

Crossing the River: Supporting times of transition

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Background: Changing relationships with alcohol and other drugs can be very challenging. This can be described as a time of 'liminality' or 'in between' identities: a time of confusion and vulnerabilities.

Model of Care: The Crossing the River framework was developed in the field of narrative practice [1].

Application to Practice: The metaphor supports people to navigate transitions in their lives. In individual counselling or groupwork, participants name what they would like to leave behind, keep with them on the journey and 'get closer to' on the other side of the river. People find their own ways of refining the metaphor about making the crossing, fitting it to their own experiences, challenges, resources, priorities and circumstances. The approach has supported many men and women in our practice over 20 years in a wide range of contexts.

Implementation: The presentation will commence with a brief explanation of the theory and practices involved in the metaphor, and the range of applications by the facilitators and other practitioners. It will then provide a summary of how the metaphor was adapted and utilised by a group of men involved with a residential drug and alcohol service. The practice offers a flexible and creative means of assisting people to reflect on identities that are important to them, changes they hope for in life, and strategies to support them on their journey.

Outcomes: Participants will leave the presentation stimulated to reflect on the relevance of the model to supporting people making major changes in their lives, and to changes in their own lives.

Reference

1. Hegarty T, Smith G, Hammersley M. Crossing the river: A metaphor for separation, liminality, and reincorporation. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work*. 2010;2010: 51-58.