
BUILDING ON THE BASIC PARAMETERS: LIVING THE GOOD LIFE

Christian Jonathan Haverkamp, M.D.

Living according to the basic parameters means an increased quality of life, living a better life. The basic parameters are the needs, values and aspirations of an individual. Communication helps to make this possible.

Keywords: basic parameters, Communication-Focused Therapy, CFT, communication, psychotherapy, psychiatry

Contents

Introduction.....	3
The Value of Communication.....	5
Finding Value in Oneself.....	6
Use of the Basic Parameters in Therapy	7
Conflicting Parameters.....	9
References.....	11

Introduction

Building on the basic parameters means doing what one loves, and which adds to the quality of life. They are the needs, value and aspirations that are unique to a person (Haverkamp, 2017b, 2018c). Living in accordance with them leads to more happiness, contentment and satisfaction in life. Looking at one's communication is how one gains greater insight into them (Haverkamp, 2010b, 2017c), which is one of the fundamental techniques in Communication-Focused Therapy as developed by the author (Haverkamp, 2017a, 2018b). When we look at the communication patterns an individual uses, we gain insight into the basic parameters.

Identifying our true needs, values and aspirations are what makes us happy in the long run. While we evolve as individuals over time, basic needs, values and aspirations remain relatively constant. The reason is that they derive from the information contained in a person and how they process the streams of information they are constantly inundated with. As information is the bedrock of meaning, how one works with information reflects on the meaning they build in the world, the meaning they see in the world and in themselves, and, by extension, what they need, value and aspire to.

While needs and aspirations may be more straight forward as psychological motivators and yardsticks to measure health and individual achievement, values may be more difficult to place within a psychological framework. But if we define as a value anything that has intrinsic value towards the person by having meaning and relevance, it becomes much easier, and more accurate at that. Building on one's values is thus also reflecting on one's inner self, the inner world from which we build the outer world through our interactions with it. The bridge between the inside and outside worlds is communication. Being close to people widens this bridge, being distant narrows it. But there is also a bridge with our inside world, and often we have to try hard to rediscover and widen it.

If one knows what one values and does this, one will value oneself more. The path to an experience of happiness and 'success' will be quicker. However, identifying one's values requires connecting with oneself in an honest way, looking back over past experiences and how one felt about them. The past does not determine our future, but it influences how we feel about it in the present. Once one can acknowledge and reflect on that, it helps to have more control over one's interactions in the present and one's reality in the future.

An important step is to cut through the everyday strivings and apparent needs and values and go to the underlying more truly fundamental values. Money is not an end in itself, maybe not even the things one can buy with it, but one can ask what important purpose the money and the things money buys ultimately serve. If one feels money gives security, one is most likely looking for a feeling of security and not money. If you want to build a house with your money, you may value having a secure space for yourself or your family more than the shape of the lawn ornaments. However, then the real value is that feeling of having a secure space or a family.

If you want to become famous, you might not want to be alone anymore, or you may be looking for another strongly felt way of connectedness, feelings you may think you have missed out on in the past. But there may be easier ways to accomplish this without the need to become famous at any price. Unfortunately, too many people are trying just that, becoming famous or striving for something similarly vague and ill-defined to close and old wound or stuff a perceived deficit.

The Value of Communication

Gaining insight into the basic parameters means acquiring information, and this usually happens in communication processes. Whether it is to ask the right questions oneself, which leads to the processing and generating of new information bundles (maybe even answers), or it is posing questions to one's environment. Questions are very powerful because they lead to new information and new insight (Haverkamp, 2017c). The communication pattern of the archetypical question brings about change, even if there is no answer available yet. Communication-Focused Therapy uses the question quite often because of its inherent power to bring about a shift internally and externally. Just thinking about a question, rather than focusing solely on finding answers, often brings about a new perspective.

Important is not only to use a communication pattern effectively, but also to pick the right one. This can be trained within a therapeutic session and requires an awareness for, reflection about and experimentation with communication patterns (Haverkamp, 2010a, 2017a). Often it is the how rather than what is being communicated, because the how is the patterns in which the information streams are steered. And, the effect of communication is mostly through how communication flows are routed, internally and externally. This applies in a similar way to individuals, groups and large organisations.

Finding Value in Oneself

Finding value in the world requires finding in oneself. The exchange of meaningful information, within oneself and with others, is the connecting link for meaning in the world. This requires the use of communication patterns which support that. As already mentioned, the evolution of helpful communication patterns can be fostered through the practice of internal and external communication.

Seeing value within oneself helps making decisions easier, putting better boundaries in place and separating own from other people's issues. From a communication perspective, this experienced value arises from the information that is present within oneself and in the interactions with other people. The process of finding value within oneself is thus a process that relies on the communication techniques and insight described by the author elsewhere (Haverkamp, 2018a)

Finding one's own values can be a scary process. It often seems easier to adopt the values of others or a group of people, whether in the present or past, than identifying one's own. One explanation may be that it seems safer to rely on something in the outside world that seems more stable than the inside world. This leads to a vicious cycle. The more stable I feel on the inside, the easier it is to rely on my own values. However, to feel more stable on the inside it seems that I need to have my own values. To break this vicious cycle, it is important to realise that the own values is not something one has to find or create de novo, but that one just has to develop insight into them, because they already exist. They are embedded into the communication behaviours of the individual. And they can be identified through greater awareness for the communication patterns one uses.

Use of the Basic Parameters in Therapy

The basic parameters play an important role in therapy, not just because they reflect what may be motivating and unique about an individual, but because they are tightly linked to communication with oneself and the world. They help to commence and maintain communication processes. Working with a patient to identify them can often be an important first step in elucidating them. This is an important process in therapy and helpful in the process. Searching for the basic parameters can become a quest that is helpful for the individual.

Since it requires a connectedness with oneself, the quest itself is a psychotherapeutic tool. Going on this quest can not only keep a patient engaged with the therapy, but also be helpful in everyday life. Developing insight into the basic parameters leads to other valuable insights and can be a starting point to find out more about oneself and the world in general. The basic parameters can thus be used in a therapeutic setting for much more than identifying the needs, values and aspirations. They help to develop an understanding for all areas of life from a very individual perspective and to create the tools to better communicate and to act more effectively overall.

A closer look at the communication patterns also creates in a person greater awareness for communication itself, the process how meaning is created in the world. Since the basic parameters are tied to meaning, greater awareness also provides stronger insight into the basic parameters. This does not mean that the basic parameters are in flux, but that they reveal themselves into how an individual interacts with oneself and the environment.

Asking the right questions (Haverkamp, 2017c) is a powerful tool in moving therapy forward. The reason is that from a communication perspective a question leads to more meaningful information. To elucidate the basic parameters it is also important to interact with the world because needs, values and aspirations depend on the structure of reality, and what reality has to offer.

When people do not live according to their basic parameters, they will notice it. Anxiety, depression and many other conditions are then often the result. When the perceived needs, values and aspiration diverge markedly from their true counterparts, life does not work as well

anymore. It is important in this regard to keep in mind that the basic parameters are very stable over time, more stable than the personality, which is mainly a description of how we communicate externally. They are a feature of how an individual handles information, communicates with oneself and others, at a very basic level. As this is also to a significant degree determined by biology, the basic parameters are also, though more indirectly, determined by the underlying information that influence the more basic information flows in a person.

Conflicting Parameters

One question may be what to do when the parameters appear to be in conflict. The reason why I say 'appear' is that the true parameters are usually not in conflict. One may cite many reasons for this, from evolution to the simple acceptance that there is not really any other choice, because otherwise a human being would be destined to permanent unhappiness and reduced quality of life.

Usually it helps to go back on a mini-quest for the basic parameters. A good starting point is to look at the parts that seem to be in conflict with each other. Let us say there is a perceived need for sex, but with the options open to us they would go about something we find important, such as not hurting someone, particularly not someone we love. There are a couple of questions one might ask oneself:

- What are the different options of proceeding?
- Is this a true value?
- Is this a true need? May there be some other need below it?

There may be ways of proceeding where the basic parameters do not have to be reassessed. Often, we may not be clear on all there are. Broadening the horizon and exploring new ways can be a good option.

Secondly, it helps to identify if there really is a conflict from the value side. Social edicts and rules may not help us or anyone else, or they may only be suited for narrowly defined situations. In any case, it is important to identify why we have a value and where it may come from. Leaving the illness of a sociopathic personality disorder and the lack of empathy and real emotional connectedness that comes with it aside, people have values because they make sense, emotionally and rationally. But if a value feels right, the next step would be to look at the need, or aspiration if that is what the conflict is with, and see if that is really a true need.

Thirdly, one would thus look at the need. Going back to the example of sex, or another dopamine rush, one may actually look for more excitement in life, such as the excitement of meeting and getting to know another human being, relaxation, escape from private or professional life. However, one may be afraid to acknowledge the underlying need, often

because of an apprehension that one's life would need to be change in impossible ways. This is, however, underestimating the creativity of the human mind. Change may happen very gradually, as it does mostly, but if a true basic need is violated, the quality of life and overall happiness, satisfaction and contentment will usually be severely impacted and reduced.



Dr Jonathan Haverkamp, M.D. MLA (Harvard) LL.M. trained in medicine, psychiatry and psychotherapy and works in private practice for psychotherapy, counselling and psychiatric medication in Dublin, Ireland. He is the author of several books and over a hundred articles. Dr Haverkamp has developed Communication-Focused Therapy[®] and written extensively about it. He also has advanced degrees in management and law. The author can be reached by email at jonathanhaverkamp@gmail.com or on the websites www.jonathanhaverkamp.ie and www.jonathanhaverkamp.com.

References

- Haverkamp, C. J. (2010a). *A Primer on Interpersonal Communication* (3rd ed.). Dublin: Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication Publishing Ltd.
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2010b). *Communication and Therapy* (3rd ed.). Dublin: Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication Publishing Ltd.
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2017a). *Communication-Focused Therapy (CFT)* (2nd ed.). Dublin: Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication Publishing Ltd.
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2017b). *Communication-Focused Therapy (CFT) for Anxiety and Panic Attacks*. Retrieved from <http://www.jonathanhaverkampf.in/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Communication-Focused-Therapy-CFT-for-Anxiety-and-Panic-Attacks-2-Christian-Jonathan-Haverkampf.pdf>
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2017c). Questions in Therapy. *J Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication*, 6(1), 80–81.
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2018a). Atypical Depressssion. *J Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication*, 9(4), 91–97.
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2018b). *Communication-Focused Therapy (CFT) - Specific Diagnoses (Vol II)* (2nd ed.). Dublin: Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication Publishing Ltd.
- Haverkamp, C. J. (2018c). *The Basic Parameters* (3rd ed.). Dublin: Psychiatry Psychotherapy Communication Publishing Ltd.

This article is solely a basis for academic discussion and no medical advice can be given in this article, nor should anything herein be construed as advice. Always consult a professional if you believe you might suffer from a physical or mental health condition. Neither author nor publisher can assume any responsibility for using the information herein.

Trademarks belong to their respective owners. Communication-Focused Therapy, the CFT logo with waves and leaves, Dr Jonathan Haverkamp, Journal of Psychiatry Psychotherapy and Communication, and Ask Dr Jonathan are registered trademarks.

This article has been registered with the U.S. Copyright Office. **Unauthorized reproduction, distribution or publication in any form is prohibited.** Copyright will be enforced.

© 2020 Christian Jonathan Haverkamp. All Rights Reserved
Unauthorized reproduction and/or publication in any form is prohibited.