

Dialogue #2: The Interactional Approach

A Dialogue between Bill O'Hanlon & Wendel Ray, Saturday Dec. 10, 2016, MHE Brief Therapy Congress, San Diego, CA.

- Developed by Palo Alto Group (Bateson and team: Jackson, Weakland, Haley, Fry) [Important Others included Harry Stack Sullivan, Milton H. Erickson, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, Alan Watts, John Rosen, William Fulweiler & others]
 - Operationalized as Interactional OR Conjoint Family Therapy at the Mental Research Institute (MRI) by Jackson, Satir, Riskin, Weakland, Haley, Bateson as consultant) and many other early researchers;
 - Refined as Brief Therapy Establishment in 1966 at the MRI Brief Therapy Center (Est. 1966) by Richard Fisch, MD, John Weakland, Paul Watzlawick, others
- **Intentionally chose NOT to use** psychodynamic/genetic/biological/past history – trauma as guides
- INSTEAD used and use **Cultural Anthropology**
Methodology:
 - a. first hand observation
 - b. Hold in check assumptions about what is important to observe (& conversely what not to observe)
 - c. Understanding comes from repeated observing, checking observations, out of which emerge redundancies/patterns –
 - d. From these redundancies comes information about the natural group as a system

From this research came the Communication or Interactional Approach

Basic conceptual Premises:

- One cannot not communicate
- Report & Command
- From intention to effect
- Non-pathological/non-normative (like people – We all do the best we can given the relationships & contexts of which we are a part – Jackson, 1952; We are much more human than anything else, HHS, 1939)
- First and 2nd order always
- Multiple meanings (levels)

Intervention

- Ask what brought you here today?
- Listen
- Observe
- Curiosity
- There is nothing wrong with people other than the relationships & contexts within which their behavior is a part
- There is no underlying problem
- The situation/complaint/symptom does make sense – the first task is to grasp that then to explore how current behavior provides a self reinforcing context that perpetuates it
- 3 Classes of Intervention: Direct, Paradoxical & Positive Connotation
- Go slow

A Bibliography

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