

METAPHORIC ASSOCIATIVE CARDS AS A TOOL FOR PROVISION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE INDIVIDUAL

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INTRODUCTION

Metaphoric associative cards (MAC), which are also called projective or psychotherapeutic cards, appeared in the 70-80s of the XX century as a special psychodiagnostic and psychocorrectional (psychotherapeutic) tool in professional psychological practice, including the activity of the leader of psychological groups (for «warming up» the group, establishing trusting relationships between group members, for diagnostics of the essential needs of the group, etc.)¹.

Associations arising in a mind of a person describing a card and commenting to them, reveal current states, experiences and needs, allow identifying basic fears and desires, internal conflicts, defining personality traits, life strategies and goals, personal meaning of past experience, «seeing» resources (both internal and external). Metaphorical associative cards, through metaphor (associations), allow quick access to a traumatic situation, which, on the one hand, helps to reveal incomplete internal processes, and on the other hand, to avoid additional retraumatization. In addition, MAC create a safe context for finding and modeling solutions, launching internal processes of self-healing and finding their own unique way out of a crisis life situation.

Associative cards as a special psychodiagnostic and psychocorrectional (psychotherapeutic) tool have the following advantages:

- create conditions (safe, trusting and comfortable environment) for self-disclosure, self-expression, self-cognition and more effective socialization in a group, in individual counseling or in a pair (in family counseling);

¹ Шебанова В. И. Тренинг нормализации пищевого поведения: Программа психологического сопровождения на пути к свободе от переедания «Парус мечты». Практическое руководство. Херсон : ПП Вишемирский В. С., 2014. 394 с.

- can be used when working with people with different needs and different levels of development (ranging from children of 4 to 5 years old and to the elderly);

- allow lowering the protective barriers of the psyche, «bypass» the rational part of thinking and gain access to the resources of the unconscious, «bring» the deep (unconscious) material to the surface (in metaphorical language – they help to «get out of your shell» and «break the ice» in an anxious situation) that creates conditions for emotional regulation;

- available, convenient and economical to use;

- help to create the dialogue between the internal and external, provide flexibility and depth of the received information;

- activate the right hemisphere, which is responsible for intuition and creative approach to life, «launch» various associations, fantasy, and creative spontaneous activity, which leads to unexpected insights;

- in individual counseling, they can be used as «substitution figures» when working in a therapist-client format on a one-on-one basis (during gestalt therapy, family constellations, etc.).

Metaphorical associative cards are a set of pictures of the size of a postcard or a playing card depicting landscapes, animals, household items, life situations, abstract paintings, fairy-tale characters, people (adults and children) and interactions between them. There are sets of cards in which the picture is combined with the inscription. In this case, people freely choose how to associate the problem, symptom or themselves with the picture or the meaning of the inscription; with entire picture or part of it (with any one element); time of day or time of year; with color or some form, setting. In other words, people freely choose not only their own associations, but also what they are ready to give up as insignificant for them at this moment. There are sets that include separately «cards with pictures» and «cards with words». The combination of pictures and words creates a play of meanings (since inscriptions, when placed in a different context, or «pictures» under the influence of another topic, are often enriched with new meanings, reveal other facets that are relevant to a person at a given moment).

In professional psychological practice, MAC is primarily a projective technique, which is based on the phenomenon of projection and allows identifying the underlying individual psychological characteristics of a person that are not available for direct observation.

From this it follows that important is not the meaning that was originally laid in the picture by the author (the researcher, the artist), but the mental response that each individual person develops to one or another picture (or to certain words and phrases). Different people see completely different situations in the same picture, ascribing completely different qualities, properties, aspirations, desires, motives of actions (often opposite) to the «heroes» (actors of the plot) . In other words, in response to a stimulus, each respondent presents his inner content of actual experiences. Moreover, even the same person, in different periods of his life, associations, and the context of a particular subject and the interpretation of what a person sees in the picture will differ each time. From this point of view, the deck of associative cards is inexhaustible – the number of combinations of subjects for psychological study is infinite.

1. Psychological functions of metaphorical associative cards (MAC)

The effectiveness of metaphorical associative cards is provided by a number of psychological functions that they perform as diagnostic and psychotherapeutic tools. All functions of MAC are closely intertwined with each other and are an important prerequisite for personal reconstruction.

We do not consider the following list of psychological functions of MA cards to be exhaustive, but in our opinion, these are the main functions that allow their successful application both during the group process and in the provision of individual psychological aid.

The implementation of psychological functions provides emotional and behavioral stabilization (which is especially important when working with anxious and uncertain people, psychasthenics, schizoids, and those having other personality disturbances). Most functions contribute to the development of group relationships at all stages of the group process (initial, transition, work, and final). At the same time, some of them (for example, communicative, focusing, stimulating) play a more important role at the beginning of the group or therapeutic process (in the course of individual work), contributing to the formation and development of relationships.

All psychological functions are quite strongly pronounced at all stages of the process of psychocorrectional or therapeutic changes

(stages of pre-reflection, reflection, action and retention). However, some of them (focusing, stimulating, etc.) play a decisive role in the transition from the pre-thinking to the thinking stage, and others (for example, the function of meaning formation, reframing, etc.) are more significant at the stages of thinking, action and retention.

The communicative function is connected with the fact that MAC can convey feelings and representations, and in a broader sense, be a means of perception, processing and transmission of information. In this case, it is possible to consider both interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of communication. It should be noted that if the interpersonal aspect of MAC implies the transfer of feelings and representations from one person to another, then within the personal aspect stipulates the possibility of an internal dialogue with oneself and the transmission of mental material from an unconscious level to a level of consciousness.

The stimulating function of MAC is associated with the activation of the intellect and various sensory systems (audio, visual, kinesthetic). In our opinion, the combination of the MAC with other types of creative activity contributes to the strengthening of this function (for example, writing poems or any other type of verbal products, which are further accompanied by a visual imaginary of MAC). This function plays an important role in motivating people who show asthenic and depressive symptoms.

The organizing (integrating) function is related to the fact that the images (MAC pictures) and the inscriptions to them (in those cases where there is such a combination) contribute not only to the more coordinated work of different sensory systems, but also to a different process of cognitive synthesis (other ordering of thinking processes, other structuring of thinking), which generates «new connections», new complex representations.

The focusing or actualizing function of MAC is related to their ability to activate memories while the attention of a person (group member, client, patient) is focused on certain objects. This function of MAC allows to temporarily fix the «needs, feelings and thoughts» and to achieve such a focus on them, which in ordinary life, under normal conditions, is inaccessible to many people. In other words, MAC make it possible to manifest, make latent, previously hidden needs or personality traits «visible». Due to this, a person can open up from a different side, unexpected both for themselves and for the people around them (this

may appear in the comments to MAC or in creation of artistic narratives, as well as other creative products that can be combined with the cards).

Focusing attention allows starting the process of re-living (re-experiencing) of different events that occurred in the past (both positive and negative). Although repeated experiences of traumatic events can cause psychological discomfort, in the context of psychocorrection (psychotherapy), it is often necessary to complete and rethink a past situation. New findings allow achieving the retransformation of a traumatic situation and, speaking in figurative language, «see the light at the end of the tunnel».

The objectifying function of MAC lies in their ability to translate the personal characteristics of a person into visible experiences and actions. This function of MAC allows a person to become more aware of their belonging to a certain community or group (cultural, professional, etc.). In this case, the basis of identification, i.e. meaningful relationships with people and other objects are reflected. This allows a person to understand to what extent their emotional experiences, actions and deeds are connected with physical feelings, needs for change, a sense of cultural, gender, professional «Self».

The function of meaning formation is associated with the choice of an object (selection of the most significant material) and its content processing, taking into account the context of the situation. This allows a person to see the personal meaning of different life events, actions and experiences (both of their own and other people). The MAC also provides *the detachment necessary for self-reflection* («a look from the side», *dissociation*). Due to the visual imaginary of MAC, a person can «see» the experiences and actions in a new perspective, and accordingly, comprehend other, deeper or even alternative content. Thus, the function of the meaning formation is inextricably intertwined with the function of reorganization or reframing (changes in the meaning of an event when the perception of the context of a situation changes). Rethinking the experience and the establishment of new semantic links between events and various elements of the inner world is possible only under the influence of the above functions. It is under the influence of the function of meaning formation and reframing that the members of the group (clients) are able to understand the reasons for the emergence of certain problems in interpersonal relationships, as well as clarify the true

meaning of their own needs and features of development (including «bad habits»).

The reframing function – (Latin prefix Re-denotes the opposite action; eng. Frame – create, construct, formulate). The technology of reframing was developed by R. Bandler and J. Grinder (80s of the twentieth century)².

Reframing is usually understood as a reformulation, a change in context, or a perception of a situation, a problem. In a broad sense, reframing is the ability to look at the situation from different angles, taking into account different perspectives. Among the varieties of reframing, the content reframing of two types is most often considered (meaning reframing and context reframing). The technology of reframing relies on a number of basic provisions that are formulated by the authors based on their observations and psychotherapeutic practice:

1) a variety of solutions to a problem allows a person to become more free (the only option is not a choice, two is just an alternative, a true choice begins with at least three solutions to a problem; the more choices the more freedom);

2) the choice can be both conscious and unconscious;

3) each person has the resources that are necessary for change, the only task is to help them discover and master the necessary resources;

4) any pathological behavioral symptom (stereotype of behavior, «bad habit») performs a positive function under certain conditions. The behavioral stereotype, no matter how strange it may seem, is the most successful reaction that is available to a person in a given situation, since the behavior is always an unknown subconscious goal. Proceeding from this, the process of psychotherapy must take into account the «secondary benefit» of the symptom (that is, before getting rid of the inadequate stereotype of behavior, it is necessary to investigate how to get «the same», but in a more appropriate way).

The function of meaning formation and reframing is also closely related to the function of deconstruction.

The function of deconstruction complements the function of meaning formation (in the sense that it expands the palette of meanings).

² Bandler R. & Grinder J. Reframing: NLP And The Transformation Of Meaning. NY. Real People Press, 1982. 208 p.

From the point of view of the authors of the postmodern era (R. Solso³, F. Funch⁴ and others), the meanings of human actions and experiences are a «construct», which is caused by the influence of culture and society, i.e. the influence of meanings of sign systems (both «language» and «non-language»).

In fact, the meanings of actions, deeds, feelings and experiences, in principle, can have an unlimited number of other meanings (besides one that is «naturally given» and introduced in the process of socialization into consciousness and the unconscious). Accordingly, such a function of MAC as deconstruction, which is aimed at «freeing» a person from «constructed» values (which began to interfere, ceased to correspond to the inner world, i.e. became «false») and to form a new value system that more reliably reflects internal and external reality and objectively necessary. Thus, for example, as a result of treatment with the use of MAC, a woman comes to the realization that her obese body (excess weight) is not due to heredity (which she was absolutely convinced from childhood), but inadequate eating strategies (in particular, emotiogenic and external forms of response to food).

The function of deconstruction is closely related to the reframing function. In other words, the inclusion of one's own feelings and thoughts in a different context of perception can lead to a change in the values.

The expressive and cathartic function of MAC is associated with the perception of images («pictures») or inscriptions to them, as well as with the formation of a creative verbal product based on MAC. Repeated experience of feelings, especially in the presence of partners who show understanding, empathy, and verbal and non-verbal expression of emotions during psychological work with MAC, can lead to emotional purification and release from uncomfortable, painful, unpleasant experiences.

A creative verbal product that is made up simultaneously or in combination with MAC (poems, fairy tales, stories, essays, detailed commentary, etc.) allows a person to get to know themselves better, to

³ Солсо Р. Когнитивная психология / [пер. с англ. С. Комаров] / Гл. ред. Е. Строганова. 6-е изд. СПб.: Питер, 2006. 589 с. (Серия: «Мастера психологии»).

⁴ Фанч Ф. Преобразующие диалоги: Учебник по практическим техникам для содействия личностным изменениям / [пер. с англ. Д. А. Ивахненко]. К.: Ника-центр, 1997. 400 с.

look into the depths of their unconscious inner world. This phenomenon is a reflection of projection (projective identification). At the same time, the subject, under the influence of identification with the object of perception (whether it is another person or a plant, an animal, an inanimate object) «transfers» its experiences to it or begins to experience what the «object» experiences. In addition, the expressive and cathartic function manifests itself not only during the composition of a creative product (i.e., during the «invention» process itself), but also during its voicing by means of verbal and non-verbal expressions of feelings (facial expression, gestures, posture, breathing, pause, crying, etc.), which also contributes to the release of emotions and cathartic effect.

The protective function of MAC is closely related to the manifestation of various psychological defenses (including sublimation). For example, a person can choose a card having the «guarding» function (talisman, amulet, guardian angel). The protective function overlaps in part with the containment function, which is related to the fact that some particular associative card serves for «sewerage» (holding) psychic energy, which ensures distancing from traumatic and incomprehensible experiences, and therefore gives a feeling of some degree of control over them. For example, when working with her aggression, a girl gave the Snow Queen association to one of the cards, and then said the following: «I want to transfer my aggression to this Snow Queen so that she can freeze it and turn it into an ice statue (the girl brought her palms to her mouth and made an energetic «exhalation» – a symbolic action of the «transfer» of aggression to the Snow Queen. And may my aggression remain forever in this kingdom of eternal ice.»

The resource function of MAC is related to their ability to activate personal resources (potentials, capabilities) while concentrating the attention of a group member (client, patient) at certain points, for example, on «special energy» in the picture (some part of a card or composition as a whole), creative idea or successful resolution of the situation, which sounds in the story on the card. This function of MAC allows a person to fix their inner strength, capabilities (both internal and external), and to achieve such a focus on them, which in ordinary life, under normal conditions, is inaccessible to many people. In other words, MAC allow manifesting previously hidden resources and personal potentials to make them «visible.» Due to this, a person can easily and quickly outline ways to solve a difficult life situation, build their own

plan to overcome a crisis situation and follow it, adapting to different conditions, open themselves from a different, unexpected side, both for themselves and for the people around them. This may appear in the comments to MAC or the creation of artistic narratives, as well as other creative products that can be combined with cards.

The presence of certain resources, capabilities, potentials, expands the field of activity of the individual and gives a person confidence in the attainability of significant goals. Subjectively, the discovery or identification of resources in oneself, in some way increases the value of a person in their own self-image, making them stronger, more significant and productive. Changing the position of self-presentation changes the position of perception of others. When we make a judgment about another person, we take into account not only their current situation, but also potential opportunities and resources, since reserves and resources are in a certain sense the substantial capital of each person.

The functions discussed above are realized in the course of fulfilling the goals and objectives of specific exercise games based on metaphorical associative cards.

2. Games-exercises (techniques) based on metaphorical associative cards

In this part of the article, we want to demonstrate some forms and options for the use of MAC as a developmental and correctional tool. We are convinced that MAC, combined with their accessibility for children and adults, are a valuable tool for practical psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers and educators in solving a wide variety of problems. Accordingly, MAC can become an integral part of psychocorrection and psychotherapy when working with problems of the widest range, including for the restoration of mental and physical health and correction of disturbed behavior. This is possible due to the fact that metaphorical associative cards during the exercise allow a person to gain access to depressed (repressed) feelings and painful experiences, to realize them, to experience them again, to express (react) and thereby free themselves from their pressure. Based on the above, we provide a description of the game-exercises («card layouts») based on MAC without linking them to any specific problem. Games-exercises (techniques) that are described in this part of the article can be used by different specialists and in different conditions. In this case, we represent

them as a tool for the provision of psychological aid, and they can certainly be applied in the context of various forms of psychological assistance (psychoprophylaxis, psychological rehabilitation, psychological counseling and psychotherapy). It is quite realistic to implement taking into account the content, goals and objectives of the use of each particular technique. Most of them can be used in individual and group work (including when working with microgroups – dyads, triads, etc.).

We are convinced that the considerable possibilities for varying the forms and variants of exercises based on metaphorical associative cards allow specialists to show their talent and skills both for the purposes of creative and emotional development of a person, and for the purpose of restoring physicality (as the basis of physical and mental health).

In order to avoid repetition of the material when prescribing the goals of each exercise separately, we found it possible to combine information and list possible goals in one set, since many of the exercises are related to the manifestation of different psychological functions of MAC and are aimed at the realization of most of the following goals (in certain variation):

Objectives of MAC-based exercises:

- actualization and expression of positive and negative feelings, their realization and integration, both in connection with a specific situation, and with different periods of life;
- actualization and manifestation of latent needs;
- identification, realization and reassessment of attitudes, values, personality traits, behavior strategies;
- realization of the dynamics of external and internal changes;
- disclosure of creative possibilities and resource potential of an individual (actualization and manifestation of internal and external resources);
- study of the system of relations, actualization and resolution of intrapersonal conflicts;
- realization and correction of maladaptive patterns of thinking and behavior, the causes of neurotic conflict, which are associated with certain psychological problems and the search for resources for its solving;
- development of reflection in relation to the «Self-image», improvement of communication and interaction skills; actualization and

expression of feelings that are connected with the «Self» image, attitude to oneself and to various aspects of personal functioning;

- the development of bodily self-consciousness and self-control, the strengthening of personal boundaries and the adoption of the «Self» image;

- development of social competence and interpersonal interaction (the skill of inclusion in joint activities); awareness of common problems and the provision of mutual emotional support.

Associative games-exercises (techniques) based on MAC, which are presented and described below, allow accessing the holistic picture of participant of the training group (or client) own «Self», their personal myth about the world and about themselves in it, and also about the subjective image of the situation. They also help to clarify and realize the actual experiences and needs of the person, as well as unfinished conflict relations. In accordance with the graphic concept of our training, we suggested that participants explore the characteristics of their relationship in the direction of all four vectors (attitude towards the body, attitude towards food, attitude towards oneself and attitude towards Others). At the same time, MAC-based exercises «launch» internal processes of self-healing and creative search for their unique way of resolving problem life situations and normalizing the psycho-physiological state and behavior.

We see the general goal of MAC-based techniques in the search for alternative stories that are focused on finding external and internal resources and getting out of problem situations (as opposed to problem stories). Accordingly, in cases where the story / fairy tale ends positively, the psychologist helps a participant (client) to relate the fairy tale to his life reality and focuses attention on the hidden opportunities discovered.

In cases where a participant (client) ends a story / fairy tale with a negative outcome, the psychologist may suggest thinking over its possible dynamics for the better as homework. However, in the case of acute negative experiences (for example, when working with children, adolescents or depressed adult clients), when a positive outcome is desired within «one meeting», the «Positive Note» exercise, which is aimed at resource state search can be one of the end options.

In performing the exercises that are presented below, we used different sets of metaphorical associative cards. In our opinion, it is

possible to combine cards from different sets in psychocorrectional work based on MAC. Of course, each deck of associative metaphorical cards is unique. At the same time, different decks can be combined with each other, creating an infinite number of options for the play of imagination and opening up new possibilities.

Each card is a reference point for the emergence of ideas, associations, fantasies not limited by any frames. Rules for the use of MAC are as flexible as possible. They serve as a guide for creating the desired context in which everyone has access to their creativity.

Associative game-exercise «Sharing».

Preamble to the exercise: this exercise can be useful both at the beginning of a psychocorrectional (psychotherapeutic) meeting, and at its end.

Process of work:

Step 1. Participants blindly draw cards. Looking at them, they are trying to understand how what is depicted on the card is related to their current state in the group. Then, relying on the fairy-tale image, they take turns sharing what they came to the group meeting with or what they end it with.

Associative game-exercise : «Positive Note» («resource search»).

Preamble to the exercise: this exercise can be useful in cases where the limit of psychocorrectional (psychotherapeutic) meetings is almost exhausted, and a group member (or a client) completes the case with negative, destructive thoughts and emotions that destroy them.

Process of work:

Step 1. Choose a card which is *pleasant* for you (conscious choice of card). Describe it: what attracts you in this card? What does this mean for you? How can this be related to your real life? If this card is about some external or internal resource, then what is it about? When and in what situations did it help you? How could one access this resource right now?

Associative game-exercise: «Kaleidoscope of Events».

Preamble to the exercise: this exercise is performed over a certain period – from 2-3 to 5-6 weeks. Its essence lies in the fact that throughout the period you have planned, you daily, randomly draw one card from the deck, and then describe it (compose a short narrative, story, fairy tale) about one page in length, observing the following structure: the beginning of the story (introduction), the development of

events (culmination), the completion of the story. Try to avoid patterns and stereotypes, rely only on your imagination.

Stories can be composed in two ways: a) write stories one after another (as a personal diary); b) write stories on separate sheets (without pagination). Further, after finishing the story, the separate sheets can be arranged in the desired order.

Process of work:

On the first day, begin your story with the words: «there lived...», «once upon a time...».

Before writing the next story, there is no need to re-read what has been written before, since there is no need to create a necessarily story connected for the entire period of work. The course of events can be determined not only by the nature of the image of the card, but also by your emotional state, breadth, flight and freedom of your thoughts and fantasy.

On the last day, upon completing the term that you have set, finish your story with the words: «... and since then everything has been fine» (if possible according to the plot).

Only after the last story is completed you can re-read everything from beginning to end.

Answer a number of questions for yourself: How many independent stories turned out? Title them. Identify the main lesson (tag) of each independent story. What topics (problems) are raised in your stories? What ways to solve problems are described in your stories?

The associative game-exercise «Symptom Master» (for working with a psychosomatic symptom) (the exercise is based on the idea of R. Tkach⁵).

Preamble to the exercise.

This game-exercise based on metaphorical cards is combined with the technique of «Johari Windows» (which was developed by John Luft and Harry Ingham, 1969). The technique is an original classification of the area of known (in the continuum «I know – I do not know»), taking into account the position of the «Self» and the position of the «Other». The intersection of these two continuums allows obtaining a matrix of four windows (fields, areas, zones, sectors – see Fig. 1):

⁵Ткач Р.М. Индивидуальное и супружеское консультирование с помощью сказки «Царевна-лягушка». Спб.: Речь, 2011. 93 с.

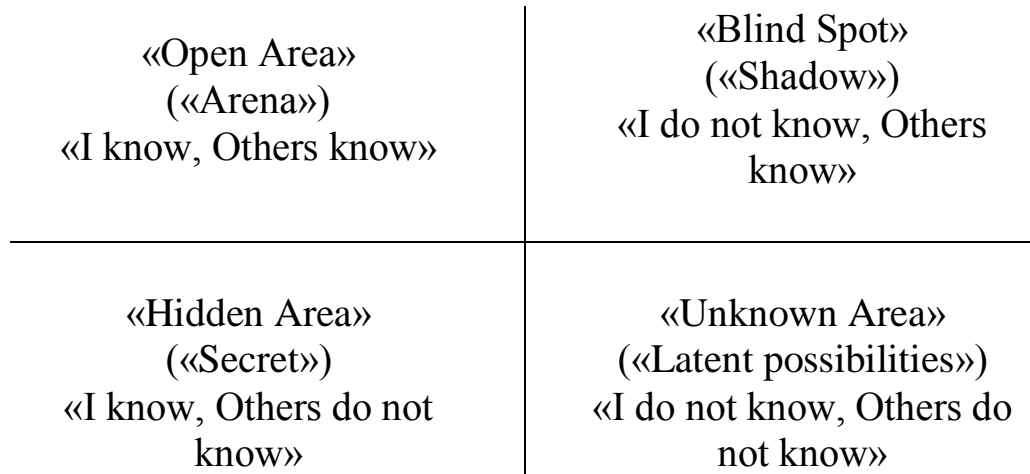


Fig. 1. Johari Window

The first window (top left) is defined as «Open Area» or «Arena» – this is the area «I know, Others know», i.e. this is what a person openly presents about themselves to others, how they want to be seen and known by others. In other words, this is all that people know about themselves, and that they allow others to know about themselves.

The second window (top right) «Blind Spot» or the «I do not know, Others know» area is an «non-knowledge» area that is out of the field of a person’s attention or awareness, but others may notice this (for example, a person does not see themselves from the back, but others see it well; a person may not notice bad breath, but others «feel» it; a girl may «not notice» the inadequacy of her behavior for a long time, which is obvious to others, etc.). *To explore the area of the «blind spot» is an attempt to look at oneself through the eyes of another person or to try to meet your Shadow i.e. with what the mechanisms of the psyche carefully «mask», «hide», make unconscious* (and, as Jung wrote, – this is usually an unpleasant meeting). The study of this zone allows to reveal the «secondary benefit» of the psychosomatic symptom or maladaptive behavior pattern..

The third window (bottom left) – «Secret» is the area of a person’s personal secrets, i.e. this is what people know about themselves, but quite deliberately hide it from the Others – «I know, Others do not know.» Sometimes it helps a person to maintain their calm and health. For example, it can be hidden love (a positive emotion towards other people) or purely personal information about yourself. However, often, such personal secrets create a «ground» for neurosis (for example, hidden negative thoughts and emotions about other people or about their

«bad habit»: the constant fear that other people will learn about «how much I eat» or fear of the physiology of the body «the fear of an unexpected urge to defecate, farting in a public place «, etc.).

The fourth window – «Unknown» or «I do not know, Others do not know» – is an area of undisclosed potential, a zone of opportunities and resources. The cognition of latent (hidden) possibilities allows a person to change the position «I cannot» to the position «I can».

Process of work: Step 1. – the moderator offers the participant (client) to find a card that associates (illustrates, reflects) the essence of the symptom that is most disturbing and which is desired to «work out» (put it in the «Open Area» field).

Moderator: this is what you know about the symptom, and what you let other people know. Describe everything you see in the card. If this card is about your symptom, then how does it manifest itself: What do you feel in your body? What do you feel about it? What thoughts arise in connection with the symptom? What do other people notice? How does this affect you? How does a symptom affect your life? – A participant (client) describes a card and explains «relations to a symptom».

P.S.: It should be noted that Others may not necessarily notice the manifestation of a symptom (for example, a person may describe a symptom as a feeling that it is «burning from the inside» but apparently the symptom does not manifest itself).

Further, the moderator offers the participant (client) to draw three cards «blindly» and place them into the remaining sectors.

Step 2. The participant (client) turns the card over in the «Blind Spot» area and describes it on the basis of the image of the card.

Moderator: If this card is about the «Symptom Master», then where is it in the card: who is it? What is it like? What does it want from you? What is it trying to tell you? What is its purpose? What does it know about the problem that you do not know? Does it do this to you because of care or desire to punish you? If it is because of care, what is it manifested in? If because of the desire to punish you, for what? What emotions / feelings does it evoke in you? What do you want to do?

Step 3. The participant (client) turns over the card in the «Hidden» window area and describes the card. The moderator asks: If this card is about what you have to hide from other people because of a symptom, then what is it about? What do you have to hide from other people

because of a symptom? What does the Symptom Master limit you in? How does this affect your well-being, health, contacts?

Step 4. The participant (client) turns over the card in the «Unknown» area.

Moderator: If you imagine that this is how your external or internal helpers look like (an unexpected resource, a magic Helper) who knows how to change a symptom, how can events develop in the future?

Step 5. Drawing conclusions.

Fragment of the work of the participant (Tatiana, 26 years old). She designated her symptom as «the problem of excess weight».

Step 1. Find the card associated with the symptom. Put it in the zone of the Open area and tell everything that you know about the problem of excess weight as a symptom that you feel in your body, and that others can observe. How does the symptom affect your life?

T.: This fat bear is me (see card 1). I'm as bulky, hulky, and clumsy. I used to be very thin, and all my life I dreamed of putting on some weight. I have begun to put on weight since I got married. At first, I was very happy that I finally began to gain weight. Now, I think that I have 25 extra kg (with height of 1.70 cm, and weight of 95 kg), and this bothers me everywhere – in all spheres of life: I cannot play outdoor games with my child; I started having health and sexual problems... I want to go somewhere less and less ... more and more I just want to lie that nobody touched me ... My mom is constantly «nagging» me for it ... and my husband is not happy.

Step 2. (description of the card in the «Blind spot» area: the card depicts Shrek sitting at the table. He is sitting in anticipation and foretasting of his favorite dish – pilau – see card 2).



Moderator: If you imagine that this is the Symptom Master, what does he want from you? «He demands that I feed him quickly.» – And when he demands that you feed him quickly, what does he know about the problem of your excess weight, which you do not know? Does he demand it because of care of you or to punish you? If because of care, how is this manifested?



If because of the desire to punish you, for what? – He wants to punish me ... For adultery ... – And when he punishes you for adultery, what do you want? – Freedom from him ... freedom from overeating attacks. – Find a card that you associate «with freedom from overeating» and put it next.

Step 3. (description of the card in the «Hidden window» zone: the girl carries a basket full of food on her head – see card 3).

Moderator: If this card is about what you have to hide from other people because of a symptom, then what is it about? What does the Symptom Master limit you in? How does this affect your well-being, health, contacts?

T: I hide ... how much I buy and how much I eat. I do not want any of my acquaintances to see me at these moments ... All this makes me terribly nervous. – «All this» is what? – The fact that I have to hide, and the fact that I, on the one hand, often overeat, and on the other I want to lose weight, and the fact that I'm tired of fighting it ... (tears). – Take as much time as you need to live through these emotions, and when you are ready to move on, tell me about it.



Step 4. (description of the card in the «Unknown window» zone: the sorceress gives the girl magic shoes – she is happy).



Moderator: If this card is about gaining freedom, how is this possible for you? Link the card of «image of freedom from overeating attacks» that you chose (in step 2) to what is in this card (step 4)? – The sorceress lift «spell» from the girl and gave her magic shoes – also as a symbol of freedom. – This gesture of «lifting the spell» from the girl, what is it about for you? What will change in you that will allow you to feel «that the spell is gone» and you are free? How does this help you negotiate the Symptom Master so that he stops punishing you? – I have already redeemed my guilt with interest ... there is no point in punishing me anymore. – Find a card that can reflect this new state of yours (a conscious card search). What are you like here? What are you doing? What do you feel? – I am confident here ... that a new stage of life has

come. I chase away with this pigpen broom all my «bad» thoughts and everything that interferes with my life. – What can you realize from this fantastic image in real life today?

CONCLUSIONS

Concluding the article, the main provisions that formed the basis for the use of metaphorical associative cards in providing psychological aid to the individual should be outlined as follows:

- metaphorical associative cards (projective or psychotherapeutic cards) are used as a special psychodiagnostic and psychotherapeutic tool in professional psychological practice, including in the activities of the moderator of psychological groups (for «warming up» the group, establishing trusting relationships between group members, for diagnosing the actual needs of the group, etc.).

- associations that occur in a person when describing a card and commenting to them, reveal current states, experiences and needs, allow identifying basic fears and desires, internal conflicts, determining personality traits, life strategies and goals, personal meaning of past experience, «seeing» resources (both internal and external).

- metaphorical associative cards, through metaphor (associations) allow to quickly get access to a stressful situation, which on the one hand, helps to identify incomplete internal processes, and on the other hand, to avoid additional retraumatization. In addition, MAC create a safe context for finding and modeling solutions, launching internal processes of self-healing and searching for their unique way out of the crisis life situation.

SUMMARY

The paper describes the advantages of metaphorical associative cards as a tool for providing psychological aid to an individual. The psychological functions of metaphorical associative cards are analyzed. It is shown that the implementation of these functions makes it possible to effectively use metaphorical cards as diagnostic and psychocorrectional tools. The goals of exercises based on metaphorical associative cards are generalized. It is presented that the goals are directly related to the manifestation and implementation of various psychological functions. The emphasis is placed on the fact that the rules for applying metaphorical cards are as flexible as possible and serve as a

guide for creating the desired context in which everyone gets access to their creative background. A number of author's exercises based on metaphorical associative cards used for psychological counseling are suggested. The case of client work is described.

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