



Two-chair dialogue: an emotion-focused technique applied to career counselling

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to show the applicability of two-chair dialogue techniques to solve intrapersonal conflicts underpinning career decision-making difficulties. Grounded in a dialectical constructivist perspective this technique evokes the dialogue between two conflicting self-positions, each one in a different chair. It is sought that this dialogue fosters harmony between both sides of the conflict to facilitate career decision-making. An illustrative case is presented to describe the sequence of counsellor's tasks during the process of facilitating conflict resolution. Next, critical aspects of the intervention are commented, namely the role of emotions and working alliance to foster client change. Finally, we refer to the advantages of this technique for flexible and dynamic practices, committed to abolishing frontiers between career and personal counselling.

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In recent decades several researchers have warned about the absence of emotion in career theory and practice (Hartung, 2011; Kidd, 1998; Young & Valach, 1996). This gap has been attributed, on the one hand, to the phenomenological nature of emotions which make them difficult to observe and measure and, on the other, by the greater emphasis given in psychology to reason over emotion regarding decision-making (Hartung, 2011). However, the pervasive nature of emotion in human experience, as it accompanies thoughts and actions or helps individuals to manage interpersonal relationships, has implications for career theory and practice that cannot be ignored. For example, cognitive science has revealed that emotions evoke feelings of positive or negative valence, allowing personal experiences to be perceived as pleasant or unpleasant, satisfying, or unsatisfactory (Damásio, 2017). Without this information, decision-making in general and, career choices, in particular, would be compromised. In the career context, the importance of feelings of control and confidence are key to mobilising individuals to deal with career barriers and other challenges of career adaptability (Savickas, 2013). Emotional information is also necessary for regulating interpersonal relationships. In career counselling, experiencing empathy enhances client-counsellor attunement, which is central to each side's assessment of the quality of their working alliance. For example, the experience of security (or not) in the relationship with the counsellor is fundamental for the client to freely explore self-experience (Cardoso et al., 2016). In turn, feelings experienced by counsellors in their relationships with clients can be used as markers to facilitate change (Olry-Louis, 2018).

Theoretical developments have also justified the growth in theoretical and practical attention to the role of emotion in career counselling. The emergence of constructivist career approaches has been particularly relevant. These perspectives of vocational behaviour share an emphasis on ordering