Facing the Current Situation ("Creative Hopelessness") / Control is a Problem

Purpose: To notice that there is a change agenda in place and notice the basic unworkability of that system; to name the system as inappropriately applied control strategies; to examine why this does not work

Method: Draw out what things the client has tried to make things better, examine whether or not they have truly worked in the client's experience, and create space for something new to happen.

When to use: As a precursor to the rest of the work in order for new responses to emerge, especially when the client is really struggling. You can skip this step in some cases, however.

Things to avoid: Never try to convince the client: their experience is the absolute arbiter. The goal is not a feeling state, it is what the Zen tradition calls "being cornered."

Examples of techniques designed to increase creative hopelessness:

Creative hopelessness	Are they willing to consider that there might be another way, but it requires not knowing?
What brought you into treatment?	Bring into sessions sense of being stuck, life being off track, etc.
Person in the Hole exercise	Illustrate that they are doing something and it is not working
Chinese handcuffs Metaphor	No matter how hard they pull to get out of them, pushing in is what it takes
Noticing the struggle	Tug of war with a monster; the goal is to drop the rope, not win the war
Driving with the Rearview Mirror	Even though control strategies are taught, doesn't mean they work
Clear out old to make room for new	Field full of dead trees that need to be burned down for new trees to grow
Break down reliance on old agenda	"Isn't that like you? Isn't that familiar? Does something about that one feel old?"
Paradox	Telling client their confusion is a good outcome
Feedback screech metaphor	It's not the noise that is the problem, it's the amplification
Control is a problem	How they struggle against it = control strategies (ways they try to control or avoid inner experience).
The paradox of control	"If you aren't willing to have it, you've got it."
Illusion of control metaphors	Fall in love, jelly doughnut, what are the numbers exercise
Consequences of control	Polygraph metaphor
Willingness vs. control	Two scales metaphor
Costs of low willingness	Box full of stuff metaphor, clean vs. dirty discomfort

These clinical materials were assembled by Elizabeth Gifford, Steve Hayes, and Kirk Stroshal