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Aeschi 10: Affirming the Relevance of Narrative in
Contemporary Suicide Assessment and Treatment

Treatment Engagement and Narrative Interviewing

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Disclosures

Honoraria

- APA Publishers; Michel & Jobes (Eds), 2011
 - Hogrefe; Michel & Gysin-Maillart, 2015
 - Huber; Gysin-Maillart & Michel, 2013
-
- No off-label use of medication will be described

Learning Objectives

- *Describe the relationship between narrative interviewing and treatment engagement*
- *Highlight the various aspects of narrative interviewing as a unique relational and goal-directed action*

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Home Attempted Suicide Becoming Allies ASSIP in a Nutshell

Research Training ASSIP Worldwide

Attempted Suicide
Short Intervention Program

ASSIP



Question

How can a three-session therapy therapy
have such a long-term effect?

Is it the narrative approach?

Therapeutic Relationship

- Morgan, Luborsky, Crits-Christoph, Curtis, & Solomon, 1982 -> Penn Helping Alliance Questionnaire (HAQ)
- Crits-Christoph (1998) -> Therapeutic alliance was positively correlated with the number of patient words per relationship episode.
- Bruner 1987: Natural length of a narrative 30-40 mins.
- Etc., etc.
- «When we are able to formulate the right story, and it is heard in the right way by the right listener, we are able to deal more effectively with the experience» (Adler (1997))

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A therapeutic relationship is a necessary
– but not sufficient condition for effective psychotherapy

Treatment Engagement: A Neglected Aspect in the Psychiatric Care of Suicidal Patients

Dana Lizardi, Ph.D.

Barbara Stanley, Ph.D.

Objective: Suicide remains a serious health problem in the United States and worldwide. Despite changing distributions in sex, race-ethnicity, and age and considerable efforts to reduce the incidence rate, the number of suicides has remained relatively stable. The transition from emergency services to outpatient services is a crucial but often neglected step in treating suicidal individuals. Up to 50% of attempters refuse recommended treatment, and up to 60% drop out after only one session. This point of intervention is crucial for patients at elevated risk of suicide to reduce imminent danger and to increase the chances that patients will follow up on recommended treatment. ***Methods:*** PubMed, MEDLINE, and PsycINFO databases were searched for empirical investigations of treatment engagement of suicide attempters. Keywords searched included treatment, intervention, engagement, adherence,

assessment, begins when a suicidal individual presents for treatment. If the individual goes to a hospital and receives an evaluation in the emergency department, this represents the next level of intervention, treatment planning and disposition. During this point of intervention, clinicians decide whether to admit the individual. If a patient is not hospitalized, a treatment plan is formulated, the appropriate type of treatment is identified, and the patient is discharged with a

Treatment Engagement

... being committed to the therapeutic process and being an **active participant** in a collaborative relationship with a therapist to work to improve one's condition.

Lizardi and Stanley 2010

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Meaningful experiences create new synapses

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Memory and Eric Kandel



„Psychotherapy and The Single Synapse“ 1979

„Psychotherapy is a biological treatment“

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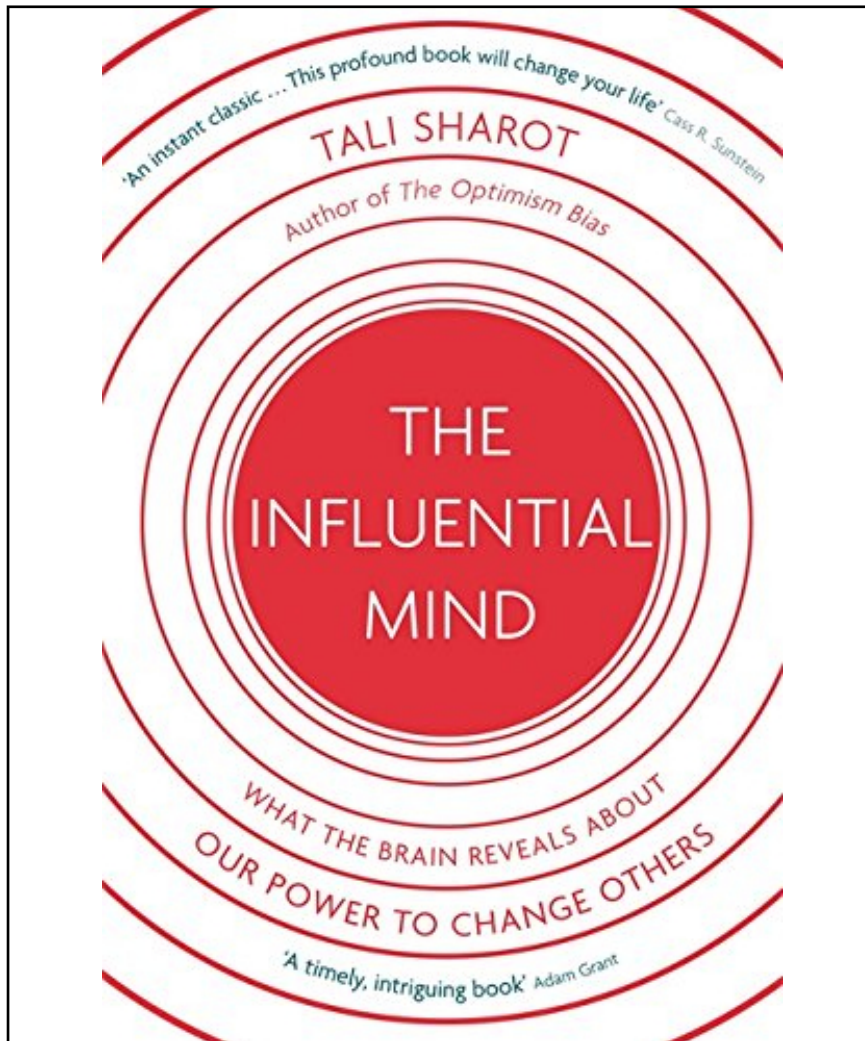
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„Change is always self-change“

How do we induce self-change?

About Change...



„Here is the problem: we approach this task from inside our own heads. (...) **We reflect on what is persuasive to us, our states of mind, our desires, our goals.**

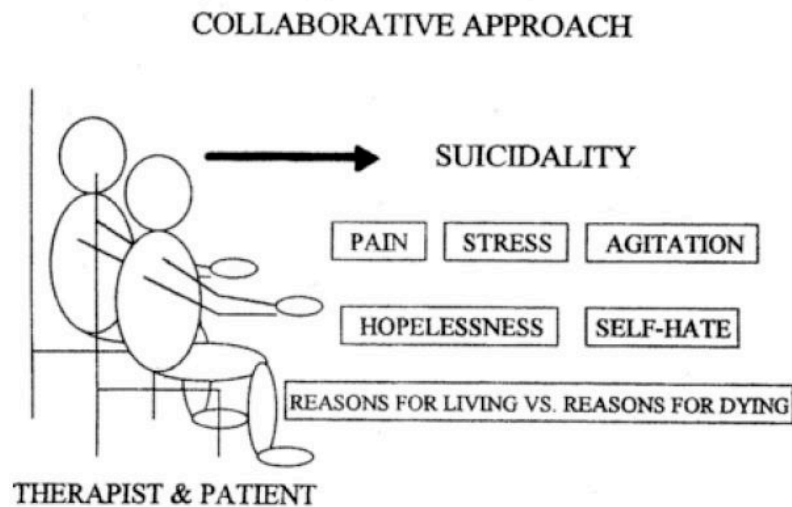
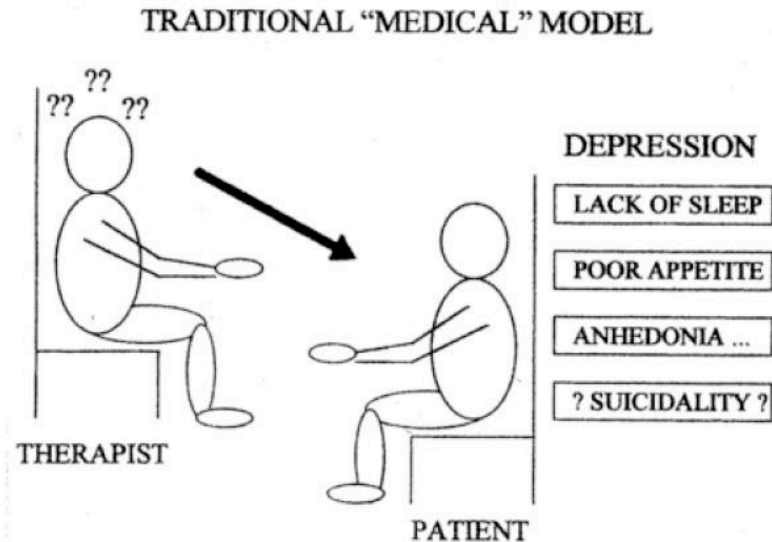
But, of course, if we want to affect the behaviors and beliefs of the person in front of us, **we need to first understand what goes on inside *their* head and go along with how *their* brain works.“**

p.7

Tali Sharot, Little, Brown, London 2017

I want to see it through your eyes

D. Jobes: Collaborative approach



ASSIP Treatment Model

We all explain and
understand actions
telling stories

„Suicide is not an illness -
it is an action“



Ladislav Valach, PhD



Suicide is an action, not an illness

Archives of Suicide Research 3: 213–221, 1997.
© 1997 Kluwer Academic Publishers. Printed in the Netherlands.

Commentary

Suicide as goal-directed action

KONRAD MICHEL and LADISLAV VALACH
Outpatient Department of Psychiatry, University Hospital, Bern, Switzerland

Accepted 30 September 1996

Case vignette: The violin maker

This is the
himself at
and army
be achieve
repeatedly
university
married a

had five children and developed a caring and warm family atmosphere –
different from what F.B. had experienced at home. He left his academic
career and started his own business as a craftsman making string instruments.

Suicide emerges as a solution to
an existential threat to a person's
life career/identity goals

The theory of goal-directed actions

Actions include cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements

Actions are related to *Self-Regulation*, and are goal-directed

Actions are explained and understood by
NARRATIVES





I want to see it through your eyes

- A narrative interviewing style is associated with a better therapeutic alliance (Penn Helping Alliance Questionnaire)
- Acknowledging life-career/biographical issues
is associated with a better therapeutic alliance

Michel K, Dey P, Stadler K, Valach L: Therapist sensitivity towards emotional life career issues and the working alliance with suicide attempters. Archives of Suicide Research 2004, 8, 203-213.

Narrative!

1. Active re-processing of an event and it's history
2. A shared experience that creates a therapeutic bond
3. Fostering self-reflexion and insight
4. Allowing personal development
5. Providing information for the therapy (vulnerability, needs, trigger, safety planning)

Narrative!

- It would be a misconception to believe that the goal of the patient's narrative is – only - to provide the relevant information to the therapist.
- It is much more...

Narrative as a form of self-regulation

Reflexivity: The ability (of the self) to turn around and take itself as the object of its own view (self-regulation).

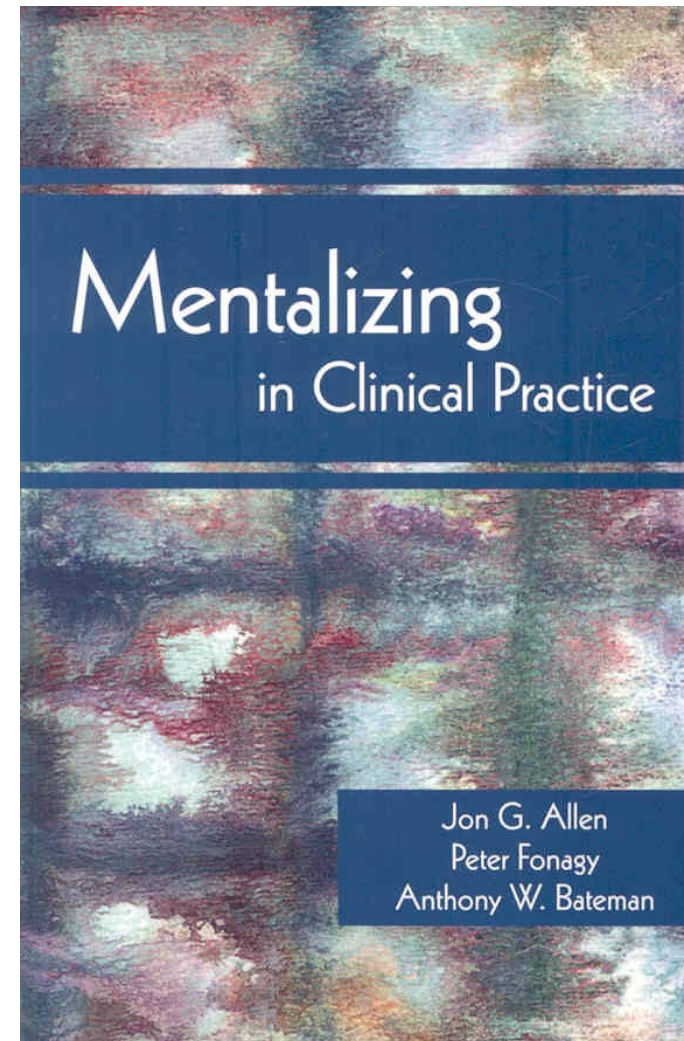
Carver 1976

One cannot verbalize experience without taking a
perspective...

Slobin, 2000

Mentalizing

- To reflect about oneself and others
- Childhood trauma -> impaired mentalizing
- Therapist in the „not-knowing“ position
- Adopting new perspectives



The functions of Narrative

Narratives are goal-oriented:



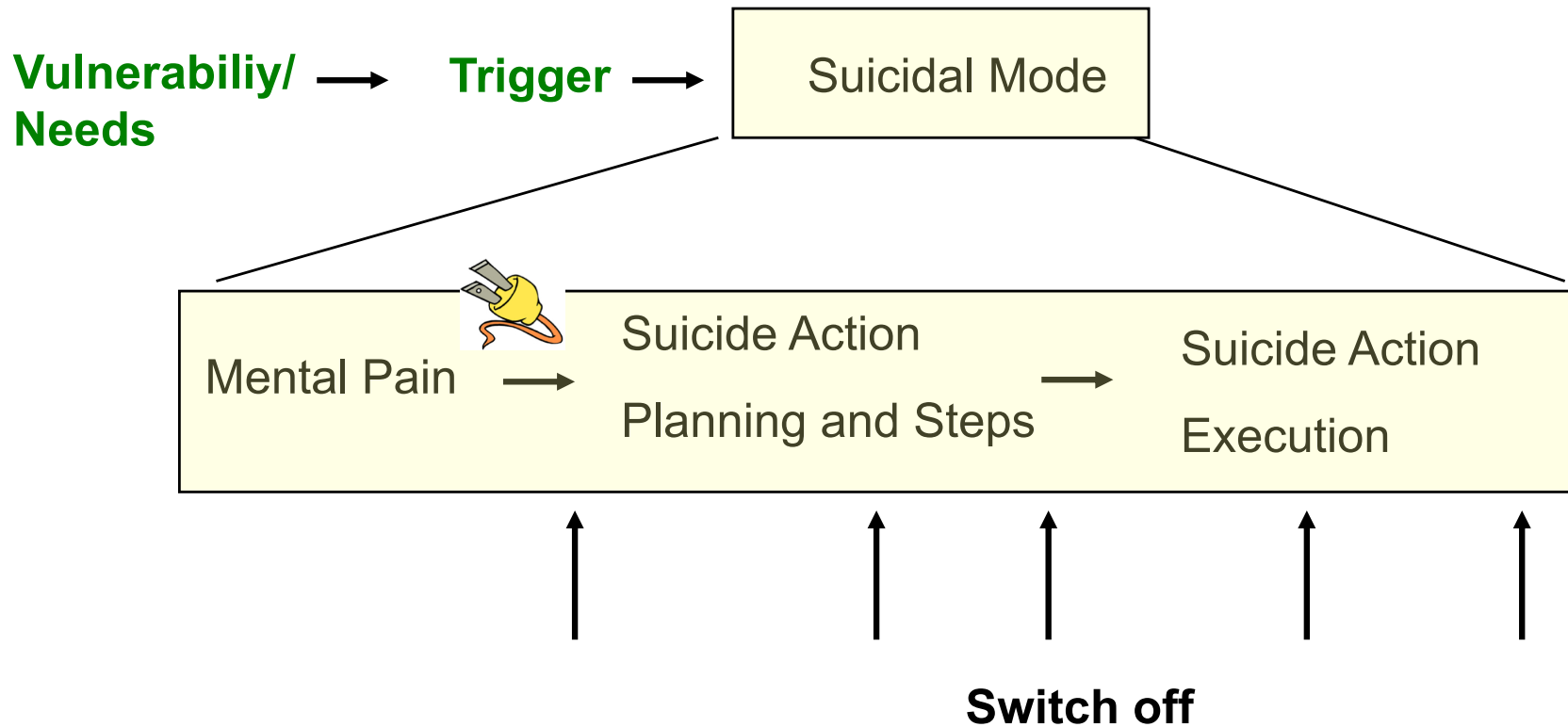
- For the client to „re-live“ the event and to articulate and understand it.

Angus, 2004

ASSIP: Starting with a narrative interview



The ASSIP Treatment Model



SESSION 3 (1)

Case Conceptualization

1. Triggering situation (what causes mental pain)?
2. Personal vulnerability/needs in relation to suicidality, in a biographical context (related to 1)?
3. Suicide action development, including prior suicide attempts? Warning signs?

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Video: Narrative Interview

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Case Conceptualization

1. Triggering situation (what causes mental pain)?
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3. Suicide action development, including prior suicide attempts? Warning signs?

Narratives are the key to personalised safety planning



Michel K, Gysin-Maillart A, ASSIP Manual 2015

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