____?