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Showing a Client How Maps Work

Chapters 2 and 3 include examples of maps drawn by counselors during group and individual sessions. We have suggested that using maps could help counselors and clients in a number of ways. For clients to benefit from mapping, however, it is important that they **understand what maps represent** and **why the counselor uses maps**.

Because counseling styles vary, the way in which counselors introduce the idea of mapping to clients will also vary. In this chapter we provide one example of how this could be done. If you draw maps in sessions with clients—or even if you create maps to organize your own thoughts and later show those maps to your clients—you will arrive at your own way of introducing this technique to your clients. The example in this chapter is intended to underscore the need to do this, and to stimulate your own thinking about how to approach the issue.

When clients know how maps work, they can

- ❖ understand why the map is being drawn,
- ❖ read the map and understand its meaning, and
- ❖ be an active partner in creating the map.

An Example

This is the first counseling session for George. He and his counselor have spent about 10 minutes in getting acquainted. Now the counselor picks up a pencil and a clipboard, holding the board so that the client can see what will be drawn.

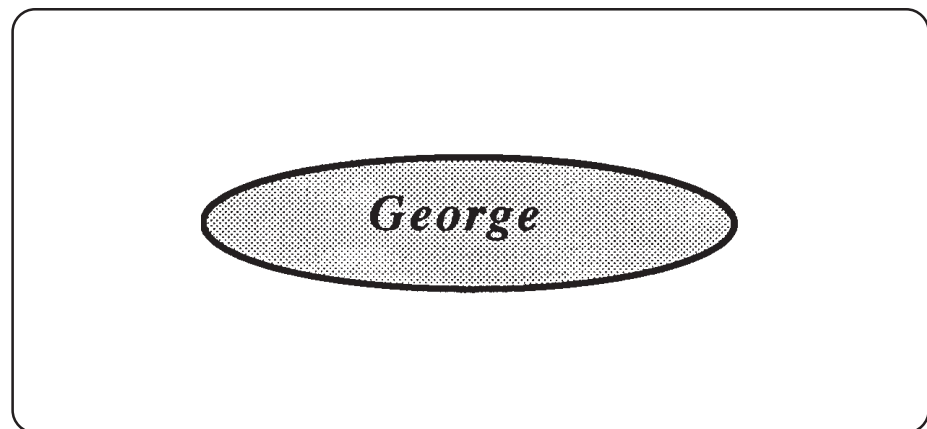
Counselor: George, I want you to be aware of a technique I use when I work. It's called "mapping," and it's a way of putting ideas down on paper so that we can both see what we've talked about. By drawing a map, we can make sure we understand each other. So often it's easier to understand all of the things involved in a particular problem when we have them laid out in front of us in a concrete way.

[The counselor writes "George" in the center of the paper and draws a circle around this.]

With your help, I'm going to draw a map about you ... the way you would describe yourself to another person.

George: You mean what I'm like and what things are important to me?

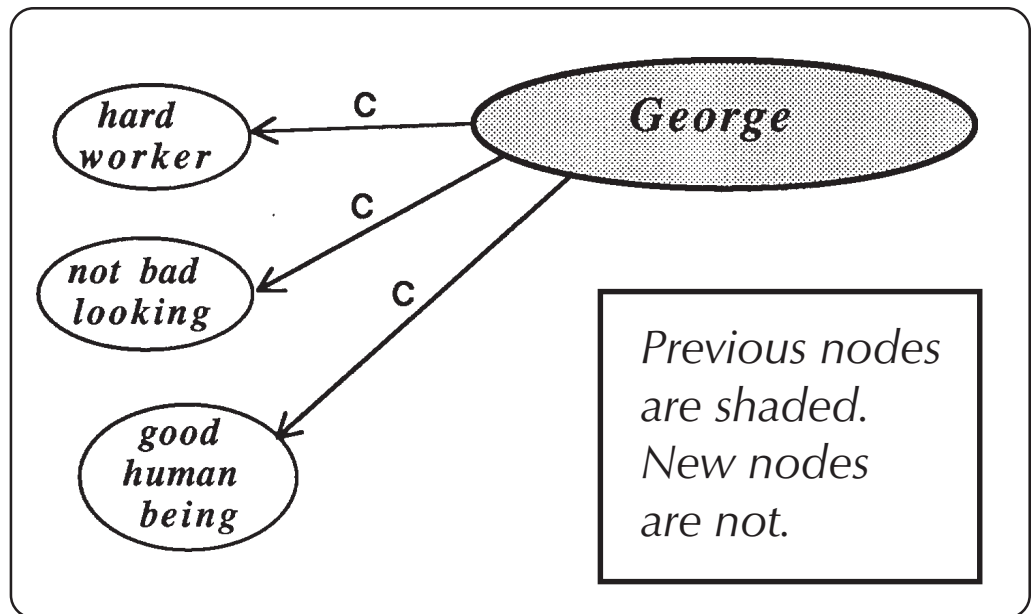
Counselor: That's right.



Counselor: Now tell me about you ... some characteristics that describe you.

George: Well, I'm a hard worker. And I'm not bad looking. I'm a good human being.

Counselor: Okay... see the lines here? I've given each of them a "c" label. That means "hard worker" is a characteristic of George; "not bad looking" and "good human being" are characteristics of George.

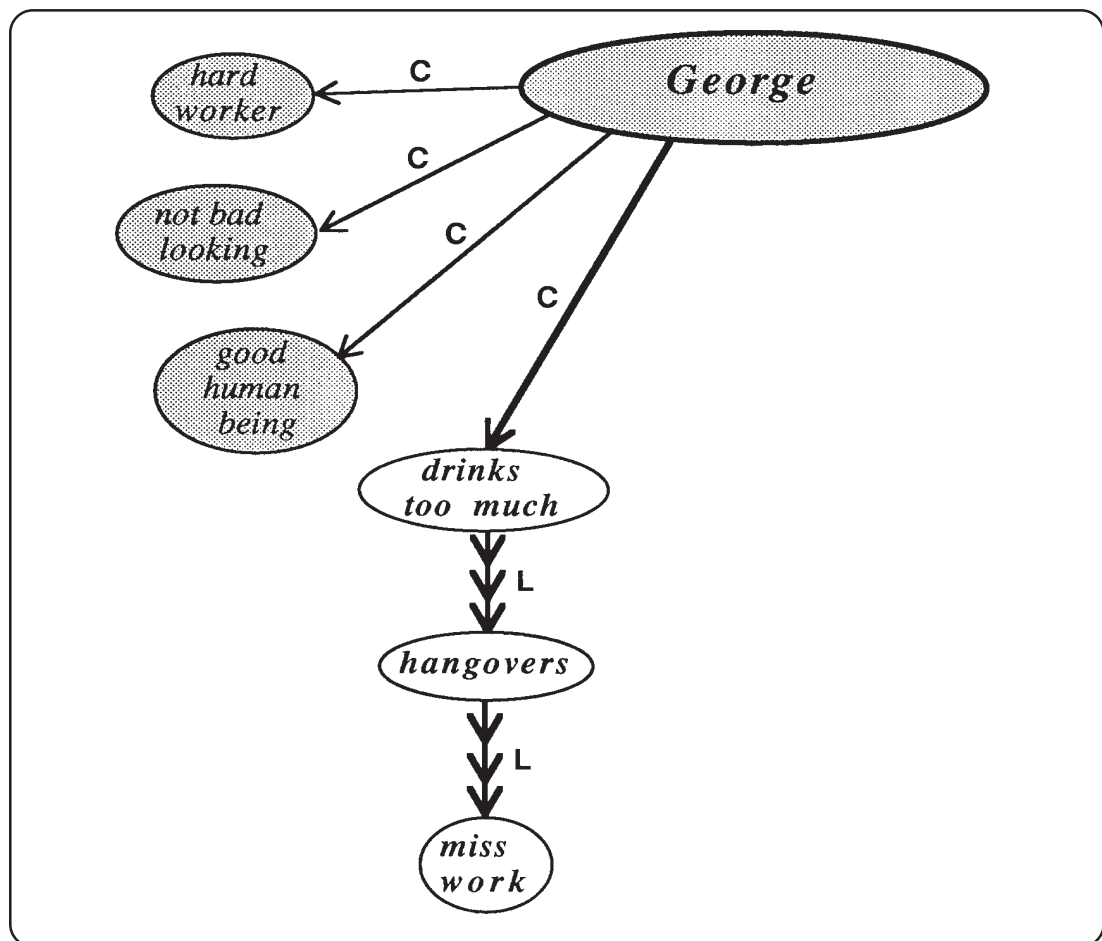


Counselor: What else goes in this map?

George: *I drink too much. Have hangovers and miss work.*

Counselor: I'm going to use a characteristic link for "drinks too much" and a leads to link for "hangovers" and "missed work." For you, drinking too much leads to hangovers, and hangovers lead to missing work. Is that what you mean?

George: Yeah.

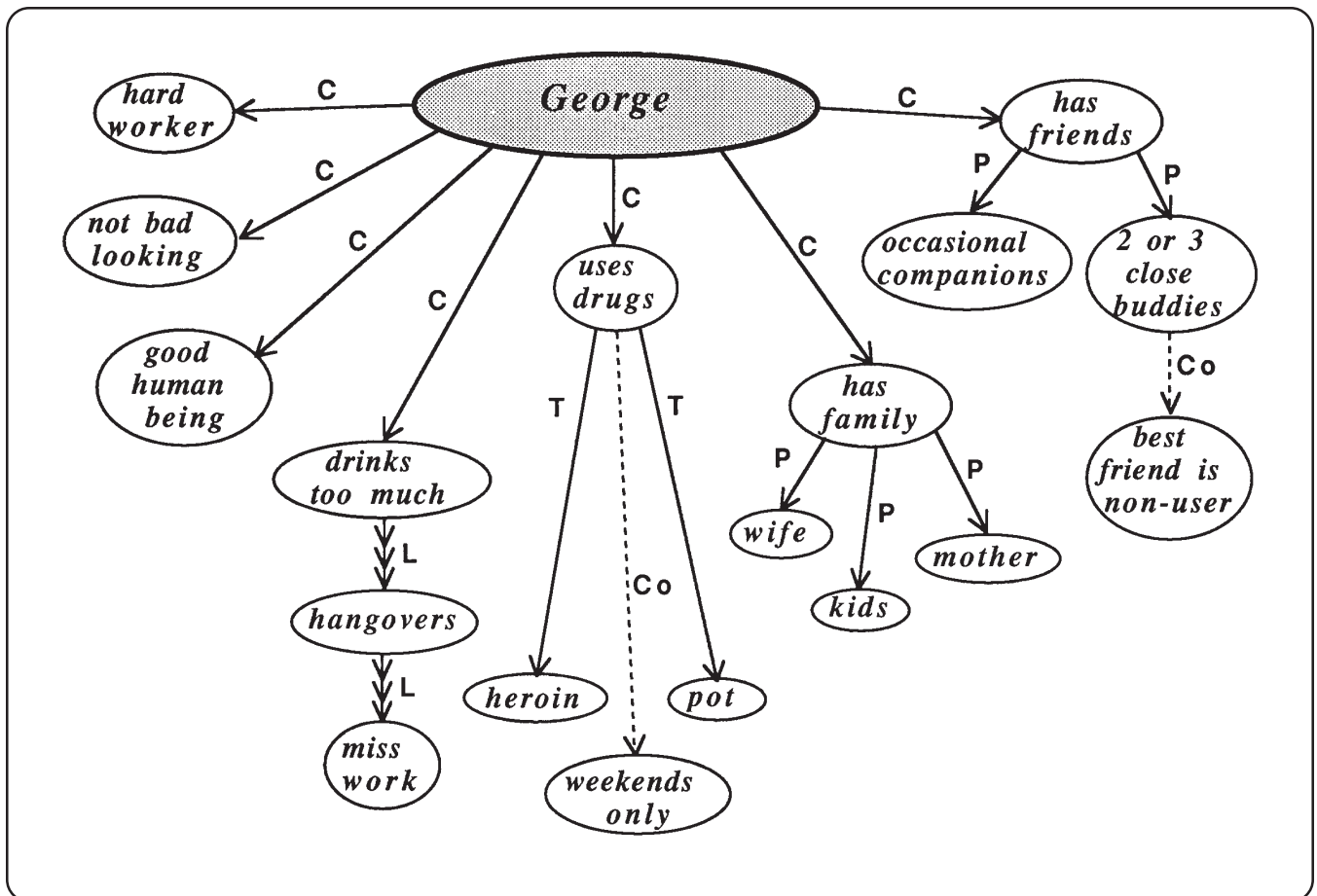


George: *And I use drugs—heroin, and sometimes I smoke pot. But they don't keep me out of work. I just do drugs on weekends mostly.*

Counselor: **Okay[drawing]. Another characteristic “uses drugs.” The types of drugs you use are heroin, and pot, so I’m putting these in and labeling each of these links with a “t” for type. And I’m putting your comment about how you use them here with a “co” link to show that’s a comment you made about how you use.**

George: *And I have family and friends that are important to me. My wife, my kids, and my mother. I have two or three close buddies, and then some other people I hang out with now and then. My best friend doesn't smoke or drink or do drugs.*

Counselor: **Good ... we’ll add “friends” and “family.” This “p” means “part”: your wife is part of your family. And we’ll use another comment here.**



Counselor: So we have a brief map of you here. In our next session we may come back to this and expand on it. For now, I hope this gives you some feeling for how mapping works. You don't need to worry about remembering the links or drawing the maps yourself... but I want to be sure you understand the maps we draw in our work together.

Before our next session I'll look at this map to help me remember what we talked about. I'll also look at it for ideas about what we should discuss next time. Do you have any questions?

George: Who's going to see these maps?

Counselor: You and I and my supervisor here at the center. Other than that, we regularly send copies of maps to our research team—the special project people we told you about during your intake interview—but the maps are coded so that your name doesn't appear on them. That allows us to maintain confidentiality for our clients and still participate in a research project.

If you wanted to show a map from one of our sessions to someone, that would be your choice.

George: Okay.

Counselor: I'll make you a photocopy of this map ... and give you a sheet here that shows the meaning of the link types that I use. For the next few sessions, each time we do a map, we'll put one of these sheets with your copy. Eventually you may want to draw some maps, either at home or in our sessions here.

George: [laughing] That's okay! I'll let you draw the maps for now.

Links Used in Maps

NAME	SYMBOL	EXAMPLE
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Actions

INFLUENCES	$\longrightarrow \text{I} \longrightarrow$	Amount of food in stomach $\xrightarrow{\text{I}}$ Effects of alcohol
LEADS TO	$\longrightarrow \text{L} \longrightarrow \longrightarrow$	Poor self image $\xrightarrow{\text{L}}$ Heavy drinking $\xrightarrow{\text{L}}$ Hangover
NEXT	$\longrightarrow \text{N} \longrightarrow$	Decide on goal $\xrightarrow{\text{N}}$ Develop an action plan

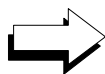
Descriptions

CHARACTERISTIC	$\longrightarrow \text{C} \longrightarrow$	Cocaine $\xrightarrow{\text{C}}$ Impacts on neurotransmitters
PART	$\longrightarrow \text{P} \longrightarrow$	<pre> graph TD A[Successful behavior change] -- P --> B[Motivation] A -- P --> C[An effective plan of action] </pre>
TYPE	$\longrightarrow \text{T} \longrightarrow$	<pre> graph TD A[Abuse] -- T --> B[Chronic] A -- T --> C[Acute] </pre>

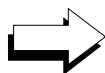
Illustrations

ANALOGY	$\text{---} \underline{\text{A}} \text{---} \longrightarrow$	Hangover $\xrightarrow{\text{A}}$ Being stuck in a clothes dryer for an hour
COMMENT	$\text{---} \underline{\text{Co}} \text{---} \longrightarrow$	Cocaine intake can be controlled $\xrightarrow{\text{Co}}$ I DON'T BELIEVE IT
EXAMPLE	$\text{---} \underline{\text{Ex}} \text{---} \longrightarrow$	Abusive behavior $\xrightarrow{\text{Ex}}$ Chemicals for breakfast

Comments on the process



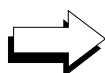
In this example the counselor has selected a topic that personally involves the client. The topic for this introduction to mapping should be personal, but not so “hot” or emotional that the focus on mapping is lost. Other topics might be drawn from the client’s hobbies or special interests.



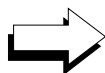
The counselor works slowly through the development of the map, often raising questions that allow certain links to be used and then emphasizing the label and meaning of a link.



Both before the map is drawn and at the end of the session, the counselor indicates how mapping may be useful to the counseling process. The client, however, may not fully understand the uses of mapping at this point. **What the client should understand, at the very least, is that the counselor has valid reasons for using this tool.**



No attempt is made here to do more than **introduce** mapping. In future sessions, the client will be asked to “read” parts of a map previously drawn or in progress. This will be done with “let’s see if we’re both clear on what I’ve put in this map,” and without making the client feel that he or she must “perform.”



Some clients may be eager to draw their own maps or draw parts of maps during a session. Others may not. Since drawing maps can increase the probability that the client is solidly involved in treatment, it is an idea that should be presented early in the process and periodically reintroduced.