



## The Metaphor Challenge!

Here are 12 questions to test your understanding of metaphors and how they can impact on people's understanding of their pain experiences.

The answers can be found at the bottom!

1. The word metaphor originates from a combination of two Greek words, "meta" and "pherin" but what do these words mean?
  - a) To impose, to tell
  - b) To transfer, to carry beyond
  - c) To think, to reason
  - d) To grasp, to guide
2. Metaphors are thoughts before they are actions.
  - a) True
  - b) False
3. "The price of metaphor is..." Rosenblueth & Wiener
  - a) uncertainty
  - b) excessive stimulation
  - c) eternal vigilance
4. On average, how many metaphors do we use every minute?
  - a) 6
  - b) 1
  - c) 11
5. Metaphors provide an effective & meaningful transfer of complex, abstract information, but they can also be...
  - a) Misconstrued
  - b) Engaging
  - c) Seductively reductionistic
  - d) All of the above

6. People use metaphors to express emotions that are too distressing to communicate literally. Which of the following best describes a metaphoric “safe bridge” as expressed by somebody experiencing low back pain?
- a) It hurts so badly
  - b) Why does it still hurt?
  - c) It’s gone again
7. “If a picture paints a thousand words, a metaphor paints...” Geary (2011)
- a) a picture perfect viewpoint
  - b) a thousand pictures
  - c) a way forward
8. Which of the following examples are self-generated metaphors used by people in pain?
- a) It’s so frustrating! I’m going around in circles without any answers
  - b) I’m really struggling at work. I need to hold my own again
  - c) I haven’t been able to do my exercises. I’ve got too much on my plate.
  - d) I’m worried it’s something serious.
9. In the Western world, society often regards healthcare as a battlefield. Which of the following behaviours might this lead to?
- a) Treatment hunting for a cure
  - b) Social isolation when unable to cope
  - c) Confronting health problems head on
  - d) Professional burnout as a clinician
  - e) All of the above
10. Journey metaphors are often used throughout healthcare and can provide a therapeutic opportunity for an optimistic cognitive reconstruction. Which of the following patient statements show this?
- a) I’m getting old. It’s all downhill once you turn 40!
  - b) I’ve really turned a corner
  - c) I’m getting nowhere fast
  - d) Is there a light at the end of the tunnel?
  - e) All of the above

11. "Pain erects a wall between us and the outside world. At the same time, it prevents us from breaching that wall by communicating the experience to others." (Biro, 2010, p.15). Metaphors can...
- a) guide people in pain and healthcare professionals towards empathetic connections
  - b) lead to the building of more walls, thus hindering a therapeutic relationship
  - c) both of the above
12. "Metaphors provide a frame through which we paint unique cognitive landscapes, but we must remain mindful of our eagerness to impose our brush strokes onto the canvases of others." (Stewart, 2014, p.27). Clinically this means...
- a) healthcare professionals must not use metaphors
  - b) healthcare professionals need to mix their metaphors to help people make sense of their experiences
  - c) healthcare professionals must develop therapeutic skills to help people explore their own metaphors

**Answers:**

1. b
2. True
3. C
4. a
5. d
6. c
7. b
8. a,b & c
9. e
- 10.e
- 11.c
- 12.c

**References:**

Biro, D. (2010). The language of pain. New York. W.W Norton & Company. ISBN 9780393070637.

Geary, J. (2011). I Is An Other. The secret life of metaphor and how it shapes the way we see the world. New York. Harper Collins.

Stewart, M. (2014). The road to pain reconceptualisation: Do metaphors help or hinder the journey? Journal of The Physiotherapy Pain Association. 36. 24-31.