NAME: Who’s Your Ruler?

SOURCE:
Julian McNally (ACT for Professionals List Serve 2017) – Adapted by James Hill 2017

INTENTION: This is a wonderful metaphor to explore the often unconscious ways we decide if we “measure up”, and to make them more conscious and intentional. This can serve as a discussion, a metaphor, or as a structure to process a person’s experience in an activity.

MATERIALS:
- Whiteboard & Markers

Present a diagram similar to the one below:

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          WORKS (Towards - Values, Importance, Matters, Purpose, Meaning)

         
          \                      /  
           \                    /   
       WRONG                RIGHT
         BAD              GOOD
        UNLIKABLE         LIKABLE
       UNCOMFORTABLE      COMFORTABLE

         
          \                      /  
           \                    /   
       DOESN'T WORK (Away From - Values, Importance, Matters, Purpose, Meaning)
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People can orient themselves to life along the vertical dimension or the horizontal dimension. The vertical dimension is more about pragmatism (noticing what works), and the horizontal more based on “truth criterion” (am I good, did I do it right, will others agree).

Clients may benefit from an exploration of the ways in which they “measure success” or decide if they “measure up”. They can be encouraged to reflect on and name other “rulers” they have invented.

Clients may benefit from exploring the arbitrary nature of such measures, the often unconscious way they are applied, and the contexts that tend to “hook” us to start “responding to these rulers”.

Clients may also benefit from an exploration of the consequences of “living under the rulers we invent”, as well as the possibility of choosing “different rulers”.

WRONG
BAD
UNLIKABLE
UNCOMFORTABLE

RIGHT
GOOD
LIKABLE
COMFORTABLE

WORKS (Towards - Values, Importance, Matters, Purpose, Meaning)

DOESN'T WORK (Away From - Values, Importance, Matters, Purpose, Meaning)