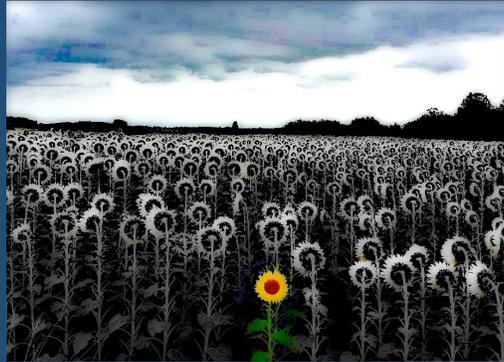


treating people as people



through our language

1

“If you treat an individual as he is, he will stay as he is, but if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought and could be.”

- Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

So much of what happens in “helping professions” is based on a deficit model. The assumption is that the person is lacking something that needs to be “installed.” The implicit message is, “I have what you need and I’m going to give it to you” be it knowledge, insight, diagnosis, wisdom, reality, rationality or coping skills. Our evaluations often become focused on detecting deficits to be corrected by professional expertise.

This approach is reasonable in auto repair or treating infections, but it usually doesn’t work well when recovery is the focus.

2

our language:

represents the meanings we
have constructed from our
experiences

4

an
exercise



5

our language

prompts attitudes, expectations
and actions

8

a second
exercise



9

our language

should always reflect
unconditional positive regard for
people

10

a third
exercise



11

our language

should be:

- person first
- strength focused
- respectful
- clear and understandable
- free of jargon, confusing data and speculation
- focused on the individual

12

what we say or write matters

a final
exercise



13

some things to remember

- none of us should be defined by our difficulties or diagnoses, or by any single aspect of who we are; we are people first and foremost
- if we do not know someone's story, we tend to assign them one, listen to and learn their story
- we may be unaware of the impact of our words have on our attitudes as well as upon those around us
- the words we choose reflect our attitudes; that we do (or do not) truly value people, believe in and truly respect them

14

thank you!



15