



Module Twelve: What Do You Want?

Last week we talked about creating a need-satisfying environment for your client as the first part of the Reality Therapy process. However, I don't want to give the impression that it is an item to check off the list. Creating a need-satisfying environment is something that must be constantly attended to throughout the entire process. You shouldn't think, "OK, we've got a good relationship. Now we can move on to the 'real' therapy." Whenever you are experiencing what feels like reluctance or resistance in your client, it is a good time to go back to working on your relationship.

That being said, let's move on to the subject of today's lesson, exploring your client's Quality World. When you ask the question, "What do you want?" you are actually asking your client to tell you about the contents of his or her quality world.

There are many ways to ask the question, "What do you want?" Some examples are:

- What do you want?
- What do you really want?
- If you could change one thing, what would it be?
- If you could improve your relationship with one important person in your life, who would that be?
- If things were perfect, how would they look?
- If I could wave a magic wand, what would you want to happen?
- If you found a genie in a bottle, what would be your three wishes?
- The idea is to get at the person's ideal world--their all they want world. It's perfect there.

If clients won't tell you what they want, it is most often a case of not having a strong enough relationship rather than the client not knowing. There are rare times when a client might not know what he or she wants or perhaps is conflicted about it, but for the most part, people know what they want. They just aren't always willing to share it. In this case, you will want to stop asking that question and go back to working on strengthening your relationship.

Sometimes it's easier for people to tell you what they don't want. This is an acceptable place to begin but you, as the counselor, always want to turn a "don't want" into a "do want." There is far more energy available to work on what you want rather than complaining about what you don't want. Another way to look at it is if you wrote down everything you didn't need on your grocery list and went shopping, how likely is it you would come home with what you wanted to buy? And yet another thought is what happens when you tell someone to stop thinking about pink elephants? Of course, they are thinking about pink elephants. So, talking about what you don't want makes it quite difficult to accurately formulate what you do want.

How do you help a person turn their "don't want" into a "do want"? Ask them this:

- If you weren't doing that what would you be doing?
- If people stopped doing that, what would change for you?
- If you didn't have that, what would you have instead?
- If you could stop being that, how would you want to be?

Do you see how these are all designed to take the negative to the positive, thus creating a Quality World picture you can work with.

Another thing that often happens is that people want something from someone else in order to be happy. If only my wife were more affectionate . . . If only my husband were more attentive . . . If only my children were more respectful . . . If only my boss appreciated all my hard work. . . None of these are positions of empowerment because the client has put their happiness in someone else's hands.

In these cases, asking this question will help:

If "those people," [whoever they are] were doing exactly what you want them to do, what would change for you?

You can keep asking this question until you burrow through to something the person actually has control over. Some examples are, "If my wife weren't crazy, then I wouldn't have to worry so much." "If my children were more respectful then I wouldn't have to be so embarrassed when they disrespect me or others." "If my wife were more sexual, then I wouldn't have to seek out other women." Do you see what each of these answers gives you, the counselor? Something you can work with; because you can help clients worry less, not be embarrassed by the behavior or others, and take responsibility for the choices they make in their lives. You have whittled the behavior down to something that's within the person's circle of control and then, you can reframe the want, saying "So what you really want is to worry less." You can continue working the process from there. It's difficult to help a client fix something in another person short of asking for what he or she wants.

You may also run into a client who talks about a vague or ambiguous Quality World picture. If your client lacks specificity of his or her want, then you can ask the have-do-be questions to add substance to the picture. The more detailed the want, the more likely the person will pursue it. Here are the have-do-be questions:

- If you had what you want, then what would you have that you don't have now?
- If you had what you want, then what could you do that you aren't doing now?
- If you had what you want, how would you be different?

These questions help you get more detail to help your clients really zero in on what it is they want.

Another situation you may encounter is the client who knows what he or she wants, has the skills to get it but isn't making progress toward their stated goals. There are several things to ask in this situation:

- Is this what you still want?
- What other things do you want that are getting in the way of reaching your goal?
- What might you have to give up in order to get what you want?

These questions are designed to uncover other deeper things a person may want that they may not even be aware of. We say we want to lose weight but somewhere we know if we lose weight, we may have to give up time with our friends who don't support that. We want to go back to school but stall because it will seriously affect the stability of our marriage. We want to move ahead in our career but stall because taking care of a sick parent takes precedence. Uncovering those competing wants and bringing them into the light help clients evaluate what's most important to them.

Exploring the Quality World is a very productive place to work with a client. Sometimes, we allow ourselves to stay focused more on the perceived world by talking about the past or things that we don't control. Focusing the conversation on what your client wants goes a long way toward beginning the process for positive change.

Conclusion:

Your assignment this week is to find someone to talk to about their Quality World. If you have clients, it can be someone you are working with. If you don't have clients, then it can be a friend, family member or acquaintance.

Takes notes on your conversation and complete the Quality World Exploration worksheet. Write down the question you ask to access the Quality World. Then, record their response. Then write down your assessment of the response. For example, you might say, I think he wants this but there is something he wants more. Then write your next question, which might be, "What do you really want?" Keep recording responses until you believe you have a clear and accurate idea of what the person really wants. You are just practicing accessing the Quality World.