

Method of Levels: information for clients

The Method of Levels (MOL) is a new conversation therapy based on the belief that people themselves have the ability to find the solutions for their own psychological distress. However, they are held back by not knowing exactly which feelings and/or thoughts play a crucial role into their emotional condition. Achieving this they therefore require to face and talk about their fear, sadness, despair or anger.

The goal of MOL therapy is that you talk about your problem as you are experiencing it at that very moment. Any feelings or thoughts that come up are allowed and acknowledged, given space and attention. MOL provides you with a helicopter view; you can observe, feel and understand your problem from a higher 'level'. The therapist will be asking questions to keep your attention focused on the problem and all that is connected to it. The questions will hone in on specific thoughts and feelings at that moment, especially responding to 'disruptions' in the conversation. These verbal and non-verbal changes in the communication include hesitating, a change in expression, looking away, different language patterns, and passing judgement on yourself or the situation. Usually these 'disturbances' signify important feelings and thoughts that make a fleeting appearance and then disappear into the background. With MOL, the therapist focuses full attention on those feelings and thoughts, ruling out the possibility of retreat. This process continues as the therapist stays on the lookout for further 'disruptions'.

Throughout this process, you will become more and more aware of what is really happening. You will be able to pinpoint the heart of the problem and everything will fall into place. These 'insights' can often result in the problem resolving itself right on the spot, and it will become clear how to move ahead on your own. The MOL is effective in treating all forms of psychological issues, regardless of any previous diagnosis.

How does a MOL conversation begin?

At the beginning of each conversation you pick the topic, so each session will start with the subject you want to talk about. Filling in standard information with an intake, or questionnaire, is not necessary. There are no any standard suggestions, exercises, methods or interventions. The therapist's priority is to help you to keep focusing your attention on the difficult subject at hand.

"What I think is useful is that you don't tell me what to do, so I noticed that I am actually helping myself. I started looking at things differently, and I was able to do that on my own. Not because you told me what to do. It makes me feel strong because now I know I can save myself."

Why will the therapist give extra attention to facial expressions or body language?

"I don't know how you pick up on this, but it seems like you know exactly how to say the right things to me. You also notice my body language and the emotional reactions I have when I talk. This was important to me. It helped to talk about my thoughts and feelings at the moment they came up. Usually I don't notice them, or I ignore them. When you asked me why I was making a certain gesture, or having a certain expression, I realized what I was doing. Then when I thought about it, I understood it much better."

Why is the therapist interrupting me while I'm talking?

Your therapist wants to focus your attention on something you just said, or perhaps a 'disturbance' had just happened. He wants to help bring your thoughts and feelings from the background to the forefront. If he were to wait for you to finish a sentence or story, you might not be able to retrieve what flashed through your mind right at that moment.

Do I need to answer the therapist's questions and discuss everything in detail?

The therapy focuses much more on the thoughts and feelings you are experiencing right now, and less on the details of the story behind it.

How will I feel after the therapy sessions?

"It took a while before I understood the MOL therapy. After the first conversation I began to wonder what the therapy was about, because I noticed that I wasn't getting any advice. But now I understand that the goal is that I can talk freely in any way I want. That gave me security and trust. And even though you didn't give me any answers, you were there and asking me the right things. Then I felt able to figure out answers on my own."

How many consults do I need?

The needed number of MOL sessions varies greatly from person to person. Some people need one or two sessions and others need many more. With this therapy, you as a client decide when to start and stop the therapy sessions. In certain situations, depending on the reimbursement policy of your health insurance, there could be a limit to the maximum number of sessions.

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