Sources of meaning card method
COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS VERSION
A statement-initiated conversation about meaning in life

7-card version for people with cognitive limitations

This version of the *Sources of Meaning - card method* is designed to initiate a conversation about existential topics with people who cannot be expected to complete the more intensive exercise with 26 cards and a duration of about one hour. Relevant cognitive limitations might arise due to, for example, dementia, severe disease, or being in palliative care.
The purpose of the cognitive limitations version of the card method is to provide structure and input to a conversation about meaning in life.

The card method is a tool, but not a ready-made recipe for a meaningful conversation. This 7-card version is thus intended for use by professionals who *are already able to have an existential conversation* with a client. The usage must be readily adapted and procedures put aside if the conversation is not sustained as expected or if other significant agendas arise.

Material

There are two types of cards:
5 cards explore the client's sources of meaning.

- o   I try to make the world a better place to live in
- o   I look for challenges
- o   People shouldn't question tried and tested traditions
- o   I need to be around other people
- o   Religion plays an important role in my life

2 cards explore the client's immediate sense of meaning in life and/or crisis of meaning

- o   I live a full life
- o   My life seems meaningless

Procedure: Decide with the client how long the conversation is expected to last (e.g. 30 minutes). As the professional, you are responsible for keeping time and keeping the conversation meaningful.

Introduce the cards, for example as follows:

Can we talk openly about what is and has been meaningful to you and has given meaning in your life? I have some cards here with sentences on them. These are statements that other people have perceived as important sources of meaning at a particular time in their lives. I will now ask you what you think about these sentences, that is, what they mean to you.

After eventual questions have been clarified, the conversation can begin:

You put one of the five cards with sources of meaning in front of the client (preferably on a table) and read the card aloud.

Ask: *Can you tell me what you think about that sentence?*
Explore what is being said. Let the conversation be fluid and flexible and *make the conversation slow. Take notes.* Let the conversation lead where the client wants it. Ask in-depth questions to explore, but do not introduce new topics. Let the subject saturate itself before the next of the five cards is presented.

Some clients formulate in words and sentences what is meaningful and important and this can lead to new thoughts/changes in the areas being opened. For other clients, the conversation may evolve as narratives of certain chapters of life; recollecting life chapters.

Put the cards next to each other or in a pile. The order is not important. For a conversation of 30 minutes, set aside 3-5 minutes per card; for a conversation of one hour, set aside about 6-8 minutes per card.
When all five cards have been spoken about, the last two cards (about meaning/crisis of meaning) are placed *side by side*.

Ask: *What do you think about this?*
Again, let the conversation be guided by the client, feel free to ask for more detail.

Once everything has been talked through, you might ask if the client can choose one or two cards that they particularly identify with/which are of special importance to them. Ask about the selection, what is it that matters in this choice?

You can end the conversation by asking whether changes in the sense of the preferred statements are desired. (For example the statement "*I need to be around other people*" may invite changes in everyday life)

If there is energy after the conversation, you may turn over the most important cards and read the concept on the back. Is this related to what has been discussed?

The back sides refer to the theory and empirical findings behind the card method. Knowledge of this theory and empiric findings will significantly increase the naturalness and quality of the conversations.

Literature

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Peter la Cour, Tatjana Schnell, Trine Struer-Tranbjerg © 2023