

Judging-by-intent-effort-&-result Intervention Technique

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1. Counseling Case

1.1. **Introduction: Purpose of writing this case & its background**

This is a fictionalized counselling case:

- The purpose is to present the methodology in counseling clients with this approach (i.e., though result is very important, we must not allow it to determine our self-worth . Who we are is to be determined primarily by our intent and effort of our journey.) This approach may be suitable if the clients' sufferings are mostly the result of their disappointments of not getting what they expected though they have tried very hard.
- Though presented here as a story, the details described are based on several hundred actual counselling cases over many years. In most cases, the results were good to amazingly good ! □

1.2. **Understanding what the client needs and wants**

"Hi Paul, now that we're done with the risk assessment phase, may I know what you would like to gain from this session today?" said John, the counselor.

"I need to talk to somebody ... I need to find a way to live differently ... to feel better about myself," Paul replied slowly and anxiously, eager to find a solution to his problem.

1.3. **Clarifying the client's issue**

"I'm glad that you're here," John assured Paul with a smile.

"Could you tell me about the issue that concerns you?" John continued after a brief pause.

"I landed in Canada about a year ago and I have been living an isolated life ... I haven't made ANY friends. My daily routine involves going to work, coming home to cook and watching TV ... doing my laundry and watching more TV over the weekend. Actually I'm not that crazy about my work either ... For some reason, it hit me this weekend that my social life really sucks ... I don't have a relationship ... actually I don't have a relationship with anybody, period!" said Paul.

"Did you experience a similar problem in your social life before you came to Canada?" asked John who wanted to know more about the pattern of Paul's lack of social life.

"Oh, yes ... it was always like that ... all my life I lived in Australia ... I immigrated to Canada ... hoping for a fundamental change ... then, I found that I'm back to where I was ... it is sad ..." said Paul while throwing a blank look over John's shoulder as if he was in a trance, talking to himself.

"What about your relationship with your family?" John asked.

"I'm the only child. My dad passed away five years ago. My mom still lives in Australia ... I feel obliged to call my mom once a week but I don't really feel close to her ... See? I really don't have a relationship with anybody!" Paul replied.

"Ah ... How is your self-esteem in the relationship area?" making eye contact supportively and after taking a deep breath, John probed further.

“Uh ... low,” replied Paul.

“May I know, how low? Could you quantify your self-esteem with a scale of 10, where one is low and 10 is high?” John asked.

“Uh ... It is about 3 out of 10,” Paul replied as if he feels disgusted with himself.

1.4. Guiding the client to focus on his relationship with himself

“Paul, self-esteem is a sense of self worth which is the result of how one judges oneself. Are you OK with this notion?” John was looking for a basis for guiding Paul.

“Yes, I agree,” Paul replied firmly.

“You rate your self-esteem as 3/10 which seems to indicate that you don’t feel too good about yourself. Right?” John wanted a quick confirmation and also wanted to make sure that Paul stayed engaged in the discussion.

“Yes, you’re exactly right! I know that I haven’t felt good about myself for a LONG time ... Actually I’m not sure when was the last time that I really felt good about myself ... ” replied John engagingly.

“Not feeling good about yourself implies that you don’t have a good relationship with yourself. Right?” John paused a bit to make sure that Paul was with him.

“Yes, I agree ... it makes sense,” Paul replied readily.

“Now, if you don’t have a good relationship with yourself, do you think that you can have a good relationship with anybody else?” John wanted to make sure that Paul had a clear understanding of this.

“No, I can’t ... you’re right ... and I, sort of knew that ... but I just don’t know how to change it so that I can feel better about myself! ... I guess that’s why I’m here,” Paul replied.

1.5. Confirming the client’s interest and getting the permission to identify the underlying issues

“Alright! Shall we focus on how you may have a better clarity in improving your relationship with yourself so that you may start to create the relationship you want with others?” John started to introduce his intervention.

“Yes, go for it!” Paul enthusiastically replied with a half-laugh.

“Do you think that there is an underlying reason for this life-long pattern of your lack of social life?” asked John.

“Yes, I think so,” replied Paul.

“Do you know what it is?” probed John.

“... Ahh ... no ... I’ve been like that since I was child,” replied Paul.

“Do you believe that you’ll have a better chance to address the issue if you understand the underlying cause of the issue?” John asked.

“Yes, I believe that” Paul replied.

“Alright! Now we’re going in that direction to explore the underlying cause of this life-long pattern of your lack of social life,” John said with a warm smile.

1.6. **Introducing the term “inner script”**

“I’m going to introduce a term called ‘inner script’ which is like something you wrote in your mind possibly when you were a child and you constantly interpret the world through this ‘inner script’,” John said and noticing that Paul wore eye-glasses, he continued. “If you colour your eye-glasses yellow, you’re going to see the world in yellow. Right?” asked John.

“Yes,” replied Paul.

“If you colour it red, you’re going to see the world in red. Right?” asked John again.

“Yes,” replied Paul.

“Now your ‘inner script’ is like the colour of your eye-glasses. Through that you see and interpret the world. Your interpretation drives how you feel and how you feel drives how you behave. Are you OK with this model of explanation?” John wanted to be sure that Paul followed.

“Yes, I understand,” Paul confirmed.

1.7. **Guiding the client to see (or to have better clarity of) his ‘inner script’**

“An ‘inner script’ was something you wrote in your mind in the past, possibly when you were a child. I would like you to tell me what your ‘inner script’ is. Would you like me to give you an example of what an ‘inner script’ looks like?” said John.

“Yes, an example would be helpful,” said Paul.

“A typical example that I hear frequently from clients is: ‘I’m not good enough and therefore I need to work very hard for others to like me, to love me,’” said John.

“Uh ... this sounds like me ...” Paul gently nodded with a half smile.

“Could you tell me your version of the inner script?” John probed.

*“I feel that **I’m not good enough** ... and I work extremely hard to get approval from my friends and my mom ... in spite of all my effort, I still feel low in front of my friends and my family ... as if I haven’t achieved anything ... **I feel I’m a failure** ... I know, I’m very critical of myself ... I judge myself rather harshly ...” Paul replied.*

“How far back can you trace this ‘I’m not good enough’ thinking?” asked John.

“Uh ... all the way to my early childhood ...” said Paul.

“Could you tell me a bit about your childhood?” John wanted Paul to have the clarity of knowing where his inner script came from.

“My parents loved me ... they were strict but not physically abusive ... my mom, a very religious person, was very controlling ...,” said Paul.

“Do you see where this ‘I’m not good enough’ thinking came from?” asked John.

“Yes, I do. I know where it came from ... I always did what my mom asked but it seems that she was never happy with what I did ... my dad didn’t help either ...” replied Paul with a sigh.

“Do you see how this inner script of yours - this ‘I’m not good enough’ thinking of yours correlates to how you feel and therefore how you behave today in terms of your relationship with yourself and with others?” asked John.

“Yes ... I sort of had an inkling of that ... but it is much clearer now how I carry my baggage all the time ...” said Paul pensively.

1.8. Guiding the client to start the healing process

“Paul, try to imagine that the ADULT YOU speaks to your CHILD SELF. What would you tell him? ... If you feel like closing your eyes before you answer this question, by all means,” after pausing a bit, John suggested.

“I would tell him that ... Paul, it is OK ... that you love your parents, and you’ve done the best you can ... your parents are having problems of their own, and they cannot give you the attention and acknowledgment that you deserve ... you must not judge yourself so harshly and blame yourself for something you’re not responsible for ... you need to learn to love yourself more instead of overly dependent on the people around you for love ... and ... I would like to give him a big hug“, Paul sobbed while keeping his eyes closed. Tears were rolling down the face of this 6’ 2” 200-pound man.

“So go ahead ... give him a big hug,” smilingly John encouraged Paul. He then, leaned back and paused for a moment to give space and time to Paul to reflect on his own.

“Paul, do you notice that children are living very much in the moment and notice what interests them in the present?” John asked when he saw that Paul finally calmed down and opened his eyes.

“Yes,” replied Paul readily.

“But sometimes, they may not interpret correctly what they see or hear!” John zoomed into the problem.

“Oh ... yes ... I can see that ... ” Paul agreed.

“How do you like your life,.. as a 40-year-old ADULT, ... being dictated ... and tormented ... by the ‘inner script’ written by a young CHILD?” John wanted to touch Paul’s soul - he deliberately said this very slowly and dramatically to rouse Paul’s attention to a very sad and ironical self-created situation.

“Uh ... It seems ridiculous ... Isn’t it?” Paul uttered with a subdued laughter – seemingly laughing at himself.

1.9. Guiding the client to rewrite his ‘inner script’ – setting the stage

Seizing the moment, John asked, *“Given what you know now, how would you like to move forward?”*

“I want to change my ‘inner script’ so that I may have a better relationship with myself and therefore I get to like who I am” Paul said with clarity and determination.

“Paul, Congratulations! You’re very insightful of your own needs and wants ... and with that you’ve already taken a major step towards your own healing. I’m very happy for you!” John smilingly said.

“Thank you,” Paul accepted the compliment. *“But how do I change my ‘inner script’?”* Paul was eager to push forward.

“To change one’s ‘inner script’ is rather straightforward, BUT to be able to use it constantly would require a fair bit of work on your part.”, John wanted to set Paul’s expectation to a realistic level.

“What do you think if we first focus on learning how to change your ‘inner script’ and then we’ll talk about how to sustain it?” John asked.

“Sounds good to me!” Paul, putting his trust in John, replied heartily.

“OK, let’s start,” said John.

1.10. Guiding the client to rewrite his ‘inner script’ – introducing the judging-by-intent-effort-&-result model

“Paul, you said that you judge yourself ‘rather harshly’. Right?”, John reminded Paul of what he said.

“Yes, people around me have repeatedly told me that”, replied Paul.

“Paul, I would like to focus on the notion of ‘judging’ for our discussion. OK?”, asked John.

“Sure!”, replied Paul.

“‘To judge’, which is similar to ‘to interpret’, ‘to analyze’, or ‘to evaluate’ before we do anything, is a basic human cognitive process that we do constantly - consciously or mostly subconsciously. Do you agree?”, asked John.

“Yes”, replied Paul.

“Now, see if you can accept this model of ‘judging’. We always ‘judge’ ourselves and others based on THREE dimensions. FIRST, we always look at a person’s **intent**, or motive, which could vary from being selfish, to self-centered, to altruistic. Are you OK with this notion of intent ?” John used his hands to explain the spectrum of ‘intent’ from low to high by stretching his right hand out and moved from a low position to a high one.

“Yes,” replied Paul.

“NEXT we always look at a person’s **effort**. Does he put the money where his mouth is? Has he really tried? OK?” asked John.

“Yes,” replied Paul listening intently.

“THIRDLY and the last dimension ... of course, we look at the **outcome** or result ... see if it has turned out as expected,” said John.

“We constantly consciously or mostly subconsciously judge the action of ourselves or others based on these three dimensions and weighted differently in each dimension in each case. Can you accept this model of judging?” asked John.

“Yes, it makes sense!” replied Paul.

“Now, Paul, try to look back at your past with this notion of judging ... HOW have you been judging yourself? ... Was it primarily based on the intent, or the effort, or the outcome of what you did?” John slowly posted this question.

“Uh ... I think ... it was primarily based on the outcome ...” replied Paul.

“Can you tell me what happened to you when judging yourself primarily based on the outcome of what you did?” asked John.

“Well, if the outcome turned out as I expected, I felt good, successful ... and ... if the outcome did not turn out as I expected ... and [with a self deprecating smile] what I expected was often based on somebody’s expectation of me ..., I felt I had failed ... “ replied Paul.

“Wow, Paul, you’re very insightful!” complimented John.

“Now, Paul, to bring out a bit more clarity in terms of what we’re discussing. I would like to use some numbers for this. Are you OK to give it a try?” asked John.

“Sure! Go for it!” Paul smiled encouragingly though not exactly sure where John was going with this.

“Now, suppose that I give you a budget of 10 points to be assigned to each of the three boxes titled as ‘intent’, ‘effort’, and ‘outcome’. The more emphasis you put in that dimension in judging yourself, the greater is the number of points you should assign to it

such that the sum of the three boxes totals to 10. Is the instruction clear?" John explained while drawing the following table for Paul to see.

"Yes," answered Paul.

	Intent	Effort	Outcome
self			

"Let's start with the 'outcome' box since that is what you put your primary emphasis on, in judging yourself. How many points are you going to assign to this box?" asked John.

"I would put 7 there ... and for the remaining 3 units, I'll put 2 for 'intent' and 1 for 'effort'" said Paul.

	Intent	Effort	Outcome
self	2	1	7

"Alright, now can I ask you to PLAY God for about 1 minute?" asked John.

"To play God ... why not?" Paul seemed intrigued with the proposition and laughed.

"Paul, try to take this seriously ... Imagine that if you were God ... you're up there in cloud nine ... looking down on earth ... AND use this template of intent, effort and outcome to judge the action of every human being ... As God, where would you put the primary emphasis on? .. Is it intent, effort, or outcome?" asked John

"Uh ... I would pick intent and effort as the primary ones ... say, I would assign 4 to 'intent', 4 to 'effort' and 2 to 'outcome' ... and I think I know what you're driving at ..."

Paul answered after thinking for a moment.

	Intent	Effort	Outcome
self	2	1	7
As God	4	4	2

"Ah ... tell me what you see," John wanted Paul to stay a bit longer in this moment of his self-reflection.

"My miseries in life ... my isolation from others ... is fundamentally the result of my overemphasizing in judging myself based on the outcome of what I do ... of what I expected of myself and others ... this 4,4,2 is far better than my 2,1,7" explained Paul.

"Yes ... you're right on," continued John. *"Now, may I share with you my numbers?"*

"Yes, I would like to know that," smiled Paul.

"My numbers are ..." John said and filled in the table as follows.

	Intent	Effort	Outcome
self	2	1	7

As God	4	4	2
John	5	5	0

“Hey! That’s interesting! Why do you assign ‘0’ to the outcome box?” Paul seemed rather amused.

“Paul, ‘outcome’ is very very important as a goal. Every human behaviour is goal oriented ... You can’t possibly do anything without a goal. However, the issue is that often, the outcome may not turn out as I expect, and I wouldn’t allow the outcome to determine who I am,” explained John.

“Uh ... yes, I see ... I agree ... in that case, I would like to change my numbers to intent 5, effort 4, and 1 for outcome ... I still like to have something for the outcome,” said Paul

	Intent	Effort	Outcome
self	5	4	1
As God	4	4	2
me	5	5	0

“Your revision is fine ... Now, I would like to focus on the ‘outcome’ column. You shifted the number from 7 to 1 ... that is a HUGE shift. Right?” asked John.

“Yes ... I notice,” agreed Paul.

“This is effectively your spiritual way of judging yourself. Right?” asked John

“Yes,” agreed Paul.

“If so, on moving forward, should you judge yourself the same way as your spiritual way?” asked John.

“Yes,” Paul agreed firmly.

1.11. Guiding the client to learn how to acquire the habit of interpreting the world through his new ‘inner script’

“Tell me, on moving forward, what would you gain IF you can consistently adopt this new way of judging yourself?” asked John.

“Uh ... my self-esteem would go up ... I would be less critical about myself ... I would feel better about myself ... and others would feel comfortable in connecting with me ...” Paul said engagingly with a glimpse of hope.

“So, are you committed to adopt this new way of judging yourself and others?” asked John.

“Yes, you bet! ... I see how I can unload my baggage and I see the hope of getting what I want in life!” said Paul excitedly.

“Paul, to support you to gradually acquire a new habit of judging ... would you allow me to give you an assignment?” ask John.

“Sure!” replied Paul with full trust in what John was going to propose.

“When you go home tonight, I would like you to write down a list of gains that you may get from consistently adopting this way of judging. You should easily double, triple or quadruple the number of gains you specified. You then post it in places you can see readily at home and at work. Are you OK with that?” asked John.

“Yes, I’ll do that ... I can see how that may help me,” replied Paul with a big smile.

“Paul, bad habit dies hard ... At times, you would likely fall back to the old way of judging yourself ... However, when you gain the awareness and catch yourself ... you will have a choice to make ... to either drag yourself down or, disrupt the unhealthy train of thought and switch to this new way of judging ... ” said John.

“Paul, before we end our session, see whether the following story helps you”, John continued.

“Have you ever paddled a kayak?” asked John.

“Yes ... I did kayaking before but I suck at it! Haha!” Paul answered, feeling rather comfortable to laugh at his own inadequacy at this point.

“Now, imagine that you’re given a good kayak with a good paddle. Imagine that you’re a skillful kayaker, an Olympic athlete, and you’re asked to paddle up a river with a reasonably strong current. For every paddle, you get a little closer to the upstream destination point. Upstream is where you want to be ... where you have a good sense of self-esteem, where you feel good about yourself ... where you have a lot of friends ... Now, what happen if you stop paddling?” asked John.

“My kayak would go backwards ... would roll downstream to where I came from ...” replied Paul.

“Yes, downstream is where you came from ... where you felt miserable about yourself ... and where you had no friends. So don’t let your guard down. Use this model of judging yourself and others for every opportunity you have. Gradually, you’ll allow this new inner script to replace your old one and you’ll form a new habit of interpreting the world through your new inner script!” explained John.

“Thank you very much! I like this kayaking imagery! I think it’ll work for me!” smiled Paul.

“Wonderful! I’m glad this imagery works for you! ... and to help you continue your inner travel on your own ... would you like me recommend you a book to read?” asked John.

“Yes, I would like that,” replied Paul.

“The title of the book is ‘Happiness Now’. The author is ‘Robert Holden’,” said John and he continued after making sure that Paul has written down. *“The theme of this book is ‘nobody can be happy with what they have unless they’re happy with who they are.’”*

“Yes, I’m going to get a copy of that from amazon.ca,” replied Paul enthusiastically.

“Paul, seems that it is time to end our session today. Do you have any closing comments?” asked John.

“John, I just want to thank you very very much ... Now, I see the light at the end of my tunnel ... I’m still not sure how long it would take me to get there ... but now I have a pathway to get there ... and I’ve faith that I’ll get there ... you know, for 40 years of my life ... this is the first time this concept of judging was explained to me ... thank you very very much!” said Paul.

“Paul, it has been a privilege working with you! I’m grateful! Thank you and very best wishes!” John was moved by what Paul said.

Paul and John warmly hugged each other before they parted.