

Practice-Based Description of Dialogue with Therapeutic Touch as the Practice

Initially, the shift to using dialogue in teaching Therapeutic Touch seemed to add one more layer of learning for me, as I looked to attain Recognized Teacher status using the new Foundations of Therapeutic Touch curriculum. It seemed daunting.

Subsequently, I set a date to offer the Wholeness Professional Development Day (PDD). As I began preparing for the Wholeness PDD, the following experience kept coming to mind. This past summer/fall when a family member was passing, my intention for each visit was simply to follow the energy. This allowed me to go in without any preconceived notions and respond to where family members were at that moment. I was following the energy of the family, of what was being said, the energy between the words/nonverbal communication, the energy of the family member's wholeness and letting it guide me. It was gentle, respectful, and mindful.

Now dialogue reminds me of Therapeutic Touch, the CARER process, and shifts in consciousness. We're following energy cues in dialogue just as we would in a TT session. I'm describing dialogue here using Therapeutic Touch as a model. Just as the healing theory is a practice-based theory of healing, using TT as the practice, this is a practice-based description of dialogue using TT as the practice. The Seven Skills of Dialogue are deep listening, respecting others, inquiry, voicing openly (advocacy), balancing advocacy and inquiry, suspending assumptions and judgements, and reflecting. See Gary Ryan, Organizations that Matter, 25 Sept. 2009, "Learn about the Seven Skills of Dialogue." <http://garyryans.com>.

Dialogue is about the wholeness of the group and the topic being addressed. A compassionate connection with other group members is initiated. Here we are trusting the intelligence and wisdom of each individual and the group as a whole will be brought forth. There is an intention for the highest and best for each participant and the group as a whole. We are sharing in the dialogue journey; not fixing or helping, but serving the group and the topic.

Centering — Using **deep listening** we are connecting to our inner self, group members' inner selves, the group as a whole inner self, and the universal energy field. Being grounded, receiving impressions of the other's wholeness and what's being said, moving towards the speaker and sensitizing to their presence are ways that individual group members are **respecting others**. Through **suspending assumptions and judgements**, we are getting our ego out of the way and remaining unattached to outcome.

Assessing — Deep listening continues as we scan the energy of what's being said for cues. Through **inquiry** we are approaching the topic with a beginner's mind, "Googling" what's been said, using all our senses to understand the pattern of what's being offered/said and asking for more info from them. As in Therapeutic Touch, we are looking for imbalances in the information being shared, i.e., area of depletion (where the thought isn't complete yet as all information may not be present), area of congestion (where old information could be let go of to make space for new), or area of imbalance (where thought could be shifted to new perspective). In **voicing openly (advocacy)**, we are being authentic as we articulate what our perspective is and explain why. This allows other group members to include our sharing in their assessment. We plan what to say based on what we notice in the energy of what's being said and how our sharing can move the group's understanding of the topic forward.

Rebalancing — Through the repatterning process we are adding information, clearing excess information, releasing old information to make space for new, and shifting thought pattern to help bring order, balance, and harmony to the group's understanding of the topic. Modulation occurs through each members speaking their authentic and mindful thoughts. Deep listening allows us to reassess where the group/topic energy is. Is there anything more I need to know? Are there any shifts in the group's energy/understanding of the topic that still need to occur? This is balancing **advocacy and inquiry**.

Ending — Deep listening is accessed to gain a sense of knowing that as much has been done as possible or a sense of being done. Expressing gratitude for each member's participation in moving the group's understanding of the topic forward can be one way to indicate the dialogue is at a close.

Reflective Practice/Recall — **Reflecting** is taking time to reflect on what's being said prior to speaking. What have I learned from their perspective? What have I learned about myself? How can I take this thought forward? Through recall we look back on the dialogue and ask what we learned about our participation in the process. Have there been any 'aha' moments for me or the group?

We can take familiar skills we have in a Therapeutic Touch session and transfer them into the complexity and fullness of our lives in a new way.

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