Story in Objects

A practical exercise for exploring metaphor with your clients

Story in Objects is a simple, flexible exercise that helps clients explore their experiences, recognise personal strengths and consider possibilities for change through everyday objects.

It's particularly useful for clients who find abstract thinking difficult, and for hypnotherapists who want to develop greater confidence in recognising and working with client-generated metaphors.

How to Use the Exercise

Invite your client to find three ordinary objects from their surroundings. They don't need to be special or valuable, and there's no right or wrong choice.

Ask them to choose:

1. **An object representing a strength** they've drawn upon during difficult times.
2. **An object representing something that's beginning to change** in themselves or their circumstances.
3. **An object representing a quality, hope or possibility** they'd like to carry forward.

Give the client time to choose their objects, then invite them to explain what each one represents.

Explore their choices with gentle, open questions. What drew them to that particular object? What qualities do they associate with it? Does it remind them of a particular experience?

Pay attention to the client's own words and descriptions. An object described as strong, flexible, worn, protective or adaptable may provide a useful metaphor to explore further.

Developing the Metaphor

Once the client has explored the three objects, invite them to consider whether there's a connection between them.

Do the objects tell a story about their experiences? What have they recognised about themselves? Is there something they'd like to take forward?

Allow the client's own meanings and associations to guide the conversation rather than interpreting the objects for them.

Bringing the Exercise Into Hypnosis

During hypnosis, invite the client to imagine holding or looking at one of their chosen objects, reconnecting with the qualities it represents.

You can also introduce bodily awareness by inviting them to notice whether imagining the object creates any sensations or changes in their body. For example, an object associated with strength might evoke a feeling of steadiness, while one representing possibility might bring a sense of openness.

Explore how they might carry those qualities into an everyday situation, adapting the imagery and suggestions to the client's individual responses.

A Final Thought

The value of Story in Objects isn't in discovering a hidden meaning behind the objects. It's in giving clients another way to explore their experiences and recognise connections that might otherwise go unnoticed.

The most useful metaphors are often the ones clients create for themselves.