Priming: The Hidden Key to Successful Therapeutic Outcomes

2018 Brief Therapy Conference
San Francisco

Dr. Clifton Mitchell

ABRIDGED HANDOUT

"You do not have to want to stop your current behavior in order to change, you simply have to want something else *more.*"

Aldo Pucci

---

1. You do not like the status quo.
   -- pushes client
   -- less pleasant motivator
   -- but familiar state

2. You want something else more.
   -- pulls client
   -- more pleasant
   -- but unfamiliar, threatening

Most clients have not clearly formulated the desire side of the change equation.

The first rule of language is that all language is hypnotic. All words and paralanguage influence.

The second rudimentary point is that, if you are talking to another, you cannot, not manipulate.

Brain most complex organ in the universe

86,000,000,000 nerve cells (86 billion)

86 (billion) to 860,000,000,000 (billion) glial cells

Each cell has 1000 to 20,000 connections

100 (trillion) to 1,000,000,000,000,000 (quadrillion) neural connections in brain

Processes 1(trillion) to 100,000,000,000,000 (100 trillion) bits of information per second

You are only aware of about 2000 bits of info being processed per second

Typical neuron fires 5-50 times per second

Ave. 20 yr. old has about 100,000 miles of nerve fibers in brain

In a recent simulation experiment it took the 4th fastest computer in the world with 82,944 processors 40 minutes to do what the human brain can do in 1 second.

The brain uses 20-30% of the calories we take in

The mind move you and your listener in the direction of the *dominant thought*, regardless of whether it is stated in the positive or the negative.

Instead of Saying…	More Effective to Say…
"Don't <u>fall.</u>" ……………	"Walk Carefully, hold the hand rail."
"Don't <u>lie to me</u>."…......	"Tell me the truth, now."
"Don't <u>hit your little sister.</u>" …..	"Keep your hands to yourself"

Instead of Saying…   More Effective to Say…

"You're not <u>dumb</u>." ...…...   "You're smart and
                                              capable."

"You're gonna <u>fall</u>   …….... "Hold on tightly,
 <u>and break your</u>   maintain your
 <u>neck</u>."   balance."

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Instead of Saying…   More Effective to Say…

"Don't <u>forget to</u>." ....   "Remember to......"

"You can't <u>miss it</u>." ….....   "You will see it on your right..."

"Don't <u>hesitate to call</u>." ....   "Call when you need me."

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Instead of Saying…   More Effective to Say…

"You will not <u>fail</u>." ..…..   "You'll succeed!"

"Don't <u>be nervous</u>." .....   "Remain calm and
                                            relaxed."

"I'm really <u>poor at</u>."   .....   "Inch by inch everything's
                                              a cinch!"

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Instead of Saying…   More Effective to Say…

"I hope I don't <u>eat</u> .... "I am healthy, I am thin."
  <u>that chocolate cake</u>."

"I <u>gain weight just</u> .... "Everything I eat turns to
  <u>looking at food</u>."   health and beauty."

___

1. **Define what you are currently doing.**

2. **Define the positive opposite of what you are currently doing with much attention to a properly worded dominant thought.**

3. **Make a present-tense statement of you *doing* the desired behavior with the precisely worded dominant thought.**

4. **Repeat the present-tense statement to yourself 500-1000 times a day consistently across time. Give it 2-3 months, once formulated, consistency is the crucial!**

___

Priming refers to an increased sensitivity to certain stimuli due to prior experience.

Priming occurs when an earlier stimulus influences response to a later stimulus.

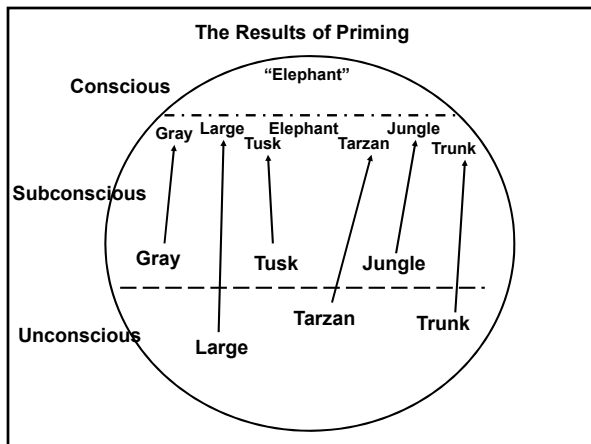**Priming can occur at the unconscious level or at a conscious level.**

Subjects primed with words like "polite" "considerate" "respect"

were less likely to interrupt than subjects primed with words like

"rude" "obnoxious" "impolite"

Subjects primed with words like "old" "Florida" "wrinkles" "bingo" etc., all associated with elderly

1) walked slower after the priming, and, in similar study, if S had much contact w elderly
2) performed worse on a memory test than S primed with neutral words w little contact w elderly

---

The Results of Priming

Conscious

"Elephant"

Gray   Large   Elephant   Jungle
            Tusk   Tarzan   Trunk

Subconscious

Gray   Tusk   Jungle

Unconscious   Tarzan   Trunk

Large

1.

Every behavior is preceded by _preparatory thoughts_ whether you are aware of the thoughts or not.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2.

No word stands alone in the brain.

Every word is neurologically linked to other words in the brain, literally. When you say a word, all associated words are momentarily triggered. There is a chain reaction of associated words all being neurologically stimulated. More importantly, these words also trigger preparatory thoughts that trigger action.
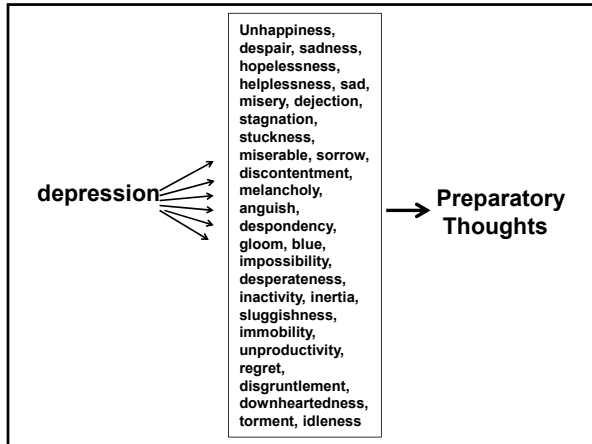
The priming and ironic process research has confirmed this repeatedly.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

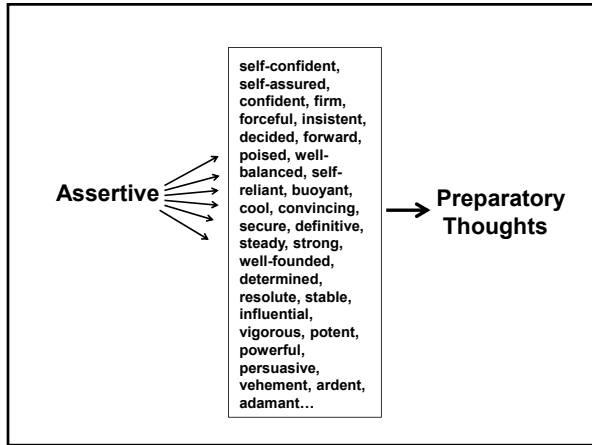**nervous, worry, concern, apprehension, disquiet, fretfulness, angst, fear, edginess, jumpiness, tenseness, uneasiness, burden, discomfort, dis-ease, agonize, stew, fuss, trouble, bother, alarm, distress, trepidation, upset, restlessness, agitation, irritation, torment, dread, fright…**

Anxiety → **Preparatory Thoughts**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

depression →→→→ Unhappiness, despair, sadness, hopelessness, helplessness, sad, misery, dejection, stagnation, stuckness, miserable, sorrow, discontentment, melancholy, anguish, despondency, gloom, blue, impossibility, desperateness, inactivity, inertia, sluggishness, immobility, unproductivity, regret, disgruntlement, downheartedness, torment, idleness → **Preparatory Thoughts**

Assertive →→→→ self-confident, self-assured, confident, firm, forceful, insistent, decided, forward, poised, well-balanced, self-reliant, buoyant, cool, convincing, secure, definitive, steady, strong, well-founded, determined, resolute, stable, influential, vigorous, potent, powerful, persuasive, vehement, ardent, adamant… → **Preparatory Thoughts**

3.
Therapist should always think of every primary word said as a cluster of related words and consider what preparatory thoughts they are priming and triggering.

We are controlled by an unconscious behavioral guidance system more than we think. And we are unaware of it.

Once covertly activated, unconscious goals are more powerful or just as powerful as conscious goals.

Goals do not require an act of will to be acquired.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What Does This Mean for the Therapeutic Dialogue?

1. Remember you are constantly priming your clients.

2. Consistently state the positive opposite of client's negative framing of problems.

3. Use high level empathic responses that include deficit statements.

4. Use embedded suggestions/commands in your dialogue.

5. Carefully observe client reactions when prime clients.

6. Remember that your job is to plant seeds. Talk to the subconscious.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____