SCRIPTING FOR THE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

The efficacy of guided imagery techniques is established in the training and educational literatures. However, little guidance has been provided on ways to most effectively use such scripting techniques in the classroom. This article supplies background information on and guidelines for guided imagery scripting and usage as gathered from both practice and research on the topic.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing attention is focusing on social cognitive dimensions of management especially as related to organizational learning and decision making. Imaginal and guided imagery methods are receiving attention as powerful tools for learning and skill acquisition. Various imaginal techniques have been used in Policy and O.B. classes to enhance student learning. This paper details how these methods can be more effectively used by management educators.

IMAGINAL TECHNIQUES AND GUIDED IMAGERY

Imaginal techniques include activities that use mental imagery episodes to help students acquire new knowledge and skills. Guided Imagery is of special significance to this article. With CI, a facilitator guides students through a script that prompts imaginal scenes or behavioral scenarios. This format engenders an internal focus, a quieting of thoughts, and increased attentiveness to skill or knowledge acquisition.

SCRIPTING AND COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING

Effective use of guided imagery depends upon the relevance of the imaginal script to students and upon their previous comfort and experience with imaginal techniques. Internal scripts or schemas are intrapsychic conceptual or relational models that frame overall cognitive functioning. Schemas develop over time as a result of learning. External or guided scripts are prompted by a facilitator and serve as stimuli for development and elaboration of students' internal scripts. Guided imagery is one of the most frequently used techniques for integration of internal and external scripts.

GUIDELINES FOR SCRIPTING AND APPLICATION

Identified below are general guidelines for script development and use in management learning. These guidelines have evolved from our use of imaginal techniques and from research on their use in various learning contexts.

The Scope of Scripts - An open-ended script is one where minimal directive cueing is provided. It is best used for creative/divergent learning tasks. In contexts where objectives are more defined, directive scripts are necessary.

Utilizing Metaphors in Scripts - Metaphoric language within G.I. scripts can suggest implicit relationships that help students reform a perception or evolve a new insight. Metaphors also elicit rich and vivid images while promoting flexible, original thinking that unfreezes habitual patterns of thought and behavior.

Personalization of Scripts - Trainees must be able to visualize themselves within script dynamics thus the use of personal pronouns enhance script relevance to students.

Ill Effects of Pejorative Terms - The use of pejorative words can detract from script impact. Even seemingly neutral cues can distract/upset students from focus and can produce negative reactions, which cancel technique focus.

Presentation Format - The following guidelines can assist in developing a positive training ambience.

I) Pacing - Scripts should be presented in a consistent, well-modulated tone. Pacing is enhanced through prior familiarity with the script and through practice readings before sessions.

2) Timing/Pausing - Periodically, within a script, pauses should be embedded to allow students to explore their imagery and impressions.

3) Wording - Words should be selected to promote vivid imaginability of scenarios. This is accomplished when strong noun-verb linkages and powerful adjectives are frequently used.

4) Multi-Modality - To insure that scripts are highly imaginable, use cues that help trainees see, feel, smell, taste, sense and touch the imaginal terrain into which you guide them.

5) The Training Environment - Training sessions should be conducted in quiet, dimly-lit, and well-ventilated locations. Any "noise", environmental or interpersonal, will compromise the effectiveness of a guided imagery session.

6) The Use of Background Music - The use of soft classical, "new age, or environmental sounds music can be a positive addition to imaginal practice sessions. Subtle music has a soothing effect that enhances student relaxation.

7) Length of Sessions - Guided Imagery sessions should be limited to about 15 minutes. This appears to be the optimal length of time that trainees can comfortably maintain an internal focus without boredom or sleep.

CONCLUSION

Guided imagery is one of the better methods to help students use their mental imagery for learning and skill mastery. Anecdotal and empirical evidence suggests that guided imagery training, when properly used, can facilitate training outcomes and performance. In this paper guidelines have been provided to help management educators use such tools in their classrooms.