

MORPHEUS

VOLUME XV

**COACHING PATTERNS
INWARDLY SECURE**

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MORPHEUS — 2023

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From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #1
January 4, 2023

THE ART OF COACHING USING PATTERNS

While coaching is a conversation, when you first learn to coach, the *conversations* that you learn are formalized conversations. We call them patterns. That's why all of modules I and II in Meta-Coaching introduces you to models and to lots and lots of patterns. By understanding the models, whether it is the NLP Communication Model, the Strategy Model, the Meta-States Model, etc., you can then *coach a person through a pattern*.

“Now why would I do that?” someone may ask. The primary reason for doing that when you are just starting out in the field of coaching is to *use a tried-and-true process for guiding the conversation*. The NLP Patterns that I put in the book *Source Book of Magic* (1997) were the patterns that had been tested, tried, used, studied, and researched for two decades. You can count on them for getting results with clients. And most of them, coming from Virginia Satir and Fritz Perls, had the added advantage of having been tested with thousands of people. What the NLP co-developers did was formalize the pattern.

When I began studying NLP and the patterns, half of them were structured with statements. The statements *informed* you and *told* you what to do. But statements do not give you the precise words to use. The other half of the patterns had questions one could use. Even many of my first attempts to creating patterns, I defaulted to making statements about what to do at any given step. Eventually I learned to let the *step* state the required action to take and to then write a series of questions for use. Today that's the basic structure of a pattern: each step is *what* to do and each question under the step provides you the process for *how* to do it.

That's important. It's really, really important. To run any pattern with a client *you need to know both what to do and how to do it*. The steps essentially give you the strategy steps. The questions gives you the precise language for facilitating it. When you learn a pattern, these are two crucial things to learn—*and learn them precisely and sequently as they are presented*. You will need to shift to procedural thinking to do that well. For example, the *Movie Rewind* pattern gives you specific steps for starting the process, the two “going meta” steps, the control booth step, the playing the movie forward step, and most crucially, how to play the movie backward step, etc.

But that's not all. You also need to learn *the elicitation question* (or questions) *of the pattern* and *the key distinctions*. Over the years, I have included these as part of the introduction to every pattern. By learning the *elicitation question*, you learn when and with whom a pattern is appropriate. Without knowing the elicitation question, you will *not know* when to use a pattern and that will undermine your confidence. The *distinctions* are usually key distinctions which the pattern promotes and upon which the pattern depends. For example, you can't run the *Meta-Stating Self* pattern if you don't clearly know the difference between being and doing, confidence

and esteem, person and behavior.

Given that every profession has a set of tools which it uses to get a job done, in the field of Coaching, your tools include the Models and the Patterns you use. Take a look at the training manuals that you received in modules I and II. Look at them from the perspective that here are your Models and Patterns. How well did you learn each of these? How much have you practiced the patterns?

By practicing a pattern over and over with various people (one of the big benefits of in-person training) and having someone giving you an experience of the pattern—*you will learn it inside-out*. Until you can do that, frame that you are going to use a pattern, grab your manual or a book with the pattern, and then follow it precisely in a step by step manner. Do that a dozen times and you will then be ready to do it without looking at a printed copy of the pattern. To run the pattern, frame it by saying like:

“There’s a pattern specifically designed to take a great idea, a principle and commission your body to feel it so it gets into muscle memory. Would you like to experience that with the principle you have just discovered?”

Calling out the pattern that you are using or about to use, even if you can do it conversationally, is usually best. It lets your client know that you are not just making things up or operating “from the seat of your pants,” but that you are a professional, who know critical processes in the field of coaching for unleashing potentials and that you’ve done your homework.

The ultimate development in “running a pattern” comes when you have so much experience with numerous patterns, that you can *conversationally* incorporate patterns into the conversation. That is typically a PCMC level competence and one that comes after many hundreds of hours of actual professional coaching. Now if all of this seems pretty cut and dry, it is not. Running a pattern is truly an art. And that will be the subject of the next *Morpheus*.

Thanks to Luis Eugenio Castañeda for suggesting this subject.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #2
January 11, 2023

BEYOND THE PATTERN TO THE ART

In “running a pattern” as part of how you facilitate the coaching conversation, there are numerous variables to be aware of. In the last article, I mentioned several variables: know the steps as the inherent strategy to achieve a particular objective, know and use the precise language of the questions. The language in a pattern has been well-tested, so use it until you know it by heart. Know the elicitation question for the pattern to develop your confidence about when to use it and when not to use it. Deeply know the distinctions which are required in the pattern, the distinctions upon which the pattern works.

If that sounds very cut and dry, then you may be missing something else when it comes to running a pattern. Yes, you can walk through each step and each question with a client and *coach the person through the pattern* and while it will usually “work,” it will not always work. And when it does not, when it seems to you and your client that it was an interesting exercise, but that’s all, it was not transformative, then what you probably missed was *the art of running a pattern*.

I use the word *art* here very intentionally. You can consider the pattern with its steps and questions, elicitation, and distinctions as the *science* of facilitating an impactful transformative conversation. But the *art* of relating to your client while facilitating his experience, maintaining rapport, listening deeply to what’s said and what’s not said, noticing the frames your client brings to the conversation, all of that and more is involved in *the art of the coaching conversation*.

What is this *art*? In part it is the ability to be completely present to your client and to flexibly adjust throughout the conversation to make the coaching relevant and impactful at every moment. How do you do that? Having cleared out, in your own mind, that the coaching is *all about the client and not you*, you take whatever the client says and keep relating it to your client’s goals and objectives. That’s how you keep every response *relevant*.

You also flexibly use both the Meta-Model questions and the Meta Questions with each response of your client. Via the Meta-Model questions, you keep clarifying and grounding the conversation in real life and via the Meta Questions, you keep identifying the frames that your client is operating from. Now that takes some *artistic skill to do that!* In this, you never know what your next question will be. Yes, the question under Step 2 says X or Y, but before you can proceed, you have to find out more about the current answer. Knowing how to do that and when to do that—that is the art.

Overall, you keep pacing, pacing, pacing, leading. Overall, you listen for semantically loaded words and phrases by your client and feeding them back as acknowledgments. Overall, you keep

asking clarity questions to get precise and specific information. Yet *the art of coaching is being able to go with the flow of the conversation so that you keep it relevant and impactful.*

Doing that, of course, makes the coaching conversation really special, even magical. Clients will find themselves opening up and saying things that they didn't expect to say and even what they didn't know themselves. You are "running a pattern" yet inside of the pattern's steps and questions, there is the relationship to maintain and the *meta* place to explore.

In this way, while running a pattern is important, it is not the end-all of coaching. *It is actually an instrumental means to a great and more important end*, namely, the client's discoveries for how to be one's best self and unleash the powers and potentials needed to achieve an objective. So while you are committed to running the pattern, your larger commitment is to the person and the person's development as a self-actualizing person.

Thanks to Luis Eugenio Castañeda for suggesting this subject.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #3
January 18, 2023

BENCHMARKS FOR “RUNNING A PATTERN”

When Luis Eugenio Castañeda suggested this subject, he asked a specific question, “What benchmarks could be used in order to manage using a pattern in a coaching session.” In the past two articles I have mentioned them, but not under the category of benchmarks. It is now time to do that. So here goes.

The Benchmarks

The following activities demonstrate competency in *running a pattern* in coaching and to use a pattern effectively in the coaching conversation. And as with every true *competency*, these involve both the knowledge and the skill to manage the following.

1) *Know the elicitation question or questions.* Knowing the elicitation question of a set of patterns enables you to know which pattern is appropriate for a given client at a particular moment. It is the elicitation question that also enables you to know how to start the pattern whether you do so formally or informally. Generally, the elicitation question is the first question in the first step. So when you ask it, you have started the pattern.

2) *Know the steps of the pattern.* The steps give you the strategy for the desired experience. And since every experience that a client wants has a structure, the expression of that structure shows up in the strategy. Each step is another element or variable that is required for the client to create his or her desired experience.

3) *Know the questions under each step of the pattern.* Sometimes there will only be one question by which you facilitate a client to move to the next step, but usually there will be three or four. Sometimes the questions offer you different ways to inquire about the person’s thinking and feeling which brings out the step the person has to take. You may not need all of the questions, just enough of them so that it enables a person to experience that step.

4) *Understand the language in the questions and how they work.* Most of the time, the questions are coded in such a way that the very expression of the question helps to call forth the experience needed. And, in fact, often the language is hypnotic in nature. Understanding how the particular linguistics play such a key role in enabling and empowering the conversation gives you, as the coach, a way of knowing how to customize the language for any given client. When you know the language, and you know *how to express* that language in your tempo, volume, tone, etc., you thereby know how to induce the state.

5) *Know how to use the required distinctions for the pattern to work.* Because “mastery is in the details” the distinctions within a pattern are usually the key to understanding how to

run the pattern and get the results. Recently a coach told me that he could not get the Meta-Stating Self pattern to work with a client. I asked him, “What is the central and key *distinction* of that pattern?” He didn’t know. When I told him, suddenly he realized why he had not been able to facilitate that pattern.

6) *Keep focused on the conversation outcome.* Keep the outcome front and center in your mind so that the coaching conversation is continually relevant. Everything in the conversation should be in service of the client’s outcome. So knowing it and using it as your criteria for relevance enables you to more effectively run the pattern. And because clients can (and sometimes do) change their mind inside of a coaching session, checking on the person’s outcome from time to time is a really good idea.

7) *Flexibly adjust as the conversation progresses.* Flexibly adjust to moments when to ask clarify questions, open or closed questions, meta-questions, exploration questions, etc. The pattern, without the trusting relationship that you create by pacing your client, is nothing. But with your ability to maintain rapport, connection, and trust, now the pattern becomes a powerful tool in your hands.

If there are benchmarks for running a pattern in a coaching conversation, these seven criteria are a good place to begin. And when you do, even if you are not focusing on the skills of coaching, you are utilizing them. You are listening and supporting, you are questioning and meta-questioning, you are receiving and giving feedback, and you are inducing state. In that, the core coaching skills—as you learn them so thoroughly that they become *your way of operating in the coaching conversation*—are the very processes that creates an expertise in “running a pattern.” To your very best quality in coaching!

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #4
January 25, 2023

COACHING THE UNCOACHABLE

I began this year with an experience that I did not expect to have and one that I had never before encountered—an uncoachable client. Now I would have thought that I would know how to handle it. After all, from the beginning of *training* Meta-Coaching, we have repeatedly found people who came to ACMC to become coaches who treated the coaching sessions as “role playing.” Over and over we said from the front of the training room and again and again in the triads— “When you are client offer something real. This is not role playing. Don’t cheat your coach by giving him or her something that is not authentic.”

Now over the years, we came across individuals who either were not ready for the level of authenticity that’s required to be a coach or who were incapable of it. Out of nearly 4,000 people, we ultimately sent home only a small handful (3 or 4) persons. That’s like one in a thousand. So when I did the eleventh session of coaching an executive for the Asian Meta-Coach groups, the idea of the person not being coachable was nowhere in my mind— nowhere! I suppose I *assumed* that anyone volunteering for a coaching session would be ready for it. I was sorely mistaken!

Then, without having any framework in my mind of that possibility, I not only *did not look for it*, I also *did not anticipate that possibility*. Result? I missed the signals. Among those that occurred in the first 15 minutes which I could have recognized are these:

- 1) *Severe symptoms*. Symptoms beyond what’s normal: three-years depression, can’t sleep, pain in body every morning that takes two hours to get over.
- 2) *Several or constant references to the past*. Opening statement about loss of mother at 3 and father at 12.
- 3) *Emotional traumas*. Can’t forgive, need to forgive others, and self. Feel used by unknown person who got what he wanted from me.
- 4) *Incongruencies*. I want to build relationship > I have six new friends. I can’t trust > but I was married and we had children.
- 5) *Storytelling*. Constant stories, many of self-promotion.
- 6) *Deflecting*. Distracting from one subject to another. Defensive thinking; derisive humor, doesn’t answer questions.
- 7) *Deflect when given compliments*. So you did trust ex-wife at first; so you do know how to build relationships with your six new friends.
- 8) *Immediately defensive upon confrontation*. “I see where you have drawn a wrong conclusion.” “Let’s stop, this is not working.” No inquiry, “What are you saying?”
- 9) *Inability to identify objective for coaching*. I want to “understand the forms of love.” Achieve? No. Change? No. Just academic understanding.
- 10) *Overall an inability to go inside*. To embrace humanity, fallibility. He offered hints

of ‘inside,’ but immediately deflected.

What I Learned?

While I didn’t even have the idea about learning how to handle an uncoachable client in mind, the experience led me into that learning anyway. With these learnings, ‘next time’ I will—

1) *Pay attention.* Pay attention to any and all signals of being uncoachable. Look for and hold in mind the signs which indicate therapy rather than coaching. From now on, I will keep the signals in mind and explore them as they arise.

2) *Re-establish the frames.* Stop and take a moment to re-state the frames that deal with coachability.

Coaching is about stretching out of your comfort zone and so is inherently uncomfortable.

Coaching is about being challenged, which will make you uncomfortable.

Coaching is about getting real— facing human openness, vulnerability, fallibility.

Coach exposes defensive thinking and ego-defenses.

Coaching exposes cognitive distortions and biases.

3) *Check out coachability.* Let the question of coachability be one of your interests or concerns right from the beginning and consider it as early in the process as possible. Use page 33 in the APMC manual for the nine coachability criteria.

4) *Interrupt dysfunctional patterns.* Effective interrupting is one of the basic skills of good coaching and this becomes really important where there is a pattern of storytelling, deflecting, mis-matching, denials, or the use of the ego-defenses.

5) *Stop the session.* As a form of interrupt, do so calmly and coolly by saying, “This is not working.” And repeat that several times if necessary. Or, “This is lacking dialogue.” “I’m not hear that you are answer my questions.” “Let’s stop here and consider where we are.” Because I was caught off-guard, I didn’t do this, and so spoke mostly from a state of frustration.

6) *Refer.* After stopping the session, identify why you think it best to stop, identify the signs that you have seen and how you have interpreted them, and how they interfere with coaching. Then, if your judgment is that the person is not ready for coaching at this stage, refer to a psychotherapist for healing, a medical doctor for assessment of physical factors, a trainer for skill development, etc.

Even with 30 years of practicing and teaching coaching and having never before encountered an uncoachable client, I was not prepared for what to do. Now I know. Given the above distinctions and considerations, I have run various scenarios in my mind about what to do and how to do it with a client. I have written out responses that I could use.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #5
February 1, 2023

DO COACHES NEED A DEGREE?

Can a coach succeed with clients and succeed in business as a coach without a certificate? If you want a successful career as a professional coach, what is required? Do you need a university degree? Do you need coaching certificate? Or is competence in coaching sufficient?

Now that more than 170 Universities and Colleges are giving out degrees in coaching, that raises yet another question, “Is a person with a coaching degree more likely to succeed than someone without a college degree?” Regarding “success” there are two dimensions—succeeding with your client in enabling and empowering the client in having a transformative experience. Then there is succeeding in the profession by being able to sell the benefits of coaching? What about someone who has taken a certificate from a Coach Training program? What are the relative values? And, can a person learn coaching on his own without specific coach education or training?

As a profession, the burgeoning field of coaching, like psychotherapy is based on *psychology*. Yet unlike therapy, it is not based on understanding trauma, disorders, or abnormality. Beginning with normality, coaching is based on the psychology of growth, learning, development, expertise, etc. It is based on Self-Actualization Psychology as originally pioneered by Maslow and Rogers, the Human Potential Movement, and all of the subdivisions of it today, including Ericksonian, Positive Psychology, Strength-based psychology, Solution-Focused, etc.

Therefore, whether via an university or a training program—an effective coach operates from, and presents, the principles of *generative* psychology, not remedial psychology. Therapists who try to be coaches using therapy models and procedures are actually *not coaching*, but sneaking therapy in and calling it “coaching.” Coaches who are not familiar with cognitive psychology, humanistic psychology, and the principles of how to unleash excellence in people are having a nice “chat” in their sessions, *but they are not actually coaching*.

Over the years in running the Meta-Coach training in Australia, we have had five graduates from Sydney U. who became Meta-Coaches. When they arrived, even though they had Masters Degree in Coaching, and knew a lot about cognitive psychology as applied to therapy(!), and the Cognitive Psychology model, they graduated without ever having practiced a coaching session—no internship. Their first full coaching session was on day two of the APMC training.

So unless there is lots and lots of practice within an university setting, and ongoing evaluations and assessments, merely have an academic degree certainly does not even guarantee that a person has some practical experience. This is a big difference between universities and coach training programs. There you have one professor and usually a person who has not coached him or herself. In Meta-Coaching there are always multiple trainers as well as an assist team so there is a

team leader or trainer for every three participants. This means that in every coaching session, there is an experienced person supervising the session, giving feedback in real time, and giving assessments for how to improve.

The academic preparation in Meta-Coaching entails cognitive psychology, some developmental psychology, and Self-Actualization Psychology. We also have a diploma in Self-Actualization Psychology which entails an indepth study and understanding of human functioning.

Yet above and beyond all of that is *the experience of coaching*. The reason is obvious, namely, *coaching is best learned by coaching*. Further, it is best learned when supervised by experienced coaches who can point out, in real time, what you're doing well and what needs to be changed or improved. Coaching is also best learned when you, as the coach, are coached. Then your learning is experiential from the inside-out. You also get to deal with any belief or personality factor that may undermine your coaching presence and/or skills.

Coaching competence presupposes that you also have some life experience and know firsthand about set-backs, struggles, being confused, getting along with people, experiencing emotional ups and down, etc. It's nearly impossible to get that from book learning.

Do you need a degree? *No*, just a degree in being human. Do you need coach education? *Yes!* You need to understand what coaching is and is not, the boundaries of the field, the psychologies that govern the field. Can you learn that on your own? Yes, although that is the long and hard way. You can certainly accelerate your learning in a coach specific learning context.

Will you be more or less successful with or without a degree or certificate? The answer is that the degree, like all degrees, are not the key or the point. *Your skills, attitude, and presence is the key*. If you have that, you will add massive value to your clients and that's is the heart of success with your clients. Yet even that is not enough. You have to sell what you're doing and why it is highly important. Together, that's the formula.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #6
February 8, 2023

BUSINESS COACHING

Inherent Occupational Hazards

When you coach people about business or when you engage in business coaching as such, there are numerous *occupational hazards*. These hazards come with the very nature of business and they can be especially disastrous to a person's inner psychological well-being and development. Therefore knowing about them and how to deal with them is essential. It is in knowing about these hazards that you can prepare for them and prevent them from undermining a person's well-being, health, effectiveness, and happiness. Three to address here are competition, ambition, and social image.

1) Competition

In today's world, when you are in business you are inevitably *competing* with others who are or who want to be serving the same population of clients that you are serving. It's inevitable. You have a product, service, or information that you can create and/or provide and a means for providing it, and because it adds value to people's lives (or to other businesses), there's a profit to be made. That's good. And if you can do that, so can others. Now you and they are in a competition for customers. And in the long-run, generally the person who provides the most reliable value will succeed. That "generally" is counter-balanced by lots of things because there are so many variables that play a role: the market, marketing to it, selling, presentation, business arrangements, partners, employees, location, capital, and on and on.

Now the attitude of *competition*, in and of itself, is a neutral attitude, neither good or bad. The *quality* of the competition, however, goes to *how* you compete and *why*. So why do you? How do you? A pretty healthy attitude is to compete to offer the best value to your customers. If, however, you *need to and have to compete to be the best*, to win out over all others, to prove your worth, etc., then it is not so healthy. It can even be pathological. If your "self-esteem" goes up and down depending on how you are doing in the competition, you have a pretty toxic form. That kind of competition will stunt your social feelings, your ability to collaborate effectively, and will do damage to yourself and others. For the sake of sanity introduce the idea of *unconditional self-esteem*.

2) Ambition

To be ambitious is to really want to succeed, to set high but reachable goals that activate your motivation and energy, and enable you to do the best you can. This is a healthy expression of being ambitious. You have an end goal in mind, a vision that gives you a mission, and a well-formed outcome that moves you forward. But again, if you are ambitious in order to be a Somebody, to prove yourself worthy, to win friends, to get approval, etc. then your so-called ambition is probably a substitute for vanity or a fear of failure. That was Alfred Adler's insight

and again, it stunts the social feelings which are necessary to be collaborative. For sanity's sake, introduce the idea of *being* as more prior to and most essential for *doing* and *having*.

3) Social Image

When you are in business, and when you are a “business person,” you have a certain image. It comes with the territory. Unlike personal relationships, as a business person you relate to people to provide a product, service, or information that is a good return on value. It is an exchange; a transaction. You are not doing it out of the goodness of your heart, you are doing it to make a living. So the way of relating is very different from how you relate to family and friends.

So, who are you as a business man or a business woman? Whatever your answer, that is your *business image*. And because new customers do not know you, part of business is creating an *image* in their minds. That's called branding and it is what you do when you “market” yourself and your business. Your “brand” is the reputation and image that is created in the minds of your customers. So far, so good. Yet at this point the temptation is to create a business image that is better, more charming, more credible, more believable, more glorious, and more fantastic than it actually is. Now you are into *image management*.

Here the danger begins. Even if your *image management* is pretty true to fact and not exaggerated, *it is still not the real you*. It's a map of you, not the territory. And now, you can begin to hide behind that image. You can give yourself a fantasy title and, lo and behold, suddenly you are more and greater and more impressive than your real self! And today with all of the social media, you can create multiple fantastic images of yourself, do incredible self-promotions and have other people promote you, and in the end, you might start believing the P.R. (Public Relations) that you have created. Do that long enough and *you lose your real self*.

This is especially an occupational hazard for people in marketing, selling, branding, media, etc. Yet it is also a hazard for anyone who feels that he or she needs to operate behind their titles. A person can so *identify with that title, position, status, list of achievements, etc. that the person loses his real self*. Then one day when things change, the person no longer “knows who he is.” And in coaching, the person may not be able to come out from behind his persona or mask and be his or her true self. Now we have a problem. A significant problem! For sanity's sake, introduce the distinction between self-esteem and self-confidence, and how that they differ from self-image and your social-self.

Yes, business can introduce some dangerous orientations to your psychological health and productivity if you are not careful. And that's the difference that effective coaching can make.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #7
February 15, 2023

WHEN YOU COACH YOU MODEL A CLIENT

Did you know that? Did you know that when you coach a client *you are in that process modeling your client?* At least if you are effective as a coach and following the Meta-Coaching processes, you are doing that. That's why 'strategy process' is on the benchmark sheet under listening. Recently a Meta-Coach asked me about that. "I really don't understand what 'strategy process' has to do with coaching; can you explain that to me?" And yes, I explained it and as I did I thought that perhaps others might have that same question.

Let's begin with what the *strategy process* refers to. Arising from the NLP Strategy Model which you can find in *NLP Volume I* (1980, Dilts) and in *NLP Going Meta* (1997, Hall), you can learn all about how to find the strategy of any experience. Dilts' book is an excellent presentation of the linear strategy model, there you can learn the step-by-step process of getting the representational steps of a strategy. To that my book adds the meta-domain which then enables you to identify the vertical dimension of a strategy. That takes you into the *meta* place where each one of a person's steps is supported by beliefs and other meta-levels. All of this is based on the premise that *every experience has a structure*. That's why the strategy model enables you to identify the structural process which creates an experience.

In coaching, *every coaching client is asking for some experience*. And if there's a structure to every experience, then there is a structure to *how* the person is currently attempting to create the experience he craves. Finding out *how* the person is currently creating her experience and/or how she needs to create it is what we mean by "strategy process." And because the process by which you discover it occurs through very active and intense listening, that's why it is under the category of "listening."

Now if you are going to effectively facilitate a client's change and development, you obviously first have to *enter into the client's world*. I hope that's obvious to you, and in spite of it seeming to be common sense, it is much, much more difficult than it sounds. You not only have to enter into *the context* of your client's life, you have to also *enter into your client's inner world*. To understand a person *on his or her terms* means being able to empathetically understand that person's beliefs, ways of thinking, values, perceptions, ways of constructing meaning, etc. It is in that way that you get the person's "strategy process." And when you do all, *you are modeling your client's inner experience*. Again, why do that? *To understand the person*.

How do you do that? What tools are available for doing that? NLP offers *pacing and matching* as a beginning tool—a way of connecting with someone thereby making it safe for the person to open up. The *Strategy Model* enables you to identify what and how a person is currently functioning. And recognizing that, you can then see where it is lacking certain steps or resources

and/or where it goes astray and needs to be corrected.

Then, beyond that linear model is the *Meta-States Model* for going deeper into the person's assumptive frames-of-references. There is also the *Matrix Model* of Neuro-Semantics and the *Meta Place* model for organizing the inside world of a client. With these tools, you can now specify the meta-levels in the person's mind that enables or disables a particular strategy. You can now figure out what is missing, what is needed, what needs to be corrected in the strategy.

In coaching, you are moving a client from where he is (current state) to where he wants to go (desired state). So, first you meet him where he is and identify the current strategy he is using. Then, when you do that, clients will generally trust you enough to open up and be ready to move to where they want to go.

You may not know it, but in coaching you are modeling. Obviously, you are not doing a full modeling project and you are not necessarily modeling expertise. You are finding the model or strategy of the particular client before you to understand her way of functioning. And, as you come to understand her better, she understands herself better. She becomes mindful of how she is doing what she's doing and how to enhance it for being more effective. And that's what coaching is all about! And, by the way, when you do this—you are demonstrating a level of coaching that goes far, far beyond what the average "coach" in the marketplace can do. This will truly distinguish you and enhance your work.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #8
February 22, 2023

WHEN YOU GIVE YOUR CLIENT FEEDBACK

Essential to effective Meta-Coaching and especially when you advance beyond the ACMC level is the *mirroring skills of coaching*. These consist of receiving and giving feedback. Sounds simple, right? And yet they are not. In fact, these are some of the most profound skills that you, as a coach, can develop and use.

Now you know about getting feedback during and after a practice coaching session. That's what we do day by day in ACMC. The assist team is always given two days training in how to do that and even with two days, most do not learn how to truly and effectively do it until they have had that training five times and practiced it over 40 days (5 ACMC experiences). After that, those doing the benchmarking become basically proficient. Now as a process, that particular kind of feedback is feedback *given to the benchmark criteria that has been set out in behavioral terms*. Because of that, the feedback is primarily sensory-based to a well-developed set of criteria.

It's an entirely different story when you are coaching your clients. Now you do *not* have a well-developed set of criteria by which to give feedback. So what are you to do? What can you do? The criteria is now determined by the client's outcome and what it inherently implies and by the criteria of a healthy, self-actualizing person (being authentic, congruent, operating with integrity, compassion, good boundaries, etc.).

How do you begin? Start by *calibrating to all of your client's outputs*. That means calibrate to his state, words, tone, volume, facial expressions, breathing, style of orientation, etc. That means calibrate to her predicates, eye accessing cues, the congruency of state and expression, etc. Your training in NLP has given you scores and scores of things to notice. Once you know how to do that, you can watch and listen to your client to attain *a base line* for how your client basically operates (that's what "calibration" means).

Having calibrated to how your client thinks, emotes, communicates, gestures, moves, acts, etc., you can now give feedback on that. And why would you do that? Basically, *to increase that person's self-awareness*. And that's because without feedback, no one knows "how we come across to others." And how we think we are coming across may be radically different from how others are actually experiencing us.

I've often noted that one of the first benefits of coaching is a *greater sense of self-awareness and a more accurate sense of self*. And since you can't change what you're not aware of, this becomes the first step in change. But a caveat—a great many people will actually be shocked when they get feedback about how they come across. It will shock their self-image. It will shock their internal maps about themselves. So get ready for denials and rejections. "No, I didn't do that!"

And with that denial, just let it go. If it is a pattern, it will come up again and you can mirror back to the person again that “there is it again.” Sometimes you will do this repeatedly, four or five times before the person begins to become aware of it. Here your *patience* is your expertise.

How do you introduce giving feedback in the middle of a coaching session? There are many ways to do that, here are a few:

- Let me give you some feedback as to how I’m experiencing you right now.
- Was that a sign I just heard? Yes? And what does that mean to you?
- I notice that you are looking up a lot, are you making pictures as you talk? If so, what are you seeing?
- Excuse me, I think that what I heard you sounded incongruent to how you said it. What I heard was a tone of voice that sounded like... Does that fit for you?
- Let me interrupt you just for a moment, what you just did with your right hand, I’m interested in what you’re aware of when you said...

In giving feedback it’s important that you don’t sound apologetic. Don’t say, “I’m sorry.” If you are wrong or if your client thinks you are wrong, matter-of-factly say, “Okay, so it doesn’t fit. I’ll work to listen more carefully so I can more fully understand you.”

The *receiving and giving feedback* in the middle of a session, in real time, is one of the most profound change tools that you have as a Meta-Coach. To use them fully, review the pages in your ACMC manual about feedback and the seven qualities of *high quality feedback*. When you move to PCMC level, this will be a critical factor for getting to the heart of things and for catching coachable moments.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #9
March 1, 2023

WHEN YOUR CLIENT IS DEFENSIVE

The fact is that even *coaching* clients can, and do at times, become defensive. What then? How should you, as a Meta-Coach, detect such and respond? That was the question I was recently asked when presenting Meta-Therapy. “What should I do if I think a client’s statement is a defense or a cover-up?”

First of all, let’s not pathologize defensiveness. It is not good or necessary to do that. We all get defensive at times. Being defensive is not uniquely a problem for those who need therapy. It is a human characteristic and a pretty common one at that. And given that, the question then becomes— Is the defensive posture appropriate or not? Is it an accurate assessment of a threat, is it imaginary, or is it a combination? What is the person defensive about?

It is appropriate to become defensive when there is a real threat, when you need to *defend yourself against* a true event that is likely to occur. When would be such a circumstance? Obviously, any form of physical attack. Then there are the *potential threats* of various kinds of losses. We generally defend ourselves against overwhelming financial costs by taking out an insurance policy. That protects us against severe economic loss in case of accidents, severe illnesses, loss of property, etc. Yet even here, better than defensiveness is operating from a mindfulness of your resources and the ability to do *due diligence* which lies at the heart of intelligent risk management.

Being defensive *as a mental and emotional subjective state*, however, is a very different thing. That comes from being insecure in yourself and your ability to cope with challenges. Again, we ask, Is it appropriate or not? For a child as someone undeveloped and for an under-developed adult, it is appropriate because the person does not have the personal security of knowing self, self-determination, and the personal autonomy of knowing one’s inner powers.

That’s why, in coaching, there are a few things that we do to coach a person for a stronger and more robust inner sense of security. We coach the ownership of one’s powers so that the person develops authorship of her own capacities. We coach acceptance and appreciation of one’s potential capacities and unconditional value for oneself as a human being. We set the frame that whatever one finds inside is just “human stuff” and that they are *not* “the problem”—every “problem” is a function of some erroneous *frame*. “The frame is the problem; you are not the problem.”

Having set those frames and induced those experiences, then you are ready to detect, identify, challenge, and replace any and all *defense mechanisms*. Why? Because as a human being, neither you nor I have *no need* to defend any awareness. Whatever you become *aware of* is just a thought or a feeling. It means nothing more than that—unless you give it meanings that distort things so that you become afraid of yourself.

Yet that is what we do. We all do it; then some of us learn better; and others have not yet learned that. *Bring any negative thought, idea, meaning, definition, feeling, etc. against yourself, and you are highly likely to create neurotic meanings.* Then you become afraid of yourself, angry at yourself, ashamed of yourself, contemptful about yourself, arrogant about yourself, etc. Now the energy of these states has no where to go but *against your mind and your body.* Now you have created a subjective world or experience for yourself that is unpleasant, distressful, upsetting, etc. It generates a stressful state of mind—and to “correct” that, *you develop various defense mechanisms.*

You deny that awareness. You forbid it. You curse it. You judge it and name it ‘weak,’ ‘selfish,’ ‘egocentric,’ ‘hateful,’ ‘unmanly,’ ‘stupid,’ ‘wasteful,’ and on and on. You suppress the awareness, you repress it. You introject it. You project it onto other people or things. You split yourself into parts. You give yourself to fantasy and magical thinking. You deceive yourself.

We humans actually are incredibly creative, in a neurotic way, when it comes to all of the ways that we invent to *avoid awareness.* Being *mindful*, in other words, is so easy to say and promote, yet so difficult to actually experience. Being mindful of what you think and what you feel, what you consider doing, or wish you could do, sometimes leads us to not like ourselves and cruelly judge ourselves. So our “adaptive” means of trying to “make the thought or the feeling *go away*” often starts with good intentions. “I don’t want to be that kind of person; I want to be more loving and kind.” Yet it ends up creating a frame *forbidding us to be aware.* The result is that we become estranged from ourselves.

Then in that estrangement, we cease to have a true and real *contact* with ourselves. We don’t know ourselves. We only know the mask of self that we want to know. We then present that persona not only to others, but also to ourselves so that as we come to live behind that persona, we become actual strangers to our selves—our real self. This describes the essence of the neurotic process. As we deceive ourselves, we not only lie to ourselves, but we begin to *live* that lie. Now all kinds of things go wrong—we don’t know what we really want, we live more and more from the outside—in instead of inside—out, we can’t feel excited about what we’re doing, etc.

Coaching, like therapy, is designed to help people develop a deeper and more accurate sense of self. As self-awareness increases, so does one ability to live *authentically.* And to do that, we detect, call attention to, and challenge cognitive distortions, biases, and fallacies. We do the same with the *defense mechanisms* as we invite people to *come out from behind their personas and get real.*

When a client *defends or escapes* from their reality, or from a challenge—that is the time to mirror that back as a feedback. The design of that? To help your client catch how they are selling themselves short via pretense. So back to the question, “What should I do if I think a client’s statement is a defense or cover-up?” Answer: call attention to it by acknowledging it, inquiring about it, and probing it. Find out if it is a defense. Then find out, “a defense against what?” “What are you *not* wanting to know about yourself?”

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #10
March 8, 2023

ARE YOU A SCULPTOR OR A PAINTER?

In his book, *Psychotherapy of Neurotic Character* (1999), psychoanalyst David Shapiro provides a lot of updating on the old psychoanalytic model. Moving beyond Freud, he emphasizes the importance of the client's responsibility, the goal of the client becoming self-determining, a much less importance of the past as he stresses the importance of the here-and-now. I found his book refreshing from the old Freudian view. Then I came across the following passage which, when I read it out loud to Geraldine, she said, "You ought to let the Meta-Coaches hear that!" So, here goes.

"What constitutes therapeutic change? How does it occur? ... Psychotherapy is essentially *a subtractive process*, **not** an additive one; *it aims to remove*, not to augment. It does not aim directly to increase self-esteem, but to diminish shame. It aims to increase interest in life, but in the indirect way of diminishing the subjective distress and preoccupation with self that interfere with interest in life. *Psychotherapy aims to reduce or eliminate the distress and disability* that are a consequence of the neurotic person's reaction against himself. It aims therefore to diminish or eliminate the self-estrangement that is a consequence of that reaction, to bring the person into contact with himself. In sort, *it aims simply to repair.*" (Ibid., pp. 115-116, italics added)

I like that because it offers *an insightful distinction between therapy and coaching*. Shapiro then suggested a metaphor for this distinction—sculptor and painter. Applying this to Neuro-Semantics, we have the therapist as a sculptor who reveals a hidden form by *removing* material and we have the coach as a painter who's work consists of *applying* material.

This highlights the central forces of therapy—cutting away the false understandings, frames, beliefs, values, identifications, etc. that create inner harm to a person. What's wrong with the person is *not* the person himself, only the erroneous frames that create inner distortions. The person is fine except for being "cognitively wrong" (Maslow). When she eliminates the toxic ideas—she will be whole and more truly human.

By contrast, coaching mostly works to get the client to add new and additional resources—resources which provide new structures (i.e., belief systems) and higher level intentions. It is more about *enhancing* what is there. It is about *tapping into the person's powers and capacities* so one can do more in life and *be* more in oneself.

A sculptor looks for problems—what is in the way, what's blocking a person. A sculptor cuts away what is not authentic so the real person can emerge. A sculptor has to be able to recognize the false beliefs, false identities, etc., those which need to be eliminated. Accordingly, therapists have been called 'shrinks' for this reason. They shrink down the false accumulations that cover

up the real person. A painter looks for possibilities, for innate talents and strengths, and for potentials to be tapped. A painter seeks to add color and perspective—to create more beauty in life. Now given that the opposite of ‘to shrink’ is ‘to expand,’ we could call coaches *expanders*.

Now given that every metaphor has its limits and cannot be pushed passed a certain point, so it is with this metaphor. It does not have a perfect correlations with therapy and coaching. But it is useful for the central distinction in the sculptor—painter metaphor. One subtracts and the other adds. So in Meta-Therapy, therapists look for things the person has added to his thinking, feeling, speaking, and behavior that misdirect his energies, turn those energies against himself, and undermine his resourcefulness. He especially looks for cognitive distortions, biases, and fallacies and in doing so he has to deal with defensive thinking. Why? Because the client typically perceives those additions to be his or her “self.” So no wonder the defensiveness!

In Meta-Coaching, while the coach may discover things that stop and interfere with the client’s growth (question 14 of the WFO questions), the overall focus is on enabling and empowering the client. The general orientation is on self-actualization—*becoming* one’s best version of oneself. One clears the path, the other guides to a more challenging future. And both are important. Now knowing both are important, that’s why we encourage every Meta-Coach to attend the Meta-Therapy trainings. It will deepen your knowledge of both realms and expand your understanding and use of the Meta Place.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #11
March 15, 2023

FALSE EXPECTATIONS ABOUT COACHING

When it comes to learning a new field and developing the skills to become competent in that field, *what do you expect?* What would you expect about becoming a skilled psychotherapist? How much study and over how many years would you expect? How about a skilled lawyer? What about a skilled coach?

What's deceiving about coaching is that it uses the communication skills that we use in everyday talk. And when you listen to a skilled coach, it often seems like "he is just talking." And that can lead to a very inadequate conclusion, "I could do that." Well, yes you *could* do that once you are trained to know what to do and how to do it. But, no you can not do it as the professional coach can right now. "But it looks so easy, so natural; you are just asking questions and being supportive, that's all. Anyone could do that." Ah, that's the delusion.

The fact is *not* just anyone can do that. In fact, now after more than 20 years of leading the Meta-Coach training in thirty or forty countries, even people with extensive background in NLP (practitioners and master practitioners) still have to work, and work hard, at learning the coaching methodology and skills. And no one reaches competency on the skills in the coaching sessions at ACMC on first go. *No one!* And even after eight days of practice, 99 percent of people are still a good way away from being able to demonstrate competency on the seven basic skills. Amazing, yet true!

What explains this counter-intuitive sense? Primarily this fact—*there is a lot more going on with a competent coach than meets the eye.* What looks simple and obvious and natural to the person who doesn't know actually took years of study and practice. This is the way it is with most competencies. In 30 days or 90 days you can learn to manage most skills and be pretty good at it. But if you want to make a living doing it, *you need to master the basics* to such an extent that you can do it automatically. And that's a whole other story.

People come to ACMC with a lot of false expectations. I see it all the time. They read a book or two on coaching, they experience a few coaching sessions, they have some training in personal development and they *think* that they will be able to pick it up and reach 2.5 competency on the seven skills in one week. Many come and have *expectations* for themselves of reaching the 2.5 benchmarks on the first practice session. Then they don't. Typically they get 1.0 and 1.3 on most of the skills.

Now the problem with such *expectations* is that *within an expectation is a demand.* The person did not merely *hope* to do well and perhaps reach 2.5, he *expected* it. She *demand*ed it of herself. And when the reality doesn't meet expectation, the person feels disappointed, disillusioned, and

even depressed. In NLP it is said that “it takes a lot of preparation to suffer disappointment.” You have to pump yourself up with desires and turn them into expectations.

Keeping an *expectation* in check so that you don’t set yourself up for disappointment, you need to take the *demand* out of it. And when you do, it is no longer an expectation. It becomes something else. Perhaps it is now a hope. It could be a probability prediction, “I think that the likelihood of reaching 2.5 is 60%.” And even though that is far too high, at least it is no longer a demand. If the probability was more on the order of 10% chance, that would be more realistic.

There’s another problem with *expectation*. It posits things as either/or—either I make it or I don’t. And there is no time element included in it. Yet learning the knowledge of a discipline like coaching and developing the skills *takes time*. It does not happen immediately or over-night. It requires lots of practice for integrating the knowledge into one’s way of talking, relating, and conceptualizing the many different kinds of coaching conversations. Several times this past year at the PCMC trainings, a coach sat with a client and in the end said, “I have never encountered that issue before.” Consequently, the coach found him or herself unable to be as effective as usual.

Adjusting your *expectations* so that they are more reality-based and include a time-frame as well as a probability estimate is the answer to false expectations. Then, when you operate with a realistic hope, you stay motivated and persisting—the true keys to expertise.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #12
March 22, 2023

FIRST ACMC IN 4 YEARS

For years I have sometimes conducted as many as 10 to 12 ACMCs every year. Then the pandemic and the lock-down occurred. In 2020, the number of ACMCs which I conducted reduced to zero. In 2021, zero. In 2022, zero. Meanwhile, thankfully, other Meta-Coach Trainers were conducting ACMCs. David and Ivan in Mexico, Mandy in China, Mariani in Indonesia, and Mohamed in Egypt and Tunisia. But as for myself, all activity ceased. Now that has changed.

Now, at long last, I got my first post-pandemic opportunity to run an ACMC. After four years Geraldine and I flew to Bali Indonesia and conducted it with 33 participants and 12 trainers and Meta-Coaches on the Assist Team. So even though I conducted two PCMC trainings in 2022, getting back to ACMC feels like a whole new adventure to me.

For the Meta-Coaching system, we have two manuals for running the training (in addition to the 250 page ACMC manual). We have the Assist Team manual (100 pages) and we have the Meta-Coach Trainer's Playbook manual (another 100 pages). Yet even in spite of all of the activities being described in lots of details, I was amazed at how much I had forgotten and how much slipped my mind. Unlike before, I had to re-read the manuals to remind myself of the activities for each day, the transitions between the parts, who would be doing this or that. Consciousness is like that. *Use it or lose it.*

This was the first ACMC that we have introduced **the In-Between Day**. I did that last year with both of the PCMC trainings, but this was the first time for the ACMC training. *In-between* days 4 and 5 we introduced a day for *Coaching Demonstrations*. We invited those in the training to participate and we invited people outside of the training. Two business men with vast experience in business stepped up for a session. Then three persons from outside *who had never been coached* agreed to being coached in front of the audience.

One thing that I think everyone *took away* from the experience was how very different each coaching session was, the difference in what people brought to coaching, and the different levels of readiness for coaching. It was amazing to recognize the readiness difference in our two Meta-Coaches from the others. They were exceptionally ready and so the coaching went much deeper (and higher) with them.

One of the ladies was extremely compliant, which was her problem as well. Being *other-referent* she did not have a strong sense of self. She wanted self-acceptance and the ability to express herself. The other lady was not ready. For 40 minutes she provided lots of distractions from *the real issue*. I'm sure it was a way of testing me to see how I would handle what she offered. Eventually she brought forth the real issue, perfectionism, which she veiled as idealism. And her fear, the main fear in her meta place was fear of making a mistake, of doing something wrong. No wonder she held back as she did.

Finally, there was a middle-age business man who seemed to be a “cosmic global.” Not merely global, but a global of globals! That took some work. Eventually I had to confront him about not communicating clearly or specifically and we finally got to something that he really needed—focus.

We had a lot of brave people in the training—people for whom English was a second language and some of them really struggled to understand the presentations. We had more than half of the group coach in Indonesian and team leaders who benchmarked in the local language. I was delighted to have, in addition to Mariani who has been learning how to run the ACMC training, two others — Irvan and Hany. Both joined us on stage in the presentations and will eventually be signed off as Meta-Coach Trainers. That’s critical for the future of Neuro-Semantics.

Unlike the great majority of coach training programs, we know that this new profession of coaching is not something you can learn in a weekend training or even in four or five weekends. The very skills of listening and supporting, questioning, mirroring, inducing state, framing, detecting patterns, coaching the coachable moment, etc. is just *too rich, complex, and profound* to be picked up quickly. Even experiencing supervised coaching practices at ACMC is not enough. The supervision and practice has to continue for weeks and months before a person truly becomes competent. To do otherwise is to discount what coaching truly is.

Most people take one to two years to reach the basic competency level of 2.5. Then it takes another two years to reach Professional Certified Meta-Coach (PCMC). Yet when a person does — that person truly becomes a *change agent* who can hold a transformative conversation that will unleash potentials and enable a person to get on the road to become his or her best self.

In this post-pandemic year, Neuro-Semantics will be hosting several ACMC trainings this year—in South Africa, Mexico, Malaysia, Egypt, Costa Rica, Hong Kong (PCMC) and perhaps more. The time has truly come for all to *renew their learnings and competencies!*

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #13
March 29, 2023

SEND ME YOUR VIDEOS!

One of the things I always say after ACMC trainings and PCMC trainings is—*send me your videos!* Why? Because most people who have invested themselves, their times and money, their effort and energy in learning the knowledge of coaching and the skills *want to reach competency level*. And why would you *not* want that? Of course you want that! So, send me your videos!

Now given that *no one reaches competency during the training*—the training is **not** designed to do that—instead it is designed to provide you with all of the information you need *in order to become fully competent*. Because it is totally unrealistic to expect to master a field in only 14 days of training, the training is designed to *prepare* you so that with practice and ongoing feedback, it is just a matter of time. But you have to practice. You have to get feedback.

So, video-tape your coaching sessions. Ask your client if you can record it for your own learning and development and for the possibility of reaching the competency level. Prepare a statement that they can sign allowing you to video-tape it for your own learning and not for public viewing. Simple as that. Then record a 30 to 45 minute session (ACMC) or a 45 to 60 minute session (PCMC).

Next, study it. Get out the benchmark forms and watch yourself coaching and see what you can record that you do, and do well, and what you are missing and/or what to work on. You will learn so much! Put yourself into a passionate learning state and go through the video several times looking for support and listening, questioning and meta-questioning, receiving and giving feedback, and state induction.

Now because the benchmarks are about actual *behaviors*—the things you do or don't do, the process of benchmarking is *mostly* objective. That's why it is *not* a subjective judgment about your coaching. It is not about whether you or your client *like* it or not. It is about *what you actually do*, the number of times you perform some of the skills and whether you are doing enough of the skills. Our benchmarking system in Meta-Coaching is one of a kind. No other Coach training school even comes close to the precision, accuracy, and objectivity that we have.

As you do that, you will not only learn a lot—you will be able to tell when you are reaching the competency levels and when you are ready to submit a video to one of the Meta-Coach Trainers. You can submit English to me, Spanish to David and Ivan, Arabic to Mohamed, Chinese to Mandy, etc. When I watch a video, I use the benchmark form and record “the time” displayed on the video so that I can point to specific minutes and seconds when a coach did something or failed to do something. I often re-wind the video to see something again and make sure that I am catching as much as possible.

In 2022 we conducted two PCMC trainings and I have been expecting to receive some videos by

some of those who sat for assessment, but so far I have not received any. So to all of you who were pretty close—send me your videos. This is my promise and the promise of all of the Meta-Coach Trainers to you of our *ongoing support*. It is our pride and honor to see you succeed. We *want* you to succeed. It means a lot to all of us that more and more of the Meta-Coaches reach and perform at the competency levels. That's because every time you do—you *become a testimony to the transformational power of Meta-Coaching*. You raise the quality of the Meta-Coach Community and you say to the world, "Expertise is possible."

While we have just finished the ACMC in Bali and this message is for all of the new Meta-Coaches, it is also for *every Meta-Coach*. Even if, once upon a time, you reached the competency level of 2.5, follow this procedure. Staying at 2.5 absolutely requires continuous practice. And is not your competence worth it? Anyone who *says* that they want confidence has to get confidence through the experience of *competence*. That's the only legitimate way. So, send us your videos!

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #14
April 5, 2023

META-THERAPY REFLECTIONS

AN IDEA

We have just completed the second presentation of *Meta-Therapy training*. There were 34 present in person and there were another 14 online. Half of those who attended were Meta-Coaches, the other half were therapists, psychiatrists, hospital personnel and two educators.

Not surprising to me was the fact that those who asked the most questions and the most relevant questions were the Meta-Coaches. Whatever education system the others had been matriculated in, they were apparently not taught to think through new information and ask questions. It was the group of Meta-Coaches who had learned that *to think is to question* and by questioning one deepens thinking. They were also the ones who knew that the quality of their training and learning was a function of their questions

The “take aways” for the therapists tended to be the new patterns and the lists of questions they could use with clients. For the Meta-Coaches, they said that they were taking away a deeper understanding of the *mind* itself—what it is, how it works, and how to use the Neuro-Semantic models. They said they were really clear about the therapy/coaching difference. Several said that they now know what to do if a client is coachable and needs the “healing” of a specific wound.

Our sponsors, Mariani and Basian told me afterwards that they had been concerned about whether this training would divide their focus and take them away from their focus on business, organizations, coaching, and personal development. That got me thinking.

Our focus in Neuro-Semantics for the past twenty or more years has been on personal development with applications to business, coaching, groups and teams, etc. We have not focused on therapy at all. In a way this is ironic. NLP began when the founders modeled three therapists and yet what resulted was *not* a theory model. What resulted was a communication model—a communication model that contains lots of patterns that are more therapy patterns than anything else. And that has always plagued NLP. In its early days nearly everyone who attended was a therapist or interested in therapy. For them, these patterns made sense. So learning NLP “Practitioner” includes, strangely many therapy patterns. True enough, we have softened them and toned them down. But still they are therapy patterns.

The question has always been, Who should learn those patterns? Can a non-therapist learn and use them? When I found NLP, even though I was a therapist at the time, I grabbed the communication part and used it with my clients because they had terrible self-communication and typically that bled over to how they communicated with others. Over the decades, fewer and fewer therapists attended NLP trainings until today when there are almost none.

As I reflect on the Meta-Coaching Skills that were evident in the Meta-Therapy training, the foundational skills of listening and supporting, the Meta-Coaches already were able to create safety, express empathy, and give unconditional positive regard—absolute requirements for doing therapy. With their questioning skills, receiving and giving feedback, and inducing states, they were able to run the NLP therapy patterns like the *Movie Rewind* and *Developing Ego-Strength* very effectively. Similarly when they ran the meta-state patterns for emotions and concepts.

By way of contrast all of this seemed new and unfamiliar to many of those in the field of mental health and surprisingly, they were not able to listen very carefully or get rapport. My guess is that they had far too much theory in their heads and not enough practical experience in working with the structure of subjective experience. Some of them recognized this and have signed up for NLP training.

Today we recognize the therapeutic effect of clear, concise, and accurate communication. It has within it a way of healing the wounds of the mind. And when a person understands the mind—its levels, its self-reflexive nature, its systemic nature, etc., then the meta-stating process gives one tremendous power and flexibility.

What About Meta-Counseling?

Now given the gray area in-between therapy and coaching, what we call *counseling*, perhaps there's a place for well-training Meta-Coaches to step into that area *at times*. When? When they meet someone half-way between therapy and coaching. Someone who is willing to deal with themselves, their emotions, their misunderstandings but who may be a bit shaking. Who may not have a robust ego-strength. Such would be the ideal person to experience *Developing Ego-Strength* and then be ready for the challenge of coaching.

I see Meta-Coaches who have reached the basic competency level (2.5) as those who by learning *Meta-Therapy* could be certified to do some limited counseling. By understanding the objectives and processes of healing, the signs of neurosis, how to deal with the ego defenses, etc., they could first enable (empower) a person to move out of the need for intense therapy and be ready for the growth orientation of coaching. We could test those ready for such by adding another day (or half day). I'm thinking that by demonstrating knowledge and competence we could offer a Meta-Counseling Certificate. Then, sponsors would not need to promote Meta-Therapy by going after an entirely new population. What do you think? Let me know.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #15
April 12, 2023

RE-STARTING YOUR COACHING PRACTICE

Most people and most businesses have it all backwards. In times when the economy is slow or in recession, *the first thing that they cut back on is learning*. It is as if they think that personal development is completely unrelated to economic success. It is as if they think that personal development is a luxury—an extra, something you think about when you have taken care of everything else. Yet Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich* principle not only continues in depressive economies, it is actually a key variable for creating wealth in economically tight times. After all, *wealth is thinking*—creative thinking, thinking by which you add value to your products and services and see opportunities when others do not.

Now because of this, many people who would be signing up for training and coaching are holding back. They are waiting. They are assuming that because the return-on-investment is not immediate, and because it might take some time, they “can’t afford to pay for coaching.” This limiting belief is severely short-sighted. It implies that investment in self should result in immediately results—immediate increase in income. But wealth creation does not work that way. Wealth creation requires long-term perspective and planning.

One thing you could do is to help people understand the relationship between personal learning and development and increase in economic fortunes. Ultimately business is *by* people and *through* people. If people are not at their best, if they are not giving *quality thought and performance*, the quality of the business will suffer. For any business to pull out of the slump after the pandemic, they need *high quality* people who want to be there and who care about what they do. That’s where coaching comes in.

What else can you do? Several things. You could give one or two free coaching sessions or ask for an exchange of some referrals to potential clients. You could do specials—half-price specials for a limited time period. You could establish a payment plan which would begin 60 or 90 days (furniture stores do that). You could offer free services to non-profit organizations in exchange for them mentioning you in their communications. What will you gain in return? *Practice* as you keep your skills fresh and challenged. *Good will* in the community. *Credibility* that you are in it for more than just the money.

You could also focus your coaching on the things that people are now most concerned about. It could be *wealth creation* for those worried about inflation, paying bills, etc. It could be on *resilience* for those who need to learn how to get back up with a sense of vitality when knocked down. If you did this, you could also put out smaller teasers on social media about what you’re doing, similar to this:

How did you handle the pandemic and the lockdowns? Did you handle the challenges

with grace and vitality? Did you come out of it with a renewed spirit of commitment to yourself, your loved ones, your mission in life? We call this ability to thrive in the midst of set-backs *resilience*. And since none of us know when or how we might suffer a set-back, we don't know when we will need to call on our resilience powers. The best solution is to develop your resilience powers now so that you have them readily available when you need them. *Resilience coaching* is one of the specialties of Meta-Coaches. That's because resilience is no regular state, it is a meta-state, a high level state that Meta-Coaches specialize in.

There are lots of things you can do to start or re-start your coaching business. It's mostly a matter of will, of creativity, determination, and self-commitment. Do you have what it takes? Do you have a buddy coach to help you through the challenges? Don't let your dream slip away because of fear or apprehension— go for it. You'll be glad you did and your clients will be even more glad.

From: L. Michael Hall
April 15, 2023
A Reminder

WHY RENEW YOUR LICENSE

It is that time of the year—time to *renew your license*. And **you** do that *through your local Neuro-Semantic Institute*. Early this morning for me, we had a Leadership Team Zoom meeting as we do every month and today we discussed the importance of encouraging Meta-Coaches to renew their license. Why is it important?

It's important so that you stay a part of the Neuro-Semantic and the Meta-Coach community. In that way, you keep your license as a professional coach, with ACMC credentials—which just so happens to be the credentials of the highest standards in the field of Coaching. In that way you get to be a part of a group of people, and collaborating with them—people who are influencing the field of Coaching in your country—raising the standards and quality of coaching.

Such *collaboration* is what has driven every great achievement of mankind. When people work together for a common vision—that is when they can do the seemingly impossible. Conversely, when people do the opposite, they push against each other, they tear up fragile human relationships, they generate misunderstandings, bad feelings, destruction, war, etc.

That happened in NLP when “The Wizards went to War.” They argued over intellectual property. They insulted each other's character. They filed law suits. And in the end they created a lot of bad press for NLP, bad press we are still working to overcome.

We started Neuro-Semantics to undo that damage to go in the opposite direction. We started with a vision that we all would be *living the messages we teach*, collaborating with each other, acknowledging each others contributions, and working together to raise the credibility and attractiveness of the models we teach and coach. Our common vision is to *change the world one person at a time, one conversation at a time*. And you are a key factor in that vision. And our collaborative theme is this: *We can do so much more together than alone or apart*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #16
April 19, 2023

HEARING THE ANSWERS

A certain phenomenon frequently occurs when you begin a coaching session and begin asking the Well-Formed Outcome questions. What happens is this—before you ask the question your client is already *answering* some of the questions-yet-to-be-asked. Amazing! Before you ask “Is there anything that could stop you?” (#14), your client may begin talking about things that get in her way or he mentioned problems in reaching his goal. You haven’t asked for that information yet, but your client offers it. Actually this is not that uncommon; sometimes in fact, it happens a lot.

Now if you have *ears* to hear and if you are paying attention to what your client is offering, even though your client may not be answering the question you asked, you will recognize this. And by recognizing it, you can then *grab it*. After all, that’s what you are primarily doing in asking the well-formed outcome questions—*information gathering*. So gather that information.

How? Just repeat the information back as an acknowledgment. In doing that, you achieve several things—you let the client know that you heard him; you validate the information being presented even though your client has not answered the question you asked or perhaps did answer it and then offered more. You also now have information about the interference question (#14) prior to asking it.

To do this, you have to be on your toes. That is, you have to be open and ready, receptive and flexible. You have to have an inner readiness for hearing. You also have to know the Well-Formed Outcome questions inside-out. (That, by the way, is one of the reasons we recommend that you memorize those questions.) Only in that way will you be able to *hear the answers* to the questions yet to be asked. Here over-learning is the key. Over-learn the 18 questions, learn them in the six sections (subject, context, action, power, planning, resources, closing), learn them forward and backwards. By over-learning them, as with over-learning anything, you translate that knowledge to your “background knowledge” thereby making that information *automatic*.

Once you know the *questions* and can *hear the answers*, you then won’t miss that information when it is offered. You will be ready and able to *hear* things that prior to this development you were not able to hear. This describes one of the applications of hearing the answers.

There’s another. Because clients inevitably have things on their mind and anticipate what they think you might want to know, they often start talking and go down a line of thinking. This may leave you wondering—“Where is this going? Why is she talking about this? I’m not getting it, this doesn’t seem to be answering what I was asking for.” When this happens or when you notice that your client is not answer your question, stop and reflect, “What question is my client answering?” “If he is not answering the question I asked, what question is he answering?”

When you do that, you may very well be hearing *answers* to questions that not only have you not

asked, but questions that you may suddenly realized, “That’s the question I should have asked!” It’s amazing what you can hear when you tune your ears to listen, to really listen, to listen inferentially, and to listen for things in the back of the mind.

Here’s also another reason for recording your sessions and then going back and listening to the session. Especially listen to the recording for the things you missed, for the things that were hinted at or even stated early in the session that you didn’t catch on to until much later. I have found that this is an excellent way to improve my listening skills. Frequently I have been surprised to discover that *if only I had been more intensely listening*, I would have caught patterns and frames much earlier.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #17
April 26, 2023

THE NEURO-SEMANTICS BEHIND MASKING

Behind every experience, every activity, every event—there are meanings and where there are meanings there are elicitations of neurology. So now that the governments which forced us to wear masks have ended “the mask mandate,” what have we learned? What meanings have we discovered? Do masks work? Did the masks that we were forced to wear actually prevented the spread of Covid? The evidence that is now coming in suggests a strong *negative* answer. No, they did not actually work to limit the spread.

A lot of the confusion was and still is caused by the inept way governments attempted to communicate about covid. Most governments did an extremely poor job. For one thing, they over-promised. “Get the vaccine and you will not get covid.” That proved false. “Wear a mask and substantially reduce the spread of covid.” Again, that proved incorrect. Further, many governments took a very heavy-handed approach by punishing anyone who did not wear a mask, including firing them or jailing them. Then there was the man swimming in the ocean under a sunshine sky who was arrested for not wearing a mask—while swimming of all things!

What’s ironic here in the US is that the first recommendation from Dr. Fauci was to stop wearing masks. Remember?

“When you’re in the middle of an outbreak, wearing a mask might make people feel a little bit better, and it might even block a droplet, but it’s not providing the perfect protection that people think it is.”

That’s what he said in the early days of the epidemic. Then he explained further:

“Often, there are unintended consequences. People keep fiddling with the mask, and they keep touching their faces.” (Video of Fauci saying ‘There’s no Reason to be Walking around with a Mask’ Rueters, Oct. 8, 2020).

For medical questions like this, a UK-based non-profit organization known as Cochrane has long provided a major source of high quality, reputable meta-analyses. They have published comprehensive meta-analyses on medical and therapeutic interventions. The result:

“Our analysis confirms the effectiveness of medical masks and respiratory against SARS. Disposable, cotton, or paper masks *are not recommended.*”

“Single-use medical masks are preferable to cloth masks, for which there is no evidence of protection and which might facilitate transmission of pathogens when used repeatedly without adequate sterilization.”

“Wearing masks in the community probably makes little or no difference to the outcome of laboratory-confirmed influenza/ SARS-CoV2 compared to not wearing masks.”

Then there is the issue about *how* to wear a mask consistently and correctly. Studies have shown that “if you have properly fitted N95 masks you do have some protection.” Yet as one doctor said, “Outside of hospital I have never seen a properly fitted mask. The observation I’m sharing is this, if you can smell wood smoke while wearing your face covering of choice, you’re probably not at all protected from Covid.”

Accordingly, taking a mask off to get a drink or eat radically reduces the effectiveness of the mask and does so to such an extent that the mask becomes essentially worthless. This was what struck me as completely ridiculous on the numerous airlines I have flown in the past year. “You have to wear a mask, you can take it off when you are eating or drinking. Then you have to put it back on.” And this is a context where the air is conditioned and filtered so it is as “clean” as a surgery room!

What we have found is that what a mask mostly protects is *you from projecting the virus* into the area immediately around you if you have Covid. That means that the only persons who should wear a mask is *someone with covid!* If you have the flu, wear a mask. Then a mask would warn the rest of us *who to avoid*. Only in that way would a mask slow the spread.

One of the problems with wearing a mask is that it creates a false confidence. For many people, wearing a mask makes them feel that they are doing something that effectively reduces the chance of getting the flu or covid. But because that is not really the case, it’s a false confidence. It may deceive you into thinking you are doing something useful. But it may be satisfying a person’s paranoia without actually contributing to one’s well-being.

For more: <https://www.city-journal.org/the-mask-of-ignorance>

<https://www.thejournal.ie/what-have-recent-scientific-studies-said-about-masks-and-diseases-6026435-Mar2023/>

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #18
May 3, 2023

THE ACMC THAT ALMOST DIDN'T HAPPEN

We have just completed the 126 ACMC and this time back in South Africa where there has not been an ACMC in many, many years. That's strange given that *when we started ACMC*, the first one was in Sydney and the second in London—the third one was in South Africa. That was 2003. That was the first year Anne Renew sponsored it and we had 83 that first year. It overwhelmed us. Then, as often happens, things transpired, some trainers retired, others passed away, and eventually people stepped away from sponsoring. In the end, a vacuum arose which lasted a number of years.

In the last couple years a new set of leaders have begun to emerge, and with them, a renewed vision. A small group of five or six people began planning for a ACMC training. And it does take a lot of planning, more than you would imagine. Now in this joint venture of collaboration as roles and jobs were distributed, one person volunteered to handle the finances. That should have been a red flag. But it wasn't. People were too busy with their own tasks and then did not bring sufficient skepticism to the process. It would have been a red flag to me because I got caught by the same thing back in 2005.

If there is any job that has to be completely transparent, it is any job that involves handling money. We humans are just too easily seduced by money! Structurally, there should be two or three persons involved, and the bank account should be a new one set up just for that, or the Institute's bank account, but not any single person's personal account. That's just asking for trouble. And the temptation to use it is just too much. And because that happened. When the time drew near to get the hotel paid, there was no money. It had been used for personal matters.

What to do? Many would simply get angry, blame, accuse, turn the situation over to the police, and then waste lots of energy in-fighting. For many, such a challenge would tear them apart. For the group of leaders here in South Africa, *they used it to come together and unite in stronger bonds*. What a great example! They had made a promise and they were committed to delivering on their promise of conducting an ACMC training. Talk about commitment! Talk about great collaboration!

What did they do? They put their heads together, thought through their options, consulted with others in Neuro-Semantics, and then—having made their plan—*they made it happen*. The South Africa Institute and the Mauritius Institute then collaborated on bringing together people for the training. We had 28 participants and 12 on the assist team and it was one of the very best ACMCs ever.

While born amidst conflict and frustration, the spirit of all those who came and participated was *excellent*. And that's an under-statement, it was better than excellent. The leaders here and in Mauritius spent month after month preparing people so when they all arrived—people who

bursting out of their skins ready to jump in and learn. We had five teams thereby giving people an experience in group and team coaching and I can't say enough praise for the team leaders—they were fully committed to making it the very best experience for their teams.

On a personal note it was great to have Manuela who was one of the leaders here in South Africa with us for several days and then to my surprise Tim Goodenough showed up. Both were with us in 2003 at the beginning of Meta-Coaching here. And not only that Bryan and Zi Hattingh's daughter was one of the participants. Zi took Meta-Coaching in 2003 and introduced Michelle Duval and myself to Brian who at that time (and still today) does a radio program, "Risky Business." I interview Bryan Hattingh in 2003 as an Expert Executive Coach and a couple years later interview Zi as an Expert Coach—she had at that time the incredible ability to sell Meta-Coaching programs like no one else. They popped in during the week and were with us for the graduation. For me, great times with a community now more than 20 years old.

For a training that almost did not happen, the turn-around was an incredible testimony to the power of vision and intention. Leaders make things happen! And without leaders who are visionary enough to see potential and bold enough to step forward—nothing gets done. My appreciation to all who participated and all who made it happen!

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #19
May 10, 2023

PERSON AND PERSONA

When you first meet a client, you actually don't meet *the person*, you meet *the persona*. You meet the person's mask which he uses as his self-image and/or social image. Yet somewhere behind that persona is the real person, although it is often hidden deep within. And sometimes, the person doesn't even not herself or himself as a *person*, only as a *persona*. Now as a way of managing one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in the real world, one's *persona* can provide a person a safe place. That's why we all create various personas and use them as we move in different circles. In itself, this is not bad, but it can be misused.

Yet while a person's *persona* may provide some protection, it can also—and typically does—create a sense of inauthenticity, and when exaggerated it can even generate a sense of de-personalization. That is, a person can get lost in their persona to such a extent that one no longer knows who he is. “Who am I apart from the roles I play?” “Who or what is the real me?” Sometimes clients come to coaching asking these kinds of questions.

Now coaching, by its very nature, actually is a call for *authenticity*. In coaching we ask the person to come out from behind her personas and get real. To facilitate that, we do a lot of matching and pacing to create rapport and a deep sense of connection with our client. In that way, the coaching room becomes a safe place for coming out from behind oneself. It's a safe place for presenting one's real self and thereby discovering one's real self.

The persona often masks or hides a person's features so that the more thoroughly a person is masked, the more we are at a loss about who the person is. Masks are good for hiding, but horrible for relating. Relationships suffer when people hide behind their personas or get lost in them. So why do people keep up the persona and hide behind it? The primary reason is that it feels scary and vulnerable to *come out from behind the persona*.

What is the fear here? Mostly it is a fear about one's inner *self* and mostly it is a fear generated by *conditional* self-esteem. If a person's value or worth as a person is *conditional* on maintaining a front of confidence based on money, salary, possessions, status, strength, beauty, or whatever, then to *be a person apart from that* leaves one feeling vulnerable.

“Upon what basis can I *be myself*? On what basis can I accept myself, can others accept me? I need to make myself worthy and show that I am a ‘somebody.’”

Inside such a person's *meta* place is a weakness—*conditional* self-esteem. That is the problem. That is the frame that is creating the fear of openness, the fear of vulnerability, the fear of rejection. That *frame is the problem*, not the person. Who the person truly is—is unknown to that person! That person is an *unconditionally* valuable human being who's worth and value is a *given* simply because he or she is “a human being.” This is what Carl Rogers meant when he said it is our job to give “unconditional positive regard.”

But, of course, we all live in societies that do *not* automatically give “unconditional positive regard.” After infancy, we regard kids, teens, and adults alike as *conditional* beings who have to prove themselves. So we grade people. We classify people. We evaluate people. And in doing so we *confuse* two very different concepts. We confuse the concept of *personal* worth and value with the concept of *social* worth and value. We *assume* that one’s *social* worth is equal to, and the same as, one’s *personal* worth. That’s where people get the idea, “I will be worthwhile and a ‘somebody’ if and when I meet X and Y conditions.”

Coaching this distinction is generally one of the most fundamental and basic distinctions to coach. Since very few people have escaped this confusion in growing up, and since it is foundational to almost everything a person wants to do to actualize his or her very best, be sure to check this out with all of your clients. Accept the persona to get to the person and coach the person to unconditionally regard his or her basic worth and value. This is where personal development begins.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #20
May 17, 2023

DISTINGUISHING FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

When you learned NLP, you learned this distinction. You learned that “feelings” or literally kinesthetic sensations are one of the fundamental sensory representation systems, and that it is *not* the same thing as emotions. To have an emotion, you have to have two things—a cognition and a kinesthetic (or feeling). Now while you may have learned this in your NLP studies, *everyday language confuses these by using them interchangeably*. This is one example of how everyday language is so inadequate for coaching and therapy and the need to construct more precise language.

Yet even Meta-Coaches get tricked by this one. It happens when they start with the Well-Formed Outcome questions. They stumble on question #2: “What does your outcome look like, sound like, feel like?” The stumble here involves confusing the word *feeling* with the idea of an emotion. The question is asking for the sensory representations of a tangible outcome. *It is not asking for the person’s emotions regarding the outcome*.

If the person’s outcome is *tangible*, that is, *empirical*, then it will have visual, auditory, and kinesthetic qualities. If you don’t recall these qualities, get out your NLP practitioner manual and review the list of qualities and factors under each of these categories. When you do, you are going to see a list such as the following categories and within each category there will be specific distinctions:

Pressure — Location and Extent — Shape — Texture — Temperature — Movement — Rhythm — Duration —
Foreground/ Background — Associated/ Unassociated” — Intensity — Frequency — Weight

That’s what question #2 in the WFO questions is going after—kinesthetic distinctions, not emotions. In the NLP presentation, “emotions” are the same thing as “state.” A state is an emotional state, but not only so, it is also a mental state and a body state. That makes *state* a very dynamic term, a system term. A state is a combination of your mind, body, and emotions.

If you ask for or get an *emotion term* in response to Question #2, your coaching will go astray. For example, you ask what the person wants and he says “the ability to effectively handle his job” and you ask “What will that look like, sound like, or feel like?” and he gives you an *emotion*. “I want to feel relaxation.” Now if you are on top of things, you know *relaxation* is a nominalization and probably an emotion, not a kinesthetic feeling. So you denominalize it. But if you just run with *relaxation*, then your coaching will become side-tracked. You will start to help him find way to experience relaxation. You might think that’s the goal. It is not. *Relaxation* is a *symptom* of something else. What he may actually want and actually *feel* is “breathing calmly” and keeping my mind focused on what I’m doing when under the pressure of performing (i.e., public speaking, coaching on stage, negotiating the release of a hostage, etc.).

Where in the Well-Formed Outcome questions do you ask about a person’s state? Good question. You want to know about two states—the person’s present state and the person’s desired state. *State is the “place”* where a person lives and is the result of their entire matrix of frames (meanings, intentions, person, powers, relationships, time experience, and roles). State is the current experience of your client and the place where the client does not want to be. The desired state is where the client wants to be.

Now in both current and desired states there are *emotions*. Using the SCORE model, in the current state these are the *symptoms* and in the desired state they are *effects*. And while the symptoms may be problematic, *they are not the problem*. They are symptoms of the problem. And the *effects* while they are highly desired emotions which your client wants, *they are not the coaching outcome*.

Now for some coaches this distinction seems like one that takes some people a long while to get their heads around. Emotions in the current state are *not* the real problem and emotions in the desired state are *not* the real solution. Write that down. Put it in your notes when you are coaching. In both states, emotions are symptoms. They are symptoms of the person’s *meanings*.

Once you know that, then you can become truly a Meta-Coach and do *meta-coaching* as you take your client *inside* to his meanings—beliefs, understandings, decisions, memories, imaginations, intentions, prohibitions, permissions, and so on. Your client’s *mind* or meta place has created a model of the world that is generating those emotions. Go there. That will make your coaching real and deep. If you only stay on the surface level of emotions, your coaching will be superficial and will not produce lasting results. Ask yourself, “How is this person generating these unpleasant emotions?” Then check the person’s meanings, beliefs, decisions, intentions, etc.



From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #21
May 24, 2023

THE META-COACHING CO-CREATORS

It's hard to believe, but the first training of Meta-Coaching occurred just over 20 years ago. It was 2002 and because I had created Meta-Coaching as a modeling project, I invited three experts to that first training and continued in that first ACMC to model them. I did that because, just as NLP arose from actual therapeutic experts (Perls, Satir, and Erickson), I wanted to put together a coach training program based on actual coaching experts. Over the years it has been said that there was one co-developer of Meta-Coaching, Michelle Duval, but that's not entirely accurate. There has actually been several. Here's a brief overview.

Many years prior to that I put together "Empowerment Coaching." That was my very first attempt in 1992 to relate NLP to coaching. Where did I get that idea? It resulted from reading about coaching as a new field in *Anchor Point* and other NLP journals. I put together what I had learned from NLP with the design to be one thing—empower people. That is one of the key values of NLP. I played with the idea, I even ran my Empowerment Coaching with several businesses in town. What interrupted that, however, was the research I was doing for resilience that later led to the discovery of the *Meta-States Model* (1994). With that, I then devoted the next years to that. Later when I modeled Dan Bagley for resilience, I found out that after his world was turned up-side-down, he became an Executive Coach (1999). He was the first expert coach that I interviewed and modeled.

The next year (2001) Karen Corban, Universal Events, asked me to put together an NLP Coaching Program that she could sell. That's when I decided to model experts. An unprecedented opportunity then arose as I met and interviewed three expert coaches—Graham Richardson, Michele Duval, and Cheryl Gilroy. I spent time modeling them for executive coaching, personal coaching, and group and team coaching. The tools I had at that time was NLP, Meta-States, and Frame Games (which later become the Matrix Model). From that emerged the first version of Meta-Coaching and the first three models of Meta-Coaching.

I knew that I needed more models to fully describe what happens in high quality coaching. I knew I would need a change model, a self-actualization model, a model for measuring, and a model to explain facilitation. I developed those in the following years. They arose as I continued to interview and model an expert coach at ACMC trainings in multiple countries (34 experts in total). The *Axes of Change* arose in 2004. After putting it together, I asked Michelle to be a thinking partner to test it. As we talked it through she stimulated my thinking so I credited her as co-creating it. While she didn't actually help me create that, she was responsible for creating the *Meta-Coach Foundation* (MCF). That was her idea and that is what she contributed to Meta-Coaching.

After 2007 when she left, I created the *Facilitation Model* which unites all of the facilitation or coaching skills in Meta-Coaching. The next creation in Meta-Coaching occurred in 2009. That's when I sat down with Omar Salom and we talked through how to completely re-organize ACMC. We designed each day with a theme: Relationship, Listening, Exploring, Performance, Change, Self-Actualization, Business, Professionalism.

Later I did the same with many of the Meta-Coach Trainers—Mandy Chai, David Murphy, Mohamed Tarek, and Geraldine. All have played a significant role in the ongoing development and co-creation of

the Meta-Coaching System—and in that sense, all are co-creators with me. With their assistance I have created many more developments in Meta-Coaching— PMCM, GTMC, Executive Coaching, Transformational Coaching, etc. Nor has this ended. Every year we introduce new features into the Meta-Coaching system. We recently introduced drills for skills and we have redesigned Day 2 to doing that almost exclusively. Along with that we have been introducing deliberate practice into the learning of the skills.

The bottom line— *there have been and continue to be many co-creators with me of Meta-Coaching.* Michelle was the first during the first four years. But that's now been 16 years and during that time the Meta-Coaching system has continued to evolve and change. Since then there have been many others who have equally *co-created* what we now recognize as Meta-Coaching. Nearly every great creation in human history has been the product of *collaboration* and it has been the same with Meta-Coaching. Here's to all of the co-creators!

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #22
May 31, 2023

WHY “NEURO-SCIENCE COACHING” IS A RIDICULOUS CONCEPT

In the pursuit of *something new*, many people are now jumping on the buzz word “neuro-science” (as if it was new) and combining it with “coaching.” This gives us an interesting hybrid, the only problem is that the phrase actually *refers to nothing*. How can I say that? What can I say to provide evidence that putting these words together mostly only creates an absurdity, which most anyone could figure out if they only took a moment to think about it?

Regarding Neurology as a field, it has been around from the late 19th century. It was only when neurology began specifically studying the brain, that the term neuro-science began being used. This especially occurs with the introduction of new tools for studying the brain— the CAT scan, the MRI, PET, etc. While medical doctors took an interest in the brain since the mid-1848 when a bar was shot through the head of Phineas P. Gage in Vermont. While he amazingly fully recovered from the injury, his personality began changing, and not for the better. Years later after he died, they studied his brain to understand the damage and the regions of the brain that allowed him to keep functioning.

Yet the earnest study of the brain didn’t really begin until the 1950s. Wilder Penfield was one of the first investigators. He opened up a living brain and touch a very small electric stimulus. Patients would report memories of things long forgotten. Some people drew the unfounded conclusion that “we remember everything.” Of course, we do not.

“Subsequent stimulation of the same site did *not* necessarily promote the same memory, and stimulation of some other sight in the brain could evoke the original memory. It is unlikely that there is any discrete storage of memory traces in the brain.” (Greenfield, Susan, 1995, p. 164)

Did you know that Alfred Korzybski wrote extensively about neurology and brain anatomy in *Science and Sanity* in 1933? He did. Korzybski distinguished the lower and higher cortical regions of the brain. He showed how our neurology abstracts from the world outside via the senses and how the multiple levels within neurology continues to abstract creating next-level up abstractions. In 1994 a General Semantics committee was commissioned to revise the book asked a group of Neurologists what they would update. After months of deliberation, they said “nothing.” What he wrote what still relevant in 1994 as it was in 1933.

While neuro-science is an extremely important discipline, it contributes very little to coaching. Each are about radically different areas— one is about the brain, the other is about the mind. In the neuro-sciences you study human anatomy and the brain. You study its functions, chemistry (neurotransmitters, neuromodulators) the multiple nervous systems that we have, and how it all operates systemically. Yet in studying the brain, *neuro-science does not study mind, thinking, consciousness, awareness, etc.* There’s another field for that—Philosophy of Mind. Key theorists in this field include Daniel Dennett, John Searle, Paul and Patricia Churchland, Francis Crick,

Roger Penrose, Gerald Edelman, Zeki, Greenfield, etc.

In the neuro-sciences there is no consensus at all about *consciousness*. Some think it is an emergent property from cell assemblages (neural gestalts), some think it arises from thalamocortical loops, others from synchronous neural responses, or multiple draft theory, etc. Many deny that consciousness exists at all! For them, the mind is an eip-phenomenon which cannot be studied.

By way of contrast, in *coaching* you study the mind, consciousness, thinking, the person, and personality. You do *not study the brain!* Yes, NLP talks about “running your own brain” but that is accommodative language for the mind. NLP is about mindfulness, thinking, and meta-thinking

Further, the neuro-sciences offer very little to nothing at all for coaches in terms of practical coaching processes. Yes, the 1992 discovery of mirror neurons confirmed that we humans are wired for connecting and for experiencing rapport. But NLP was teaching *matching and mirroring* (1975) for nearly 20 years before that discovery. The brain and all of our nervous systems are the hardware of consciousness. Mirror neurons describes the underlying structures that explain why *matching* works. But we have known that for decades and we have known the principle that humans are made for connecting for thousands of years.

Every year I read in the field of the neuro-sciences and as a psychology and psychotherapist I find it fascinating in order to understand dysfunctions. From brain damage, concussions, lesions in the brain, drug addictions (LSD, cocaine, Ecstasy), etc. all sorts of pathologies can arise: aphasias, memory problems, Alzheimers, Parkinsons, etc. These are the things for the medical field and some for therapists —yet these have no offering at all for coaches.

The convoluted phrase, “neuro-science coaching” mixes brain and mind that need to be kept distinguished. It offers *no practical coaching practice* that we don’t already have. Yes, knowing about brain physiology will increase your appreciation of this mysterious phenomena. Knowing that you were born with 200 million neurons and that these are pruned so that by the time you become a young adult, you have 100 million neurons. This informs us about the importance of providing a rich learning environment in the early years. Yet once again, we already knew that!

The neuro-sciences has shown that neurons which are not activated and linked together in cell assemblages for making a distinction, a learning, and/or a skill will be lost and pruned. Yet we have already also known this; “Use it or lose it.” This knowledge does not really lead to any new ways of coaching.

The bottom line—there is no such thing as “neuro-science coaching.” I think that buzz term is mostly used by people who do not know the depth and quality of Neuro-Semantic Coaching—*Meta-Coaching*. In the Neuro-Semantic *Brain Camps* we start with some basic facts about the brain—its structure and functioning. We identify the processing levels in the brain, where various aspects of consciousness seem to be influenced by the various structures in brain anatomy. Yet the brain is not so simple and to identify the part or the region where various subjective experiences occur— we have found is extremely challenging since the brain works holistically to produce our sense of self and sense of consciousness.

If you want to disagree with my conclusion, then simply write and tell me what neuro-science discovery that you know about which leads to *some specific coaching practice*—one we are not already using. I have looked high and low for two decades of Meta-Coaching and have not found such a coaching practice derived directly from the neuro-sciences.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #
2023
Part II

MORE NON-SENSE ABOUT “NEURO-SCIENCE COACHING”

After writing the previous article, I came across an NLP book claiming the neurosciences as a coaching technique. The book, *Keeping the Brain in Mind: Practical Neuroscience for Coaches* (2014) by two NLP authors however offers *not a single neuroscience technique*. Instead, they go through the list of traditional NLP patterns and talks about brain anatomy and the probability that this or that brain aspect is involved. That’s the very point I already made. Namely, what we do in NLP and Neuro-Semantics already *implies* and *assumes* various brain functions. But the latest information from the neurosciences *does not generate any new technique*. Everything it suggests are already integrated in the traditional patterns.

The book details anchoring, re-imprinting, sub-modalities mapping over, pattern interrupts, the swish pattern, change history, the V/K pattern (Movie Rewind), hypnosis, visual squash, Disney creativity strategy and Clean Language and attempts to relate how brain functions are involved in each. Nothing new there. In the Introduction they promise:

“You will learn how to target specific areas of the brain to reinforce new neural patterns while coaxing old ones into extinction.” (p. 9)

“A little dose of neuroscience goes a long way to help people change.” (62).

But what does that mean? *Target specific areas of the brain?! They do no such thing. That’s not the domain of coaching or therapists. That’s the domain for medicine and brain research. We do not target specific areas of the brain. We don’t even work with the brain, we work with the mind.*

The book also is really a poor example of running NLP patterns. The authors do not run them very well at all. They are often over-simplistic in their descriptions. Their presentation of Change Personal History (pp. 72-77) is extremely poor as the coach contradicts the client and rejects the client’s solutions.

They also make unfounded and untrue statements: “the brain takes the shape of what the mind focuses on” (10). “... there is a part of the PFC (prefrontal cortex) that takes everything personally.” (154). Here they have completely confused the lower more primitive and childish parts of the brain which does that kind of cognitive distortion, not the higher. They invent “sexy mysterious names:” Quantum Zeno Effect. They assert, “Change work is all about emotions...” well, yes change work involves emotions, but it also involves thoughts, beliefs, intentions, memories, identity, etc. “...your unconscious has all your resources.” (190). All resources?

They violate some basic NLP principles. For example, we don’t ask the why question. But they say, ask, “Why am I about to do this?” to help identify deceptive brain messages. (43). They assert, “Yet it is very difficult to generate rapport on a conscious basis.” (130).

I was also shocked in how they make a mistake that I would expect of new practitioners. They treat “confidence” as a feeling and then simplistically anchor it to a desired area. But the great feelings of confidence without competence in the required skill creates fools, not experts! This occurred repeatedly in the book (p. 60, p. 116, 173, again on 24). They also accept the nonsense of “spinning a feeling” (86). They are unaware that the 55/38/7 statistics about communication was discredited a long, long time ago and quote it as if still valid (132). The strategy for “doing taxes” (p. 147) completely avoids *doing* taxes and focuses on focusing exclusively on when it is over. “Whew, it’s done!” It is a strategy of avoidance, not doing. There was no reframing that would give a fun meaning to the activity itself.

While the book has no Bibliography (a sign of a novice), there are references scattered in the text of source materials. And there are a lot of good things in the book about the brain, brain anatomy and some of the brain functions. But the authors seem completely confused about the role of neuroscience and the work of coaching and/or therapy. We work with *the mind*, not the brain. And yes, we believe the mind is an emergent property of brain functions. And yes, understanding how the brain works does give us more confidence in understanding how some of the patterns potentially work. But the absolute and rigid statements in the book go far beyond what has actually been established.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #23
June 7, 2023
Secure Inside—Out series #1

SECURE INSIDE—OUT

In Neuro-Semantics, we are considering developing a new certification process, something that will be on the order of Meta-Counseling (the name yet to be determined). This will stand in the area in-between coaching and therapy. It will be for those who are not quite ready for Meta-Coaching but who also are not really clients who need intense psychotherapy. Maslow noted, as many others have, that all of us have differing degrees of neurosis. And if it is a matter of degree, then there will be many in the no-man's land somewhere in-between.

From the beginning of Meta-Coaching, I repeatedly noted that the key problem for someone who needs counseling or therapy is that for the most part they lack the ego-strength to face life's challenges head-on. Part of the reason for this is that they are not "okay" within themselves and/or they are also living in the past. That's where their energy and focus go—trying to finish some unfinished business so that they can live with their past as they focus on today and the future.

Eric Berns (*Games People Play*, 1965) and later Thomas Harris (*I'm Okay; You're Okay*) developed Transactional Analysis (T.A.). They developed it to simplify psychoanalysis and to invent a more simple language. For them, when the self is not *okay*, it is insecure and being unable to stand on its own, uses various defense and escape mechanisms to boost itself and try to be okay. This is common knowledge in psychology. You have to have a basic sense of security in being yourself to function healthily and effectively. We call this ego-strength.

Ego-strength refers to your *self* ("ego" as the Greek word for "self, I, me") having enough inner strength to face life as it presents itself. The "strength" here comes from knowing oneself and being aware of one's humanity including your fallibility and mortality. The "strength" here refers to being able to use your powers of thinking, emoting, speaking, acting, and relating in a way that's effective enough to achieve your goals of getting along with others, finding out what you do best, learning (and learning how to learn), building a lifestyle, etc. We call this being *resourceful* in Meta-Coaching and NLP.

To understand ego-strength, begin by realizing that no one is born with ego-strength. For that matter, we are not even born with an ego—a sense of self. That develops. And it takes many years to develop to the point where one's ego-strength can truly handle life's challenges. For that to occur, you have to learn a great many things. Generally it takes all of one's childhood and into one's teens and even 20s before a person has sufficient ego-strength to launch out on your own into the wild and wonderful (and dangerous) world.

When you have *ego-strength*, you know yourself and others well enough to know how to create friends, work consistently and effectively at a job, handle your finances, treat people well, know

how to avoid dangerous places and people, solve everyday problems, anticipate how things could go wrong and do some risk-management, and get back up when you get knocked down (resilience). That's a lot!

Ego-strength is tested whenever you are at the edge of your skill development and have to stretch beyond your comfort zone to take on a new challenge. It is tested whenever things go south and you take a fall, are severely disappointed, lose a job or a best friend, are betrayed, face a natural disaster, etc. Life is not always easy. Sometimes it is harsh and even cruel. One tragedy after another tragedy piles up and you begin questioning yourself, life, the world, or God. You experience an *existential crisis* wondering what is the meaning of it all.

Some are very unfortunate to have to face such challenges as children. When that happens, they suffer the most. Often the normal ego-strengthening process of healthy parenting is interrupted and consequently they fail to develop the needed ego-strength. To cope with some very not-so-normal contexts, they develop various neurotic responses. This is normal. Neurosis for this is a normal coping mechanism ... and it usually works to get them through very abnormal situations. Only later, when they graduate into adulthood do they find that they are not ready and that they lack the needed ego-strength. That's when and where therapy comes in to help.

A person who is not secure *inside—out* is a person who needs the healing (therapy) that builds up their ego-strength and helps them learn their inner resources so that they can cope effectively and healthily. Again, it's a matter of degree. Does one need full and intensive psychotherapy or does one need a bit of counseling to pull them out of the past, out of the defenses, and into a strong resourceful state for facing life?

In this series, I will explore what it means to be *secure inside—out*, I will identify how to develop that kind and quality of inner security. And I will include some basic patterns that you can use for that very purpose.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #24
June 14, 2023
Secure Inside—Out Series #2

THE STRUCTURE OF FEELING INWARDLY SECURE

Psychologically most of the challenges of modern life require inner security. The *inner security* which is located comes from the *inside* and which shows up on the *outside*. What is this inner security and how do we develop it? That's the \$64,000 question in psychology. And sadly, there is still a lot of confusion about it in the field of psychology. But not in Neuro-Semantics.

In Neuro-Semantics we understand *inner security* as a two-fold structure. We understand it as a synthesis of the two most profound and determining variables of human personality—*being* and *doing*. The *being* part of personality refers to being a *human being*—a member of the human species and the human race, a *human person* who is at the same time full of unspeakable potentials and a profound mystery about your inner sense of self. The *doing* part refers to each person as he or she shows up in the world with a different set of talents, dispositions, tendencies and in different family and ethnic cultures. All of which then leads the person to develop in different ways. The *doing* part expresses itself in your mental, emotional, verbal, and behavioral variables, in your roles and personas in society, your ability to study, learn, and adjust to your environment.

Who you are as a person involves both of these aspects—you as a human *being* and you as a human *doing*. Sadly, most families, schools, and cultures focus almost exclusively on you as a human *doing* and then *confuse* it with self-worth. We ask, “What do you do for a living?” “Where did you go to school? What grades did you did? How much money do you make? What degrees do you have? What is your socio-economic status? Etc.” We evaluate ourselves and others by their looks, intelligence, strength, money, family, “race” (ethnic group), history, etc. This way of thinking puts people in boxes and creates all sorts of prejudices as we favor some distinctions and reject others.

To only be a *human doing* is an extremely limiting thing. It downgrades the quality of human living, it reduces a person to being a machine, and only valuable depends on what one can produce. This reduces the sacredness of being human, the mystery, the potentials, and treats people as inter-changeable cogs in the social system. *Yet we are more than that. A lot more!* And each person has an incredible range of untapped potentials—potentials that require nurturing and development. Every kind of pre-judging of persons limits and de-personalizes.

What's needed for inner security is to realize your *unconditional value as a human being solely because you are a human being*. Carl Rogers said that we need to treat each other with “unconditional positive regard.” The “positive regard” is the attitude of respect and honor; it is the attitude of care and compassion.” And the “unconditional” refers to basing it on *no conditions*

at all. It is to treat each other respectfully as human beings based only on the fact that one is human. As this applies to all people, it equally applies also with regard to ourselves. This is the true meaning of “self-esteem” —to treat yourself with respect, honor, kindness, care, compassion, etc.

Understanding self-esteem as unconditional means that it cannot be either *low or high*. It does not become more and it cannot be reduced. If it is unconditional, it just is. It is a given. It comes with being born. Nor can you make it less. Not really! Yes, you can mistreat yourself. You can insult yourself, criticize yourself, confuse your self with what you do, feel, experience or with how others treat you. You can *esteem* your self in a low way, when you do, you are living a lie. You are a human *being* and you are that mysterious *being* even when you don't recognize it, even when you are feeling down and negative, even when you mess up. There's no *conditions* to you being a human being.

Low self-esteem is your fallacious thinking and mis-understanding. So is high self-esteem. You have forgotten that nothing you can *do* can increase or decrease *your worth as a person*. Thinking so and feeling so are lies that you are feeding yourself.

The structure of inner security is two-fold. First it is claiming and asserting your innate dignity and value as a human *being*. Then it is secondly using your freedom to think, feel, speak, do, and relate to become the best version of you. It is developing your skills, learning how to unleash your highest meanings and values into your best performances. Do that and you *secure yourself* so that you can then *live inside—out*. Then you can develop your humanity to the highest and best forms.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #25
June 21, 2023
Secure Inside—Out Series #3

SELF-EFFICACY SECURITY

Once you have a secure sense of your self—a solid sense that truly distinguishes unconditional self-esteem from conditional self-confidence in way you can do, you are ready to build up the state of self-efficacy. This refers to the self being able to be efficacious within itself to figure things out in handling the challenges of life. Self-efficacy distinguishes a person as being able to be healthily self-determining. It is characteristic of every entrepreneur who sees a challenge and considers herself as efficacious in figuring things out.

Self-efficacy rests on the foundation of years of self-confidence development. As you develop *competence* in one skill after another, your repeated experience of becoming confident to do various skills builds up a larger generalization, namely,

“Even though I didn’t know how to do X when I started, I learned. I learned time and time again to develop new skills and I will do the same again. I will figure this out also. It is just a matter of study, talking and experience.”

Repeated success at developing new understandings and skills gestalt into a larger perspective which we refer to as self-efficacy. Now you know that you can trust yourself to learn and to develop. It is just a matter of application and time and you will get it. This creates the next level of inner security.

If someone asked if I’m confident that I could fly a helicopter, I would say yes. Even though I have never even hitched a ride on a helicopter, and even though at this moment in time, I don’t have a clue as to what a person would do once he sat behind the controls, I know that *I could learn*. I could take lessons, hear the instructions and read the manuals, and then comply with the instructions from an instructor. I could learn. It would be just a matter of time, money, and some effort. That’s all.

The difference between confidence and self-efficacy is a very wide one. With *confidence*, your feeling of assurance comes from the past. You *have* done it. You have pulled off the skill and you have done it enough times, that you *know* that you can now do it consistently. Now you are confident. You have the *competence* and it is your practiced skill level that gives you that confidence. [Confidence without actual skill competency is foolishness!]

Self-*efficacy* is not based on past experience and skill level. It is based on a trust in yourself in your future. Though you have no specific experience with the skill in question, you know that you can learn it. Because you know how to learn, how to think, and how to relate to others, you are able to trust in yourself. It is that self-trust which, in turn, allows you to know that you will figure things out. These “taking on a challenge because you have taken on many other challenges and succeeded” convinces you that you have the foundational skills to learn the new skill that you

have never yet experienced.

If esteeming your person as unconditionally worthwhile generates inner security, and if developing particular skills gives you a confidence that you can handle certain things in life, and therefore inside—out security, self-efficacy will take it to the next level. Think about self-esteeming as for the here-and-now *present*. Think about self-confidence as for a foundational trust that you can *do certain things* based on what you have done *in the past*. Think about self-efficacy as your trust in yourself for the unknown *future*. Together they deepen your inside—out security and with that, now you're ready to take on a challenge.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #26
June 28, 2023
Secure Inside—Out Series #4

REALITY FACING SECURITY

The phrase “secure enough to face reality” refers to the ability to know within yourself that you are *okay as a person* and that you are *capable of handling* the challenges of life. Are you that secure? If you have these two personal and internal resources, then you will be able to face reality without falling apart or getting into a highly reactive state. That’s what happens when a person does not have sufficient ego-strength to face reality. With this inner security, then the external challenges will *not* question you as a person (your worth or dignity) or overwhelm your ability to cope with life.

Knowing your unconditional value and having developed coping abilities—now you can *face reality* for what it is and take effective actions to deal with things. Now you can *accept* life’s challenges. *Acceptance* is what indicates that there is sufficient internal security to face reality. Conversely, rejection of life and its challenges actually makes it impossible to deal with life. When you *reject* what is, you are fighting reality itself and as long as you are in a fight with reality, you are expending your energy, thought, creativity, problem-solving skills, etc., in a realm that is self-defeating. Why? Because reality is *what it is*. No matter how much you dislike it, hate it, wish it would be different, *it is what it is*.

If a loved one has died, then a person you have loved has passed on and is no longer alive. If your house was destroyed in a hurricane, then the house is gone. If you get a diagnosis of cancer, that is what you now have to deal with. And this is where *the magic of acceptance* enables you to cope and move forward in life. You don’t have to like the situation to accept it. You only have to acknowledge it. This “acceptance” is not the same as resignation—that is completely different. Nor does it even suggest condoning the situation. *Acceptance is an acknowledgment of what is*. And that makes it the beginning place for healing and resilience.

All of the previous stages of grief that Kubler-Ross identified in her classic study on grief—denial, anger, bargaining, and depression are actually unnecessary for grief resolution. You will only experience these to the degree that you don’t *accept* life and its challenges for what they are. When you accept, you don’t have to deny, rage, bargain, or depress. Yet with acceptance, these become unnecessary. [They also become a waste of your time and energy.]

What does it take to face reality? I’d recommend that you begin with unconditional self-esteem and a set of coping skills. After that, you will need a healthy dose of *acceptance*. But even without the first two, you could start with acceptance. Acceptance can be the starting point for facing reality. That’s because when you accept yourself, your skills, your powers, your situation, etc., your acceptance ends the fight. It ends the inward fight against yourself, your history, things from your childhood, etc.

Acceptance is powerful for many reasons. As a change principle: *You can't change what you don't accept*. So acceptance begins the change process. Also, you can't face what you don't accept.

What drives the pre-grief stages of a loss (e.g., denial, anger, bargaining, and depression) are cognitive distortions. These arise when a person exaggerates a loss, personalizes it, emotionalizes, awfulizes, develops a tunnel vision about it, etc. To experience *security inside—out*, begin by welcoming and embracing reality as that which is. Acknowledge it. The paradox is that when you begin with this kind of acceptance, all of the internal fighting against what's real ends, and you can focus on coping. Now you're ready to do some high quality problem-solving.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #27
July 5, 2023
Secure Inside—Out Series #5

THE DIS-IDENTIFICATION PATTERN

When people *personalize* a bad thing that happens in their lives, or when they *personalize* a label that they've been given, *they thereby identify themselves with the event or the term*. This begins an unsanity process if the person doesn't realize what he is doing and isn't mindful. This creates all sorts of problems—problems that you will find frequently in coaching—problems of insecurity.

Ideally we want to distinguish *self* from our powers and experiences, then we will be able to get more in touch with our inner or core self. Then your real self can direct and guide all of your expressions of yourself—your thinking, feeling, speaking, and behaving. Years ago I took the work of Roberto Assagioli (1963) and developed a dis-identifying pattern. It is an "exercise in dis-identification" which begins by becoming "*aware of the fact: 'I have a body, but I am not my body.'*" This gives the structure for *inside—out* security.

Korzybski (1933) warned against *identifications* as is the source of unsanity. The problem occurs when you *over-identify* with any temporal facet of your self or your situation. You then limit and reduce yourself to that experience, idea, person, role, job, etc. This leads first to *unsanity* because you then become possessed by the identification. When that happens you *become* whatever you have identified with—your role, mask, emotion, idea, belief, etc. This, in turn, "tends to make us static and crystallized ... prisoners." (1933, p. 121). Use this pattern when a person becomes *too identified* with something. Use it to construct a mental map of a higher transcendental self. [I first published this in *NLP World*, Hall, 1997.]

1) Start with the supporting belief— I am more and different from my experiences.

Do you know that you are more than your expressions as well as your circumstances?

Stay with and notice what happens inside when you make the distinction between self and the expressions of your self?

Feel the shift from confusing and identifying self and these facets of mind-body to make this more empowering distinction.

2) Dis-identify linguistically.

How does it feel when you use the linguistic phrase, "*I have... but I am not...*" ?

How easily can you frame your powers and functions and circumstances as *not you*?

"I have a will, I am not a will." Do this with—conscience, emotion, thought, choice, etc.

3) Dis-identify in trance.

Access a comfortable state and induce yourself into this transcending state *about* your psychological and physiological powers to deepen the distinction of these levels of experience.

"If I lost any of these powers, my core self remains."

“Every time we identify ourselves with a physical sensation we enslave ourselves to the body ... I *have* an emotional life, but *I am not* my emotions or my feelings. I *have* an intellect, but *I am not* that intellect. I *am* I, a center of pure consciousness.” (Assagioli, p. 117).

I put my body into a comfortable and relaxed position with closed eyes. I now affirm, 'I *have* a body but *I am not* my body. My body may find itself in different conditions of health or sickness; it may be rested or tired, but that has nothing to do with my self, my real 'I.' My body is my precious instrument of experience and of action in the outer world, but it is *only* an instrument. I treat it well; I seek to keep it in good health, but it is *not* myself. I *have* a body, but *I am not* my body.

I *have* emotions, but *I am not* my emotions. These emotions are countless, contradictory, changing, and yet I know that I always remain I, *my-self*, in times of hope or of despair, in joy or in pain, in a state of irritation or of calm. Since I can observe, understand and judge my emotions, and then increasingly dominate, direct and utilize them, it is evidence that *they are not myself*. I *have* emotions, but *I am not* my emotions.

I *have* desires, but *I am not* my desires, aroused by drives, physical and emotional, and by outer influences. Desires too are changeable and contradictory, with alternations of attraction and repulsion. I *have* desires, but they *are not* myself.

I *have* an intellect, but *I am not* my intellect. It is more or less developed and active; it is undisciplined but teachable; it is an organ of knowledge in regard to the outer world as well as the inner; but *it is not myself*, I *have* an intellect, but *I am not* my intellect.

'After this dis-identification of the 'I' from its contents of consciousness (sensations, emotions, desires, and thoughts), I recognize and affirm that I am a Center of pure self-consciousness. I am a Center of *Will*, capable of mastering, directing and using all my psychological processes and my physical body.'" (Assagioli, pp. 118-119).

"What am I then? What remains after discarding from my self-identity the physical, emotional and mental contents of my personality, of my ego? It is the essence of myself—center of pure self-consciousness and self-realization. It is the permanent factor in the ever varying flow of my personal life. It is that which gives me the sense of being, of permanence, of inner security. I recognize and I affirm myself as a center of pure self-consciousness. I realize that this center not only has a static self-awareness but also a dynamic power; it is capable of observing, mastering, directing and using all the psychological processes and the physical body. I am a center of awareness and of power.'" (Assagioli, p. 119).

4) Solidify the self and function distinction.

As you recognize more fully how that each power, function, facet, circumstance, etc. differs from your core self, how does that feel? What happens inside you?

Do you now *have* functions rather than identities so you can express yourself without over-identifying with these expressions?

5) Swish your brain to a transcending identity.

Think about *the you* who exists above and beyond these powers—*the person* who is unconditionally valuable as a person, the user of the powers. This is you're the state of "pure consciousness." What symbol or word will you use to anchor this?

Now imagine this higher self as a stable center — a stable center out of which you can live and express yourself.

From: L. Michael Hall

2023 Morpheus #28

July 12, 2023

Competence Development Series #1

[Temporarily interrupting the Secure Inside–Outside series]

WHY IS COMPETENCE SO HARD AND TIME CONSUMING?

The short answer is— Because competence is actually a very complex experience. It is far more complex than most people realize. Even at the primary level, it is extremely complex. Let's begin with what *competence* refers to. It refers to “being able to perform an action or set of actions sufficiently to reach a specified outcome.” That gives us several variables:

- *Ability* — capacity, training, development, etc.
- *Performance* — actions co-ordinated to effect a result.
- *Measurement* — what is sufficient? Sufficient as measured by the outcome, quality of the skill or sub-skill, timing, co-ordination, etc.
- *Outcome* — specific results that can be measured.

Just with that we have *a lot entailed in the idea of 'competence.'* Now let's distinguish competence from skill. That's because you can have a skill and not be competent. In Coaching, you could have one of the core skills necessary, say “questioning,” but if you lack supporting, listening, etc., then you would *not* be competent as a coach. To be competent requires skills and it also almost always requires multiple skills.

In Meta-Coaching we have seven core skills to begin with (ACMC) and eleven to complete the competency (PCMC). There are more skills for Group & Team coaching, even more for Executive Coaching, etc. And for each of these skills, such as Supporting and Listening, we have 20 sub-skills for each—that's 40 sub-skills just for the first two core skills. Skills come first, and then with the co-ordination of skills, competence comes. They are not the same even though we typically use the terms interchangeably. For Training, we have identified nine core skills with a great many sub-skills in those nine.

Continuing the idea of the *complexity of competence*, there are additional variables:

- *Number* of skills required for a specific competence.
- *Difficulty* of the skills, some may be easy and quick to learn, others more challenging and time-consuming to learn.
- *State* that a person needs to be operating from to perform the skills.
- *Timing* of the skills and their co-ordination for the competency.
- *Interferences* to be managed to prevent the skills from being sabotaged.
- *Attitude* of the person performing the skill.

Now each one of these many variables can (and does) affect the skill and therefore the overall competency. But that's just the beginning! There's a lot more. When we move above the primary level to the meta-levels—to the *Meta Place*—in a person's mind, then we have many

more variables—variables that affect the person’s state and attitude:

- *Beliefs and understandings about mistakes*— open or closed to them?
- *Intention to develop the competency*— how weak or strong, robust and resilient?
- *Openness to feedback information*— how respond to error messages?
- *Beliefs about time and repetition*— how patient or impatient with practice, especially deliberate practice?
- *Commitment to learning and growth*— willingness level for staying the course?
- *Separate person from doing*— refusal to put one’s self or ego on the line about one’s actions and/or results?

From Physical to Mental/Emotional

Consider skills that we consider primarily *physical*—tennis, shooting basketball from the free-throw line, weight lifting, golfing, playing a musical instrument, etc. To develop competence in any of these, you start with the basic maneuvers and practice them over and over and over until you can do the actions *automatically*. How many times do you need to shoot a basketball at the basket until you can shoot and hit 90% of the time? Answer: A lot! Hundreds of times, thousands of times.

What are you doing when you are doing that? You are training your neurons! Neuroscientist Donald Hebb’s rule is, “Cells that fire together wire together.” That’s what you are doing—*wiring your cells in your brain and in your body so that they fire together*. When that happens, the skill becomes automatic. You can do it blindfolded.

That’s for physical skills. Now think about skills that are mental/emotional. Take a simple one like *seeing eye accessing cues* or *hearing predicates*. Again, you practice the skill over and over and over to train your mind and sees to see and hear these things *automatically*. How long does that take? How many times do you need to practice using the eye-accessing cue chart? How many times before your ears are *wired to automatically hear predicates*? It took me three full months of daily practices with several clients every day to learn that.

Now you know why we have been emphasizing *deliberate practice*. This requires that you patiently repeat something over and over and over. You are training your neurology using Hebbian learning so that your “cells wire together” and then they will automatically fire together. And for really complex competencies, being a surgeon, an airplane pilot, a skillful lawyer, a professional coach—it is going to take years of practice and therefore a big commitment.

If that’s heavy, then here’s some good news to wrap up with—you can become competent with 90% of all skills on Planet Earth in 30 to 60 days. In one to three months you can become competent in playing tennis, chess, hitting the basket from the free-throw line, driving a car, typing on a keyboard, etc. The great majority of skills do not take very long *if you devote yourself to learning / practicing several hours every day*. If you do less than that, it will take longer.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #29
July 19, 2023
Competence Development Series #2

HOW CAN I BECOME TRULY COMPETENT?

Competence is everything! Well, almost everything. It is certainly why, in Neuro-Semantics, we train, coach, consult, write, run practice groups, hold conferences, etc. We do so in order to enable ourselves and others to become competent at a whole variety of activities. From self-management to parenting, to wealth creation, to leadership, to health and wellness, to eating right, to sleeping soundly, etc., *competence is our objective*. We want people to become self-determining and have the self-efficacy to be competent in the things that they value.

When I say that competence is everything, I'm thinking about the following applications. *Competence is the foundation of confidence*. To be competent is to be confident and just about everybody wants that—who doesn't want to *feel confident* in what you do and how you live? Consider the opposite: Confidence without competence means you are fooling yourself and trying to con others into thinking you have skills and you can do what you cannot do. The only way to feel truly and fully confident is to become competent. But that's actually a lot harder and more complicated than most people image.

Competence is the foundation for expertise. Let's say that you want to become an expert. What's required for that? Basically, first develop your basic competence, then add 10 years (or 10,000 hours) of deliberate practice, and then you will develop expertise. This is the finding of Anders Ericsson in his longitudinal studies on expertise. This also highlights that *competence is much more than merely having some skills*. Yes, competence requires skills and is built upon skill development. Yet, as noted in the first article, you could have some skills and still not be competent.

Competence is the foundation for self-trust. Once you develop a skill, any skill, does not mean that you will always be able to demonstrate that skill. Skill competence comes and goes. They depend on how you're feeling, the sleep you got the night before, how things are going in your life, etc. Competence is a wavy line—up and down, on and off, good days and bad days. But once you take the skill to the level of competence, you develop a basic *consistency* that gives you much more control over the skill.

Competence is the foundation for self-efficacy, which is the foundation for entrepreneurship, and just about everything else, wealth creation, risk taking, leadership, management, resilience, and the list goes on and on. I hope the point is made— *because competency is just about everything in our lives, go for it!* Aim to become competent. Don't be satisfied with being mediocre or just getting by.

Now for the How

Because the *skills* which are required for competence have to be developed one by one, *you are going to need a lot of patience*. That means giving up your impatience. The impatient who want to become competent over-night or in a weekend course are those who will never become competent. Your skills will inevitably be on and off as you go through the learning process. It is the nature of the beast. Why? Because you are moving your conceptual knowledge into your neurology. And that integration process takes time.

Along with patience, you are going to need *a powerful robust attitude toward mistakes and error messages*. That's because you accelerate your learning process via the feedback process. In other words, you have to be open to the error feedback messages. If you make the fatal mistake of confusing your self (your ego, your worth as a person) with what you *do, your behavior*, you will not learn very well and it will take you a lot longer to become competent. So, release your ego! Separate person from behavior. Stop making that fatal error. What you are *doing* is just that—doing, behavior.

Next, *practice one piece at a time*. Stop trying to do the whole competency or even the whole skill— set your sights on the sub-skills. Deliberately focus your practice on each one so that your cells fire together and you create a neural pattern in your neurology. Once you do that, you will develop a consistency that you can trust. This is the pathway to competency. Every manual that we have in Neuro-Semantics has been developed specifically for this. For whatever competency you want, open up your manual, find the sub-skills and practice them over and over and over. That's the key.

Keep yourself inspired and therefore motivated by setting your intention on developing the competency. Give yourself a *great big why* and then *meta-detail* everything you do in your deliberate practice with the big why. Refresh your *why* everyday you do your practice. As you do, forget the results. That's right! Forget the results, they will follow if you do the process. So focus entirely and exclusively on the process. And what is the process? *Deliberately practicing the sub-skills!*

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #30
July 26, 2023
Competence Development Series #3

HOW CAN I SUSTAIN COMPETENCE?

In the first two articles, our focus was *competence development*—how to develop competence. Now it is time to focus on, *how to sustain and keep competence* once you have developed it. Simple competencies, which you can accomplish with 90% of the skills that we humans learn and develop, you can reach them in 30 to 90 days. For the bigger competencies such as being a professional coach, trainer, leader, manager, etc., that takes longer, usually we measure that in years, not months.

To ask this question, “How can I sustain my competence?” recognize a crucial fact. Namely, *every skill and every competence will deteriorate if not constantly refreshed*. At the level of your neurons in your brain and body, just as “cells that fire together will wire together” so the opposite is also true. Cells that do not continue to fire together will not stay wired together. The connection between the cells will degrade. The actual dendrites of the neurons will shorten since there is no firing that activates them to reach out to connect with other neurons. At the behavioral level you will experience this as the weakening of the skill, forgetting, etc. as the connections are loosened.

Every skill and every competence is *dynamic* in that it is alive, it is in flux, and it depends on constant reinforcement. Skills and competencies oscillate. That’s why you and I experience good days, mediocre days, and bad days. Some days we are really “on,” and some days our skills are just not there, they are “off.” Competence is not a *thing*, it is a *dynamic process* and as a process, it is up to you to keep it fresh and rejuvenated. Otherwise the skill will deteriorate and become less and less competent.

It seems that for some people this idea of *sustaining competence* never crosses their mind. They think, “Once I have it, I will always have it.” But they are wrong! I would guess that every Meta-Coach and Neuro-Semantic Trainer who has returned to be on the assist team knows this all too well. While they obviously had reached the first competency level of 2.5, they often find that they are now far below it. Why? They haven’t been practicing. Simple as that. Or, they may have been practicing wrong and didn’t even know it. Many become aware that in a slow and imperceptible way, their practice shifted and altered and they never even noticed. Without feedback, how could they? Then they return, receive some benchmarks and discover that they are way off the mark.

It happens to all of us! And the more advanced the competency—the more involved it is and the more complex it is—the more deterioration can and will occur if there is not constant refreshment of the skill. That’s why it is so important to keep attending the MCF chapters and practice groups.

Just because you reached competency once or twice or even a dozen times —that’s no guarantee!

Skills and competencies have to be continually refreshed. To rejuvenate the skill or competency, review the basic practice and give yourself to practicing it precisely and rigorously. Do that regularly. Yes, it may feel childish to you at first; like you are back in kindergarten, but it is a way to refresh your learnings and to give your cells a chance to wire together again.

Next, pull the skill or the competence apart into the sub-skills and do each one consciously and mindfully. Again, you are signaling your cells to fire together. You can experience this also by mentoring someone through this process. As you do, you are scaffolding the person; you are sharing your brain and skills enabling the novice person to learn from you. And by making yourself a model and example, you are rejuvenating your own skills. This is perhaps one of the most valuable byproducts for being on an assist team.

In fact, anything you do which functions as a “back to basics” will have this effect. Pick up a book on Coaching that you read when you began—a basic book, and reread it. Baseball players gather for “spring training” every year before the season starts and what do they do? They throw and catch baseballs. That practice hitting the ball. These veterans of the sports are running themselves through a “back to basics” program—using the Hebbian learning process of firing up their neurons to wire them together—again.

Sustaining competence means turning the discipline of the skill practice into lifestyle. Then it comes your way of being in the world. Frame it as your purpose and mission. Find new nuances within the skill and practice them for the purpose of sharpening your skills. Then you will sustain your competence.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #31
August 2, 2023
Competence Development Series #4
[A reprint from 2017]

DELIBERATE PRACTICE

For several years, beginning in 2017, we shifted to using *deliberate practice feedback as we practice coaching*. There are many reasons for doing this—not the least of which is the importance of *timely feedback*. The closer to the action that you can receive feedback, the sooner you can make critical distinctions and adjust your actions. What we now know in terms of developing expertise is that *if you really want to become an expert*—you need to practice in a diligent and contracted way while receiving clear specific feedback in the moment.

Anders Ericsson, who invented the idea of deliberate practice, noted that it is very effortful. It is one of effort, focus, concentration, etc. and not much fun. Practicing for fun and enjoyment is *not* deliberate practice. Instead, it is highly focused on a particular behavior which you want to improve and so involves an appropriate level of difficulty—“appropriate” signifying that it is not too easy nor too hard. It involves working hard around a critical distinction. What are the *characteristics of deliberate practice*?

- 1) *Repetition*. You take an activity, something that you *do*, and you repeat it over and over until you can do it, and then practice it until you can do it smoothly and naturally. You program it into your neurology.
- 2) *Focused*. You focus on a critical action and zoom in on precisely what is required. If it is framing, then two distinctions—*what* you are framing (the activity, experience) and *the meaning* that you frame it with. In deliberate practice, you deliberately focus on the most difficult aspect of a performance until it becomes automatic.
- 3) *Immediacy*. You get feedback *in the moment* which is the most timely moment for finding out how you did with your performance. Did you get it or not? To what extent are you now doing it right?
- 4) *Checking*. The immediacy of the feedback allows you to check externally with the eyes and ears of someone else who can also make the distinction, namely the benchmarker or the Meta-Coach giving you feedback.
- 5) *Validation*. The best feedback both reinforces what the person is doing right and offers corrections for what you are not doing right and how to do it right. It involves statements of “Well done!” for successfully making a distinction.
- 6) *Questions*. The best feedback also involves training a person’s mind to see, catch, and detect distinctions and does this best through questions rather than advice. So we ask questions: “What was the meaning you gave to X?” “Are you aware that you raised your inflection at the end of your statement?”
- 7) *Effortful*. Don’t expect deliberate practice to be enjoyable or fun. Instead expect it to feel like work because it is often it is the work of breaking an old habit.

Here is what Anders Ericsson wrote about deliberate practice:

“The core assumption of deliberate practice is that expert performance is acquired gradually and that effective improvement of performance requires the opportunity to find suitable training tasks that the performer can master sequentially—typically the design of training tasks and monitoring of the attained performance is done by a teacher or a coach. Deliberate practice presents performers with tasks that are initially *outside their current realm of reliable performance*, yet can be mastered within hours of practice by concentrating on critical aspects and gradually refining performance through repetition after feedback. Hence the requirement for *concentration* sets deliberate practice apart from both mindless, routine performance and playful engagement, as the latter two types of activities would, if anything, merely strengthen the current mediating cognitive mechanisms, rather than modify them to allow increases in the level of performance.” (2006, p. 692)

From this the criteria for deliberate practice involve the following:

- 1) The feedback is designed to improve performance.
- 2) The action is repeatable.
- 3) The action is sharply defined.
- 4) Feedback to it is continuous.
- 5) The action is a stretch which is beyond the person’s current ability.
- 6) The action requires focused concentration.
- 7) The action is not easy, not inherently fun.

To give deliberate practice feedback

1) *Identify, interrupts, and ask about it.* Identify where a skill could have been used or where the response by the coach was not very effective. “Did you get the response that you wanted? Do you know why?” “Do you know what to do?”

2) *Offer some possibilities for how to improve the skill.*

“Do that again and this as you replay the acknowledgment, say it slowly and emphatically, and end it with a moment of silence as you look caringly at your client.”

3) *Identify the point where to restart the conversation.*

To the client, “You just said Y. Hold that in mind; we will start again with that in a moment.” Or, “You just asked Z, in a moment we will start from this question.” At that point, say, “Okay, Take 2, let the coaching begin again.” Then, watching and listening, the benchmarker may interrupt two or three more times to “coach” the coach to be able to do it accurately, precisely, graciously, etc. When it works, that is, when the coach performs the specific skill, the benchmarker just calls out— “That’s right. You’ve got it!” and let the coaching continue.

Reference:

Ericsson, K. Anders; Charness, Neil; Feltovich, Paul; Hoffman, Robert. (2006 Ed.). *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #32
August 9, 2023
Competence Development Series #5

LEARN THE PIECES AND THE SKILL WILL APPEAR

The central idea about deliberate practice is to take a small piece of a skill, a piece that you can discern a beginning and an end, a piece that is regular and systematic, and practice it under supervision, until you can perform it with precision and excellence. Do it until you can do it automatically. This fits the Benchmarking Model in Neuro-Semantics and the foundational ideas of precision in the Meta-Model. That is, by identifying the *behavior equivalents of a skill*, and then sequencing them to identify the order in which they occur, you break down the behaviors of a skill into their component units, and practice them until you became competent.

For many years in APMC training (2005–2017), we asked the teams to do a “Benchmarking Project.” Out of that project many began developing their skills in meta-detailing and as they did, they took their benchmarking skills to higher levels. It was not easy. Many, in fact, found it too far beyond their current level of understanding and skill. Everyone who worked as Team Leaders and Coaches know how much we all worked in helping the teams understand the benchmarking process. After more than ten years, we shifted to doing the *Drills for Skills* project (2017—2019) which we did that for nearly three years.

The next development came in November, 2019. That’s when we shifted to the *Skills Experiment*. Having all of the work done in terms of detailing the component parts of a skill—we found ourselves with the sequential pieces of the fundamental coaching skills. That led to the paperwork whereby you, as a coach, can focus on the pieces of a skill and practice over and over using the “Drills for Skills” until the skill itself emerges.

The Drills for Skills was a collaborative group project. We used the new design for APMC in China in November, 2019. We then redesign it for APMC in Sydney, that’s when Ana and Adam put their talents to format it in its current form. Then Shawn Dyer created a similar format for the Axes of Change skills, which I updated and Sherran in Hong Kong created the final form.

With these forms, *you can now take each skill and deliberately practice each component of the skill*. Imagine that! You can do that intentionally and under the supervision of another Meta-Coach until you get each of the skills down pat. Set your aim to do that repeatedly until it becomes an automatic response. As it habituates, you then have available a skill that you can consciously and intentionally use in a coaching session. That’s when you *execute the skill*.

Knowing the pieces of a skill is one thing. That’s intellectual and conceptual. Being able to

perform those pieces is the next thing. That's implementation and integration. After that comes the step of being able to put all of that together into the proper sequence. Do that and you have habituated a new communication skill that you can now use in coaching. That's when the column "Execution" comes into play. This takes additional practice. Ideally, if you are practicing with another Meta-Coach or at a MCF Chapter meeting —someone could supervise your coaching session by cuing you, "Now is a good time for an acknowledgment." "Right now you could do a clarity check." Doing that repeatedly then enables you to deliberately practice *the right timing*.

Finally, there is the last column, "Quantity." This refers to how many times you would need to do the skill in a thirty-minute coaching session. For example, "7" times for acknowledgments and 50% of the time for when the client provides a semantic gesture which externalizes his or her internal space.

What does this approach allow you to do? It provides you a way to learn new skills and integrate them into your coaching in a way which Anders Ericsson discovered is typical of people who become experts in a field. Experts engage in deliberate practice. And now you can! You can take the two documents attached and use them to deliberately practice these fundamental skills and thereby take your coaching to a new level of competence.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #33
August 16, 2023
Competence Development Series #6

BEWARE OF PSEUDO-SKILLS

Imagine this dilemma. You are watching a coach in the process of coaching, maybe you are there to support the person, maybe there to offer feedback, or maybe to benchmark the level of the skills. You watch and listen to what seems like an acknowledgment. You're pretty sure that you recognized several acknowledgments. Then you hear myself or one of the Meta-Coach Trainers say, "Yes, it did look like the skill of acknowledgment, but it was not. And here's why."

Whack! "Did a two-by-four piece of lumber just strike me across the face? It feel like it!" When that happens, you might be in shock, perhaps even in denial. "What?! That's not an acknowledgment?" At first you are full of questions. Concerns. Confusions. Then you hear myself or a Meta-Coach trainer explain what it takes to perform an "acknowledgment."

"It had some of the features of an acknowledgment, but not enough of them to count as an acknowledgment. Yes there was 1) the repeating of the client's words, but not precisely. The coach did not repeat them accurately. Next, the statement repeated was not really a 3) semantically loaded statement. Further, there was 3) no pause at the end. He followed the statement immediately with a question. That made it a question. And without a pause, 4) it was *not* used as a tool to get the client to hear herself."

You hear that and think, "Ah, now I get it! That's what an *acknowledgment* truly is!" you also learn something else, something really important when it comes to skill and competency development. Namely, a response can look like and sound like a particular skill *and not actually be that skill*. In terms of a skill, the response is actually a *pseudo-skill*. It has some elements of the skill and on the surface strike you as that skill, but it is not. There are elements missing.

That brings up another learning: *Skill development is in the details*. What separates the person who is fully competent and the expert from the novice is the quality and amount of *details* that are recognized and used.

This explains why it typically takes a Meta-Coach who joins the assist team in Meta-Coaching, four to five times before they develop enough perception of details in order to truly detect genuine skills. Otherwise you can be easily seduced by the pseudo-skills. Now if you are really committed to your development, your competence, and your expertise in coaching—always seek out those benchmarkers who can see and hear the finer details of a skill. You will get a lower score with them *and that's really good*. Why? They can catch what a more global person will not catch. And if they don't catch it, you may walk away thinking you are more skilled than you really are.

Pseudo-skills occur in every area of life and in every profession. On the surface you have the

impression that the person before you is highly skilled and can more than perform at top level, but then comes the reality. The performance is superficial. The performance does not get to the heart of things. The performance is lacking what you wanted and hoped for. In coaching, whenever anyone starts—they learn the basic structures which gives a good first-impression:

- Make the client feel comfortable and present yourself as confident in what you do.
- Ask what your client wants and explore that to align with the person's values.
- Get into problem-solving so the person feels that you are taking her problems seriously.
- Let the person talk so that he feels listened to.
- Set some frames about the uniqueness and empowerment of coaching.
- Etc.

Yet a person can do all of that without actually having the required coaching skills. That's just the surface. You have not even begun coaching if you do not *take the person inside to his inner world*. That's when coaching, and especially *Meta-Coaching* begins. Coaching in an *inside-out* process; it is an adventure into a client's mind or Meta Place and an updating of one's understandings and mental maps. All of the coaching skills are actually designed to enable you to do that.

But to become skillful and/or competent at it requires practice—lots and lots and lots of practice, deliberate practice, and feedback—lots and lots and lots of feedback. And adjustments and slowly wiring the neurons in your brain to become wired together so that the skill is embedded deep in your neurology. Here's to your excellence in your skills!

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #34
August 23, 2023
Competence Development Series #7

“HE’S A QUICK STUDY!”

Imagine this—you learn something and you immediately implement what you learn into the application that defines why you are learning it. You translate your understanding, belief, or procedure immediately into action. What then happens? What can you then expect? Would you expect competence? Expertise? Don’t. You will almost always demonstrate that you are still pretty inept. You are still unable to reach the level of performance that you learned.

Surprised?! Don’t be. You are still learning and immediately act on what you have just learned never immediately translate into competence. It takes longer than that. And this describes how *learning* works. This is how skill development works. It has worked that way all of your life up until now and it will continue to work that way.

Now, if you then immediately *learned what you need to do next in order to “up your skills,”* you immediately identified something in your response to adjust and then you immediately tried again, you may then get a bit closer to pulling it off. And if you do that again and again—very shortly you will get it. You will be able to do it. Again, that is just how the learning process works. It’s the combination of scores of tiny adjustments, and you learn the skill.

Now consider the above two paragraphs in terms of throwing a basketball into a hoop or bowling or driving a car, or typing on a keyboard, or any skill that you have already learned and learned so well that you now can do it very well, that is, skillfully and consistently. You did that as you moved through the inept stage wherein at first you were incompetent with the new skill.

Now if you are good with the incompetence stage, if you view it as “learning,” if you operate from states of patience and playfulness—you will undoubtedly be a person who learns very quickly. If so, then those on the outside probably say, “You are a quick study!” “You learn so quickly and thoroughly.” They may even describe you as especially intelligently or naturally gifted. Yet the truth may be much more modest. You have simply learned how to manage the first stage of learning, the incompetence stage.

Most people don’t. Even most Meta-Coaches do not. Instead they struggle painfully for years in the incompetent stage, fearful of failure, judgments, and fearful of looking like a fool, etc.

In terms of communication skills, coaching skills, training skills, etc., those who are quick studies approach learning in a piecemeal fashion. They take a piece of a skill—a small self-contained bit of a skill (a sub-skill) and drill it into your neurology until it becomes an automatic response. They repeat it so many times—hundreds and thousands of times—that eventually they can do it in their sleep. At the neurobiological level, they have activated a series of neurons (assemblies of

neurons) so that they are *fired* again and again and again, and as they do, they begin to *wire together*.

I started thinking about this during a recent Leadership Team meetings. Shawn Dwyer posited an interesting idea; he said that those who move on to the higher levels of competency skills do so because they have a higher level of self-efficacy. That gave me paused as I thought about that.

“Yes, with self-efficacy *you trust yourself*. You trust that you will learn, you will figure it out, you will eventually get it. No question about it. It’s just a matter of time. Now let me get at it!”

Then, upon some more reflection, I thought that if I was to model “quick studies,” those who seem to close the knowing–doing gap in a short period of time, they are the ones who jump at opportunities to practice. They jump at opportunities to see what they can do, to be benchmarked, and who love error messages and mistakes because each one brings them closer and closer to competence. What an attitude!

And there’s more. What other attitudes do you need to be a *quick study*? Well, you have to be really good with such things as repetition, with continuous practice, and with a singular focus. You have to have a really good relationship with concentration and procedure so that distractions and options do not pull you away. Quick studies do not even think about failures, non-achievement, scores, etc. None of that is on their minds. They focus singularly on one thing—*how to do X better and better and better*. they don’t care what others think. They don’t care about being watched or judged. For them, embarrassment is irrelevant.

To be a *quick study*, you close the knowing–doing gap. One thing that blocks people from doing that is that they falsely think that because you “know” about the skill, and can even teach the skill, that you know *how to do it*. Not so! And *knowing* can be very seductive. That’s because it’s so much easier to know than to do. Plus with knowing, there is very little danger like the danger inherent in doing. With doing, you risk finding out what you can do. The seduction increases with the more you know. You falsely think that if you know more, you can do more. But that is a deception.

I’m convinced we need more and more *quick studies* in Neuro-Semantics— people who quickly step up to take on new skills and who will risk failure, risk embarrassment, and risk feeling inept. Will you become a *quick study*?

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #35
August 30, 2023
Competence Development Series #8

THE PATHWAY TO COACHING COMPETENCE

Here's a little history about how we went about designing the *Meta-Coaching System*. In 2001-2, I began with NLP as the foundation (namely, NLP Practitioner and Master Practitioner). Then I added the Meta-States Model (APG and LPG) along with the Matrix Model. That is all we had at the beginning. Yet that gave us the essentials for creating the 8-day intensive, ACMC (Associate Certified Meta-Coach). As soon as we started, many, many people wanted to join but had no NLP background. So as a "solution," we created a fast-track process for those who did not know if they want to learn *all* of the NLP materials. So we created Module I: *Coaching Essential* and Module II: *Coaching Genius* as a way to fast track people into Meta-Coaching. The idea was that it would get them started and then they would see the value of completing Prac. and Master Prac.

That *initiated and began* the field of Meta-Coaching. It was never intended to be the *end* of that training; it was just the beginning. From the start, we also designed PCMC (Professional Certified Meta-Coach) as the next step after ACMC. Now some 20 years later, as I've been re-visiting this design with some of the Meta-Coach trainers. The reason is because we see many Meta-Coaches who are not aware of or do not realize that *ACMC is just the beginning*. Somehow they got the false impression that ACMC was sufficient. It is not.

More recently I got thinking about how those in the legal field organize their law offices, that is, the structure that they have invented to distinguish where a person is in terms of their competence and eventual expertise as a lawyer. In organizing a law office, they use the following: Associate, Junior Partner, Senior Partner, Partner, and eventually Name Partner.

Now if we were to organize the competence level of a Meta-Coach in a similar way, we would have the following:

- *ACMC — Provisional*: Here the person is still working to fully demonstrate competence on the basic seven coaching skills.
- *ACMC — Junior*: As a Junior, the person is now able to perform the basic coaching skills at competence level (2.5).
- *ACMC — Senior*: At this next level, the person has studied the advanced coaching skills of the PCMC level, may have attended the PCMC training, has entered into one of the deliberate practice groups and has collaborated with two others to support each other to develop the more advanced skills.
- *PCMC — Provisional*. Having reached the *ACMC-Senior* level, studied at PCMC, is now awaiting to fully demonstration all the skills at 3.0 in a single session.

- *PCMC — Professional.*

Now that's an idea I've been thinking out-loud with the leadership team and some others. We have not yet adopted it. But it does provide a way to distinguish and recognize where you are in the process of becoming a professional coach. What does this mean? It means several things. One thing it means is that when you graduate from APMC with a 2.5 on each of the skills, you have reached the status of **APMC– Junior**. You have reached the benchmarks at least one time. That begins your Meta-Coaching journey toward expertise.

Your next stage would be to be able to *consistently and regularly* reach 2.5 competency. The key here is *consistency*, that's what enables your skills to become automatic and at ready access for you. For everyone, this requires lots of practice. And those who get there are those who are fully open and excited about learning from feedback, learning what needs to be improved, what they can do better.

A great way to develop that is to join one of the PCMC practice groups. It is to use deliberate practice to get your neurons to fire and wire together, first on the core skills, then on the advanced skills. As you do that, then it will be time to get yourself to one of the PCMC trainings for training in the advanced coaching skills. You don't have to set for assessment when you attend PCMC training. In fact, you may want to do that training two or three times before you know you're ready for assessment.

I can't emphasize enough the importance of committing yourself to a triad of other PCMC learners. Then as an intense practice group, you practice coaching, benchmarking, and being coached at that level for at least one year. That should prepare you for the PCMC assessment. If coaching competence is your ultimate goal, this offers you a pathway for getting there.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #36
September 6, 2023
Secure Inside—Out Series #6

*Back to this Series— I interrupted it back in July
to do the Competence series.*

STRENGTHENING THE EGO

Because your *sense of self* is a construct that you have created over time, if it is weak or insufficient for facing reality, then as with any construct, you can strengthen it. You can develop it as an aspect of your personal self-development. Further, given that your ego-strength is your psychological and sociological development which is built upon your resources for facing reality, you can diagnose its strengths and weaknesses. Doing that then lets you know what resources to access and develop which will strengthen your ego.

When you strengthen your ego, you are developing the strength to function as yourself, as a fallible and mortal human being. And because reality can be tough, even harsh, at times you will need all the strength you can muster to face and cope with things. This describes the realm of ego-strength.

Use the following pattern to identify where and what to make stronger and then how to strengthen yourself for facing reality with courage, fortitude, commitment, resilience, etc. In this process, you first develop the needed resources for ego-strength, then you identify strategy to solve problems. Use this pattern to create a more secure inner sense of being the person you are.

DEVELOPING EGO STRENGTH

Ego-strength is the strength of your mind-body-emotion to *face* whatever *is* for what it *is* without caving in and without having a stress fight/flight response. Ego-strength is the ability to both cope with and master the challenges in your life. Ego-strength paradoxically grows out of a solid sense of self, self-esteem, self-worth and dignity, and confidence in your skills. You were born without any ego or ego-strength, but develop it as you move through the world, learning, developing resources, becoming more skilled.

The Ego-Strengthening Pattern:

1) Consider an event that triggers a threat to your sense of self.

What is the triggering event that you find hard to face? (e.g., facing loss of a loved one, loss of a job, a career, facing criticism or rejection, being bullied, health crisis, etc.).

As you recall it, describe that event as if you are observing it—as a neutral observer.

2) What “strength” or “strengths” do you need?

In your list of resources or powers for yourself, what do you need?

Menu List: Acceptance, appreciation, flexibility, ownership of your innate powers, social powers to connect with others, distinction between responsibility to/for, forgiveness,

compassion, vision, values.

3) Identify your beingness apart from all of your expressions of self.

Have you distinguished your *self* from what you *do* and *experience*? If not, then make that distinction now: There's two parts of me— myself as a human *being* and myself as a human *doing*. These are not the same. The first is unconditionally valuable, the second is conditional and depends on my skills and learnings.

Are you more than your thoughts, emotions, speech and behavior?

Is that all you are?

As you use the words, "*I am more than* my thoughts, emotions, speech, behaviors, experiences, history, etc." What comes to mind? How well does that settle?

4) Access the neutral explanatory style to clean out any "trauma."

Exchange the three **P**'s (personal, pervasive, permanent) for the three **T**'s (that, there, then). Consider the situation or experience and say to yourself:

- It is *that* and not me, not personal.
- It is *there or here*, not everywhere, not pervasive.
- It is *now or then*, not permanent, not forever.

5) Integrate into your self-definition and future pace.

Adopt a solution focus that there's always a solution. Say that to yourself. Say "I am more than, and different from, whatever happens."

How well are these words settling inside you and integrate into yourself and your identity?

How often do you need to repeat these words until they become fully embodied?

What other resource do you need?

Take time now to coach your body to feel these resources.

Finally, make an executive decision to continue this until it becomes your way of being in the world.

Are you fully aligned with this? No objections?

Where will you first use them?

With this pattern you can strengthen your own ego (your sense of self). You can also use it to coach a client in finding and adding the needed personal strengths for a secure ego-strength. Repeat until it is fully integrated and you or your client knows that you can face whatever happens.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #37
September 13, 2023
Secure Inside—Out Series #7

PROBLEM-SOLVING SECURITY

Ego-strength, as good as it is, by itself is not enough. Once you have the inner strength to face reality, you have to use it to solve whatever problems that life throws at you. So next, you need a robust and vigorous problem-solving mentality. You need a mindset that looks at problems as “just a problem to solve” and yourself as a problem-solver. “I solve problems.”

It’s *this attitude* that truly measures a high quality of ego-strength. With this attitude you not only *can* face reality for whatever it presents you, you actually look forward to solving the problem. That was the *aha* moment for mathematician genius John Nash in the movie, *A Beautiful Mind*. Tormented by schizophrenia, at first he let it get the best of him. It was only when the consequences of losing his wife and child that he woke up and had an eureka awareness. What did he realize? He realized, “This is a problem and I am a problem-solver.” From that moment, he treated his schizophrenia as “a problem to solve.” How about that for a shift of attitude!

I did something similar when I received the diagnosis that a lump on my chest was cancerous. I had just landed in Egypt for a series of trainings and received the news from my doctor in an email. Several people have asked if I was shocked or if I suffered any mental anguish and the truth is that I was not shocked nor did I experience any negative emotions about it.

Instead, I immediately *accepted* the diagnosis, “Okay, that’s what it is.” My next thought was, “It is a problem to solve, that’s all.” When I returned home, I began reading about breast cancer and I made plans for my next visit with the doctor. I asked several individuals with expertise in dealing with cancer, people who used various alternative approaches and with them I checked out if I had within myself any possible psychological contribution to the cancer. When I couldn’t find any, I then turned to diet and lifestyle and I completely changed my diet. Next came the surgery. Throughout it all, *it was just a problem to solve*. In my case, I concluded that the primary cause was years of eating the typical “American diet” of too much flour and sugar, processed foods, pasta, rice, pizza, dairy (milk, cheese) wine, etc. So I cut all of that out and went on a strict anti-cancer diet—a diet that I’m still on.

When you have *an inside—out security* with the ego-strength to face problems head-on, *you just do what has to be done*. Simple as that. There’s no need to fight it, resist it, deny it, bargain with heaven, rage against the universe, depress, feel anxious. You just get on with doing what you have to do. This is what all true survivors do. This is what makes them resilient so that they rise up from the ashes and bounce back into life.

If any of that seems incredible or miraculous, there’s a secret to share with you. It’s part of the paradox of acceptance. Here’s the secret: problem-solving is generally pretty easy once you get the self out of the way. What blocks the ability to solve problems are all of the self-interferences

that we bring up and use to block our ability to see solutions. These including asking *the why question*. “Why did this happen to me?” It also includes any and all of the questions about the fairness of the universe. Not only are such questions unanswerable, they waste your time and energy, and they misdirect your focus. So banish them! Replace them with a set of better questions. “What needs to be done today?” “What response do I need to make?” “Who do I need to assist me in solving this problem?” “What do I need to learn?” “What would be the best attitude to adopt as I deal with things?”

Finally, there’s another important awareness, namely, *when you know how to solve a problem, it is almost **not** a problem at all*. Think about a problem that you have learned to solve, something that you can now solve almost without thinking about it. How much of a problem does it seem? How much do you worry about it, fret about, torture yourself, “Why does this always happen to me?” Probably, not at all. Imagine that! The more problems you learn to solve, the more they disappear in your consciousness as “problems,” they are just things that you do. Now that is true *security*, isn’t it?

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #38
September 20, 2023

THE TANTALIZING INTRODUCTION

One of the exercises or processes that we have used for years in ACMC is the “coach identification.” The idea was to get new coaches used to the idea and the experience of introducing oneself as a coach. For many, it was the very first time that they looked at another human being and said, “Hi, I’m a coach ...” So no wonder it often felt awkward, weird, and uncomfortable! But when you do anything, day after day, what’s unfamiliar becomes increasingly more familiar and therefore comfortable.

We then asked that as part of the practice to add additional pieces of information, the kind of coaching you do (relationship coaching, executive coaching, career coaching, etc.), your style (your way and orientation), your objective, your audience (your ideal client), and your five-year vision. We used that process from 2002 to 2023. Then I had another idea.

In 2023, I had an idea about how to upgrade that introduction and make it more actionable in the real world. The essential idea is that instead of focusing on oneself as a coach, especially your style, objective, audience, and vision to focus on the client. The idea is to make five statements, the first two about yourself, the second two about the client, and the fifth statement an exclamation. The idea of this introduction is to help formulate an introduction that would captivate attention and tantalize your client for what you do.

1) State your name and that you are a Meta-Coach. *I’m Michael, I’m a Meta-Coach.*

[Group response] A Meta-Coach?

2) Affirm that you are a Meta-Coach and identify the focus of your meta-coaching: *“Yes, and my meta-coaching specializes in personal coaching.”* By specifying the focus and form of what you do in coaching, you set a frame of reference for your client. It could be personal, executive, group and team, wealth creation, healthy aging, resilience, etc.

3) State the problem that you address. State what it is or what it is not. *“Winning any one of the games of life—love, money, peace of mind, personal development, self-value, etc. can be confusing and hard.”*

4) State the solution. *“Yet when you learn how to win the inner game, the outer game is a piece of cake.”*

5) Declare or exclaim your feelings about it: *“I love it!”* Or, *“It’s awesome!”* *“It’s great!”*

What makes this introduction much more powerful and potentially tantalizing to your client is that you succinctly identify a felt problem that needs solving along with the solution. Now because the human brain is wired to hear *problems and solutions*, when you state either a problem or a solution, people’s ears tune up and tune in. That’s especially true when a person has been struggling with a specific problem and/or looking for a specific solution. And as you well know from meta-programs—some people, the away-from, will have ears for *problems* and others, the toward, will have ears for *solutions*.

But being able to state an effective *problem / solution* statement in a clear, brief, and memorable way—that is the magic. It's not easy. Most people find that they have to *think long and hard* to achieve an effective problem/solution statement. To do that you need to think in terms of problems and solutions. So ask yourself:

- What problems have I solved? What problems do I love solving?
- What problems have I become really good at solving?
- What solutions have I discovered, learned, or experienced?
- What solutions do I love facilitating in others?

Here are some examples.

- For Wealth Creation Coaching: *True wealth is not money, it is a rich creative mind that adds value to people's lives, after that, the money then follows.*
- For Resilience Coaching: *Life inevitably has set backs. On any day you can get knocked down and suffer a fall. The cure is resilience which is energy and vitality from within. And it's a learned skill!*
- For Healthy Aging Coaching: *The body inevitably gets older, it happens to us all, but the mind, the heart and the spirit — they can stay youthful and energetic as you age.*
- For Personal Coaching: *We all know we have to take care of our external life—work, career, home, family, health, and on and on. Yet often the inner life is left feeling empty, lonely, meaningless. I coach the inner game of self-development so you can be all that you can be—the best version of yourself.*
- For Group and Team Coaching: *We need strong self-sufficient people in our organizations and teams but because they may not know how to be great team players, I facilitate them to learn true collaboration.*
- For Executive Coaching: *Leadership often seems to be an outside-in thing; it is not. True leadership is inside-out. It begins when you can lead yourself effectively with values and vision, then others naturally follow.*

Today when you revisit ACMC, this is the new *coach introduction* that you will learn. It is harder than the older version, yet it is also much more dynamic, creates much more energy in yourself, and frequently, it is an amazingly tantalizing introduction for clients and potential clients.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #39
September 27, 2023
Secure Inside—Out Series #8

THE SECURITY OF THINKING STRATEGICALLY

Ego-strength alone is not enough (Morpheus #36). It is not enough to generate the kind of inner security that we want for ourselves and our clients. That was my point in the last article on problem-solving and the reason for the importance of problem solving (#37). And when it comes to solving problems, the foundation is ego-strength—that state of mind, “It’s just a problem and I solve problems.” “Life is full of problems, that’s what makes it fascinating and calls for creativity.”

Since it is not enough, what else is needed? The answer is *thinking strategically*. It is to ask such questions as: “What is the structure of the problem?” “What is the structure of the solution?” You could have the greatest ego-strength in the world, and the inner strength and serenity to face anything that’s blocking you from your dreams, but if you don’t have an effective strategy for *how to respond to the specific problems*, you won’t succeed. Success comes to those with both the ego-strength and an effective strategy. We need both.

First comes the inner personal strength. That solves the inside problem—you. It solves the problem of *the person* so that one has the inner sense that “I have the right to be, to be me, to find and develop my potentials, to think, to reason, to create, etc.” Once you solve these inside problems, you are ready to “take on the world.” What do you want? What do you want in expressing your full *being* as a self-actualizing person? This brings us to strategic thinking.

Thinking strategically means asking, “How does this problem work? How do you do depression? How do you create anxiety? How do you procrastinate?” These experiences, and a thousand more, do not just magically appear in our lives. We create them. To experience any one of them, you have to think in a certain way, emote in a certain way, talk to yourself with certain words and tones, etc. In other words, there is a structure. Thinking strategically means thinking in a way to identify that structure, understand it, recognize your role in it, and then change it.

Thinking strategically also involves asking, “How does the solution work? How do you generate the state of resilience? How do you create an inner center of serenity? How do you create a productive lifestyle?” Again, because every experience has a structure, when you know how to be supportively self-aware, disciplined in your habits, loving to others, self-esteeming, self-motivating, living with integrity, and a thousand other powerfully positive experiences, then employing a solution to a problem is straight-forward. It is also easy. A piece of cake!

Thinking strategically about problems and solutions, knowing that there’s a structure to every experience endows you with an inner wonderful security. It’s wonderful because you know that

whatever happens, life can then become an adventure of discovery and application. Instead of taking a problem as a disaster, you take it as a challenge to your creativity, to your problem-solving skills. Now it is just a matter of time and effort to get things on the up-and-up. You know that you can handle things (ego-strength) and you don't have to wait until everything is solved before you decide to be happy. You can make happiness your way of being in the world as you solve problems.

To a great extent this is what Meta-Coaching is about. As a Meta-Coach you work with clients to enable them to unleash their potentials for solving all sorts of problems—inside their Meta Place problems and outside in their life situation. As a coach, you work to facilitate each client to develop his *strategic thinking skills*.

- The NLP model that you rely on for this is the Strategy Model as you ask yourself, and your client, “What are the representational steps by which you create this experience?” The best book for this is *NLP: The Study of the Structure of Subjectivity* (1980 Dilts).
- The Neuro-Semantic model that you rely on for this is the Meta-States Model. Because you and your client not only think linearly (the Strategy Model) but think self-reflexively, you need the ability to *go meta* to the representational steps and identify what next-level thoughts are framing each of the steps. The best book for this is *NLP Going Meta* (2002, Hall).

Together, these two models can give you all of the tools you need for truly thinking strategically. Now you can identify both the linear and the systemic steps in a person's strategy. You can do this for the strategy that does not work—the “problem.” And you can do it for the strategy that works to resolve the problem—the “solution.”

From: L. Michael Hall
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October 4, 2023
Secure Inside—Out Series #9

THE SECURITY OF RISK MANAGEMENT

Inside—out security begins with unconditional self-esteeming. Next comes the ego-strength so that you can face life's challenges as they arise. Then to that mix, you add self-efficacy which then enables you to engage in effective problem-solving and risk taking. And, of course, when we mention risk, and the sense of risk involved in tackling problems, this leads us to the importance of risk management.

One thing that stops people from solving problems, is that the very idea of problems and tackling them elicits a sense of danger, or threat, or risk. Question: How secure do you feel when you are taking on a problem to solve or taking a risk? Your answer will give clues to your basic style in relating to risk generally. Are you a risk-taker or a risk-avoider? Does risk excite you or scare you? Do you move toward it or away from it?

Once you identify your basic or general style, we can now explore *what* specifically that you consider a risk. Risk, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. If you have already taken care of your unconditional self-esteem, then *you* are not at risk—you do not have your self-esteem “on the line.” What else then could be at risk?

Perhaps what is at risk is your reputation? Or embarrassment? Perhaps time, money, effort, learning, friends, etc.? “What is at risk?” is a great question for flushing out unspoken fears and unarticulated anxieties. What is paradoxical is that by specifying the risk, your sense of risk will be reduced. “How much is X at risk? How much are you putting at risk?” Recognizing that there are degrees of risk enable you to opt for a risk level that is appropriate to you. Then you don't have to put anything at too high of a risk. “How much could you put at stake and if it was lost, you would still be okay?”

These questions are at the heart of the *risky conversation* that helps a person to think through and make sure that whatever risk they take is ecological. Specificity in this process enables you to begin to manage the risk. “How much time could you risk in this process if you decide to explore this?” “How much money or effort?” “What could you learn along the way even if the risk does not pan out?”

I have included below “The Risky Conversation” pattern that I first developed for *Inside—Out Wealth* and have since included in the *Living Personal Genius* (LPG) training. Reading it to yourself will give you some insights, but it will not even get close to its power when someone coaches you through the questions. The experience of diving into your inner thoughts and feelings about risk will usually create a significant shift.

The Risky Conversation Pattern

1) Identify a business “risk” that you take or need to take. Then ask the following questions to do due-diligence about the risk:

- 1) What is the risk that you need to take? Since risk is in the eye of the beholder, how much risk do you see? Gauge its fear factor from 0 to 10.
- 2) When will you take this risk? Do you have the time for this? Is the timing right?
- 3) Do you have the energy? How much energy will it require?
- 4) Does this opportunity fit with your talents and skills?
- 5) Does the opportunity fit with the context of your life?
- 6) Do you need others in this risk? If so, do you have the personnel? Or who do you need to bring on board with you? Who to collaborate with?
- 7) Does it fit with your values? Does it fit with your current priorities?
- 8) Does it fit with your vision for yourself, your life, your business?
- 9) Do you need to (or be good to) run a test or prototype? What reality testing can you do?
- 10) Is it possible to take a small step first before fully committing to it?
- 12) Do you have the knowledge required?
- 12) How much of a learning curve will this require?
- 13) What are the pros and what are the cons about this opportunity?
- 14) What are you putting at risk? (e.g., money, time, effort, reputation, friendship, etc.?)
- 15) What is your plan for the risk? What milestones to let you know how things are going?
- 16) If things go south, what are your contingency plans B and C? What will you do that can mitigate the risk? What early warning signals can you set up?
- 17) Have you made a decision? What is the decision?
- 18) How decisive are you when you make a decision? Do you need some boldness?
- 19) What is your habitual style of decision-making? Are you more risk averse or risk approach?
- 20) What is your action plan from this point forward?

How much of a risk does it now feel? Gauge it.

2) Reframe the word “risk.”

Sometimes a problem is the language used. Is the word “risk” itself a problem for you? If so, what would be a better definition of risk for you? What else could you call it?

Menu: *Smart* risk taking, *calculated* risk, a good probability, personal growth, stretch out of my comfort zone, following my passion, etc.

3) Begin to tame your sense of risk.

The more resourceful you feel, the less fearful will the risk seem. Also, you can transform fear into energy or excitement by developing more skill or by setting a passionate outcome. To that end, what resources do you need to become bolder in your risk taking?

If you are over-serious—playful. If you over-value money—re-prioritize your values.

If fearful—skill development.

Identify the emotional resources that will help you tame the sense of risk:

Menu: specialized knowledge, how-to steps, calmness, boldness, passion, compelling outcome, excitement, curiosity, playfulness, etc.

As you take the resource and apply to yourself, how much courage does that generate?

How much fear or sense of risk does it now feel? Gauge again (0 to 10).

5) Specify the action steps that will create the “taming” of the risk.

What will be your first step? Second?

Do you now have an action plan for what you’re going to do?

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #41
October 11, 2023
Secure Inside—Out Series #11

RELATIONALLY SECURE

Here's another aspect of *inside—out security*, namely, social or relationship security which arises when you live compassionately and collaboratively in community with others. The simple awareness that there are people who care about you, who you can call upon for assistance, who will be there for you to pull you up when you stumble—that is a tremendous resource for feeling secure. As social beings with a brain that is essentially social, it is essential for mental and emotional well-being that we develop this sense of being relationally secure.

This aspect of inside—out security speaks about the inner sense of attachment to others. It is a sense of belonging, of love and affection — essential on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. There's hardly a greater sign of insecurity than that of "going it alone." The person who refuses to trust others, rely on others, ask for help, be a part of a community, etc. is the person who is very insecure inside. That person is refusing what is most human—connection with others. There's reason for this. It's because to trust them, a person has to trust him or herself in the hands of others. And that requires a whole host of social and interpersonal skills.

As a basic human need for love and affection, for belonging, for feeling attached, our very brain has been designed with mirror neurons so that we innately are wired to copy, mimic, and model others. We are made for connection. And it is inadequate and insecure attachment in the first years of life that usually explains a person's revulsion and inability to connect with others. This forfeits one of the greatest resources for an inner sense of security—the sense of being connected to others.

The paradox of relational security involves *being willing to be openly vulnerable*. It's paradoxical and difficult because leaders often over-develop their internal referencing, self-trust, self-competencies, and self-determination. This leaders under-developed their ability to talk about their struggles, fears, and insecurities. Consequently those closest to them often do not even know or have a clue about what the leader is dealing with inside. And without letting others know, the social support that could be there is not, it is never evoked.

A few years ago, two of our trainers who were both on the leadership team, experienced a lot of stressors and it led to a breakdown in their relationship. I detected it and asked them about it. "Oh, it's really nothing," they both said. I suspected that there was more and so appreciated each of them individually. In that privacy each owned their vulnerabilities and I supported each one as best as I could.

At that point, I urged both of them to let the rest of the team know. They both strongly and stubbornly refused. Because each of them had asked that I keep what they said confidential, I did. But that confidentiality came at a cost. Because they did not communicate their vulnerabilities to

the team, no one else knew. So each one suffered alone. They did not get help, not from the team, not from others back home. They were too fearful for their reputation. Their egos could not handle being open. Eventually they separated and after some time, they gave up what they loved, training and coaching.

There's security in numbers. There's security in community and in teams—*but only if you are willing to be open with your vulnerabilities*. When you are not, you prevent others from responding to you and for community to really work. The solution is to embrace the paradox—you enrich your inner security as you create trusting vulnerable relationships with people around you.

When you know that you've created a social network of trusted colleagues who will be there for you as you will be there for them, then you can trust that if things go south, if you face some defeats, if you lose a loved one—there are people who will be there for you, people you can turn to. Now you have a social net that will catch you!

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #42
October 18, 2023

COACHING BEYOND YOUR EXPERTISE

Once upon a time a long, long time ago Tim Gallwey, the grandfather of Coaching and the founder of the “inner game” of coaching spoke about the difference between coaching and consulting. He said while consultants have expertise *in the subject matter at hand*, coaches do not. The interviewer said, that “this flies in the face of conventional wisdom.” In other words, he wanted to give advice! Gallwey’s responded by saying—

“When you know a lot, it’s too easy to start teaching. But coaching is not so much about *telling* the client what you know as it is about helping him *discover* what he already knows, or can find out for himself.”

He was then asked to give an example where a coach would not have expertise. Gallwey then described his experience of being invited to the Houston Philharmonic Orchestra. After he gave a brief presentation about the inner game, they asked for a demonstration. A tuba player volunteered. When he came on stage, he asked him “What would you most like to learn?”

Client: “What I find most difficult is articulation in the upper range.”

Coach: [“I had no idea what he was talking about. I asked him to play a passage. It sounded good to me, but he shook his heads, obviously not pleased with his performance.”] “*What did you notice?*”

“It wasn’t clean.”

Coach: “*How did you know?*”

Client: “I can’t actually hear it when it happens because the bell of the tuba is too far from my ear. But I can feel it in my tongue.”

Coach: [That got me close to the critical variables I needed to use as a focus of attention.] “*What happens in your tongue?*”

Client: “Well, in difficult passages like this one, with upper-range notes, it often starts feeling dry and a little thick.”

Coach: “*Play the same passage again, but this time don’t try hard to keep the articulation clean. I merely want you to notice any changes of moisture in your tongue as you play the passage.*” He then played the same passage and I could detect no changes. They both sounded good to my untrained ear. But the rest of the orchestra got up out of their seats and gave him a standing ovation! And the tuba player had a satisfied and somewhat surprised smile on his face. “*What did you notice about your tongue as you played?*”

Client: “It stayed moist the entire time, and it never felt thick.”

Coach: “*Why do you think that was?*”

Client: “I felt more relaxed. The pressure was off when you said don’t try hard for clean articulation and I was very curious to notice what was happening to my tongue.”

The interviewer then concluded, “So the coach, without having technical knowledge, can help the client get around whatever is blocking his best performance.” Gallwey agreed:

“Yes. Define the gap between what is known and what needs to be known. Then paying close attention to experience will usually get rid of the interference, and whatever learning is necessary to close the gap can take place. ... What the coach provides is the non-judgmental awareness so that the learning can take place.” (*The Inner Game of Work*, 2000, pp. 211-212).

I’ve told this story many times in the ACMC training and in spite of many tellings, I never get tired of it. It’s a great example of the power of *awareness questions*, which when a coach asks from a state of no-knowing and absolute curiosity, can perform magic. Knowing too much can be a blind-spot for a coach. It can actually block you from curiously exploring. What a coach needs is the belief that clients have both the capacity and the experiential resources to find answers and solutions for their life situations. Believe that and you will be far less tempted to *tell* or *give answers*, and much more ready to facilitate the client’s discovery.

As a Meta-Coach your expertise is *not* in the content of the client’s story and situation, but in *the processes* for thinking, understanding, deciding, believing, embodying, etc. You are a process expert and that’s what they pay for.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #43
October 20, 2023

PCMC— STRANGE AND WONDROUS

We have just completed another PCMC training—very much a life transforming experience for nearly all who were there. That’s the fascinating thing about the *live coaching sessions* that occur in PCMC—not only is the client’s life transformed, but because it is always such a *human* thing, all of us are impacted and touched by it.

Now with ACMC trainings, when you have been to one—when you attend another in the same year, the training experience will be pretty much the same. Each day has a theme and certain information about the essential aspects of coaching. And while we do add new things to ACMC every year, and while it does change significantly every 3 or 4 years, it is a standardized training. That’s because it covers the basics of coaching. So if you miss a certain day, say Day 3, you can come to another ACMC and get Day 3. What changes in ACMC is not so much the content, but the newer and more efficient ways to train aspects of coaching.

But PCMC is not so standardized. While the first three days of presentation is well established in content, the next four days are not. That’s because from out of *the live coaching sessions* come unexpected insightful learnings about real life situations in coaching. This gives rise to all sorts of new insights, skills, and psychological principles. And what arises cannot be predicted. This is what makes PCMC trainings so amazing. Every time there are things that arise which surprise me.

In the past twelve months we have had three PCMC trainings—Mexico City, Mauritius, and Hong Kong and as Geraldine has said, “each one felt like a different training.” That’s also true of coaching in general—you never know what may arise and what you may have to deal with. What centrally differentiates PCMC is the degree of *integration of the coaching knowledge and skills*. As you can integrate more and more of your knowledge and your skills, you are able to do multiple things simultaneously.

While this can be a nightmare for the benchmarker (!), it means that you can *do more with less*. And for the Meta-Coaches moving into the PCMC area that usually feels paradoxical and ironic. “How can you do more by doing less?” That’s because you are using more of your *inferential thinking and questioning* which, in turn, enables you to get to the heart of things.

PCMC is differentiated from ACMC also by *how much more experiential it is*. At ACMC level, you focus on the skills— listening and supporting, questioning, mirroring, and inducing state. At PCMC level you focus on *inducing the person into the experience*. Whatever experience your client asks for, you take them there. You enter it yourself. You live it with your client. This is the difference.

There’s a reason you enter into the experience—it is because *the way out is through*. By entering

into the experience with your client (which seems counter-intuitive), you are then enabled to lead your client out of it. Without embracing the experience, you treat it as something to avoid, escape, or deny. By embracing it and going into it, you treat it as something to accept—*accept it for what it is*—and then find the doorway out. This goes to the back change principle: You can't change what you don't accept.

Now in doing that, you are comfortable with your emotions and your client's emotions. You don't back away from these because they are emotional. Because we are human beings, we are emotional creatures. Nothing strange about that. And being emotional beings does not mean we need therapy! We need emotional intelligence so we can be emotionally aware, able to monitor, able to regulate, and able to use our emotions.

It was wonderful to see Magnus Hedman reach the PCMC competence level and to do it with such directness and grace. It was wonderful also to see three others get closer and closer to the PCMC level— Shawn Dwyer, Irvan Irwan Jie, and Sheila Tan. For them, it won't be long. While most people reach PCMC level after some 3 to 4 years, it is not because of the passing of time. It is because they are regularly coaching— 10 to 15 clients a week and doing case studies along with being engaged with a buddy coach or one of the PCMC practice groups. Obviously, PCMC is for those serious about making Coaching their career or a significant part of it.

PCMC in Hong Kong in October meant we had to deal with three languages—English, Mandarin, and Cantonese. We also had an international group as people flew in from Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, Sweden, Philippines, and mainland China. But mostly the group consisted of people from Hong Kong, Maca and China. I did love the spirit of those who not only wanted to be benchmarked by me in front of the whole group, but begged to be benchmarked! That's the spirit! If you really want to develop, you should seek to be benchmarked by someone who can do it in great detail every week.

Mandy Chai who sponsored this training, and is a Meta-Coach Trainer herself, has asked that we do PCMC again next year in **Hong Kong, December 1-7, 2024**. She's planning to spend the year providing a PCMC practice group. My vision about all of this is that we produce 30 to 40 PCMC Coaches in every country— that would do more to elevate the Meta-Coach brand than anything else.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #44
October 25, 2023
Getting to ACMC #1

TO REACH ACMC COMPETENCE

It is not easy to reach the competency level for Associate Certified Meta-Coach (ACMC). It was not designed to be easy. If you want easy, go for ICF. If you are serious about coaching, about expertise, about excellence, about life change transformations—then actually aim for ACMC level. Here are some pointers to help you reach the competency level of ACMC.

Precision

Now if you ask, “What makes the coaching skills of ACMC more challenging than any other coach-training school in the world?” Answers is *precision*. Every coach-training program encouraged coaches-in-training to learn to listen, to support, to ask questions, to give feedback, and to facilitate the client to have an actual experience (state induction). But for almost all of these programs, it ends there. ICF assessors most often do the assessment over the phone and make an “intuitive judgment,” “Yes I think you were actively listening.” In Meta-Coaching, we recognize that as vague, fluffy, non-specific, and as much a hallucination as anything.

To be *precise* in coaching, you need to know and execute *precise behaviors that translate the unspecified verb* (e.g., listen, support). Accordingly, we have 20 such *precision behaviors* that make up “listening” and another 20 that make up “support.” These you need to know! Of course, in any given coaching session, you will not use all 40 sub-skills, but you will use a good number of them— 7 or so at least. And, you will know how to use the sub-skills to convey the sense of listening and supporting. This is true for all of the basic seven skills. To reach ACMC, *practice each of the skills and sub-skills until they become automatic*.

Attitude

Another unique distinction of the ACMC level training is that we put a lot of emphasis on *the coach’s attitude* from the beginning. You can note this by looking at our Feedback Form. After each skill is an attitude: Supporting from state of caring; Listening from state of attention/presence; questioning from state of curiosity; meta-questioning from state of exploration; giving feedback from state of sensory precision; receiving feedback from state of openness; and state induction from state of expressiveness. In Meta-Coach training we stress: *You coach from state to state*. If you don’t have the right state, even if you do the right things (techniques) it will not work. To reach ACMC, *put yourself in the right state as you develop the right attitude*.

The right attitude includes this: *The coaching session is not about you; it is all about your client*. Forget yourself. Make yourself invisible. Get your ego out of the way. Forget the scoring. Be

totally and completely present to your client. You can review your session later to learn what you could have done better, but don't do that in the session.

Experiential

While it is true that coaching is a conversation, and a special conversation, it is mostly designed to be *an experiential conversation*. If you are just “talking,” if your voice is matter-of-fact, if you are not taking your client into the experience (current or desired) and going there yourself, then you are not “coaching.” In Meta-Coaching we say that coaching is a conversation like none other because it goes into the heart of the matter—meaning. You take your client or enable your client to take you into his or her mind or Meta Place.

How do you do that? You ask *meta*-questions and you use your voice and gestures to induce your client to experience that inner experience as your client talks about it. That's what makes the conversation *like none other*. To reach ACMC level, *learn your meta-questions and state induction skills*.

This also is what makes coaching *challenging*. Clients often hesitate to go into their Meta Place. Some are untrained in how to do that. Others have fears and apprehensions and so have all sorts of prohibition frames which stops them from going there. Going there typically means *stretching beyond one's comfort zone*. Again, this is what makes coaching challenging and why the coach has to have lots of care and compassion to make it safe for the client to go there. To reach ACMC level, *learn how to challenge your clients to strength beyond their comfort zones*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #45
November 1, 2023
Getting to ACMC #2

HOW TO FAIL AT ACMC

There are actually a great number of ways to fail at ACMC. One way in particular shows up in a particular phrase that I keep hearing and one that I find irritating. It irritates me because it shows such a complete misunderstanding of what a person should be thinking about, focusing on, and intending to do at ACMC.

“I’m working on removing the ‘P.’” “How long will it take for me to remove the ‘P’?”
“Great news, Susan removed her ‘P’ last week.”

I don’t know where the idea of *removing the P* came from, but it fails to meet the very first condition of the Well-Formed Outcome pattern—state what you want in the positive. *Removing the P* does not state the desired state in the positive at all. It is a negation. It is removing the provisional status, it is making it go away, removing it. As such, the idea establishes a weak and questionable orientation and focus. You are focusing on making something to non-exist.

Question: What do you have to positively do in order to remove the P? *You have to demonstrate competence in performing the seven coaching skills.* Now that’s a positive outcome! So set that as your objective. “I’m working on reaching competence on the coaching skills.” That describes *what* you can then aim to achieve. It gives you a focus.

Now while you can remove the P when you reach competence (2.5 on the benchmark sheet) one time in two or three coaching sessions, *don’t aim to settle for that!* That’s a very small goal. Instead, set your goal to be able to reach true *competence* on all of the skills in a single coaching session and to do it repeatedly—at least seven times. Now there’s a goal! Do that and your sense of competence (and therefore confidence) will be well established. If you only seek out a 2.5 once in two or three sessions, you are still very much a novice, and while you have removed the P, you have not yet become a truly competent coach.

What that means is that you need to set for assessment again and again. And the thought of that should trigger great delight in you. Why would it not? Oh, yes, if you *interpret* having your skills evaluated as a “judgment” or a “criticism” or if you fear risk or failing to achieve your goal—then you would not be excited at all about getting feedback repeatedly, so you could keep learning and improving.

Actually, there is no other way to develop competence. We learn best via “trial and error.” You attempt to do something, make some errors, get feedback about those errors, learn from them, make adjustments in your speech and behavior, and try again. This is *deliberate practice*—if you want to develop competence or expertise—use it. Develop your own deliberate practices and make it a lifestyle.

Without a positive attitude about practicing, assessing, and getting feedback—you will never become competent, let alone an expert. If fear still *paralyzes* you so you avoid assessments and benchmarking, that fear is also preventing you from becoming highly skilled. Take that fear into as many coaching sessions as you need in order to transform the fear into excitement and commitment. Because the spirit of fear kills clear thinking and effective learning, you do not need it in a learning context.

Why do we have so few experts in Coaching in Neuro-Semantics? Because most people will not give themselves to repeated assessments. They have not reframed their fears, apprehensions, or negative attitudes about failing. In fact, if you want to fail at ACMC or PCMC—this is a central way to do that. Refuse to ask for, and experience, regularly assessments so that you know where you are at and your next step of competence development. That will ensure that you will fail.

Conversely, if you are a passionate learner and are committed to your growing expertise, then set a goal to be *a courageous adventurer*. Put yourself into experiences where you are put to the test. For the ongoing learner, “there is no failure, there is only the next-level competence to be more fully developed.” “There is no failure, there is only learning opportunities.”

The ACMC *competence level* is very doable,. To achieve it, you have to commit yourself to the discipline of deliberate practice. Those who have done that, and who are doing that now—they are the ones developing that level of competence. As they do that, the technical skills cease to be “technical skills” and they become *personally authentic ways of being* with a client. They may even lose awareness of the specific skills as those skills become automatic responses. Here’s to your ever-increasing ability to reach the ACMC *competence level!*

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #46
November 8, 2023
Getting to ACMC #3

FIRST TECHNIQUE, THEN INTEGRATION

The step that will take you from the ACMC level and prepare you for the PCMC level is that of *integrating all of your skills*. But before you can do that, you first have to be able to master all of the techniques at the 2.5 level. That means that you perform the seven core skills and all or most of the sub-skills technically correct. And without a doubt, that's a lot!

To perform the skills *technically correct*, you have to know and understand the skill, and you have to have practiced it with sufficient precision, so you know *how to express* the skill verbally, behaviorally, and relationally. It means you can *ask* each of the 18 questions in the Well-Formed Outcome set of questions *precisely* as they are written, and you know how to *work* the questions using testing, checking, clarity, and exploration questions (the energizing questions). Do you know how to do that? It takes a lot of *deliberate practice*. Have you done that?

For example, take the sub-skill of *acknowledgment* under Supporting. You have to understand that you use this skill to call attention to what a client has said for the purpose of getting your client to truly and deeply *hear* what the person has said. You are *not* just repeating his words. Typically you repeat the words slowly and deliberately, then you pause ... you are waiting to see how your client responds, where she goes. You do not follow it up immediately with a question. That's the technique. While it's easy to understand, almost every new coach forgets to *do this in real time in a session with a client*. To do that takes lots and lots of practice.

Once you have the technique down so that you have it as part of your repertoire, and it is readily available in your automatic behaviors, you can now integrate that with the other techniques you have available. Under Supporting that would include semantic matches, validating, challenging, summarizing, empathy, giving feedback, etc.

Because the technique always comes first, you have to engage in a lot of *detailing*, that is, *meta-detailing* in order to train your perceptions and responses as you maintain attention and presence to your client. If you have a global (general) meta-program, this will require that stretching out of your comfort zone. You cannot develop *precision in the techniques* without using a detailing meta-program.

A further challenge that you will face if you're global in your perceptions is that *you will think you are detailing when you are not*. This is where you need feedback from another Meta-Coach who is able to do the detailing. Keep using the fundamental "representational tracking" process that you learned when you learned the Meta-Model. "Can you track from the words *alone* to the theater in your mind without you filling in the details from your map of the world?" This takes

practice. Get with other Meta-Coaches and engage in intensive deliberate practice. Eventually you will get it.

At first you do the individual pieces (skills) as you learn the skills one by one. You learn them until they become so automatic that you do them without consciously thinking about them. What begins as complicated, and perhaps overwhelming, eventually becomes not 7 or 15 things to remember, but one single thing. This frees your mind to focus on additional distinctions.

To then integrate all at the same time, fully embrace your client's experience. Question his communications (verbal and non-verbal) as you induce him deeper and deeper into the experience. If and when you do that, your client's hidden frames will begin to pop out. At that moment, go there, grab it, and enter into it. As you do, you will typically have elicited a coachable moment. If so, you are now inside the *inner game* with the client ready to make some high level transformation and/or development.

Integration comes after technique. That's because in integration, *you integrate the separate techniques into a unified response*. But if you don't have the techniques down pat, and if you cannot perform them with precision, then you are not ready to integrate them. Trying to do so is rushing things and generally creating confusion. So take your time. Learn the basics until you can do them in your sleep, in fact, you will probably find yourself dreaming them. Here's to some great dreams!

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #47
November 15, 2023
ACMC Reflections #4

AFTER TECHNIQUE, INTEGRATION

The day that you discover that you have mastered the techniques, that you can do each of the sub-skills with precision and in correct form—that’s a great day! Your level of confidence in *what you can do* in the coaching session will soar; you will be flying high. And so you should. Practicing the skills until they become automatic, and at ready access, for your use means that you don’t even have to think about them consciously. They are now part of your unconscious competence revving to go and to be put to good use.

Now you are at the place where you can knock off a 2.5 competence level any day of the week. Those who reach this place can rightfully take pride in this accomplishment. I know many Meta-Coaches who absolutely *love to be benchmarked* because they know they can produce a 2.5 level session any day, at any time, with any client.

When you reach this level, then you will find that—at times—you get 2.7 in some skills, then 2.8, 2.9, 3.0. What’s happening is something special—*your skills are integrating*. What this means is that now as you improve a single skill—it raises the quality of the other skills. As you get better and better at listening, your supporting skills rise, you know even better questions to ask, you sense when to give feedback for the responses that you are calibrating in your client.

As a benchmarker at the PCMC level, I can tell you that this makes benchmarking a tremendous challenge—sometimes a nightmare. Why? Because at the 3.0 level, a coach can perform one skill and it can be registered in multiple ways. “Was that a question? Deep listening (inferential listening)? An Induction?” and the answer may be, “Yes. It was all of those at the same time.” Now we are talking *integration*.

Integration means bringing together several separate skills and expressing them all at the same time in a singular expression. When you integrate your listening and supporting and questioning for example, the very expression of your inquiry becomes quite compelling, inspiring a client to want to answer it. When you integrate your compassion (supporting) with your state induction for taking a person into an experience, your client feels safe in your hands and finds himself willingly going there.

Integration is where the real power and “magic” of coaching begins. While it seldom shows up at the ACMC level, it regularly shows up at the PCMC level. To understand integration, let’s think about the simplest of all integrations—when two states integrate. I often illustrate this in Meta-States training by starting with the primary state of *learning* (openness, receptivity) and applying *joy* to the learning. This gives us *joyful learning*. The modifier “joyful” identifies the higher level, a state of thoughts-and-feelings of joy (delight, pleasure, fun) *about* the state and experience of “learning.”

Now when *joyful learning*, as an experience, has been repeated over and over, eventually *the joy coalesces into the learning*. It percolates into it; it penetrates it; it enters into it so much that you could not separate the two even if you tried. You cannot pull out the joy from the learning. At this point, it is integrated. It is one.

So with *compassion* and *challenging* in the experience of coaching. At first there are two very different states of thoughts-and-feelings. Eventually they become one— *compassionate challenging*. At that point, they are integrated. Integration shows up as a single response that has within that response multiple aspects. When you *integrate* respect and anger, you have a single response that we call “respectful anger.” In this, lots of things are integrated—your breath, tone, volume, use of eyes, choice of words, pace, etc.

Now in coaching, we want to integrate a lot of things. So one by one you develop the skill, the behavioral competence and all of the required knowledge/ understanding about that skill. As it becomes automatic for you, it drops out of your conscious awareness. Eventually the relational competencies (listening, supporting, receiving feedback, etc.) unite with the challenging competencies (questioning, framing, inducing state, challenging, etc.) to create *your integrated coaching style*.

Your coaching style will then reflect all of this intense training (what you *know*) along with *who you are* (your personality style and way of being), your *intentions* in coaching. Consequently, this integration will consolidate in your *style*—what you offer to your clients and *the way* you do coaching.

L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #48
November 22, 2023

COACHING AS A THINKING ADVENTURE

I want you to think for a moment about *the thinking that you elicit and require* when you ask the Well-Formed Outcome questions when you begin a session of meta-coaching. How fully do you realize that you are inviting your client into *a pretty incredible thinking adventure*? Do you know all of the kinds, levels, and degrees of *thinking skills* you are activating in your clients with just the 18 WFO questions? If not, then let me be the one to delight and surprise you.

“*What do you want to achieve in this session?*” You begin with this question, which, on the surface, sounds prosaic. But it is not! When a person sets a goal, that person activates his pre-frontal cortex where intentions and intentionality lie. The goal establishes a standing order for all of the rest of his mind (and mind-body system) to be on the lookout for whatever fits that goal. In this, every goal a person gives her mind gives consciousness an assignment. This is amazing. No other species can do this. Try it with your dog or cat. “What do you want to achieve today to make your life better?”

To answer this first question, your client begins to *entertain ideas of value and significance*. It begins to put them on a purposeful pathway. Then you ask “*Why is that important to you?*” This third question even more fully evokes the person’s intentionality, and as it does, it invites the person to begin identifying his values—his criteria for life, for success, for what really matters. And if you ask the question repeatedly, holding each level and asking for the next one, you enable the person to generate a *value hierarchy*. And this is what a great many people do not have which explains why they may be indecisive, scattered, easily distracted, procrastinating, and many other things.

The next questions facilitate a person to shift from the meta-thinking to detail thinking. “*When do you want to achieve this?*” and “*In what area of life?*” you are evoking the person to begin detailing specifics about the context. If the answer is not obvious, the person will be indexing time, place, person, etc. This develops a person’s ability to be more factual. So also with question 7: “*What do you have to do to achieve this objective?*” Now the person has to get specific and precise and present something that’s actionable. This develops the pragmatic and practical thinking skills. No more “pie in the sky” thinking.

The next thinking power you begin to evoke with your clients is the *response-ability thinking skill*. “*Is this within your power? Have you done this? Can you do this?*” As a coach, you are holding your client’s feet to the fire of reality. Great dreams (questions 1 and 3) are made real as you ask about competencies in the real world. To answer, a client has to start making distinctions—one of the essential thinking skills.

Detailing things to do to actualize what you want this brings up the practical questions— “*How many things do you have to do?*” and “*Do you need a plan or strategy for them?*” Ah, now we

are getting to strategic thinking. This is a kind of *structural* thinking that involves figuring out the intricacies of “how.” How do get something done: how to build a business, how to lead, how to delegate, how to write a book, how to parent, etc. When your client is answering these questions, she has to engage in *procedural thinking* and give up optional thinking. This kind of thinking lies at the heart of the NLP Strategy Model and how we engage in “modeling.”

“*What feedback will you need to monitor to make sure you are progressing to achieving your goal?*” What kind of thinking does this evoke? System thinking and process thinking. It’s not enough to identify the final product, you have to think about *the process and all that’s involved in learning from errors, mistakes, and failures*. If you can’t do that, you will be brittle and rigid, and problems along the line will defeat you. You won’t have the resilience to keep bouncing back to your goal. Feedback thinking looks for both what’s working and what is not.

“*What could interfere with your progress or block you?*” This question presupposes an openness to problems. This question implies you are curious and open and fascinated by problems and that you think in terms of problem-solving, not problem-blaming. It implies that your thinking powers are robust enough to look reality straight in the face without falling apart (ego-strength). This is thinking is the opposite of repression-thinking that fears problems and that taboos negative emotions.

“*What resources do you have and what resources do you need?*” This question elicits and helps to build up solution-focused thinking. It implies that where there are problems, we mostly need to think in terms of solutions, resources. This is the thinking of entrepreneurs! It is abundance thinking, not scarcity thinking.

“*Will all of this be ecological?*” Have started up in the clouds with your dreams and hopes—what you really, really want and having made a deep dive into the everyday details of what it will take, we now again, zoom upward into meta-land to do a reconnonance of the entire system. Engaged in this project, will it be healthy for you? Will it ruin any aspect of your life—health, finances, relationships, etc.? Ecological thinking is a new and very different kind of thinking for most people. It facilitates the kind of thinking that we call *wisdom*. Here you think about your thinking and so monitor your thinking, think long-term, and engage if healthy predictive thinking.

“*What you decided that you are going to do this?*” While there were decisions made earlier, now that the whole program has been covered, is the person ready to completely *focus in on this decision and make a commitment*? This is a go/ no go decision. It is more likely to be a smart decision because one has thought through all that’s entailed in it. It is not a rash decision.

“*How will you know that you have achieved your outcome?*” This is evoking the thinking processes involves in feeling convinced. It’s asking what will convince you that you have successfully achieved your goal? This kind of thinking shows up in the convincer meta-programs (#19 and #34).

Now isn’t all of that amazing? When you ask the WFO questions, you facilitate a *thinking journey* for your client—a journey that has the potential of changing his or her life.

L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #49
November 29, 2023

EAGERNESS TO DISCOVER ERRORS!

In his book on *Living Consciously*, Nathaniel Branden wrote a line that jumped out at me due to the outrageous use that he made of the word *eager*. Here's what he wrote, see if it jumps out at you; "Living consciously requires an eagerness to discover one's errors and a candor about admitting them."

Eagerness! Wow, that is a startling word in *that* context, don't you think? I found it absolutely surprising. I think I was expecting something like, "Living consciously requires a *willingness* to discover one's errors..." Or, "Living consciously requires *an understanding* of the importance of discovering one's errors." But *eagerness*? Really? "Eager" suggests being excited, delighted, anticipating, even longing. Now having watched how people on six continents and many countries respond to feedback while learning coaching, I have to ask two questions. Is it possible? And if it is possible, how would that work?

Possible

In ACMC training, you will remember that we spend time enabling you to build up a Matrix State for effectively receiving feedback. That process enables you to identify your best state for experiencing feedback. It asks you to identify your best meanings (beliefs), intentions, identity, relationships, skills, and use of time. And if you remember, you actually wrote your own unique personalized formula for that. Ideally, you took that hope and practiced accessing that empowering state until it became automatic for you.

What comes *back to us* from the outside world when we do something (what we call 'feedback') are the *results* of whatever we put out there. It gives us the results of our performance. As such it is the second-part of the communication/ relationship loop. First there is output (feed-forward), then there is response (feedback). It is feedback that tells you *how you did*. Did you succeed? To what extent? Did you not reach your goal? To what extent? Feedback is the world's information back to you for *how to improve*. Think of it that way and I think you too can feel eager for feedback. Consider the case of Bob.

Bob made an exceptional presentation at a company conference and afterwards, as it is with public speakers, people came up and complimented him on his presentation. "Good job!" one said. "Well done!" another. Bob asked each of them, "Thanks, what could I have done that would have made the speech better? Any ideas for taking it to another level of quality?" The first said, "No, nothing. Good job." The second said, "I can't think of a single thing."

Now you would think Bob would have felt really good about his presentation and their responses, but he didn't. He felt disappointed. He knew in himself, as all speakers do, that the presentation could be made better no matter how good it is, but he didn't know

exactly what to work on. He had hoped for some honest feedback.”

Later John greeted him. He asked about how to make it better, John said, “Well, the story about the boy on the playground was a wonderful and very dramatic story! A great story. But really, I didn’t see how it was relevant and I lost track for a few moments what you were getting at. If you could connect it that would be great; otherwise, best to drop it.”

Bob glowed when he heard this. “This is exactly the feedback I need to improve the presentation for next time! Thank you, thank you, thank you.” he said obviously excited.

How It Works

The second question I posed was, “If it is possible to feel *eager for feedback* and to learn from it, how does that work?” Here are several answers. **Answer #1:** It works when you understand that *the response is just a response*. It may be accurate, it may not be. It may be useful, it may not be. But whatever it is, *it is not a reflection on you*. Instead, it is a reflection on what you put out into the world—some action, some words. Therefore, if you keep it as *just a response* and do not personalize it, you can begin to become *eager* for whatever feedback comes back to you.

Answer #2: It works when you understand that the feedback *informs you how to improve*. And if you *want* to improve, feedback can give you high quality information about *your next steps* for developing your expertise. Refuse feedback, defend against it, close your eyes and ears to it—and you trash some of the best information you could possibly receive.

Answer #3: It works because when the feedback disappoints you, surprises you, and/or shakes up your expectations, *you are in a wonderful place for correcting your current mental maps to make them more reality-oriented*. It’s common to feel disappointed about feedback. “I thought I was better than that.” “I put so much time and effort, I thought I would do better.” If there’s anything that can shake us free from varying degrees of self-deception, it is feedback. Feedback works like a mirror—reflecting back to ourselves how we came across to others.

Finale

It is possible to develop an eagerness for feedback about errors and mistakes. If you are a great learner, and know how to accelerate your learning, you’ve developed that eagerness. I saw it recently in Hong Kong with those sitting for PCMC and for others at the ACMC level. I had people lining up *begging me to benchmark them*. Begging! Now how amazing is that? How about you? Are you ready to say, “Benchmark me, please!”

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #50
December 6, 2023

EVIDENCE-BASED COACHING

Meta-Coach Credibility

Not long ago I picked up the book, *NLP Coaching: An Evidence-Based Approach for Coaches, Leaders, and Individuals* (2010) by Susie Linder-Pelz. I met Susie in Sydney when I was living and working there, she had worked as a behavioral scientist, and then as a Career Coach for many years. After that she attended the ACMC of Meta-Coaching. A couple years later, we invited her to return as an Expert Coach. After that, she and I co-wrote several scholarly articles for the *British Psychologist*. Susie was, and continues to be, a thought-leader and scholar in this field.

This is a book that you will want to quote and refer to when people ask you about coaching research and about the foundations of Meta-Coaching. You may even want to get a copy of it so you can give it to CEOs and companies who want evidence of the validity of Meta-Coaching. Having not read her book in more than a decade, re-reading it was a real delight. If anyone has any question about the *scholarly standing of NLP*—read this book! Linder-Pelz has provided extensive descriptions of the NLP sources that back up, and gives evidence for, the validity of NLP, Neuro-Semantics, and Coaching. She has been a voice of reason and for *evidence-based credibility* for many years, and while this book is 13 years old—it is still relevant and timely.

The book begins with a description of NLP coaching, the skills of a coaching, and industry standards. The second part of the book is “An Evidence-Based Approach to NLP Coaching.” Here Dr. Linder-Pelz explores best practices, theories, principles, the psychology of coaching, etc. Chapter 8 ties “Coaching” as a profession to various other psychologies to describe “coaching psychology.” It is a good chapter for knowing some of the theoretical frameworks—frameworks that we assume in Coaching and have integrated into the system.

Chapter 7 is especially excellent: *Systemic Principles With Psychological Overlay*. Every Neuro-Semantic Trainers and Meta-Coach ought to read that chapter. That single chapter is well-worth the value of the book. I had forgotten what an incredible job she did when she took Bateson’s systemic thinking approach and applied it to coaching. Her writing is so thorough, so readable, and so practical—I wish I had written that!

Not long ago I wrote two articles about Neuroscience and Coaching. My point in writing was to highlight the *ridiculousness* of combining those two disciplines and inventing “Neuroscience Coaching.” My point was also that we can use discoveries in the neuro-sciences to give validity to certain coaching practices, but that the neuro-sciences offers nothing new that we do not already have and already do in coaching. Long before I made that point, Susie made the same as she titled the beginning sections in Chapter 7: “Roots in Psychology and Support from Neuroscience” (p. 74). She especially refers to mirror neurons and quotes from two other researchers, Lisa Wake and Jane Mathison about that.

In Chapter 9 Susie writes about *Empirical Evidence* of coaching. Here she writes about *how to actually do coaching research*. Then later, in Chapter 11, she presents 16 research questions that she recommends for anyone who wants to do research in this area. Some of these questions are exclusively focused for Meta-Coaching, so if you are looking for an excellent *research question* to explore to write a thesis or a dissertation on, you would do well to start here.

Linder-Pelz has produced a book wherein the first three chapters is a good basic description of NLP. She even quoted me about the intellectual roots of NLP in the Human Potential Movement (p. 60) but did not integrate that into some of that history. Yet the book is primarily about research. She turns to “best practices and devotes Chapter 10 to approaches to “NLP Coaching” which she considered was built on established theories and principles: *Symbolic Modeling/ Clean Language* and *Meta-Coaching* built on *Meta-States*. She highlights the role of reflexivity, the step-back skill, the process of meta-stating or framing, the principles and premises of Meta-States. “Self-reflexive consciousness is vital because coaching is about facilitating a client’s performance, experience, learning, and actualizing of goals. In coaching change, the coach enables the client to reflect on potentials they previously may not have believed they had and on beliefs and feelings that may be holding them back. ... The Meta-States Model brought in Korzybski’s ‘structural differential’ model relating to the effect of one state upon another. ... The *primary states* and *meta-states* distinction parallels the distinction in neuroscience between primary and secondary emotion...” (p. 127-8, 130)

Caveats

There are numerous errors in the book about the Meta-States Model. The probable reason for this is that there is *no reference at all to any of the five books on Meta-States*. There is especially no mention of *Meta-States* (1994) or to *Secrets of Personal Mastery* (1997). For that reason there are numerous things said about the Meta-States model that are just not true.

For example, it is *not correct at all* that “This Meta-stating process is a version of the Miracle Question that is used in Solution-focused coaching and laddering.” (p. 136). As I described Meta-Stating when I developed it in 1994, it came from my research in Korzybski and Bateson which was years before I studied de Shazer’s Miracle Question. And the diagram presented in the book (p. 136) is *not* an example of meta-stating in the least and no self-respecting Neuro-Semanticist would think so.

Linder-Pelz extensively describes *The Axes of Change* model and demonstrated its validity by quoting extensively the psychological literature for it (p. 132). What she did not get correct was the source of the model. Contrary to what she wrote, it was *not* based on modeling Michelle and while she tells a nice story, it is just not correct. I actually developed it via research into the field of Change and then modeling numerous coaches including both Graham and Michelle. I did ask Michelle to “think through” the meta-programs of the last axis before I completed the model.

NLP Coaching: An Evidence-Based Approach for Coaches, Leaders, and Individuals (2010), Susie Linder-Pelz, Ph.D. Kogan Page, London. ISBN 978 0 7494 5452 4.
164 pages of text; 48 pages of End Notes.

www.koganpage.com

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #51
December 13, 2023

CONSULTING TO COACH

Before you can coach, you have to consult. That's what you do when you do an Introductory Session for a potential coaching client—you consult. Because this is a crucially important part of coaching, it is described in the ACMC manual in several places.

Consulting—what does this involve? How do you do it? What does this mean for you as a coach? What this mostly involves is providing *expert knowledge about coaching* so that the potential client fully understands what coaching is and what one is getting himself into! A consultant, by definition, is someone who has expert knowledge about something and who sells that information. Accordingly, people consult with a consultant to get the expert knowledge that they want without having to become an expert oneself. I have consulted with medical experts to get medical advice, with tax consultants to get tax advice because while I needed some expert knowledge, I did not want to become an expert in either of those fields.

As a professional ACMC coach, you have *expert advice* to offer people *about coaching*—what coaching is, how a coaching program works, what's required of a client to get the most from coaching, what it will cost, benefits a person can expect, etc. That's mostly what you communicate in the Introductory Session so that a client knows what she is buying, its value, and what to expect. This is necessary if the potential client is to make an informed decision about hiring you as his or her coach.

This is also necessary, even today, because in spite of Coaching having been around since 1992. Still today most people do not know what coaching is or how it works. That's why, as a Coach, you have to consult to coach. You have to spend some time with people so that they understand it. As you learned in ACMC, you will help people understand that coaching itself is **not** giving advice, training people in new skills, healing therapeutic issues, teaching, lecturing, or psychoanalysis.

The best materials for the Introductory session is in the ACMC manual under *Personal Coaching*. I'd recommend that you start there, refresh your understanding of that approach, and begin to adapt it so that it fits your style and approach. When coaching began, Thomas Leonard thought it best to *give people at least a little experience of coaching itself*. Because coaching is different than most people think, this is an excellent idea. Let them experience it.

Now when you do this, you don't have to do a whole session although if you have the time for that, do that. Otherwise, ask, "*If you could change something about yourself that would make your life better, what would that be?*" If the person doesn't name a change, but mentions a subject or area, repeat the question, "And the change in you about that is what?" This communicates that coaching is about change, a personal change, a change of thinking, feeling,

speaking, and behaving. It communicates that coaching requires a personal response-ability and a self-commitment to step out of one's comfort zone.

If a person has the idea that coaching deals only with problems or issues, refocus the person on solutions and goals. "*What would be the challenge or opportunity that you'd like to stretch out of your comfort zone to make happen?*" Lots of people associate coaching with solving problems. That is one thing we do, but it is secondary to envisioning life by one's dreams, hopes, opportunities, and possibilities. This is the self-actualization aspect of coaching which is based on a whole different psychology than the psychology of therapy or counseling.

Begin with the wheel of life and ask about each of these major areas of life and what goals the person has with regard to them— family, mate, children, work, career, hobbies, spiritual life, health, fitness, sports, finances, investments, etc.

When you *consult to coach*, put yourself in a state of having the privilege of introducing coaching to someone. Put aside any thought of selling, influencing, persuading. Instead, think of what you're doing as an invitation, an opportunity —when someone is ready. Don't assume that the person is ready. Think of your consulting as preparing someone in getting ready ... which may not happen for months or years. Think of yourself as *qualifying people*, rather than selling. You are helping people make a really smart decision about whether coaching is right for them.

Consulting to coach enables you to share the expert knowledge that you have gained, it enables you to ask the "coachability" questions that tests whether a person is really up for it. You are looking for people who have caught a vision of a more meaningful, purposeful, and passionate life. They don't want to just get by, they want to make a difference. They want to be the best version of themselves. They want to actualize what's possible.

Consulting with a person about coaching will inevitably involve helping that person see, understand, and feel the values and benefits of coaching. If you don't do that, you won't sell your coaching. Be sure to find out what the person thinks that coaching is so that you can chase out any myths and misbeliefs from the beginning. Find out also how the person is currently perceiving the cost, time, and process of coaching. The time to help them develop accurate and appropriate expectations is in the consulting process, not after the coaching begins.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #52
December 20, 2023

STRATEGIC THINKING WHEN INTERVENING

What do you say after you say, “What do you want?” And then, what do you do after you work out be a well-formed outcome for your client? What then? How will you intervene at that point and what intervention will you use? And, come to think of it, is there an *Intervention Pattern* that we can use to guide our thinking?

The essential intervention pattern involves a special kind of thinking—namely, *strategic thinking*. This is the kind of thinking that you engage in when you know two things: where the person currently is and where the person wants to be. This *Now*—>*Then thinking* is what enables you to think strategically. This is the Present State (PS)—Desired State (DS) gap. Now you can ask yourself, “What thinking, believing, deciding, planning, acting, relating, changing, etc. will move my client from *now* (P.S.) to *then* (D.S.)?”

Now before you go and try to re-invent the wheel, perhaps your client already told you what has to happen. That’s right! Not infrequently clients sometimes come right out and tell you what needs to happen. So review in your mind the information that you gathered from Questions 7 to 15. After all, you asked, “What do you have to *do* to get what you want?” in question seven. What did your client say? Often this is the first thing to explore as you move into the intervention stage. Be sure to ask, “What else do you need to do?” “What do others have to do to achieve that outcome?”

If the person *knows* what to do, the strategic question becomes, “Do you *do* it?” “Do you *do* what you know you need to do?” Many know, few implement. And many of those who do implement do not do so with the quality or regularity which is needed. Why not? What interferes so that they do not follow-through? What stops them from the discipline, persistence, or resilience that they need?

Once you know *where* your client wants to end up at, the outcome that she desires, the question for you is: “How will this new perspective, feeling, behavior, etc. be generated?” “What has to change in my client’s *meta* place in order for him to engage in this new outer game?” More than likely, the answer will be—

My client needs some *new ways of thinking* (e.g., believing, deciding, understanding, framing, etc.).

My client needs some *new ways of experiencing* (e.g., acting, practicing, imagining, etc.).

Given this, “*What experience* could my client go through that would naturally provide anyone with this learning and the subsequent skills?” As you now scan through a list of NLP or Neuro-Semantic Patterns, you can evaluate them in these terms:

What shift of thinking will this pattern facilitate?
What experiential skill/s will this pattern facilitate?
What problem or issue will this pattern solve?

Thinking strategically as a Meta-Coach involves always thinking, “Where do I stand in relationship to my client and where is my client in relationship to me?” You will want to adopt this thinking pattern from the very beginning as you detect and calibrate your client’s state even before the coaching begins. After all, you can’t coach if you don’t know where your client is. And knowing where your client is mentally and emotionally, that is, the person’s state, is where you begin as you match and pace to create a safe and trusting relationship.

Thinking strategically in this way has to continue throughout the coaching session. “Where is my client now?” “Where did my client just go off to?” Because coaching is not a chat, it is not therapy or consulting, your ability to sustain strategic thinking throughout enables you to always be thinking— *What does my client want— really want?* Clients more often than not *do not know*. That gives you a job, helping them to find out. And when you do that and then help them to achieve what they really want, you have earned your money.

From: L. Michael Hall
2023 Morpheus #53
December 27, 2023
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PROCESS AND RESULTS THINKING

Whenever you think of a goal, you probably focus mostly on either the end-product or the process for reaching the goal. Which do you do? Where does your mind primarily go? Does your mind go to the goal—the final objective and the results that will accrue? Or does your mind think in terms of the processes for achieving the goal? Do you think about steps and stages, activities, skills and sub-skills, procedures, strategies, etc.? Of course, you can think of both. Yet most people find themselves focusing primarily on one or the other— *process or results*.

Result thinking. As you think about results, you will typically feel more motivated. You will feel energized and excited to get there and experience the fruit of your labor. Results can also inspire the heart, and enable you to dream a bold dream that will activate your willingness to step forward and live the adventure. That's what normally happens. Some people, however, have the ability to spoil all of that. How? They picture the results they want in a way that they are so big, so unrealistic, and so unattainable that they overwhelm themselves. They then end up inducing themselves into states of paralysis and helplessness.

Process thinking. Conversely, thinking about processes and usually you will sequence your actions into a workable plan for how to achieve your goal. Process thinking enables you to see achievement as a living dynamic—as *what you do, when you do it, how you do it, with whom* you do it, etc. With process thinking, you also think about resources—the things required to achieve the goal. When you think about processes, you communicate to your body about what you have to do—it focuses your attentions and your emotions on specific skills and competencies—the activities of the process.

Now while both *result and process thinking* is needed, and needed for different experiences, it is process thinking that's the most critical. Process thinking is what enables you to actually achieve your outcome. *Only* thinking about the end results—especially when you should be focusing on processes—actually misdirects your mind and because of that, can become a block to success. Managers in companies frequently make this mistake—all that counts for them is results. They evaluate success solely in terms of results, the numbers of this quarter. They overlook, or outright ignore, *how* the company produces the results or the *quality* of the experience by those who make it happen.

People losing weight also make this mistake. They focus on their weight—a particular number and ignore the quality of the processes. By not even thinking about *how* they are eating and exercising, the *quality* of the food and physical exertion, etc., they are clueless about what to improve or change to get the results they want. So overly focused on results, they miss seeing that *what they are doing, or not doing, everyday* are the factors making or breaking their resolve.

Certainly there is a joy in reaching your goals and experiencing the results that you wanted. Yet

there's actually a deeper and more satisfying joy when you focus on the processes for getting there. When you learn to enjoy the processes of whatever you're doing, then you discover *the deeper joy of getting there*—that most of the fun is getting there rather than reaching the goal. Then, whether you eventually reach your goal or not, you will recognize that the journey itself was worth it and a value in itself. And if you do reach the end results, that's just extra.

In process thinking, the value lies in the experience itself. What you learn and how you grow and develop become more important than the actual results. With process thinking, you begin living your life in such a way that *the process of getting to wherever you want to go is where the fun is*. And that truly transforms life from the inside-out.

In Meta-Coaching, *focusing only* on the final product of a 2.5 score or completion of the ACMC credentials will mostly *blind* you to the inner dynamics that make coaching the wonder it is. It's *the inner processes of coaching*—the interpersonal skills of listening, supporting, framing, inducing state, questioning, etc. that is the most important aspect of coaching—and where the power is. Questions to leave you with—

- How much do you focus on the processes of coaching?
- How conscious are you of those processes when you're coaching?
- How many distinctions do you make about any particular process in terms of its sub-skills?