



I just want
to be...
ME!

Word Prisons

(inspired by the work of Kelly Wilson)

Assembly Instructions

Download and print out the four pages of cards. Using either a photocopier or other print service copy the pages so that each word card has the 'Word Prisons' design lined up on the back. Cut out ready to use.

Using the cards

The cards are designed to help clients see how they can remain stuck because of the language they use in relation to the situation. The twelve words represent rules or beliefs that clients may fuse with, to the point of being unable or unwilling to take differing perspectives and move forward with their lives.

Suggested approaches:

a) The therapist may suggest a domain of the client's life, such as 'work', 'family', 'health' etc. With the client's permission, the therapist may then either present the cards one at a time to the client, word side up, or spread them out across a table. In both cases, the client is asked to do two things - observe the word, and notice what comes up for them (the relation between the word and the domain). The client may divide them into 3 piles – those with a strong connection, those with a medium connection, and those with a light or no connection. Focussing on the words with a strong connection, the therapist can then help the client draw out what impact these beliefs/rules have on the client's behaviour – whether they serve to move the client in a valued direction, or keep them stuck.

b) The therapist may use the cards to explore the client's perceptions of their life in a more general sense. As above, the cards can be presented to the client one at a time, or spread out all at once. The client is asked to divide them into 3 piles – "This word features strongly in my life", "This word features a bit in my life" and "This word is not really a part of my life". Any cards from the first pile (or second, if none are selected for the first pile) can then be selected for the client to describe further – what domains of their life they feel it features in, how strongly, how long it has been around, in what contexts it comes up the most, what impact it has on their behaviour.

In both cases, the words can be flipped over at some point to reveal the "Word Prison" side. This can act as a trigger for discussion around how holding tightly to these kind of words can actually keep us stuck. Discussion can examine what the difference would be if these words could be held more lightly (in the first instance).