Hope and hopelessness: therapeutic engagements with the balance of hope

- Emotional postures
- Key ideas
- Personal and professional resonance
- Reflections

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Chiara Santin – Rainbow Family Therapy Services
Emotional postures to foster learning


Postures of Tranquillity

- Invite
- Mutual listening
- Multiple perspectives
- Curiosity
- Reflecting

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Identify and transform
Postures of mobilisation

Invite
Defensiveness
Control
Justification
Blame
Let’s practice: BEST HOPES

○ Activity in pairs

   Interview your partner about his/her best hopes in coming to the workshop today (2 minutes each).

○ Write a list as long as possible for each other at the end
Hope across time and contexts

Chose the best hope and find out more about it thinking about the following ideas:

- Expanding the focus of conversation across different contexts and relationships e.g. hope at home, at work, family of origin, as a person
- Expanding the focus of the conversation across time e.g. when more/less hopeful
- Feedback and reflections

Aim: Explore one theme (e.g. hope) helping your partner to enlarge the focus to include multiple contexts, different relationships and time frames
KEY THEORETICAL IDEAS (I)

based on

*Holding hope and hopelessness: therapeutic engagements with the balance of hope*


- Hope & hopelessness as co-existing side by side rather than mutually exclusive or opposites e.g. high hope-low hopelessness

- Attend to complexity of different levels of expressing hope and hopelessness for family members: feelings, thinking and doing e.g. someone could feel hopeless but still doing hope

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KEY THEORETICAL IDEAS (II)

- Attend to the multi-layered context of hope and hopelessness in family intimate relationships, family history and wider social contexts e.g. patterns, roles and individual expressions and their complex interconnections

- Therapy as promoting a BALANCE of hope and hopelessness in the family, a change in the current constellation of hope and hopelessness
What is systemic?

- Both/and approach
- Hope & hopelessness
- Relational
- Balance within family
- Context
- Influence of family history, social/political factors
- Patterns
- Positions & roles within & across generations
- Self-reflexivity
- Reflect on own relationship to family constellation, therapeutic outcome, hope & hopelessness

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SYSTEMIC INTERVENTIONS

- Explore the complex patterns in the constellation of hope and hopelessness within the family e.g. how different family members experience and express hope and hopelessness.

- Explore positions and roles (e.g. gender) in intra and inter-generational family history and wider context e.g. social injustice, social disadvantage, or human adversity.

- Make patterns more flexible towards a more healthy balance of hope and hopelessness.

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The Therapist

- Witnessing and emotionally holding hope and hopelessness in the therapeutic relationship
- Remaining open and curious about the constellation of hope and hopelessness in the whole family and individuals within
- Building compassionate connections with family members
Self-reflexivity

Reflect on own relationship to the family’s constellation of hope and hopelessness e.g. allying with most hopeful member, or taking most familiar position

Reflect on own ideas, beliefs and personal vulnerabilities e.g. own tendency towards hope and hopelessness

Reflect on own relationship to hope for therapy e.g. balance of hope and hopelessness within ourselves towards the expected outcome

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Reasonable Hope
(Weingarten, 2010)

- **Relational**: co-construct hope together by identifying resources, strengths and signs of resilience – faith, family, friends (vicarious hope)

- **Active**: “doing hope” e.g. resisting negativity and preserving positivity through

- **Future-oriented**: plan a preferred future and explore possibilities accepting uncertainty

- **Dynamic**: ongoing revision of attainable goals (good enough)

- **Dialectical** relationship between hope and despair – soften polarity

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Critical hope

“My hope is necessary, but is not enough. Alone, it does not win. But without it, my struggle will be weak and wobbly. We need critical hope the way the fish needs unpolluted water”

(Freire, 1992:2)
Singing hope

Hope is the thing with feathers – that perches in the soul – and sings the tune without the words – and never stop – at all –

Emily Dickinson

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GROUP REFLECTIONS

PERSONAL RESONANCE

e.g. ideas, beliefs, own personal life experiences in relation to hope and hopelessness

PROFESSIONAL RESONANCE

e.g. clinical experience and own case material