

MORPHEUS

**BEYOND WIMPY COACHING TO
CONFRONTATIONAL COACHING**

VOLUME II

2010

MORPHEUS — 2010

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From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #1
January 6, 2010

COACHES AS PROBLEM DEFINERS AND SOLVERS

Part I

Problems— what is the relationship between coaching and problems? Is there any? Recently someone asked me a question that truly surprised me:

“You mentioned ‘problems’ a little bit ago, isn’t that reverting to therapy? Isn’t that a distinction between coaching and therapy, coaches do *not* deal with problems, therapists deal with problems. Right?”

I was generally surprised because neither I nor any of the Meta-Coach Trainers have never made *that* distinction. And because it mis-understands the therapy—coaching differentiation, I expanded my response in the following way:

“Well, no, actually there are therapy problems and there are coaching problems. And there’s nothing inherent to a ‘problem’ that necessarily makes it a factor of therapy. Regular people also have problems. And that’s great. We are a problem-solving species. We need problems! Take problems away from a movie and the movie becomes excruciatingly boring. Take problems away from human being and they begin to invent problems to solve —crossword puzzles, math problems, interactive computer games that offer problems to solve. We need problems. And self-actualizing people are especially turned-on and excited by problems. Problems activate untapped potentials!”

Then about a month ago, Antoinette Ehmke, a Meta-Coach in South Africa, wrote and said that she remembered that I had shared about “the well-formed problem” in the Self-Actualization Workshop and wondered if I could write more about it, perhaps in this forum. That struck me as a great idea so I thought I’d write about *the problem-defining and problem-solving skill of coaching*.

A Ferocious Attitude about Problems

If you’re going to be a *great* coach and successful in coaching, you have to *love problems*. You have to look at the problems that people bring to you about their lives, their experiences, their businesses, their families, and so on, as *wonderful*. Is that your current attitude?

Or do you find that shocking? I hope so. Why? Because most people don’t like problems, don’t want problems, and don’t even want to use the word “problems.” Their attitude is one of “Oh no!” and not one of “Oh boy!” So to shift your attitude here are some frames and reframes.

Problems aren’t real; they are constructs of human thinking and meaning-making. You’ve never

seen a problem, heard one, felt one, smelt one, tasted one. Problems are not sensory-based. To have a *problem* you have to have a person defining that something is a problem. It is only a problem when a person thinks it is a problem. We are the ones who have the ability, the power, to call “problems” into existence. Something becomes a problem for us when we want something more than we have today. When there’s a gap between our present state and desired state.

Now if you and I and all of our clients *call our “problems” into existence* then the capacity for problem-solving begins with the skill of problem-defining. After all, the problem is a problem to the degree, the extent, and the nature that you define it. This has many tremendous implications. First, it implies that you are (whether you know it or not) the master of your problems. After all, your problems are invented. You invented them. And you can un-invent them. Well, you can once you know and claim your problem defining and solving skills.

It also implies that many of your “problems” only exist as problems due to your definition and framing. With some problems, the entire problem exists in the realm of framing, not in the territory. The so-called problem of “failure” is a good example. This “problem” is a problem of language, evaluating, and framing. That’s why it is so easily solved! That’s why the Meta-Model of Language can so easily re-solve it. You know how to do that, do you not?

Another implication— it implies that an attitude of awe and wonder and reverence enables us to fully embrace a “problem” so that we can understand how it works, how a person creates it, and how it can be un-created. When you learn how to stand in awe of a problem, whether your own or someone else’s, you can appreciate that it is a human construct and that some people are absolutely incredible masters of self-misery and limitation! Then you can look at the person with the problem and genuinely say, “What a skill! How do you do that? That’s great!”

It’s the same kind of fascination that those scientists had who first discovered various viruses, or cancer, or anything else that might have powers of destruction. It is through the paradox of embracing what troubles us that we can truly come to terms with it—with its mechanisms and processes. And that’s what gives us mastery over it.

Problems are great for other reasons. They give us business. What would business be without problems? The purpose of business is to solve problems. And the bigger the problem, the larger the fee we can charge for the solution. Small problems can only harvest small rewards. So give us big problems— huge-gigantic problems! Problems that call forth big rewards for resolving them.

How are these frames for reframing your thinking about problems? Which of these frames (or others that you can invent) would best help you to move from the “Oh No!” response to the “Oh Boy!” response when you encounter problems? After all, as a Coach, you are a problem-solver and to be a problem-solver, you have to be a master problem-definer. And when you develop your capacity as a master problem-definer, you’ll be able to explode most problems as pseudo-problems and cut through the noise to find real problems— the real problems that facilitate your full self-actualization. Here’s to your problem-solving competencies as a Meta-Coach!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #2
January 14, 2010

COACHES AS PROBLEM DEFINERS AND SOLVERS

Part II

If you, as a *Meta-Coach*, are first and foremost a problem-definer and then a problem-solver, and if what makes you a *great* coach is your “bring it on!” attitude toward problems, then what core competencies do you need and what Meta-Coach technologies provide you development of those competencies?

For your problem-defining competencies you mostly need the extended Meta-Model of Language. As a tool, the Meta-Model will enable you to cut through all of the noise and non-sense of words and language to get to the heart of things. It will enable you to create specificity and preciseness from the vagueness, indefinitiveness, and nominalizations that plague the way we humans talk.

Since words are just *symbols* that *stand for* and *represent* something other than themselves, knowing how to effectively handle language is critical for the kind of exposing and clarifying conversations that get to the heart of the matter with clients. When you know that, then you know to never, but never take your client’s words at face value. Explore them. Challenge them. Question them with the Meta-Model questions so that the client has to *clarify to you* what he or she means. And of course, in doing that the client develops a greater clarity for him or herself. That’s part of the magic of the Meta-Model.

In doing that, you are *representationally testing and tracking the words*. That is, you are taking the words and attempting to track them directly to the screen of your inner movie. If you can’t do that, then you have to ask more questions. When you are able to eventually do that, then both you and your client have co-developed a much higher quality of clarity regarding the references of the conversation. And oftentimes, that completes the task. It enables the client to have a clarity of mind and emotion that he or she didn’t have before the conversation.

Then there is the tool of the Well-Formed Outcome. And as a Meta-Coach, you have been trained to use the Well-Formed Outcome as your fundamental process for establishing a coaching contract with clients. This NLP pattern is one of the most powerful patterns in NLP and provides you, as a professional coach and communicator, an absolutely incredible tool. In fact, during the past year (of 2009), I learned more about the Well-Formed Outcome than in all of the previous 22 years that I had been studying that NLP pattern. I didn’t know that there were yet so many distinctions that we could discover in that pattern. It is an incredibly rich pattern and some of the

things we are now doing with it in Meta-Coaching is taking it to new levels.

The Well-Formed Outcome enables you to create specific KPIs with your clients about each individual session and about the overall coaching program. And because the client has specific sensory-based indicators of success, the client now has the ability to clearly articulate the difference you have made in his or her life as well as the ability to measure that difference. This eliminates questions about the efficiency and efficacy of coaching as a helping modality. It provides evidence-based proof of its credibility.

Then there is the *Well-Formed Problem* pattern. Do you know that pattern? I learned it first in the book *Change Management Using NLP* by Dr. Martin Roberts. Martin introduced the idea of a well-formed problem from his years of experience with NLP and business consulting. Finding it an equally powerful pattern, I began using it and eventually included it in my book, *Games Business Experts Play* (2002). Then as I was using it in various business and problem-solving contexts, I developed it further and a couple of years ago included it as a significant part of the second Self-Actualization Workshop, *Creativity and Innovation*.

This pattern is similar to the well-formed outcome in that it identifies and uses the criteria that distinguishes a problem when it is ill-formed and when it is well-formed. In the next *Meta-Coach Reflection* I will give you both lists so that you can see the contrast. That will also deepen your appreciation of the importance of clarifying a problem.

For how many times have you ever sit down with a client and then spend the first twenty or forty or ninety minutes trying to understand “What is the problem?” In fact, the client might have left and you might have spent the next two weeks still contemplating, “What is wrong? What is the problem?” You, like the client, may have a vague sense, but still unable to put your finger on it. And how many times have you been in a state like that?

So first and foremost a powerful and life-changing coaching conversation begins with a clarification of what’s wrong. “What is the current situation? What’s not working as beautifully and elegantly as it could? How are your highest potentials not being tapped and unleashed?”

The tools you have as a Meta-Coach then are these: the Meta-Model, the Well-Formed Outcome, the Well-Formed Problem, and an attitude of awe and wonderment in the presence of the semantic construct of a “problem.” Then there are the guidelines for working with problems. And probably the most important and the first one is, “The presenting problem is almost never the real problem.”

Presenting problems are just that *presenting* problems. They are as much to test *you* as the Coach as anything else. How will you handle it? How will you handle the person offering it to you? Will you be respectful? Patient? Kind? Will you jump into judgments? Will you dismiss it as nothing and scoff at the person? It’s a test. Perhaps conscious, but probably not. And if you pass the test, then you will get to the *next-presenting-problem*. And again, how you handle it will determine if you get a pass to move on to the real stuff.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #3
January 21, 2010

COACHES AS PROBLEM DEFINERS AND SOLVERS

Part III

To fully understand a *well-formed* problem it is best to contrast it to an *ill-formed* problem. So here goes. The first list identifies characteristics and criteria of an ill-formed problem. After that, the contrast list along with elicitation questions for a well-formed problem. As a Coach you are a *problem-solver* and so you facilitate them moving from ill-formed to a well-formed problem. As you do, often that's all that's required. The process itself enables the client to develop sufficient clarity about what to do, when to do it, with whom, etc. and the problem solves itself. And if not, then they are ready for a well-formed solution!

An Ill-Formed Problem

What would a problem that's ill-formed be like? It would be —

1) *Vaguely defined*

Poorly defined; described with over-generalizations.
Defined in abstract terms without clear referents.

2) *Indistinct boundaries*

Lack of clarity as to when the problem begins and ends.

3) *Time element long and time factors*

Unaware of when the problem began.
The problem keeps returning. The problem keeps recurring.
Problem seems to have been around for a long time.

4) *Unspecified causes*

Cause of the problem unsure.
Lots of assumptions about causes.
Confusion and lack of distinction between causes and contributing factors.

5) *Consequences unspecified*

Denial or problem or of its consequences.
Avoidance of looking at the consequences.

6) *Attempted solutions not recorded*

No record keeping or learning from what has been attempted and results attained.

7) *Unaddressed political dimensions*

Contexts within which people operate ignored or pretended doesn't exist.

8) *Symptomatic focus*

Focus on the many symptoms rather than on the contributing factors.

9) *Lack of ownership*

No description about who owns the problem. Who's involved?

10) *No solutions imagined and/or designed:*

Do you have any idea of what could solve the problem?

The Well-Formed Problem

What are the distinctions that make a problem well-formed so that it can be effectively addressed and solved. After all, a problem well stated and defined is half-solved, perhaps even 90 percent solved.

1) *Specificity: Precision in Description*

What's wrong? How do you know?

What is your evidence?

What is/was worst example of this? The best?

How is it a problem? In what way?

In what area? To whom?

What does it stop you from doing or experiencing?

2) *Distinct Boundaries: Where, Contexts?*

Where does the problem occur? Where not?

Where does it begin, end, etc.?

Who is affected by this problem?

Who else is affected by it?

Who is involved?

Where has the problem been solved?

3) *Time Element: When?*

How long have we had this problem?

What originally initiated it?

4) *Specific Causes and Contributing Influences: Cause?*

What has caused or contributed to this?

What else has contributed to it?

How many factors influence this problem?

How much of a problem is it?

How do you measure it?

What is the source?

5) *Consequences clearly specified: Consequences?*

What will happen if the problem remains?

Who will it affect? How do you know?

What will happen if the problem is solved?

6) *Attempted Solutions explored:*

How have we tried to solve this problem?

What did you learn from that attempt?
How did you adjust your response when it did not work?
What else have you tried?

7) *Political Frames and dimensions: Interpersonal contexts?*

What is the explicit company policy about this?
What is the implicit policy?
Who wants this solved the most?
Who does not want it solved?

8) *Symptoms specified*

What are the symptoms of this problem?
How do the symptoms dominate focus and attention?
What is the actual problem?
Are we solving the problem's source or symptom?

9) *Ownership of the problem:*

Who is responsible for solving this?
Is it your problem?
If it is only partly your problem, what part is yours?

10) *Solutions imagined and/or designed:*

Can the problem be solved?
If it can be, what would a solution look like?

11) *Meanings and Frames:*

How do you interpret this problem?
What does it mean to you? What else?
What assumptions are you making about the problem?
Why is this important?
Why is this a problem?

These lists come from the second Self-Actualization Workshop that presents *four conversations* —*the well-formed conversations involving outcome, problem, solution, and innovation*. I use them in that training manual as the conversations that enable a coach or consult to facilitate an individual's or a company's creativity and innovation. The reasoning is that what we *create* and then later *innovate* will be highly valuable if it solves significant problems and facilitates the experience of an outcome that makes a difference.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #4
January 28, 2010

COACHING AS MODELING

If you are a coach using NLP and Neuro-Semantics, then a good bit of your coaching involves modeling. Modeling? Yes, of course! After all, in order to coach effectively, you have to discover what the client wants and needs and how the client experiences his or her reality. And to do that you have to use your core coaching skills so that you can discover the client's model of the world, do you not?

First, *the relationship skills* (supporting and listening) give you the context and foundation for being allowed entrance into the client's world. If you don't create a safe and trusting relationship, you won't be able to get the inside information that only the client is privy to. Only then can you truly use your *exploration skills* (questioning and meta-questioning) to ground the experience and detect the meta-layers that hold the meanings in place.

You'll also need the *mirroring skills* (receiving and giving feedback) so that you provide the client a way to see him or herself and discover patterns and blind spots that might be the key structural patterning that needs to be addressed. And of course, the state elicitation skills are the skills that enable the client to actually experience rather than just talk about it. While there's more to modeling than just these core coaching skills— these certainly will give you the foundational skills for modeling the experience of your client. As you do so, you can now detect and diagnose.

Why model the client's experience? First to understand the client on the client's terms. Without modeling how the client experiences things and the structure of that experiences— how will you know what to do and where to intervene? Without modeling, you will only be able to deal with content— the story, the narrative.

So as a Meta-Coach using the models and tools of NLP and Neuro-Semantics you have the truly unique skills and opportunity to enter the client's world and deeply understand the processes at work—the processes generating your client's present state. And the amazing thing is that you can do that through words and language (the Meta-Model), through states and layering of states (Meta-States), through perceptual distinctions (Meta-Programs), and so on. In fact, you have redundant models that can enable you to test your detection and diagnosis.

As a coach who models, you don't have to wildly guess about what to do with your clients. The ability to model the structure of an experience enables you to know *what* to do. And this is one of the things that truly distinguishes your skills and style from that of most Coaches. You will not coach "from the seat of your pants," guessing and hoping that what you do will work. Nor do you coach by reaching into a "grab bag of tricks" crossing your fingers and praying to the gods of

chance that something will make a difference.

Coaching by modeling the experience of your client—the structure of the subjective experience that your client presents to you enables you to be systematic and to rise above the content of the story to the meta-processes. And because that makes you a Meta-Coach, you can now coach at a higher level.

In recent months, having done the Coaching Session in Meta-Coaching on Day 6, having it video-taped, and then analyzed, and having demonstrated getting the KPI dozens and dozens of times, many have asked how I have developed such coaching skills. And this question especially arises when I emphasize that I'm not a Coach professionally, that coaching is not what I do for a living, and that I do not define myself as a Coach. And while I know that it has arisen from interviewing three or four dozen expert coaches over the years, spent time modeling them, sorted out the sub-skills and trained them in hundreds of Meta-Coaches, I think that the most basic answer is that it comes down to modeling.

By modeling a client's experience and recognizing the meta-levels that create the experience, I can then know what to do, when to do it, where to do it, and how. It's the modeling itself that gets to the heart of things so quickly.

What's the point of all of this for you? Learn to model each and every client as if the reality that is presented to you is unique. Avoid classifying people into types or patterns and inside look for the unique pattern of each person. This will obviously keep you fresh, alert, and curious and it will also keep you on your toes as you have to invent a new "theory" for each person — which so happens to be precisely what Milton Erickson said that he did with every client.

To your modeling within your Coaching so that you can take your meta-coaching skills to ever new levels of expertise!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #5
Feb. 3, 201

COACHING AS TRAINING

This past week I observe Colin Cox “coach” a person during our Trainers’ Training in Hong Kong. The context occurred when I set up the following question for the trainers-in-training:

“How do you think about ‘interferences’ and what NLP and Neuro-Semantic patterns do you rely on and default to in handling interferences?”

After posing the question, we (Colin and I) then engaged the group of 48 participants in a dialogue. “What do you think? How do you represent and frame ‘interference?’” When a participant describes something as *interfering*, how do you respond? With the Hong Kong group, it took a bit of coaxing, but after awhile there were numerous proposals about how to think about an interference. The interference could be one of—

- A Belief — do a belief change process, Meta-Yes, for example.
- An Emotion — use the meta-stating a negative emotion pattern
- A Concept — meta-state the concept pattern
- Self-reflexivity — if someone has turned their reflecting onto themselves, then dance with the dragon.
- An Excuse — then use the excuse blow-out pattern
- an Incongruency — use spinning icons or meta-alignment
- an Over-Pleasure — use the de-pleasuring pattern

As you can see, we were encouraging using the basic 14 patterns from APG as well since that’s what we were primarily teaching in the early part of NSTT. After that, I surprised Colin by suggesting that he do a process with a participant to deal with an interference. I say “surprised” Colin, but not really. When I sprung it on him, it was no surprise given his meta-programs and style of improvisation. So while it was no surprise, it was unexpected. He didn’t know I was going to immediately call on him to do that! But rolling with the punches as he does so well, he immediately framed it, “Oh, a freestyle process, eh?” then began polling the audience for someone to work with. He picked Conrad.

Then he began the process, I thought I’d benchmark his training skills. But then, as began, I suddenly realized that I was not actually benchmarking training skills, but coaching skills. He was coaching! So I tracked two things— the content process of moving up the levels, frame upon frame to discover the structure of Conrad’s experience, and the coaching skills that enabled him to do so. And later I unpacked the process using both of those formats. (This by the way was video-taped and if it is not on facebook or u-tube already, it will be soon.)

Anyway, starting with a state of “nervousness” about presenting because of the sense that “they are not getting it,” Colin explored the matrix of frames ... listening, reflecting, questioning,

giving feedback, meta-questioning, receiving feedback, questioning some more, mirroring back more, inducing state ... all the while Conrad was becoming aware of frames behind frames that drove the nervousness that he felt was an interference. Above “they aren’t getting it” was “I’m not getting it.” Colin framed that. “Ah, so it’s not about them, it’s about you?!” And behind that was the need to “do it right, first time, every time.” And the a metaphor, “To hit a home run every time.” And the intention behind that, “to be up to one’s game, to put on the pressure,” but then behind that the realization, “it also messes things up.” And so it went.

Colin’s ability to summarize and feedback and then ask for the next level reflection, kept Conrad jumping yet another level and finally identifying a frame that was a breakthrough frame—the need to change a critical belief. “Doing it right, first time, every time” when keeps him on the edge also creates a lot of needless nervousness.

In the end, I realized something. Colin was not training, he was coaching. And benchmarking what I saw, I realized that he was reaching 3.25 on all of the seven coaching skills. And then I realized something else. He was *training by coaching*. By coaching the participant through the process, he was *demonstrating* the skill and so training the group in how to do the skill.

Training by coaching and coaching via training goes hand-in-glove as two parts of the same thing—facilitating and enabling the learning and installation of high level skills.

How about that! Perhaps that’s why Meta-Coaches seem to have a natural affinity for becoming Trainers even if “training” is not their primary profession and why Trainers similarly have a natural affinity for coaching even if “coaching” is not their primary profession. I know for myself, learning and developing the skills of coaching has tremendously helped my training skills and my training skills enable me to more effectively coach.

Thinking about all of this, I think that we need a new combination word, a word that combines training and coaching. After trying to cram *training* and *coaching* together into a singular word without any success, I realize we probably need to invent an entirely new word, one that doesn’t currently exist. So are you a training coach or a coaching trainer? Or both? Or is that the next step in your own development? Here’s to more unleashing!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #6
Feb. 10, 2010
Part I — Getting Beyond Lame Wimpy Coaching

GETTING BEYOND LAME AND WIMPY COACHING

“A careful conversation is a failed conversation. When we enter the conversation with a goal of being poised, clever, instructive, we are inhibited, and all possibilities of intimacy are held at bay.” Susan Scott (*Fierce Conversations*, p. 183)

I’ve seen some courageous coaching and I’ve seen some wimpy coaching. When I sit in as an observer and benchmarker of courageous coaching, I feel like I have a front-seat on reality. The conversation is real; it is authentic; it is getting to the heart of things. It is often emotional, personal, and in it two real people are meeting and encountering what is real at that moment for the client. I don’t see that many sessions like that, perhaps one in ten, but when it happens, even as an observer, I am touched— and sometimes changed.

Then there are those wimpy conversations. Pathetically little chats— safe, predictable, polite, and vague. Those are the conversations that I feel like yawning through. And when I’m the benchmarker for the Meta-Coaching sessions I often will yawn; sometimes because I can’t help it (!) and sometimes I make it as obvious as I can to both coach and client as a reflection of the superficiality of the coaching. And when the “chat” continues without ever stirring up anything real, I’ll interrupt:

“If you were paying \$500 an hour for this coaching session, *is this* what you’d be talking about? What is the most significant thing that you ought to be presenting to your Coach, the thing that you are avoiding, the thing that will unleash new potentials? What is the thing that you most hope the coach doesn’t bring up?”

I wonder if we could, or should, benchmark and gauge coaching sessions in terms of authenticity? If we did, *the wimpy conversations* would be high on the amount of yawns per minute and *the authentic conversations* would be high on moments of breathlessness. On the wimpy side of the scale the conversation would be highly predictable, on the authentic side of the scale the conversation would be transformative.

As a very special kind of conversation, coaching goes beyond the polite conversation. It goes behind all of the polite interactions that only deal with the surface of a person’s life. Last year I walked into one of the *Coaching Mastery* courses on day one and greeted one participant. He said that he was really looking forward to Meta-Coaching because he had always been a good conversationalist with the gift of gab and had finally discovered his “calling” as a Coach. I couldn’t help myself.

“Hmmm. And what, in your opinion, is the relationship between the gift of gab and coaching?”

He talked about his ability to keep a conversation going, that he could talk to anyone about anything, at parties, pubs, social events, etc. I again could not help myself.

“Well, I think you’re going to find this really challenging and perhaps a very different kind of conversation than you have ever had. Are you ready to speak less than your client and to use questions to evoke the client to speak rather than chatting away?”

Coaching is about getting to the client’s reality and that’s something that no coach knows anything about. Only the client knows his or her reality (and most often they do not know very much of it!) We are not the expert of the client! The client is his or her own expert. It is the job of the Coach to hold the space and to courageously evoke the exploration of the client’s truths. That’s why we begin with the first question: “What do *you* want?”

And that leads to the next set of questions:

“What do you *really* want?” “And beyond that, what do you want?” “And what want have you not articulated?” “And what do you really, really want that you are not even yet allowing yourself to know?”

Pushing the client in this way demands courage and that’s why you have to be brave, very brave and courageous, to be a coach. After all, what is your coaching about? Is it not to provoke significant change, to get to the heart of things, to help your client unleash possibilities, and to release the client from any and every thing that interferes with becoming fully alive, fully authentic? That’s why the coaching conversation is more often than not a fierce conversation.

It is fierce in that it is an intense, robust, and passionate conversation in which you invite the client to come out from behind him or herself and out into the crucible space that you have created and to become more real than he or she has ever been before now. And that can be scary even for a psychologically healthy person. That can be scary because it means leveling with oneself, telling oneself the truth, and facing one’s truths. And to do that, as a coach— you also have to come out from behind yourself and be real. You have to demonstrate the kind of authenticity that you are coaching in your clients.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #7
Feb. 17, 2010
Part II — Getting Beyond Lame Wimpy Coaching

MAKING THE CONVERSATION COUNT

“While no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a business, a career, a marriage, or a life, any single conversation *can.*” *Susan Scott, Fierce Conversations*

If *Meta-Coaching*, as a cutting-edge coach training and coaching approach, is to lead the emergent field of coaching—we have to get beyond the lame and wimpy coaching that is far too common. In Coaching today, there’s just far too much wimpy coaching. What is it that makes coaching lame and wimpy in the first place? How can we tell? The coaching conversation sounds like the kind of chats that go on in pubs and board rooms all over the world. Such chats indulge in whining and complaining, they analyze issues to the point of paralysis, and in the end they change nothing.

To get beyond wimpy coaching in Meta-Coaching, our aim is to train Meta-Coaches in how to have fierce conversations that get to the heart of things. So what I began to write about this in the last Reflection I will continue for the next few Meta-Coach Reflections. I write these as a challenge to invite you to learn how to avoid “safe conversations” with your clients and to aim for bold life-changing conversations. That will give you a distinction you can brand as part and parcel of Meta-Coaching.

So how can we get beyond lame and wimpy coaching? What elements can make your coaching robust and powerful, life-changing, and facilitative of transformation?

- 1) Delve deeply into emotions – evoke strong emotions.
- 2) Make the coaching experiential.
- 3) Get beyond the worship of “comfort” as an ultimate value.
- 4) Welcome issues that are tough and pressing.
- 5) Iterate clarifying questions to delve into what is real for the client.
- 6) Confront the unreal in the client as you call your client to come out behind him or herself and be real.

Read again the quote at the top of this Reflection. I think it is as profound as it is powerful. And what it suggests for you as a Coach is as challenging as it is disturbing, is it not? “While no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a business, a career, a marriage, or a life, any single conversation *can.*”

Now, what if, just *what if*, you adopt this premise as one of your basic frames in coaching? Suppose you entered into every coaching conversation with this idea as your governing and

dominating frame? *This very conversation may very well change the course of this person's life!* Would it make a difference in your coaching approach, attitude, and state? What difference would it make in how you coach?

If you operate from the frame that *this conversation may be the crucial conversation that changes the very course of this person's life*, I predict that your coaching will take on a new life, energy, and power. I predict that you will not have just a mere “chat,” you’ll have a fierce conversation. I predict that you will be more alive to the conversation— more present and that you will really be listening, and questioning at a whole new level.

I think it would first motivate you to recognize the coaching conversation as a real leverage for transformational change. And that would more fully engage you so that you truly *show up* and show up more fully *to be present* to and for your client. And if you are more present, I think you would also listen to truly understand the client on the client's terms, rather than yours. And if it did that, your listening would be more sacred— truly holding the place for your client to discover and change, truly listening to understand the person's heart and intention.

The danger with Coaching as with anything new, vibrant, and exciting is that we can so easily get used to it. You can get to the place that you take it for granted. Yet when you do that with coaching, when you forget that any coaching conversation may be the very one that changes the very course of life for a client— then you forget just how sacred and alive the coaching experience is designed to be.

Are you ready to make each and every coaching conversation count? Then do this: Imagine that each and every conversation may be the very conversation that will change your client's course of life. As you set that as your frame of mind— come fully into the moment with all the courage and compassion that you can muster. Decide that you will be as real, as true, as honest, and as present as you are capable of. Access your coaching genius state so that you can be fully engaged and be nowhere else. Then, holding the crucible space for your client, begin the exploration:

“What is the most transformative thing that we can talk about today that will be a powerful difference in your life?”

Do that and your coaching will not be lame or wimpy. Take this bold step forward and you will begin to be Morpheus offering your client's the Red Pill to begin the adventure of mastering his or her Matrix.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #8
Feb. 24, 2010
Part III — Getting Beyond Lame Wimpy Coaching

ASKING THE EMOTION QUESTION

If you have taken your Meta-Coach training in the past year, then you know that if there's any really dangerous question that we repeatedly warn about, it is "the emotion question." I think that we therapists are the worst with this one. Given our training in psychotherapy, all you have to do is show up and we automatically say, "And how do you feel about that?" It's as if we are on automatic and the simplest of triggers will evoke this question.

On the surface this question seems caring and compassion! Yet it can just as easily operate as a cruel invitation to needless pain! Unless properly used, it will undermine your coaching and shift you into the role of a therapist or mother (or father) and you might just find yourself caught up in a co-dependent relationship with your client. Generally speaking, you can count on this — asking "How do you feel about that?" is as irrelevant as it leads in the wrong direction.

Why? The answer is simple: *Emotions are symptoms*. How you or any other person feels about anything is *the result* of your or their frames (belief frames, understanding frames, decision frames, identity frames, etc.). So when a person is talking about something and you ask about their feelings, the only information you will receive will be symptomatic information, information that you can usually guess about. After all, we feel according to how we frame things.

The feeling question is also a big clue that the coach is a novice at coaching. It is what those who get lost and don't know what they're doing default to. "And how do you feel about that?" In fact, the frequency of the emotion question tends to be a sign of wimpy and ineffective coaching. The more you ask it, the wimpier your coaching!

During the last year, when I hear the question at the beginning of coaching sessions— even before a well-formed specific outcome has been identified— I step in, interrupt the process, and ask,

"What are you seeking to discover by asking that question? And how is that going to serve this client identifying her desired outcome?"

This isn't to say that you should never ask the feeling question. Not at all. Asking the emotion question can be powerful and life-changing. Yet you have to know *when* to ask it as well as *how* to ask it. So when is it best to ask this question and how do we ask it with power?

1) *Ask it when it's important for you and them to identify their current state.*

You coach from state to state, so you need to always be calibrating to your client's state.

If you don't know the state your client is in, ask. "What are you feeling as you say that?" "How much are in you that feeling state?" "Is that helping or hindering you?" "Is this state the problem or the solution or neither?" The key here is to make sure your client is in the best state for the coaching. The quality of your coaching will be governed to a great extent by your client's state.

2) *Ask it when you want to create aversion to the client's current pathway.*

But only ask it after you have asked at least three outcome questions. "What results are you getting now? What current impacts are occurring? If you keep doing this and getting these results, what will happen in six months? In a year's time? And from those results, what will then happen?" Once you have facilitated this consequential thinking in your client, then ask, "And when you consider all of these results, what do you feel?" "Is that enough to get you to take action now to avoid those consequences?" "What more do you need to consider to change your course?" Here you are using the feeling question to facilitate enough *away-from energy* to change the course of life.

3) *Ask to create enough positive energy to propel your client forward.*

First you have to ask several questions about the client's desired outcomes. "What do you really want to create in your life? And when you create that, what will result from that? And when you get that fully and completely in the way you want it, what will you feel then?" The feeling question here enables you to facilitate in your client sufficient positive emotional energy to take the required actions to make a change. You induce the *forward propelling state* so that there's energy for transformation.

4) *Ask to heighten the client's resolve to take action.*

Set up the emotion question here by first asking about what the client already knows that has to happen to bring his or her ideal outcome into reality. "What will you do to actualize this? If you say *yes* to this, what will you have to say *no* to? How much do you really want this? As you consider this, what benefits will this offer for you? How do you feel about that?" The feeling question here facilitates a decisive-energy state—a state that will turn thought into action.

Asking the emotion question without a strategic purpose means you will be evoking emotions, without putting that emotional energy into gear. It may evoke nice feelings, but the feelings will not be connected with any purposeful action. Or worse, the client may confuse those feelings with the resolution of the problem!

When I listen to a coaching conversation during *Coaching Mastery* and the coach repeatedly uses the feeling question so that the client makes his or her outcome to "feel" something, I typically will interrupt. "Can you feel that now?" And almost always the answer is "Yes." "Yes I can feel courage now, confidence now, humor now, self-valuing now, etc." To which I then respond, "Great. Done! Give me my money!" Or, "Done! What is your next outcome for this coaching session?"

The point in this? Don't cheapen your coaching by over-using the feeling question. Ask it intentionally and strategically. Ask it to generate the energy for the change that your client is seeking and that will call forth the action that creates a new pathway for your client.

To the boldness of your coaching!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #9
March 3, 2010
Part IV — Getting Beyond Lame Wimpy Coaching

THE WORSHIP OF COMFORT

“Your confusion is an asset; in fact, your search for clarity may blaze a path for others. In working to express what you do not understand— but long to understand— you invite the kind of conversations for which others are searching.” (p. 185)

“The experience of being understood, versus interpreted, is so compelling you can charge admission.” Joseph Pine *The Experience Economy*

There is hardly any thought or frame that will stop people from self-actualizing than the idea that “The most important thing in life is being comfortable.” Perhaps we all learned it when our parents warned us as children to watch what we say around Aunt Sally or Uncle Bob because “It will make her or him uncomfortable.” So we come out of childhood with a fear of making anyone uncomfortable. We learn to worry about someone feeling uncomfortable. “What if they get upset?” “What if they don’t want you to ask that question?” How about you? Did childhood program you to take responsibility for other people’s state of comfort?

Now if you want to be a wimpy coach, here’s a simple formula: Constantly worry about whether your responses and interventions will make someone uncomfortable! Wimp out by making it your object to never disturb or upset someone. Always second-guess how your client will respond and take responsibility for his or her emotional responses. Do that and you will have safe little chats but you won’t be able to facilitate the unleashing of your client’s hidden and deep potentials. You yourself will also feel safe and comfortable even though you will be a highly ineffective coach.

Let anyone make *comfort* one of his or her primary values in life and that person has thereby put an incredible limitation on his or her possibilities. Pursuing the path of least resistance dooms you to a life of mediocrity at best. And that means that the person will not push against the constraints of society and environments or the inner restraints of beliefs, habits, and experiences to push yourself beyond your current level of skill. It means you will have no freedom to stretch beyond your current competencies. If you can only do what is comfortable, then you severely limits your ability to learn, to develop, and to tap into the depths of you potentials.

In contrast to all of this, coaching is all about pushing beyond one’s current limits. It’s about setting out on an ambitious project of stretching beyond one’s comfort zone. To sign up for coaching is to sign up for “a personal potential trainer”— a catalyst who will intentionally facilitate states of discomfort in you! It is to sign up to be pushed forward by the dis-comforting emotions of aversion and attraction as the coach holds the crucible space that makes the dis-

comfort acceptable. Does your clients know that? Do they know what they have signed up for? Do they know that you're there as "Disturber of their Peace?"

This kind of fierce coaching operates from the realization that life is not about obtaining perpetual comfort, it is about unleashing possibilities. It is about becoming everything one can become. It is about scaling the heights of potentials, not staying at base camp whining that climbing the mountain makes him feel uncomfortable. Those who want to stay at base camp because it's uncomfortable climbing the mountain will never reach or see the peak. To reach the peak requires experiencing "discomfort" of effort and struggle. What some might call being "uncomfortable," yet by those who stretch forward to the peak it is "the fun of getting there."

If a client wants a meta-mommy or meta-daddy to take care of them— refer them to a therapist. That's what therapy is about— re-parenting someone who needs to be loved and nurtured back to health after having suffered some trauma. Or if you're afraid of believing in your client's inner strengths and resources and knowledge that you're ready to push and challenge and stretch your client, then perhaps you need some coaching!

Unlike the therapist, a Coach doesn't use the dependency and neediness of the client as the foundation for transference as a method for resolving parenting errors of the past. Let a well-informed and competent therapist do that with those who need that. And as you let them do therapy, you can be a Coach! And especially step up to being a challenging Meta-Coach!

Have you worshiped "comfort" as your god? Do you still do that? Are you ready to give up that small god and fully accept the reality of human life as one that entails discomfort and that "being uncomfortable" is just part of the price of excellence? How about putting these words on your business card, "Disturber of the Peace!"?

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #10
March 10, 2010
Part V — Getting Beyond Lame Wimpy Coaching

ASKING THE CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

Here's another way to be a wimp as a coach— *Don't ask your clients to clarify what they mean.* Whatever they say, just run with it. Run with it as you assume that you know and do so without exploring it. Don't ask them clarifying questions. And if you do ask a clarifying question, just ask one or two; and then give it up. Don't dare push them. Don't persist until the client has to work at getting clear herself. That's just asking too much and besides, it might make the client uncomfortable (!).

There's some really interesting facets of the clarifying questions. On the surface, they are so simple, so obvious.

“Tell me more. What do you mean by X?”

“In what way specifically did she do Y?”

“Where and when did he do Z and how are you interpreting that?”

In practice, however, it is so easy to get caught up in the story and readily hallucinate details of the story that the client has not specified and to assume you know what they are talking about. This is the seduction of *the story*. It is the hesitation to ask the specificity questions. It is the worry that if we ask for too much specification, we'll look ignorant or foolish. After all, you are the expert and you should just know(!). Yet it is through the clarification questions that we facilitate the client becoming clear. This is where your willingness to *know nothing and assume nothing* forces the client to *make him or herself clear to you*. And typically, to do that, they discover things that they had generalized, distorted, or deleted. The power of coaching is that we are enabled to hear ourselves as we have never heard ourselves before.

Of course, you can wimp out and just go with the fluff. You can let your client's vague descriptions hypnotize you into assuming that you understand, that you know what they are talking about, and then there will be two of you in fluff-land wallowing around in a pseudo-understanding and working at the cutting-edge of mediocrity.

It takes courage to ask the clarifying questions and to keep asking them until the client is pouring with sweat trying to make his or her fluff clear, to say what they have not said. It takes courage and persistence and belief that the answers truly lie within the client if you hold the space for the struggle for clarity. And if you let your client off the hook when she says, “I don't know...” then that's your way of wimping out. After all, “I don't know” is no answer. It's a defense against knowing or an escape from doing the work of knowing or it's a trick to get you to enter into a co-dependent relationship of saving them the mental work of exploring into the darkness.

“I don’t know” is just another hiding place that clients go when they feel “uncomfortable” and if you let them get by with that, you reinforce that as a habit and a way of avoiding themselves. This is precisely when they need your challenge. So begin with the basic NLP response, “If you did know, what would you say?” After that, use the other nine responses that we use in Meta-Coaching. (You’ve memorized those 10 responses to “I don’t know,” haven’t you?)

As a Meta-Coach, you are the one to challenge the client to come out from behind him or herself and stop hiding. Come out and be real. “I don’t know” only speaks about the requisite skill that some people have developed in masking reality from themselves— from their own reality. It reveals one of their ego-defenses that they use to avoid self-confrontation and vulnerability.

The secret in asking clarification questions is to ask seven to ten of them in a row about the subject and not to let the client off with just one or two. It is by staying with the focus on bringing the subject into focus that we facilitate the client truly digging down deep inside to flush out the assumptive frames and confusions that have created the fog that has been creating the confusion.

I see a lot of this every time I benchmark in *Coaching Mastery* and I find it astonishing. A client begins and before I have hardly any picture in my mind of the situation, the coach has jumped in with solutions! When I stop the coach and ask, “Are there any other clarification questions that you might want to ask?” most of the time they say, “No. None that I can think of.”

Then I ask them 5 to 10 questions —questions that ask about when, where, how much, can they do it now, if so, do what degree, is that the problem, is that the solution, is that a resource, etc. Questions that if they don’t ask will force them to assume, guess, mind-read, and project. If you don’t have the guts to clarify, you will probably end up trying to solve the wrong problem or go for the wrong outcome with your client. And when you do that, you only lower your own credibility as an effective coach in their eyes.

So here’s to developing the guts, the courage, the balls to ask the bold questions, the personal questions, the clarification questions. After all, *the clarification conversation is the first conversation in any coaching session.*

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #11
March 17, 2010

COACHING IS THE CONVERSION

I have recently been reflecting on the essence of coaching, the heart of coaching, the key variables that make up this new phenomenon that we call “coaching.” When all was thought and said and evaluated— my reflection led to the following statements:

Coaching is the conversation. The conversation is how you coach. Coaching ultimately comes down to a *conversation*—to what and how you are conversing with your client. Ultimately that exchange of words and ideas (the dialogue) about hopes, dreams, fears, etc. is what we call “coaching.”

Now if that’s true, then *how* are you at engaging in the kind and quality of *conversation* that makes it worth \$100 an hour, or \$500 or even \$1000 an hour? What is so special about a coaching conversation that would make it that valuable, that beneficial to a client? And what can a mere conversation do?

Since the beginning of Meta-Coaching, one of the descriptions I have used is that *coaching is a conversation like none other*. And later, as I began writing the series of Meta-Coaching books, I wrote that *coaching is a fierce conversation*. I got that idea from Graham Richardson and from Michelle Duval and other expert coaches. Then I came across the book by Susan Scott by that title. And for that reason, I have just completed writing several of these reflections on how to be bold and courageous in your coaching conversations and how to avoid being a conversation wimp.

It is the mere conversation, the normal and average conversation, that makes it lame or wimpy. And when you have that, you do not have an effective *coaching conversation*. You will not have a conversation that can facilitate the unleashing of potentials, which is the unique domain of coaching. So you have to avoid the mere conversation. Yet what usually seduce you into those “normal” conversations is that they are made up of the same stuff that comprises a fierce conversation. Both normal conversations and powerfully fierce conversations are comprised of words, gestures, and the quality of your voice. No wonder it is so easy for many coaches to slip into having a nice chat.

In the biography book on Donald Trump, *Trump: How to Get Rich* (2004), author and interviewer Meredith McIver quoted “the Donald” saying this:

“Rarely does a day go by in which I don’t have five to ten conversations that change the way I see the world.” (p. 122)

Shazam! Isn’t that absolutely amazing?! *5 to 10 conversations daily! Conversations that*

change the way I see the world!! Can you say that? I can't. Not 5 to 10. No way. If I have one conversation a day that changes my perspective on things, I consider myself really fortunate, and that the day has been an incredibly transformative one, and I record it in the book of "Amazing Things that have Happened in my Life!" How about you? How about your clients?

Would your clients regularly sign off on the following indicators:

- Yes, my coaching conversation today with my coach was transformative so that I now see things in a new way.
- Yes, my coaching conversation today got to the heart of things and was a conversation like none other.
- Today the coaching conversation radically altered one of my frames of mind; I'll never be the same!

Or would they check off one of the following:

- I like my coaching conversation; it was a nice chat.
- In my coaching conversation we talked about some interesting things.
- I felt that my coaching conversation was mostly a waste of time, we really didn't get to the heart of things.
- Why the hell do I pay for this Coaching? I should just go to a pub!

What do you think? My guess is that most conversations are a waste of time and effort. They are shallow, self-serving, mediocre, and not real. My guess is that most business meeting conversations skirt the real issues, are mostly made up of political and positioning moves, and fail in terms of learning, growth, and transformation. What do you think? And isn't this a great reason for the coaching profession— to help people learn how to use conversations more powerfully and productively?

How can we make our everyday conversations more productive? The answer is simple: *Make them more real*. If you make them real, people will become engaged, curious, fascinated, and responsible. They will come out from behind themselves— their masks, positions, P.R. and be real— honest, transparent, open, and vulnerable. And this creates the context for insights and transformations. And isn't that the whole purpose of the crucible model and the crucible conversation?

And how do we make them more real? By confrontation. You have to confront people with themselves. You have to hold up the mirror. You have to ask those extremely personal questions that no one else will ask. You have to get in there and call for reality. This is the heart of the Crucible and it is the place where transformation occurs. So what would you check off:

- I recognized the heart of the matter in my client and confronted him or her.
- I danced around the heart of the matter, but never got to it.
- I love the confrontation part of coaching.
- I avoid the confrontation part like the plague.
- In my own self-coaching, I'm always seeking the next level of self-confrontation.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #12
March 24, 2010

THE ANSWER IS IN THE QUESTION

An Adventure on the Phone

This past week during my Tax Break¹ I received three calls, each asking for advice, suggestions, information, or help in some form or other and with all three I used the same pattern in responding.

¹“Tax Break” — Yes, I suppose I could call this my Spring Break because March 21 is “the first day of spring” here, but I’m home to complete my taxes, so it’s my Tax Break.

The one from a lady with a southern accent was the longest call.

“I need to know how to break the bondage I have with a hypnotherapist that I have become too dependent on, I feel that I have to check everything in my life with her and I don’t think it’s right, I don’t want to do it, so what book do you have on audio-tape that could help me in knowing what I need to do break with this? I think I might be in a cult and maybe I won’t be able to get out of this.”

“You need a book? I think I just heard you tell me the answer that you’re looking for and that you already know the answer!”

“What? You did?”

“Yes, I just heard you tell me that you already know that the dependency you have with this therapist is not healthy and that you have made a decision to break it off.”

“Yes, but I don’t know how. I’m afraid I’ll just go right back. Is this normal? I think I may be in a cult. How can a person get out of a cult....”

“Wooooo woooo tooooo much ... slow down! You are going so fast I’m going to have to get on a motorcycle to keep up with you! [laughter] One moment you tell me that you know it is not right, that it isn’t empowering you, and now you are whining about what you know you have to do. So what is it? Will you or won’t you break it off?”

“Yes, but...”

“Ahhh, yes but.... Wooooooo there you go again, *yes butting* your way to excuses! Are you selling yourself short? Selling what you know inside short? Back out of what you know you have to do?”

“But I’m afraid...”

“Good! That’s good that you can hear your emotions. Now take the second step, step back and reality check that emotion. Is that fear realistic or unrealistic? Is it saying anything you need to

listen to? [No.] So what if you're afraid? Is that going to stop you?"

"No."

"Great! So what's your next step?"

"Well I ... I ... I don't know."

"Okay, so some questions. Have you made up your mind once and for all that *you are in charge of you*, you get to choose your values and beliefs, and that you get to and are responsible for living *your* life?"

"Ahhhh ... but what if..."

"Oh, now you're going to excuse yourself with the *what ifs!* What do you say that we not go there. Well, unless you want to. Maybe you do want to be dominated by this hypnotherapist! Maybe you shouldn't bold stand up for your right to be you! Maybe you should just wimp out and be a cult-member and worship her wisdom!"

"NO!"

"Okay then. Have you made up your mind..."

"Yes, dammit! I have made up my mind."

"And are you ready to stop taking counsel of every irrational and childish fear that calls to you in the back of your mind? Or are you going to wimp out in that ..."

"No, I will not give in to those fears. They're irrational and silly. I know that."

"Okay, so how are you going to take control of your powers —your mental powers, emotional powers, behavioral powers, powers of your language, powers to choose? What can you begin to do right now?"

"Well, I feel a lot of energy in my body as you say that. So maybe I'll think about that and repeat that to myself."

"Good. So you know what to do; you know the answers to the questions you called me about. You didn't need me except to hear and mirror back the answers you already had within yourself. So do you think you might begin to also listen to the wisdom that you have?"

"No one has ever talked to me this way before or interrupted me so much! Ah, I kind of liked it because you didn't put up with my B.S. and excuses."

"So now you have a model for how to not put up with your B.S. and excuses, don't you? Now you have a model for interrupting yourself when you start whining about what you can't do and focus on your truths. Are you ready to do that? Really? ... So who can you get in your life to hold you accountable to that? [Pause] Come on ..." [And so she did.]

Reflection: One of the principles of Meta-Coaching and Neuro-Semantics is that *if you listen deep enough and high enough, people will tell you the answer to their dilemmas*. They will put it out on a silver platter for you. But you can't be in a Problem-Solving mode, a Fix-It mode, a "I've got the answer to your problems" mode. You have to listen to what they say and don't say. And once you hear it, *you can then help them hear themselves!* Ah, yes, this is where the awareness questions and the self-listening questions comes in.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflection #12
Feb. 14, 2010

THE VERBAL CONTRACT

While you are practicing your coaching skills and having coaching conversations with actual clients or practicing in the practice groups, or even having conversations with friends—remember that if *coaching is to be a conversation like none other*, then you must begin by getting the client's outcome. After all, coaching is all about the client. It is not about you at all! It is not about your advice, wisdom, expert knowledge, experiences, knowledge, or feelings. It is about supporting the client to clarify what he or she wants and then facilitating that process.

So the first coaching question is always, "What do you want?" Now some versions of this question can be some of the following:

"What is the outcome that you want in your life, your health, your career, your relationships that I can assist you with?" "What is the most important thing you and I can talk about in the next hour?" "What change do you want to make that will unleash more of your potentials?" "What problem or challenge is interfering with you being at your best that you will like to explore that will make a transformative difference in your life?"

Now the seduction of *the outcome question* is that you will settle for, you will buy, you will jump on the first thing your client says. Don't do that! Whatever your client says— *explore it*. Question it. Ask lots and lots of clarification questions. Find out *why* your client wants whatever he or she says that he or she wants. *Question your client with the well-formed outcome questions!*

By now you should not only know those well-formed outcome questions very well, you should pretty much have them memorized. That's my recommendation. If you want to become a great Coach, an excellent Coach of tremendous skill— be sure to know the well-formed outcome distinctions and questions and to ask them with persistence, passion, and patience.

What—

- 1) What do you want? (State in the positive)
- 2) Where will this occur? (Context)
- 3) What are the sensory qualities of this? (Sensory-based)

When —

- 4) When do you expect to achieve this objective? (Time-frame)

How —

- 5) What do you have to *do* to obtain what you want? (Actions)

What actions are involved? How many actions?

- 6) Are these actions part of a single response or many? (Steps and stages)
If more than one, how many stages are involved, how many steps?
- 7) Are *you* able to do this? Is it *intrinsic* to you? (Initiate and maintain responses)
- 8) Do you have the know-how for this, a strategy? (Plan)
- 9) Do you have the resources, internal and external, for this? (Resources)

Check —

- 10) Is it compelling in a powerful and passionate way? (Compelling)
- 11) Is it realistic, holistic, balanced, congruent in your life? (Ecological)

Check Off —

- 12) How will you know when you achieve it, when to stop striving for it?
(Evidence Procedure)

With this list of a dozen questions *you have the ability to facilitate your client to create a well-formed outcome*. And when you do that, you create with them a verbal contract for your coaching session or program. Now you have a contract! Now you are ready to coach.

“I’ve not been coaching up until now?” Oh yes you have! You have been coaching for clarifying and decision about what they will be coached to. In fact, you have been coaching for one of the most important things that people seek coaching for—clarity about their goals. The great majority of people want things, but do not have clear goals or well-formed goals. They are ill-formed.

Now in Meta-Coaching, we recommend that you and your client take one more minute once you have a well-formed outcome. Take one more minute and solidify it into a single sentence. Begin with the words,

“By the end of this session, I will _____ [do X] which will satisfy _____ [Y values, conditions, qualities] and I will have evidence of this by _____ [Z evidence] which I can check off as accomplished.”

Now you have a Key Performance Indicator (KPI). It is as simple as that; it is as challenging as that; it is as empowering as that. Do that and your client will be able to *measure* the difference that the coaching conversation has made in his or her life. This is important because if your client can measure that difference in this specific way, *your client has a way of talking about that difference to friends and colleagues*. And when you have that, then you have a person who will be singing the praises of your coaching excellence! And that’s the most effective way to build a thriving coaching business.

Here’s to your ability to create wonderfully specific Verbal Contracts!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflection #13
Feb. 21, 2010

PRACTICING YOUR COACHING GENIUS STATE

If there is anything that distinguishes a Meta-Coach, it is that *you know how to step into your coaching genius state at will and be fully engaged and presence to your client.* This distinguishing factor sets you apart as a coach and empowers you to be truly present to your client. And your client will know that. Your presence of attention, care, compassion, and engagement will energize your client—awaken them.

Why? Because it is such a rare experience! It is so rare because most people think that listening is a passive skill. It is not. As a Meta-Coach, you know that it is an active, a very, very active skill and that it requires so much of you. And that's precisely why you access your coaching genius state—so that you can be fully there.

The “genius” state is the result of meta-stating all of the process frames that allow you to stop multi-tracking and release all of the concerns in your meta-mind so that you can come fully to your senses in the moment with your client. Fritz Perls expressed it this way: “Lose your mind and come to your senses.” The big mystery for years was, “Okay, but *how* do you do that?” Now we know, we use the meta-level frames to protect the know-how information and the why of purpose and intention. Paradoxically, it is these meta-states that allows us to return fully to the primary state.

You learned *the genius state* on day 3 of APG. That was the day that you set your highest intention, got your big *why* and then practiced stepping in and out of your coaching genius state. (You did that, right?) If not, it is never too late to develop that strategy and capacity. The genius state begins like a circle or sphere of excellence. But there are differences. You begin by accessing a time when you were in a pure and intense state of engagement with a client. If you don't have a referent experience, then you invent what it will be like to be completely engaged and present.

How? By simply using the basic NLP mapping questions.

“What will you see, hear, and sense when you are there?”

“How much are you experiencing that right now?”

“What do you need to do to make it even stronger, more compelling?”

Use such mapping questions to simply map your experience and strategy for being in a state of pure presence. Now begin to step in and out of that state. Do so for the purpose of letting your body, your neurology, your posture, your gestures, your breathing, and so on fully *know* what it is

like to be there and what it is like when you step out. There are several goals for the process of stepping in and out over and over again. One is to distinguish at finer and finer levels the differences. This tunes your body so your neurology “knows.” Another is to practice the fine art of impeccable state shifting. Shift states so that you can cleanly and clearly move from one intense engagement state to a neutral witnessing state, to another intense engagement state.

This will enable you to know how to be interrupted without feeling interrupted. Then when an interrupt comes, you will quickly and cleanly step out, take care of the interruption and then step back in just as cleanly—picking up precisely where you left off without any loss of attention. How about that?

The problem that humans have who don’t have that skill is that interruptions *interrupt*. Then they forget where they were, what they were doing, what they were thinking, what they were going to say or write ... they lose their place. They lose their focus. Now they have to start all over!

The problem is that they were double-tracking while they were being interrupted, *trying* hard to remember where they were, what they were doing, and yet while trying to do that, they were being engaged with the interruption ... and then when they return, they have so diluted their mind, their attention, that they often suffer amnesia. They forget.

The paradox is that when you can totally release the state of engagement, leaving it intact and not taking any of it with you is that it will be there fully when you return. That’s why learning to step out and then step back in will teach you a deeper trust of yourself. And then when you are with your client, you can be fully present without double-tracking or multi-tasking or any other of the common modern diseases of the mind.

So while you are in this interim between Part I and Part II of the *Coaching Mastery* program—if you don’t have your “coaching genius state” fully developed so that you can turn it on and off at will, then practice it. Get with a colleague and practice. Practice at the practice group sessions. Practice with yourself—read and work through the pattern until it becomes second-nature to you.

Do that and you will be laying the foundation for becoming an excellent coach, a coach who when the client shows up—also shows up, fully and completely.

To your best coaching genius state!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflection #14
March 31, 2010

MASLOW ON COACHING SKILLS

I've been re-reading Maslow. Again. In fact, I've been re-reading *everything* he ever wrote in preparation for the newest Self-Actualization Workshop, *Unleashing Vitality*. And as I have, I have been noticing various sections wherein Maslow speaks about Coaching. Okay, okay, not in those words. He never used the word "coaching." He used other terms as he spoke about the profession of facilitating self-actualization in people who are psychologically healthy.

So what did Maslow call these people? In one place, he called them *meta-counselors*. Here is what he wrote about the need for this new class of helpers, the meta-counselors:

"These B-values [B stands for *being*, the realm of self-actualization] behave like needs. I have called them meta-needs. Their deprivation breeds certain kinds of pathologies which have not yet been adequately described, but which I call meta-pathologies—the sicknesses of the soul which come, for example, from living among liars all the time and not trusting anyone. Just as we need counselors to help people with the simpler problems of unmet needs, *so we may need meta-counselors* to help with the soul-sicknesses that grow from the unfulfilled meta-needs. ... These B-values are the meaning of life for most people, but many people don't even recognize that they have these meta-needs." (1971: 43)

How about that?! As counselors work with people still struggling to meet their basic (or lower) needs, *so meta-counselors* work with people who are ready to fulfil and gratify the meta-needs of self-actualization. Today we call them *Coaches* and in Neuro-Semantics, *Meta-Coaches*. I think Maslow would have liked that.

Maslow went further. He even describes what these *Meta-Counselors* would "teach."

"Practically everyone does have peak experiences, but not everyone knows it. Some people wave these small mystical experiences aside. Helping people to recognize these little moments of ecstasy when they happen is one of the jobs of the ...meta-counselor." (1971: 47)

Peak experiences are those glorious little goosebump moments when you feel the ecstasy, joy, and wonder of the higher life, the meta-life. They come all along the way, even when you are still learning how to gratify the lower needs as little "tastes of heaven" to seduce you into the pathway and adventure of moving into the self-actualizing life. Here Maslow notes that we all have those moments of peak experiences, "but not everyone knows it." People discount. People ignore them and pooh-pooh them. High achievers sometimes think they are nothing. But "helping people recognize these little moments of ecstasy when they happen" —awakening them to the higher life—this is one of the jobs of a Coach.

Maslow speaks to the Coaching relationship in many places in his writings and in many ways.

Like Carl Rogers, his emphasis always was on treating people as unique and understanding him or her on that person's unique terms:

“The patient must be approached as a single, unique person rather than as a member of a class. Understanding a person is not the same as classifying or rubricizing him. And understanding a person is the *sine qua non* for therapy.” (1968: 130)

Now in Meta-Coaching we know that truly coming to understand a client is not an easy task. It requires intense active listening and supporting. What makes full-attention listening and supporting is that the habit we all have learned of “putting on our listening face!”

“Often we use the present not for its own sake but in order to prepare for the future. Think how often in a conversation we put on a listening face as the other person talks, secretly however preparing what we are going to say, rehearsing, planning a counterattack perhaps. Think how different your attitude would be right now if you knew you were to comment on my remarks in five minutes. Think how hard it would be then to be a good, total listener. If we are totally listening or totally looking, we have thereby given up this kind of ‘preparing for the future.’ ... this kind of forgetting the future is a prerequisite to total involvement with the present.” (1971: 62)

That's about listening, Maslow also wrote about supporting. Mostly he focused on the importance of safety in the helping relationship. He said that one must set up the situation so that it is

“... permissive, admiring, praising, accepting, safe, gratifying, reassuring, supporting, unthreatening ... where the person can feel completely safe and unthreatened... Growth an emerged only from safety. ... Only when his fears are accepted respectfully, can he dare to be bold. We must understand that the dark forces are as ‘normal’ as the growth forces.” (1968: 53)

About these first two core coaching skills, Maslow wrote a lot about whole-hearted attention—attending a client with an attention that is absolutely focused and whole-hearted so that you are completely there and present.

“Self-actualization means experiencing fully, vividly, selflessly, with full concentration and total absorption.” (1971: 44)

“To the fullest extent possible the ego, its experiences, and its preconceptions, its hopes, and its fears are to be put aside if we are to apprehend the *per se* intrinsic nature of the experience before us.” (1970, 208)

Maslow was able to speak to coaching before the word “coaching” was applied to working with psychologically healthy people because coaching today is carrying on his work of enabling and facilitating the highest and best in each person, in everyone becoming his or her best self, and creating their own best version.

Code for References to Abraham Maslow's works:

1968 *Toward a Psychology of Being*

1970 *Motivation and Personality* (second edition, original 1954)

1971 *Further Reaches of Human Nature*

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #15
April 7, 2010

THE KPI IS NOT A FEELING!

If there is one thing that seduces new Coaches or at least Coaches new to working to specifically lock down a well-formed outcome into a *Key Performance Indicator*, it is thinking that a KPI can be a feeling. Have you been seduced by that deception? Most people learning this Meta-Coach distinction are. It is so common that when I get with the Team Leaders to review how the coaching sessions went, I have learned to ask not only if someone got the KPI and locked it down with specificity, but also to ask: Was the KPI a feeling?

That's when the fun begins. If they say yes, then I ask for the feeling, and when they tell me the feeling, then I mischievously get a twinkle in my eye, and pausing for effect, I then ask the testing question: Can you do that now?

“Yes, he got a KPI, he would know by feeling confident at the end of the session, and he would know that by breathing calmly and feeling his muscles tense at an optimal level.”

“Hmmm. Sounds great. Can he do that now?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, can he ‘feel confident’ now? Can he breath calmly right now? Can he tense his muscles at an optimal level right now?”

That's when a sheepish look begins to emerge on the face of the speaker whether a Team Leader or a Coach who thinks he or she has been in the presence of a real live KPI. “Well, yeah.” That's when I like taking a very intentional and obvious breath, pause again for dramatic effect, and then make a pronouncement on the coaching session with solemnity: “Done!” And just for effect, “Give me my money!”

Yes, it is sweet torture to the coach (or Team Leader), the sweat torture that suddenly deflates the excitement of thinking that a KPI was achieved. But it is a necessary pain and one designed to drive home the lesson that a KPI is about *performance— action*, not feeling. So, do you think that your outcome is a feeling? Then think again. Do you think you have a KPI when your client tells you about a feeling that he wants? Don't be deceived; it is not. You have just begun, there's a lot more to do.

What do you do next? Ah, that's easy. Next you ask this *performance question*.

“What do you have to *do* in order to feel X? What will you have to accomplish, achieve, engage in, develop, or complete in order for you to legitimately feel Y?”

It is those actions that will then evoke the desired emotions. The emotions are the result of achieving something. But what? *That's the question—the coaching question.* So when the client gives you a feeling, valid it. “Okay, and what will you need to *do* so that you can legitimately experience that feeling?”

I have used the word *legitimately* twice and on purpose. Emotions and feelings can be *illegitimate*. You can feel an emotion in a genuine, lawful way, one that adheres and conforms to the principles of emotional generation or in a way that cheats, that's illegitimate.

Suppose a client wants to feel confidence. To cheat on that one, just access an experience of confidence, invite the client to step into that memory or imagination, to feel it fully, anchor it, and then transfer it to the context where the client wants to feel confidence. Presto! Instant confidence. Of course, that doesn't make the person *competent* to actually *do* or *perform* whatever the context requires—the person will *feel confident* but not be able to speak effectively in public, hit a tennis ball with skill, run an unknown computer program, speak elegantly about the Axes of Change model, etc. The *confidence feelings* are false, illegitimate, ungenue, and deceptive.

An effective Meta-Coach knows to ask the performance question:

“What will you need to *do* to feel confident about ...
... delegating so that you can trust that your people will carry on the project?”
... selling yourself as an Executive Coach?”

The bottom line is that the KPI is about performance. When you look for the *indicators* that will let you and your client *know* that he or she has achieved a desired and compelling outcome, you are searching for the critical success factors, the *key* action that will indicate that.

So the next time you sit down with a client and go for a desired outcome that the client really wants and will pay good money to obtain, don't cheat your client by going for a cheap emotion—go for facilitating a greater performance. Go for facilitating a performance of your client that will require him or her to experience a transformational change of such magnitude that the emotion that your client wants will naturally and inevitably emerge. Do that with client after client, and you will develop a thriving Coaching business!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #16
April 14, 2010

HOW'S YOUR CONFRONTATION SKILLS AS A COACH?

In Meta-Coaching we have identify that there are six kinds of conversations that you, as a Coach, can have with a client. One of those is the Confrontation conversation. Ah, confrontation. And *why* would you do that? And if you have a big reason for doing that, *how* would you do that? What skills are involved? What processes?

The reason *why* is that sometimes a client shows up in your office (or you in his or hers) and the client seems to be blinded to his or her current reality. The client is suffering from the blindness created by his or her blind-spots. Ah, blind spots— areas of one's actions, words, and responses that the client cannot see. Blind spots are often created by our driving meta-programs. The very meta-program (global / specific; matching / mismatching; internal / external authority sort, etc.) which are our best strengths and gives us our outstanding talents is at the same time the very place where we are blind, and even blind to that blindness.

Blind spots can also be the very thinking patterns (especially the cognitive distortions) that drive how a client thinks, reasons, and creates his or her frames. Blind spots are typically at the meta-levels which are outside-of-consciousness and so beyond the kin of our awareness. That's where the receiving of the client's responses and mirroring them back provides such a powerful response— and a confrontational one.

There's another place that blind spots show up. They show up in the very processes we use to protect ourselves, defense our way of life, and so our defense mechanisms operate not only as security operations, they operate as blinding influences. They blind us to ourselves. So if you know the typical defense mechanisms and can detect them, call attention to them, feed them back to your client, then you will be able to confront these blinding influences.

Finally, there are in all of us areas that we have just not paid attention to. We're blind to such areas simply because we give them no thought and no attention. This may arise because we dis-value certain things or we may just not understand how they are important. You may also want to confront a client's inconsistencies, limitations, sabotages, and so on. So if you didn't know what you would *confront* in a client —now you have several ideas, several areas.

Now a coaching confrontation conversation is a dialogue that we initiate with our clients in order to bring to their awareness factors that influence their experience. And to do so generally means that we are bringing up *an unpleasant subject*, one that our client would prefer to avoid. This is what distinguishes a Confrontational Conversation from the other conversations. You are

bringing up something that's essentially *unpleasant*.

And when you do, you can expect denial, rejection, resistance, and a whole range of defense mechanisms. It's natural. It's to be expected. It is even to be expected of people who are psychologically healthy. A person doesn't have to be sick or neurotic to use defense mechanisms. All people do. I do. You do. It's "human nature." And that's good. It's good because *protection* is built into us. You wouldn't want a client who is so soft, so open, so easy that there's no strength of backbone, tenacity, persistence, commitment.

In a Coaching Confrontational Conversation, you bring to your client's awareness things that will typically be unpleasant and undesirable. You may confront behavior that isn't working. You may confront language patterns that are at the source of limitation and diminishing. You may confront frames that will undermine and sabotage. You may confront whether they are actually carrying out their action plans and translating what they know intellectually into what they do behaviorally. You may confront an over-used driving meta-program, cognitive distortion, or attitude.

And why? I think that should be obvious— to provide a real-time personal *mirror* of what's going on so that the person can unleash more potentials. The confrontation is part and parcel of a fierce conversation that gets to the heart of things.

But how? How do you do it so that it works, so that it is effective, so that transformation occurs, and so that you don't lose your client? Ah, the *how!* Yes, that's where the art and the skill of confrontation comes in. Otherwise we will confront in all of the highly dysfunctional way that we've learned and seen others confront— yelling, accusing, judging, pointing the finger, mind-reading, using "you" language, etc.

There actually are two confrontational conversations you can have as a coach, the first is when you confront your client with something that's getting in the way with the client reaching his or her desired outcomes. The second is when you are facilitating two or more people to confront each other about some issue or difference that they are in conflict about. In that case you are facilitating a confrontational conversation between two or more parties to work through to understanding and some resolution.

To know more about coaching confrontation, I will describe the stages for doing this effectively in the next couple Meta Coach Reflections as well as a Confrontation Model that you can use when you are coaching people through the process.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #17
April 21, 2010

EVIDENCE-BASED COACHING

Last week I received a brand new book by a Meta-Coach, *NLP Coaching: An Evidence-based approach for coaches, leaders, and individuals* (2010) by Susie Linder-Pelz, Ph.D. Now 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 supply of the book so that you can give it to CEOs and companies who want evidence of the validity of Coaching and Meta-Coaching.

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.

But more than that, I am really impressed with Chapter 7— *Systemic Principles for Coaching*. Susie uses eight of the presuppositional premises of NLP and Neuro-Semantics to show *how coaching works*. It is an elegant chapter that gets to the heart of the process of coaching. This is a chapter that I highly recommend, one that I think every Meta-Coach should read and know. It will help your comprehension of this ever-evolving field.

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. And some of these questions are exclusively focused for Meta-Coaching, so if you or someone you know are looking for an excellent *research question* to explore to write a thesis or a dissertation on, you would do well to start here.

Susie ends the book in Part III by describing Symbolic Modelling and Meta-Coaching as two NLP forms of Coaching. One of Susie’s skills is to write a clear and succinct summary of a model or process. You can really see this in Chapter 10. First she summarizes Lawley and Tompkin’s *Symbolic Modelling* using Clean Language. If you want to know what “symbolic modelling” means in NLP, here are a few short pages that gives you an overview. And the so-called “clean language” (which I still think is a misleading title; for more see my review on that on the website), but the 9 questions essentially explores the meta-state of a client’s *metaphor* and the meta-level “landscape” of that form of meaning.

Then Susie provides an overview of 4 models of Meta-Coaching: NLP, Meta-States, Axes of Change, and Benchmarking. I am impressed with her succinct description of the Meta-States model. She highlights the role of reflexivity, the step-back skill, the process of meta-stating or framing, the principles and premises of Meta-States and much more. Now while Susie is not a Neuro-Semantic trainer, she shows excellent understanding of the Meta-States model. So if you want a few quick pages about *the Meta-States Model*, you can't do better than pages 127-131. She even addresses a leading misunderstanding that many NLPers have, that meta-stating is just "collapsing" of anchors. She shows that it is not, but that the reflexivity of meta-states leads to the coalescing of levels. And that you have to think systemically to realize what that means.

For *The Axes of Change* (pp. 131-133) she similarly provides a short and to the point description of the model, the generative change focus, the levels of change, and the 8 coaching roles that emerge from that model. And then in Chapter 12 she addresses the subject of Benchmarking.

The weakness of the book is that the Meta-Coach System is now so much more than when she began writing this book! Since 2003 when she took her Meta-Coach training (and Susie was our Expert Coach in 2004), Meta-Coaching as a training has continued to evolve! For some reason, she didn't mentioned *the Matrix Model* which has been part of the Meta-Coach System from the beginning. And since 2007, we have introduced several additional models: *The Self-Actualization Quadrants*, *the Matrix-Embedded Volcano or Pyramid*, *the Six Coaching Conversations*, *the Facilitation Model* and *the Advanced KPI model*. Also the 26 Coaching Skills have evolved to more than 50 skills that we have benchmarked.

Susie has also included in this book a rich description of a lot of the NLP Research that's going on around the world and the key players who are leading out in research. She speaks about *mirror neurons* and some of the current research about such as well as a clear description of *self-organizing systems*.

There's much more that I could write about the book. As a research-focused book, it is well-written. I would encourage you, as a Meta-Coach, to get a copy so that you have at your fingertips this supporting data for what you do as a Coach and especially as a Meta-Coach. And to Susie —

“Meta-High Fives for an excellent book! Well done. May many use this work and follow in the path that you have pioneered in this community!”

Contact information:

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
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #18
April 21, 2010

THE WHAT AND THE HOW OF CONFRONTATION

In last week's Meta-Reflection on Confrontation Skills I mentioned a number of the key things that, as a Coach, you will want to confront in your coaching. Now for a fuller list

What to Confront

With a single client or with oneself:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1) Blind spots | meta-programs, frames, assumptions. |
| 2) Inconsistencies | incongruencies, inauthenticity, conflicting roles, presentations. |
| 3) Closedness | defense mechanisms, secrets, refusal to talk or communicate. |
| 4) Limitations | beliefs, frames, patterns. |
| 5) The unsayable | taboos, rules of prohibition. |
| 6) Sabotages | behaviors, habits, lies, dishonesty. |
| 7) Consequences | impact on others. |
| 8) Responsibilities | areas of response, liabilities, accountability. |

With two or more clients:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 9) Misunderstandings | different ways of processing, meta-programs, values |
| 10) Relational behaviors | patterns, roles, expectations |

Now for more about the how. And this is where the two core skills you learned in *Coaching Mastery* come in and shine. That's where the receiving and the giving of feedback is most impactful as a coaching methodology. As a Coach, if you are actively and intensely listening, if you are calibrating to the person's non-verbal actions, movements, gestures, and to that person's semantic space, then from the moment you meet your client, you are *receiving* all kinds of feedback to your questions, comments, gestures, etc. the question for you is: Are you noticing? Are you in sensory-awareness? Are you in a space of non-judgmental attentiveness?

If you are, and if you are tracking the responses, then you can begin to compare the client's responses to your various questions and statements. Now you can begin the very sacred process of *reflecting back as a human mirror* what you are seeing, hearing, and detecting. That's the giving feedback part and that is, by its very nature, confrontative.

"I notice that twenty minutes ago when we began, you said you wanted to focus on your career goals, but since then you have been talking exclusively on your love relationship. Is that what we should focus on? Where are you?"

"Have you noticed that all of your references for your criteria for success in this endeavor is external and that you have not mentioned on internal one yet?"

The skill of confrontation is founded in the ability to notice distinctions, track a client's goals

with his or her experiences, pick up on patterns (pattern detection), recognize meta-programs, cognitive distortions, meta-model distinctions, etc. First you have to know something about how people function cognitively, emotionally, connotatively (in their choices), and behaviorally. And with the NLP and Neuro-Semantic models, you have that.

Next you have to be present to your client. And the more present, the more attentive, the more fully available, the more you'll pick up. If you're inside your own head preparing your next question or intervention, you won't see and hear. And once you recognize something to bring up and call to your client's attention ("confront"), then you have to have the ability to mirror it to your client in an effective way with the right timing.

Your client has, in fact, hired you to confront him. He may not have said that to you directly. She may have had no idea that coaching involves a very intimate and personal confrontation with one's truth and reality, yet it does. That's what coaching is about—a special time and space for self-reflection with the big questions of life:

Who am I? Who do I want to be? Where am I going? What am I best at? What potentials clamor within me to be developed and expressed? Who's going with me? What are my values and beliefs? What would I like to believe and value? How much richer can my life be? What do I have to contribute?

Sometimes the confrontation is more direct, more challenging, more cutting. It brings up a client's limitations, self-sabotaging behaviors, issues that have not been effectively resolved, past representations and meanings that are now sucking the life out of the person. And when you begin to touch on these things, you may get a lot of denial as the client uses various defense mechanisms and escape mechanisms to avoid the confrontation. We all do. It's in our nature to want to protect ourselves.

Yet if we also have a commitment to our highest and best, to the truth, to being real and authentic, we want to be confronted. We want to know what's real, what's effective, what is the way forward. Do you want to be confronted with the truth or would you prefer to be lied to, deceived, tricked? You know that you are in the presence of a psychologically healthy person because he or she will always say, "Yes! Let me have it."

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections – #19
April , 2010
New Book Launch

THE LAUNCHING OF META-COACHING BOOKS IN SPANISH

I landed in Mexico City recently and after a day of indepth Coach training for benchmarking with our Team Leaders — we spent that evening *launching the first two Meta-Coach books in Spanish*. This occurred on April 14th at the International Conference Center in a seminar room and all of this was created by Maru Eugenia Martinez.

So that evening we launched *Coaching Change* and *Winning the Inner Game*. Neuro-Semanticists *David Murphy* was the MC (master of ceremonies) at the event, *Maru Eugenia Martinez* introduced the first Meta-Coaching book, and *Omar Salom* spoke about the Frame Games book. I then had a chance to tell the “true” hidden story behind all of this!

It was eleven years ago that I made my first presentation of Neuro-Semantics in Mexico. That’s when I first presented the Meta-States Model in the APG (Accessing Personal Genius) training at Monterrey Mexico with Maria Luisa Rodriguez. And at that time I began hearing voices from many, many people, “Are there any of your books in Spanish?” “We would like to have this material in Spanish.” And that continued for more than a decade with the voices getting louder and more insistent as each year passed.

When I visited Chiapas Mexico where David Murphy is a licensed Neuro-Semantic Trainer (and now a Meta-Coach Trainer), the translator for me there, Bárbara Sierra, was so captivated by the Neuro-Semantic approach that she took it upon herself to begin translating *Coaching Change* in Spanish. And so for a year or two, we had the manuscript translated, but no publisher. That’s when Maru entered the scene. As a self-confessed “doer,” Maru got busy knocking on doors, making calls, and using her persuasion skills to find a publisher. Finally she found *Trillas* and more than a year ago, with Maru’s tutelage, I made an agreement with Trillas to publish it. And so using Barbara’s basic text, the translation was updated and finally last week published.

Now for a *doer*, seeing that it was taking a year to publish a manuscript, she considered that ridiculous especially given that the manuscript was already translated. So Maru, having watched the process and consulted with me about publishing, took it on herself to have *Winning the Inner Game* translated and published — which she achieved in 4 months—one-third of the time that it took for a professional publishing company! And as an aside, this is the spirit of Neuro-Semantics, the spirit that makes things happens! [Think mind-to-muscle, think actualizing best performances!] Maru hired Flor Montero, who has been our translator at the Meta-Coach Trainings for four years, do the translation.

So following the Neuro-Semantic premise, *We can do so much more together than alone or apart*, it took a community to make this happen. And what has begun will now allow Meta-Coaching in Latin America and Spain to begin to grow exponentially as more and more people will have access to the foundational books. And in the meantime, a publishing company in Madrid Spain has translated *User's Manual of the Brain, Volume I* (which is the basic NLP Practitioner course) into Spanish!

Here's a great big *Meta-High Five* to Omar, David, Barbara, and especially Maru for their vision, their passion, and their practical commitment to Neuro-Semantics in Mexico and Latin America! Well done!

Want a copy?? Great — here is some contact information to reach Maru:

alvarezm@hotmail.com

marumtzv@hotmail.com

Phone: (52) 5556597342

For *User's Manual of the Brain* – Palmyra, Madrid: 91 296-0200

www.palmyralibros.com

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #20
April 21, 2010

THE WHAT AND THE HOW OF CONFRONTATION– II

In last week's *Meta-Coaching Reflections* on Confrontation Skills I mentioned a number of the key things that, as a Coach, you will want to confront as you engage in the process of coaching. Now for a fuller list:

What to Confront

With a single client or yourself:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1) Blind spots | Meta-programs, frames, assumptions. |
| 2) Inconsistencies | Incongruencies, inauthenticity. |
| 3) Closedness | defense mechanisms, secrets, refusal to talk or communicate. |
| 4) Limitations | beliefs, frames, patterns. |
| 5) The unsayable | taboos, rules of prohibition |
| 6) Sabotages | behaviors, habits, lies, dishonesty |
| 7) Consequences | impact on others |
| 8) Responsibilities | areas of response, liabilities, accountability |

With two or more clients:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 9) Misunderstandings | different ways of processing, meta-programs, values |
| 10) Relational behaviors | patterns, roles, expectations |

Now for more about *the how*. And this is where the two core skills you learned in *Coaching Mastery* really shine. This is where the receiving and giving of feedback is most impactful as a coaching methodology. As a coach, *if* you actively and intensely listening, *if* you are calibrating to the person's non-verbal actions, movements, gestures, and to that person's semantic space, then from the moment you meet your client, you are *receiving* all kinds of feedback responses to your questions, comments, gestures, frames, etc. So the question for you is: Are you noticing? Are you in sensory awareness? Are you in a space of non-judgmental attentiveness? Are you fascinatingly curious and ready to explore?

If you are, and if you are tracking the responses, then you can begin to compare the client's responses to your various questions and framing. Now you can begin the very sacred process of *reflecting back as a human mirror* what you are seeing, hearing, and detecting. That's the *giving* feedback part, and that is, by its very nature, confrontative.

"I noticed that twenty minutes ago when we began, you said you wanted to focus on your core love relationship, yet since then you have been talking about your career goals. Is that what you truly want to focus on? Or is there something in the back of your mind that keeps moving you away from that subject?"

“Have you noticed that all of your references for your criteria for success in this endeavor are external and that you have not mentioned one internal reference yet? What are you now realize as you notice that?”

The skill of confrontation is founded in the ability to notice distinctions, track a client’s goals with his or her experiences, pick up on patterns (pattern detection), recognize meta-programs, cognitive distortions, meta-model distinctions, etc. First you have to know something about how people function cognitively, emotionally, conatively (in how they make choices and decisions), and behaviorally. And in the NLP and Neuro-Semantic Models, you have that.

Next you have to be present to your client. And the more present, the more attentive, the more fully available, the more you will pick up. If you’re inside your own head preparing your next question or intervention, you won’t see and hear what is right in front of you. And once you recognize something to bring up and call to your client’s attention (“confront”), then you have the ability to mirror it to your client and learn to do so in an effectively way with an elegant timing.

Actually, your client has hired you to confront him! He undoubtedly did not have say that to you explicitly. She may have no idea that coaching involves a very intimate and personal confrontation with one’s truth and reality. Yet it does. That’s what coaching is about to a great extent—a special time and space for self-reflection with the big questions of life:

“Who am I? Who do I want to be? Where am I going? What am I best at? What potentials are clamoring within me wanting to be developed and expressed? Who’s going with me? What are my values and beliefs? What would I like to believe and value? How much richer can my life be? What do I have to contribute? How am I doing? How well am I progressing? What am I missing? How can I sell myself short? What else is there?”

Sometimes the confrontation is more direct, more challenging, more cutting, more sensitive. It brings up a client’s limitations, self-sabotaging behaviors, issues that have not been effectively resolved for the person to go to the next level, past representations and meanings that are now activated by some new challenge—meanings sucking the life out of the person. And when you begin to touch on these things, you’re getting personal, you are likely to touch raw semantic nerves, and so you may get a lot of denial. The client may then begin to use various defense mechanisms and escape (avoidance) mechanisms to get away from the confrontation. We all do. It’s in our nature to protect ourselves.

Yet if we also have a commitment to our highest and best, to being real and authentic, then *we also want to be confronted*. Don’t you? We want to know what’s real, what’s effective, what is the way forward. Do you want to be confronted with the truth or would you prefer to be cuddled and protected *from* reality? To be lied to, deceived, tricked? You know that you are in the presence of a psychologically healthy person because he or she will always say,

“Yes, Let me have it! Bring on the mirror! Don’t hold back the light; I don’t need darkness or the shadows!”

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #21
April 28, 2010

COACHING CONFRONTATION WITH A GROUP

I mentioned in the past two *Meta-Coach Reflections* that there are two kinds of *Confrontational Conversations* that you can facilitate as a coach.

1) The first one is *The Confrontational Conversation*. This one is personal and individual, it is coach to client. Sometimes a client is actually seeking and willing to have a fierce conversation about a critical factor in his or her life that's undermining success. Sometimes it is the coach who recognizes a factor in the client that needs confronting— an inconsistency, a blind spot, a frame outside of the client's awareness. In every case, the confrontation needs to be *in service of the client's highest and best*.

So as a coach, you can ask yourself such questions as:

Will this confrontation help the client reach his or her desired outcome?

Will this confrontation facilitate greater self-awareness and choice in the client?

Does the client have the required resources and ego-strength to handle the confrontation?

In the end, coaching should always serve the client's self-actualization, not the coach's agenda. Once you know that this is the conversation that's needed, then ask yourself some questions:

Do I have the skills for this kind of a coaching conversation?

What skills, resources, frames of mind, etc. do I need in order to create a crucible space and then courageously bring up and hold the space for this conversation?

How clean and clear am I able to be in "bringing up something that's unpleasant" and that could "push buttons" in the client?

2) The second is *The Confrontational Process*. This conversation occurs when you as the coach facilitates a confrontation between two or more persons in order to flush out or resolve a conflict. So in this context, we are now talking about Group Coaching. And in this coaching conversation, you are essentially facilitating a conflict resolution. So if you are a group coach, even when you are a Team Leader at a *Coaching Mastery* training, this is the conversation you facilitate in order to get a group through the storming stage to the norming stage.

Again, there are a number of questions you can ask yourself to prepare for this conversation:

What state are the various persons in?

Are these states conducive for a confrontation about something that could be very personal, very sensitive, something semantically loaded?

What states do I need to elicit, evoke, and help the people in this conflict to access?

Do I know how to call forth the crucible space and hold it for a group of people?
How do I want to frame, preframe, be ready for on-the-spot framing, and post-framing so that it enables everyone to work from win/win, to be respectful, to reflect rather than react, to manage the intensity of their emotions and their expression, and to remember that everybody operates from fallible maps?

Does all of that sound challenging? You bet it is. *The Confrontation Conversations* are undoubtedly some of the most advance coaching conversations that you'll ever facilitate. And when you do, if you are skilled and competent, you are enabling people to have a fierce conversation about things that really matter, that are full of meaning, that are probably semantically-loaded, and that can create transformative change if handled well.

So what resources do you, as a Meta-Coach, have for learning the Confrontation Coaching Conversations? Here are some suggestions.

Begin with the *Conflict Resolution Agreement* that you signed when you became a Meta-Coach. It is in your *Coaching Mastery* training manual and is essentially a NLP/ NS pattern for conflict resolution. That gives you a short, succinct one-page pattern.

Next, if you have my book, *Games Great Lovers Play*, there are two chapters on “How to have a Great Fight.” I'd recommend that you use it as one of your resources. There is also a chapter on the “differences” that meta-programs make in couples which applies to any two or more people collaborating and trying to work together.

Then there is the attached file (a PDF file, 19 pages) that I have sent with this Meta-Coach Reflection. It offers you a *Conflict Resolution Process* and how to facilitate it through the many stages and steps. I wrote it originally in 1987 and published it as a small booklet. Recently I revisited it, updated it a bit, and now offer it exclusively to you— as a resource for learning these skills.

Here's to your upskilling as Meta-Coach for the Confrontation Conversation!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #22
May 5, 2010

CONFRONTATION AND THE CRUCIBLE

If there's any place that really highlights the *Confrontation Conversation* as a coach, it is when you use the Crucible Model. It is when you are having a Crucible Conversation. Do you know that one? If you have not read *Unleashed* or been to the *Unleashing Potentials* workshop, then the Crucible may be a new model and experience for you.

In Meta-Coaching, we have two change models for working with self-actualizing processes. First is the *Axes of Change Model*, the second one is the *Crucible Model*. While the first one enables you to engage in the “dance of change” and explicitly work with the four mechanisms of change for a psychologically healthy person, the second one is far more systemic. The second one is designed to engage a person in an *encounter of truth* that gets to the heart of things— and especially to anything that serves as a block to his or her highest self-actualization. The second model is especially appropriate when a self-actualizer person needs to *unlearn*.

Self-actualizing people can have blocks? Interferences? They can get stuck? Yes, of course. It's a human ability! Just because someone happens to get caught up into something and therefore “stuck” with the over-loading of meaning or the hurt of a pain or something, doesn't necessarily mean the person is needing therapy! Just as healthy people can experience pains and hurts physically without needing to go to a doctor for surgery, so they can also experience an inner pain that makes them “stuck” in some way.

Now there is a difference between the two models. While the *Axes of Change Model* is *not* designed for a therapeutic situation, the *Crucible Model* can fully be used not only for coaching clients but for people in need of therapy. And that's useful. That's because sometimes, as a Coach, you will begin a process that gives no indications of trauma and suddenly you are working with a traumatic event in the mind-heart of your client. And further, to that event, to the way he or she has coded and interpreted that event, suddenly the otherwise psychologically healthy person may regress and for a limited time become so unresourceful that ego-strength tends to vanish, perhaps an okay-sense of self.... and for a few minutes, the person needs some inner healing. And if you are using the *Crucible Model*, you can continue without blowing the whistle, ending the session, and referring out (!).

And I think this may especially be the case when you are in the coaching mode of *confronting a blind-spot, an incongruency, or a sensitive semantically over-loaded trigger*. One minute you have a person ready to take it on, the next minute the person has crumbled into a pile of tears and despair. I've seen this happen on several occasions. This speaks about the power of confrontation in coaching as well as the power of conversation, rapport, trust, and many of the

other critical ingredients of an effective coach.

To establish the hypnotic space of a Crucible, you first create a safe spot. You create it through accessing and inducing your client into unconditional self-valuing, pure sacred witnessing and observing, and then magical acceptance. Take all of that, put it into a construct of memory and imagination that brings out their best— and presto!, they suddenly enter into a Crucible space for discovery and change.

Now comes the confrontation with three fiery and hot ingredients: truth, responsibility, and appreciation. The heat that truth, truth-telling, authenticity, and ruthless honesty brings is heat that can cause the person to sweat, to squirm in the hot chair of your coaching room, and to feel the pressure that makes them feel like their ready to explode. That's great! Don't save them from that! Hold the safety elements and let them sweat. Let the pressure build up.

You are now at a transformative moment, a coaching moment, where your client has accessed sufficient energy that can be channeled into action— into responses, into powerful responses and we call that moment of choice point, *response-ability*. Hmmmm. Now you know that's how it comes together! So you ask, "And feeling the heat of that truth, what will you *do*?" Pedal to the metal. That's what this moments about. You are in the Creation Axes and you are making the transition from co-creating to actualizing. "What action will you take from this day forward?"

And now for the heat of appreciation— the energy that transforms pressure into valuing, sacred valuing, framing anew what once was fearful and scary. So you ask, "And what are you now appreciating about this that you never saw before?"

And when you hold your client in all of this, you can expect that there will be an explosion. So let it be. There will be an explosion, like an organism, into joy, love, enthrallment, or some other form of the glorious peak experience. This is the vitality of the meanings that's like an organism sexually, but this is an organism of your spirit. Thus ends the Confrontation Conversation. But you don't grab a cigarette and ask if it was good for them. No. You grab a notebook and ask, "What's your action plan?" Then you ask, "What was the best thing that you'll take from this coaching session today?"

Ah, for a Crucible Coaching Confrontation Conversation! May you have several this week!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #23
May 12, 2010

CONFRONTING THE QUEEN OF META-LAND

Just when I could proudly announce that I could get a KPI in 4 minutes with anyone, anywhere, about anything (!), I have an experience that proves yet again, “pride comes before a fall.” Mine occurred when I met the Mistress of La-La Land; the Queen of Meta-Land, the Princess of Cosmic Consciousness swirling in the etherlands of vagueness which dances to the corners of fluff and puff. And there she was, sitting before me as the volunteer. She said she wanted to identify a vision— a vision that she wanted to actualize. Now if I can be calibrating those in the room, those who knew her were grimacing, tightening up their bodies, preparing for a spin around the cosmos, and anticipating my public humiliation.

I was in Japan and it was an *Unleashing Your Creative Solutions* (Creativity and Innovation) workshop, and I was about to demonstrate the first of four-inter-related conversations (outcome, problem, solution, innovation). Now to make it even more hilarious, I asked my questions in English, the Queen of Meta-Land responded in Japanese, and the translator sat behind us repeating the words in English, or at least trying.

Now it generally takes as many words in Japanese as in English and then another half, so one-and-a-half times the amount of words. But with the La-La Mistress, it took two and three times as many words. She not only lived way up there in Shangri-la, but she had learned the language of convolution and she could link any ten nominalizations together and look at you meaningfully assuming that you knew exactly what she meant. And as the translator was working double-time trying to say some words in English that somehow related in some unimaginable way to the question, I was waiting, and waiting, patting my foot, drilling my fingers, and trying to get ahold of something that I could then ask, “and when do you want that?” “Where will that occur?”

And so it went. It was the Ignorant (namely, me) asking the Confused (namely, her) through the Frustrated (the interpreter) so as to demonstrate clean, clear, precision of communication skills! And this was day one. And this was the morning of day one.

Now, actually, I was proud of my questions— succinct, pointed, focused.

“Is that what you want?” “Can you do that?” “Is that realistic?” “Do you have a time frame?” “Have you chosen a location yet?”

All yes-no questions. I was just trying to lock down *the What* of the 14 well-formed outcomes questions— “What do you want, where will it occur, when, can you do it, etc.”

Then I began noticing a pattern, she was never answering my questions. So I repeated them again and again and again. Eventually everyone in the audience became aware of the pattern. At least they were all smiling knowingly at me! And eventually I would give a little smirk as I asked it for the 4th time, the 5th time, the 10th time. Then I even made some meta-comments, “Okay, let me try one more time...” and I’d repeat the question. When none of that seemed to make a dint, I figured that her consciousness was not on this planet, maybe not even in this world or dimension. Time for confrontation.

“Do you realize you are never answering my questions?” More talk about the glories of touching people with the spirituality of the wonder of feeling kinesthetic aesthetics in Japanese culture in the power of deepening relationships between the harmonious oneness of something.

“I have asked 7 or 8 yes– no questions and you have not answered any of them.” More talk. “Do you realize that you are doing that right now?” More talk. “See, you did it again.” Then I got a response. She said,

“You asked yes-no questions? I have been answering your questions.”

“Are you aware that I have asked many of the same question again and again and you have not responded? [Shaking head no.] So you’re not aware of that? I’d like you to think about that.”

Ah confrontation. Bringing information to a person about his or her pattern, style, response, etc. that provides a choice point for the person. In confronting you come face-to-face with the person and you come face-to-face about something that’s usually significant, critical, something that the person needs (or you think the person needs). And it is this reflection of importance that makes confrontation seem so sensitive or dangerous.

In a confrontation conversation you and the person experience an intimacy of contact. Typically it is not a positive encounter or contact. More often than not, it is unpleasant and negative. Why? Because we are bringing to the person’s awareness what he or she does not want to hear, does not want to know, doesn’t know, finds upsetting or threatening, and so depending on the person’s level of ego-strength, awareness, openness, relationship with you, etc., will either consider or defend against.

A face-to-face encounter that we call a confrontation—when motivated by compassion and complimented by skillful competency— offers a moment of authenticity. It is a moment of authenticity because we are being real (truthful, honest) with the person and inviting the person to step forward into authenticity with him or herself and with us. The confrontation conversation invites authenticity! And because it does, it is a mechanism and process of self-actualization. Of course, it usually does not *feel* like that. It usually *feels* like an attack and so a threat, a conflict, a danger.

This becomes doubly true when you confront someone with very well-developed defenses. In fact, the more highly developed the defenses, the more sophisticated and long-term the defenses, the harder it is to get through to the person. The person with great defense mechanisms that have

been long practiced will seem almost un-confrontable. This is the very opposite of coachable, open, and receptive of feedback.

So you mirror. You identify a pattern, then when it happens in real time in the interactions, in the communications, you go, “Is that it?” “What you just said, what you just did— I think that’s it.” And oftentimes, you have to do that not once or twice, not even ten or twenty times, but dozens upon dozens of times. The first dozen times there will be denial and a denial that has a snare in it. “How could you possibly think that about me, you ridiculous incompetent person!?” But eventually little glimpses get through. Eventually the person’s defenses provide a little opening. “Maybe...in this one incidence.” “Could it be?” So it takes patience. It takes persistence. It takes an committed compassion in you as the coach to keep at it and to enable the client to see the patterns that he or she constantly exhibits, patterns that limit and sabotage the person’s highest and best.

Now sometimes, in getting through, you may have to raise the volume, raise the level, raise the energy. Doing that has to be strategic and totally in service of the client. And typically it will be a person with the meta-program of aggressive under stress. Passives don’t need it. They, in fact, will think you are yelling or blaming when you just raise your voice a tiny bit in order to be heard! Not so with aggressives; and actually, raising the voice and making yourself heard in that way will often be the first time that they will have noticed or heard you!

Ah, confrontation— this is truly an art form when it comes to coaching and an extremely valuable skill and one not known or developed in most of us.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #24
May 18, 2010
ACMC Event

LAUNCHING META-COACHING IN CHINA

Do you remember writing your *five year vision* in the first days of your *Coaching Mastery* training and then reading it on Day 4? When Mandy Chai did that in 2005, she wrote her five year vision about taking Neuro-Semantics and Meta-Coaching to mainland China. It is now five years later and beginning in January she was the organizer and co-sponsor for two major trainings— NSTT in Hong Kong and *Coaching Mastery* (Module III) in Guangzhou China. And this weekend, we saw at the graduation 42 fully certified Meta-Coaches with ACMC credentials and another 24 provisional Meta-Coaches. *Here's to visioning and to the proactive visioning of Mandy Chai!*

The China training was especially challenging. I found it challenging due to the translation, the time and schedule that we adopted (two-hour lunches) which made it ten days, the numbers of participants (94 in January, 64 in May), the time between the two parts (far, far too long), the fact we had no team leaders from mainland China, but every team leader came from Hong Kong or elsewhere, etc.

First there was the language, the translating and the slowness of sequential translating. Team Haung, the sponsor in China had the training manual translated— the two thick books have both English and Chinese. We did have a group of 10 people who could do their coaching sessions in English and so we had two Team leaders who could benchmark that group. Then in Part I we had nine other groups of 9 people who needed benchmarking in Chinese. And getting enough Meta-Coaches around the world who speak Mandrin Chinese— that was difficult. We had 10 in January and 8 in May. For 90 we actually needed 30!

Getting enough people to benchmark was a big challenge; in the end we did not have enough and so we had to do a lot more sessions. We also took the “Coaching Seminar” format that I use with the team leaders and had each team leader do the same with their teams. And to do that, we had to forgo the Benchmarking Project, I didn't want to do that, but we had to. That decision was made as a team— knowing that first and foremost were the competency skills, so as a team we focused on those.

What were the other challenges? There was the problem of expectations—what should a person expect? What's a reasonable expectation in terms of learning “coaching?” How quickly can one learn? Can one learn without *doing*, without practicing? And why all the emphasis on benchmarks and benchmarking? I found it fascinating to watch day after day people *not* getting

the skills, *not* getting the distinctions, and then suddenly one person gets it and reaches competency on a skill or two. Then another! And then suddenly, people seem to wake up to the possibility, to the reason-why, to the importance. And then there's a new energy, even a passion to reach competency!

For our team leaders— I can only say “Wow and Meta-Wow!” to their commitment, their willingness to put in a lot of effort and energy to handling so many. We had 64 in the second part and only 7 Team Leaders for those last 7 days (Carmen Yiu had a special situation and came for the last 3 days). So meta-high five to—

Mandy Chai
Team Haung
Wilkie Choi
Desmond Sim
Mariani
Salina Lee
Kin Wui Fong

Carmen helped at the end with the benchmarking, so did Teresa Chan. Several new policy decisions have emerged from all of this. For example: if *Coaching Mastery* is to be done in two parts, they have to be within 3 to 5 weeks; the ratio of team leader to participant is maximally 1 to 6 and ideally 1 to 3.

Necessity continues to be the mother of invention, and just 4 weeks ago Omar Salom and David Murphy asked if we could do the “Coaching Seminar” that I with Team Leaders on the day prior to *Coaching Mastery* in the training. I said, “And when would we do that?” I didn't know when or what we could shift around to get the time. But now I see how to do it and how much time we would need (less than I thought). So look for that addition next time!

So to the 1024 we now add 64 more Meta-Coaches —bringing us to 1088 around the world with 4 more *Coaching Mastery* bootcamps this year. And if you are interested in being on the Team— we can use you! Here are the other courses this year— next one is Hong Kong and we can use English speaking Meta-Coaches there as well as Chinese.

Hong Kong is next —	July 31— August 7.	Team Leaders: July 30
Auckland New Zealand —	August 14—21.	Team Leaders: August 13
Stockholm, Sweden —	Oct. 7— 14.	Team Leaders: Oct. 6
Pretoria South Africa —	Oct. 29 — Nov. 5	Team Leaders: Oct. 28

Come join the Meta-Coach Revolution!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #25
May 19, 2010

MORE ON THE CONFRONTATION CONVERSATION

In the last Meta-Coach Reflection I mentioned the difference between a passive and aggressive person in receiving a confrontation. There's more to be said about that.

What is your style? What meta-program governs how you experience stress? Neurologically people are wired with a sensitive nervous system that makes them highly aware of, and hence sensitive to stress (threat, danger, overload) and others have a robust and fairly insensitive nervous system that makes them unaware of stress so they move forward toward what they want. We call the first response style "passive" — it is driven by the move-away from energies; and we call the second response style "aggressive" —because it is driven by the go-forward energies. This gives us two neurological responses to stress, two behavioral patterns— aggressing and withdrawing.

Yet they are both the same. Both are driven by threat, danger, and overload —three cues to the brain that triggers the fight-flight or general arousal syndrome. So as both are driven by insecurity, both are security-moves. That is, in both we are seeking to create safety for ourselves as a way to get away from the threat (passive) or eliminate it directly by going at it and fighting it (aggressive). If you think you can deal with it, you move forward. If you don't, you freeze or you get out of there.

Are there any other choices between these Type-A personalities and Type-B? Yes. After you grow up and you learn to think out and talk out your stresses rather than act them out, then you can move into the Assertive response style. Stress researchers have been calling this Type-C personality.

Assertiveness is not aggression, nor is it passivity, it is *thinking* and *speaking out your "stress."* It is understanding the stress and what to do and then articulating your understanding to yourself and to others. That's assertiveness. And that is the middle response between the other two, the unique human response to stress.

Now I'm sure you can imagine the importance of this meta-program in yourself and in others when it comes to confrontation. Which response style does the person you are confronting have? What is your response style? How well do they work together? What challenges do they create for each of you? How can you adjust your style so that you can be more effective with people with either passive or aggressive style?

If the person is assertive, there's really very little problem. You and they can then think and talk out the issues and concerns that otherwise would be interpreted as threat, danger, or overload and go into fight or flight. This is the key to a successful confrontation conversation. You need to get your client into the assertive response state in order to effectively confront that person. But that, of course, is easier said than done and especially if the subject is important to the person.

This does establish some basic guidelines: check to see if the person is in a state to be confronted. If not, then induce the safety of the Crucible (unconditional positive regard, witnessing, and accepting). You can't get to the heart of things, to the person's meanings and truth and so hold them responsible for finding and creating value (the furnace of the Crucible) if they don't feel safe enough to do that.

What state is the person in? Does the person think that the confrontation makes him or her a bad person or the problem? Then set the frame repeatedly— you are not the problem; the frame is the problem. The person is never the problem. Next, prepare the person for the encounter. Are you ready for some feedback? Would you want some feedback about a pattern that I think I have detected? Make it tentative, soften it.

“I could be wrong, but it's what I've become aware of, would you like to hear it? I think it could possibly make a positive transformative difference in your life.”

In the Confrontation conversation, it is all about the relationship, the client, and the client's unleashing for him or her being and becoming his or her very best self. That's what it is all about. It is not about you being right or clever or anything. So set the frames. Engage the person, enter into the intimacy of the encounter, keep your heart and focus clean.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #26
May 26, 2010

COACHING A “TRUE BELIEVER”

A dilemma arose for me when we were doing the Meta-Coach training in China and during it I made some mis-calculations. On the second day, I was told that one of the participants had left the training the previous day because she had seen “negative energy enter the room and that it was fighting with me and Shu’en” (my translator) while we were on the stage. “Okaaaaay. That’s a bit weird.” She was gone for two full days, then someone told me that she was back. Not knowing anything about her story, my only comment at that time was that she would obviously be provisional and have to make up Days 5 and 6 the next year.

A day or two later, during one of the times when the Team Leaders were with their groups preparing for a Coaching Seminar, I was visiting each of the groups for a few minutes. When I came upon one of the teams, one of the participants was sobbing and three or four members of the group were hunched around her, comforting her. When I asked what was wrong, I was told that she had experienced a sudden dizziness and that some negative energy had entered the room, and she was not feeling well and was full of fear.

Speaking with her privately, I asked her through the translator about what was going on and she talked about the sick feelings, dizziness, and so on that came upon her due to the entrance of the negative energy into the room. By asking her some questions, she was able to stop the sobbing, gain her composure and then affirm that she wanted to be coached to deal with this, to “resist the energy.” My first thought was to see her after the evening sessions, but given the long hours and need to meet with the Team Leaders that night, I made the mistake of asking her to be the client in her group. The next mistake was to do the coaching myself. That came because Shu’en said he didn’t think any of the new coaches could handle her.

Ten minutes later, when we began, she was in a very different state. I began by asking what she wanted, intent on getting a KPI first. She wanted to “resist the energy.” “What is this energy?” I asked. She then began talking about all of the “energies” that are all around us. “And what is this energy? Light, sound, smell, or what?” That got nowhere. “So how are you representing this energy? If I could peak the theater of your mind and see or hear it, how are you constructing your sense of it?” She denied that she was. “Well, it’s in your mind and body ...”

“No,” she disagreed, “It is out there, I’m not constructing anything.”

“Are you not having kinesthetic responses to what you believe is this energy— dizziness, feeling sick, fearful ...?”

“I’m not creating anything. The energy is doing this.”

“So you believe that the energy is doing this?”

“It’s not a belief, it is a fact.”

Then to explain to the unbeliever [me!], she explained that it was like the energy of a cell phone that’s out there “in the air” that you can’t see, it’s like the quantum level of reality that’s there but we cannot detect it.

“Okaaaaay,” I said, “So what is this energy?”

“It’s not been discovered yet. I’ve been studying it for years. I have an advanced degree in physics.”

“So how is it that not one of the 70 people in this room sensed this energy, only you? Don’t you think that a little strange?” She didn’t. She “knew” that the energy was there, that it was scary and trying to do bad things to her. I went round and round with her about this, asking if she accepted the NLP premise that “the map is not the territory.” She said she did *and* she knew that this energy was real and not in her mind(!).

“Have you had enough of this fear? The dizziness, sick feelings, etc.? Do you want more of that? Or would you be willing to consider it a belief to change?” No, not if it meant thinking that the energy was a belief! “Then I don’t know what to do with you.” I finally said.

At that point, I had turned to the group of 10 people and said that there wouldn’t be a coaching session. Several asked if she could still be coached at that point. And my immediate answer was, “No.” Later that evening with four of the Team Leaders, our conversation centered on the idea of sending out a Meta-Coach who believed in these invisible energies out to do her harm—energies that no one but her seems to be aware of, energies that make her sick.

It was the next day that I realized the mistake I had made with my succinct answer of “No” to the group. In answering that I had confused two issues:

- 1) dealing with a client as a client and
- 2) dealing with a participant in training to become a licensed Meta-Coach. And by confusing the two I didn’t see her as truly a client, but as a trainee in a training program.

That’s why I refused the premise and would not accept it as the working assumption in a coaching session: “There are invisible energies out there that negatively impact people, but I’m the only one who seems to see it, recognize it, and am affected by it.” That’s why I would not agree to help her to “resist the energies.” That would presuppose that I accept that there are such energies and work out some strategy for resisting them. But not with a person who was there to learn how to be a Meta-Coach and who, if certified, would be a representative of Meta-Coaching and the brand we have created.

My confusing the two roles— her as a trainee and her as a client led me to say “No” to even trying to coach her. Yet if I was in a different context, I might very well have responded very differently.

Under those conditions I would have explored “the energies” in a dispassionate way, curiously seeking to understand. I would not have made the Cognitive Constructionism premise of NLP and Neuro-Semantics a condition for working with her. That only applies to the question of

Certification. In that case I would have begun by framing my inquiry:

“Since I have had no experience with the kind of energies that you are describing, help me to understand. So, first, when do you see or sense these energies? Are they always there, or do they come and go? And if they come and go, then under what conditions do they seem stronger and under what conditions do they seem weaker? Since you want to resist these energies, have you ever had any experience of resisting them? If so, what did you do that enabled you to ‘resist’ them? What could you do to increase the resistance? And if you do resist them, how does that work? Do they diminish in intensity or influence, or do you somehow get stronger so that you don’t notice them, or what happens that you are able to ‘resist’ them? And how long does this work? What works well with the resistance and what does not work well?”

Now, having written all of this, I am reminded of how, in a therapy situation, a therapist assumes the world of the patient, whether a schizophrenic or multiple personality and enters it in order to spoil it. And that would have been the strategy I would have taken with her. And that, of course, brings up the question of the distinction between therapy and coaching.

This brings up the question of whether this person was ready for coaching (was coachable) or a client for therapy. After all, for someone sobbing over “energies” entering into a training room and fighting against the trainer or entering and creating dizziness, this comes very close to the criteria for diagnosing her conditions as that of a form of schizophrenia or hysteria. And in that case, even with someone highly intelligent in physics, this fits more for therapy than it does for coaching.

Reflecting on this situation, I think I mis-calculated and got caught up in Certification content. My learning is that if I had to replay that one, I would first deal with the person as a person and treat her first as someone who is probably over-sensitive to people and who is picking up on “emotional energies” which she has mis-labeled “unknown physics.” That she has spent her life and has an advanced degree in “Physics” (which I found out about at the last moments) tells me that she has believed this for a long, long time, has lots of vested interests (secondary gains) in maintaining this belief and so became a “true believer” in this. My diagnosis: the “energies” is an indication of her psychology, not the world’s physics.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #27
June 3, 2010

I HEARD THE RUMBLE OF LEVELS

One of the sub-skills within Meta-Questions is “detecting levels.” And because people usually have lots of questions about what that means, they want examples of detecting levels and asking about them. At the beginning of this year, while in Mexico on the Meta-Coach training there and with the Team Leaders, one of the coaching sessions provided a great example. The person who was coaching the session didn’t hear the levels, but I did. Of course, I had an advantage— I was sitting outside of the sessions, in a meta-position, and benchmarking the session along with all of the other team leaders. The coach was inside the experience— facilitating, trying to get a KPI, under the examining eye of a dozen team leaders and three trainers— so I’m sure she had many other things on her mind!

Anyway, the client began by identify the “problem” she wanted to address, a problem that was presented as something she *did not* want to do— “I don’t want to go to the doctor because I’m afraid he will find a problem. There was also a set of very unpleasant symptoms— headaches, not feeling good, a general fatigue in her body, lots of demands on her as a single parent. It turned out she was not even aware of any “stress” in her life as such. She was only aware that she had dissociative feelings which would come upon her giving her that ability to “forget” the stressors. So with all of that(!), no wonder the coach had plenty to explore in terms of content and didn’t hear the levels.

With that much, I think most coaches, even many Meta-Coaches, would easily be seduced by the content. The team leader who was coaching focused on the amount of “stress” which all of that suggested and so asked about her stress level. “From 0 to 10, how much stress are you experiencing?”

“Stress? No there’s really no stress. ... Well, maybe some ... but mostly I’m just afraid of going to the doctor but I need to go.”

That indicated some self-doubt and I would have explored that, but the coach was seduced! “Why are you afraid of going to the doctor?” Ah, the “why” question about a negative emotional state! And yes, I almost stopped the session there. I almost interrupted to ask, “Do you really want her to go there?” But I didn’t. So she answered:

“I’m afraid that he will find a problem in my health. And I can’t because who will look after my children? My ex- never helps me with them; I’m totally responsible and it’s such a heavy burden. I don’t know what I would do if the doctor found something wrong with my health.”

Meta-state level	— Solely Responsible for — heavy burden —
Meta-state level	— No other resources- feels helpless, clueless —
Meta-State level	— Fear of failing responsibility to children —
Primary State	Fear of what the doctor might find

Hearing levels is hearing how a person frames, interprets, gives meaning, classifies, and categorizes his or her experiences. And because this can happen so quickly, in a second or two, you have to really have your ears tuned-up to hear the layers of interpretative frames. Can you hear them? Do you believe that you can learn to hear them? Do you want to?

Hearing the classification frames of meaning in your clients is learning to hear their whisperings in the back of the mind. And when you do, you can now give feedback to your client— mirror back what you hear— and check for validation. This giving of feedback introduces a confrontation conversation as it confronts the client with his or her own layers— layers of meta-stating frames that they have been living in and not-aware of.

This also happened not too long ago as I was demonstrating a coaching session. I'll call the client Jim. "So Jim, you say that when you speak up to your senior manager to assert your ideas and suggestions, you begin to have a sense of panic, of danger, of a fear of rejection. And you say that it begins at a 7 or 8 level so that it's hard to catch your breath, so if we go with that and say that your fear is accurate, so what? What then?"

"Ahhhhh, I don't know. ... [pause] well, it's so distressful, all I can think about is getting away from it, stopping the panic. That would make a fool of me and ruin my reputation in his eyes, and then I be stuck there with no chance of advancement."

"And... ?"

"[Long pause] ... well, that would kill my career. I might as well leave or I'd probably be too afraid to do that, I would just shrivel up and die inside. There'd be no hope or reason to care."

"Wow! All of that! And just from wanting to share an idea of what you could do in the business! Incredible. Did you hear all of that Jim?" He said he did not know what I was talking about.

"Well, you first talked about the primary state of fear and panic and now I understand how you are so masterful of filling your body full of fright and scaring the hell out of yourself! You are very good at that! [Jim was smiling a shy smile.] You first meta-state yourself with a command negation— "Do not *be afraid*; don't *panic*!" And the meta-state frame above that is "Panicking is making a fool of myself and ruins my reputation." That's pretty semantically loaded, isn't it? And then you meta-state that with "No chance of Advancement! None! Absolutely." And that's within yet another higher frame: "Career is killed!" And that would mean, next higher level, "No

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #28
June 9, 2010

THE BRAND NEW FEEDBACK FORM

We now have a brand new competency feedback form for the core coaching skills. This is the feedback form that we use in Meta-Coaching when we score a person's skills around the core coaching skills of supporting, listening, questioning, meta-questions, receiving and giving feedback, and inducing state. I have attached this new form to this *Reflection* so that you can begin to use it at MCF chapter meetings when you benchmark coaching sessions.

So, are you asking, Why a new one? Or, What's new about it? How does it differ from the previous forms? The answer is that the biggest difference is the focus on the skills and the sub-skills. In the last year or so I've been asking myself, Which sub-skills are absolutely necessary for each of these skills? Which are sufficient to comprise the skill? And which are extra that give it an extra quality or expertise? How many of the sub-skills have to be presented before we can say that a person is "fully competent?" The new design is the answer that I have at this point to these questions.

In the new design everything listed *at 2.5 and up to 3* are the skills of the particular competency. *These are the behaviors that make up the competency.* To be "fully competent" you have to have all of these sub-skills. These are the behaviors that are "necessary and sufficient" for the presence of the skill. Above level 3 we see the behaviors that make the competency more and more elegant, effective, and powerful. These are the skills that begin to define an *expert*.

The new format drops some of the signal behaviors that were on the old form. These still count and are still assumed in the skills listed, they are just not listed. That is, to streamline the form, and not to put every single thing that could be a signal or cue of the skill, I have dropped them and only listed the sub-skill. So on the new form you will find the following number of skills (sub-skills) as follows:

<i>Supporting</i>	—	10 sub-skills
<i>Listening</i>	—	10 sub-skills
<i>Questioning</i>	—	7 sub-skills
<i>Meta-Questioning</i>	—	6 sub-skills
<i>Receiving Feedback</i>	—	7 sub-skills
<i>Giving Feedback</i>	—	10 sub-skills
<i>State Induction</i>	—	6 sub-skills

Another new feature on the feedback form is the *italized words* which are at the top of the benchmarks next to the name of each Skill. So, for example, next to Supporting there is *personal state: warm, kind, caring*. What is this? Have I now gone global? Where is the

specificity in these words? Glad you asked. These are the *qualities* that will make the coach fully elegant in exercising the behaviors of the skill. So, how would we see or hear these *qualities*?

That's a great question. And while I don't have all of the answers at this point in time, I know where to start. Look for and calibrate to *the coach's state*. The coach already is *doing* certain things— as expressed in all of the *actions* listed in the levels, especially level 3 and 3.5. Now *from what state* is the coach operating? To discover that, as a benchmarker, put the following questions in your mind:

What state is the coach in?

What state would I guess, mind-read, hallucinate that the coach is in while coaching?

What behaviors, signs, and indicators give any evidence of that?

How much is the coach in that state?

From 0 to 10 what indicates the coach's state?

To what extent does the coach pace, pace, pace and then lead the client so that the client is being induced into this state?

Quantity refers to behaviors— things we can see, hear, count, and measure. *Quality* refers to the state from which it comes and the state that it elicits. And *state induction* is one of our skills in NLP and Meta-Coaching. This area will be developed more and more fully in this year and the coming years, so expect more specifics about this to come.

The behaviors below *level 2.5 or 2* are those behaviors that *undermine the skill*. These behaviors indicate a low level of the competency, not up to full competency. These are the behaviors that need to be eliminated from the coach's behaviors.

On the right side of the sheet is the *KPI Funnel*. Since coaching is all about the client, all about what the client wants, "What does the client want?" *Listen* for what the client wants. *Support* what the client wants, *Question and Meta-Question* to find out, *Induce states* to help the client discover what he or she really wants. The funnel helps to keep this in mind as you benchmark someone's coaching.

Finally, the form ends as always with—*Strengths* and *Next Steps*. This provides a summary feedback that validates and challenges. Here's to the unleashing of your best coaching skills!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #29
June 16, 2010

THE POWER OF QUESTIONING

With Alan’s post and reference to the research by Professor Dolores Albarracin, he began a line of thought about the difference between two semantic environments: “*I will* (be able to solve the task).” And “*Will I* (be able to solve the task)?” The study by Albarracin demonstrated the effectiveness of a question over a statement: “The question group outperformed the affirmation group by over 85%.” (*Psychological Science* journal).

Now, among a lot of people that is revolutionary— it is incredible— it is mind-blowing. It goes against the cultural intuitions that views statements (declarations, assertions) are more powerful than questions. Yet for those of us in NLP, Neuro-Semantics, and Meta-Coaching, we know that the opposite is actually the truth. *Questioning* is much more powerful as an influence process than making declarative statements. Yes, declaring and stating makes *you* feel powerful. But what’s most powerful *for the other person, for the client*, is asking questions. And this happens to be the very foundation of NLP’s Meta-Model and why we coach and train *with questions*. We know that questions are incredibly powerful! We know that we can do all kinds of things— wonderful things— by questioning. Do you know that?

Today as I wrote this article I checked out the website that Alan gave for the study and discovered that the respondents on that website went crazy making the whole issue one over “Affirmations.” And the Affirmation Zealots, who are real believers in Affirmations, were activated to rally a protest, complain about the inadequacy of the study, and accuse Albarracin of not understanding the magical realm of Affirmations!

What a wonderful misunderstanding and tremendous example of a *semantic reaction to a word!* If the professor had written “the statement group” instead of “the affirmation group” there probably would not have been a word of protest. But she used the term “affirmations” and that pushed their buttons.

How much more sane the responses from Irena and Angus! They both immediately went to the heart of things and spoke about the power of questions. In the NLP and Meta-Coaching models, knowing the power of questioning, we know that the key is *the effect* that the questioning has within a person, what it does within them. As both noted, sometimes the most profound influence is the “deep processing” (Irena) or the “creative and transformational silence” (Angus).

And that’s why we benchmark two levels of questioning in Meta-Coaching. We benchmark primary questioning, the “down” questions that ground things in reality and invites the person to develop the specificity and precision to speak intelligently about his or her experience. We then

benchmark meta-questions which invites a person inside, the “up” questions, so that one can discover the frames and his or her meaning frameworks (Matrix) that makes up their inner world and their inner game. Together these questions opens up both the visible and invisible worlds that they live in. Together they take the person back to the mapping that they are operating from and give them a chance to re-map in a more transformative way—a way that unleashes new vitality and potentials.

All of this enables us as facilitators to enable our clients to reconnect with their mappings (frames, beliefs, etc.) that governs their experiencing. I especially like the phrases that Irena and Angus have used. Irena called it *deep processing* and that’s because the frameworks that we operate from are the invisible, unconscious meanings that our lives are deeply embedded within. Angus called it *creative and transformative silence* and emphasized the value of a client going silent as he or she goes within to discover and change. And that’s because by facilitating a client’s return to the maps and mapping, the person discovers their psycho-logics and recovers their foundational powers.

How are your questioning powers? Are they just as fresh and curious and vital as when you graduated from Meta-Coaching? Are you keeping them alive and vigorous? Do you approach your clients with an unquenchable curiosity that stands in amazement and wonder at their possibilities?

Here’s to your questioning power as a Self-Actualization Coach!

Meta-Coach News

We have just completed NSTT in Hong Kong — graduating 45 brand new Neuro-Semantic Trainers. And inducting Mandy Chan into the ranks of the Neuro-Semantic Leadership Team — our first Leader in Asia and China.

We start this weekend with NSTT in Colorado — anticipating 27 from 9 countries.

There are 3 to 4 more Meta-Coach Trainings this year — Auckland NZ, Stockholm Sweden, Pretoria SA, and Mexico City.

We are now planning to conduct PCMC training in 2011 in Sydney. We may do it elsewhere as well. PCMC involves 2 days of training in Advance Coaching Skills and 1 to 2 days of assessments of Coaching skills.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #30
June 23, 2010

SO WHAT IS IT? IS CHANGE IS EASY OR HARD?

When I read the field of Coaching, there seems to be a debate, or at least a difference in opinion, between the positions about the difficulty or ease of change. Some view change as hard and difficult and taking a long time and others view it as easy, as something that can occur quickly. So what's the reality? Does change take a long time and does it require lots of pain or is change easy and painless?

Well, of course, as with many things, it is both. It depends on the *kind of change* under consideration. For remedial or therapeutic change, change can be difficult and take a fairly long time. But for the coaching population where there are people *anting* to change, change is not hard, or difficult, or painful. And this is especially so if you know how change works and have developed the skills to facilitate it. If you choose to make a change and if you have the right tools, change can be facilitated in a very efficient way.

As an example, imagine driving down the road and suddenly one of your tires goes flat. Oh no. And there you are without any tools in the car for taking the tire off and putting the spare tire on. Imagine how hard it will be to change that tire! Imagine trying to use your fingers to twist off all 8 of the lug-nuts that hold the tire that's now flat. You could try and try all day, you could try for days on end, and you would not be able to get the lug-nuts off. Changing the tire with your fingers would not only be hard, it would simply be impossible. Now that's hard!

But suppose you found a pair of pliers— could you then do it? Well, maybe. But it would be really, really, really hard. What if someone stopped and offered you a wrench— Ah, yes, now you could do it. It would be hard, but doable. Yet better, suppose you found a lug wrench hidden away in a corner of the trunk? Now you're cooking! Now it is pretty easy, unless somebody at the last shop thought it would be funny to see how tight he could put the lugs on! Finally, suppose someone stopped and handed you a power wrench— bzzzzzzzz. You'd do it in second! Piece of Cake!

With each level of technology— fingers, pliers, a wrench, a lug-wrench, a power wrench— the job gets more doable, easier, and less problematic. *The technology makes all the difference in the world!* The technology that's designed to be applied to that particular event (e.g., changing a tire) would completely transform the situation.

So it is with facilitating changing with a person. How difficult is that? How painful? How doable? With human beings, there are levels of change. We can change a mind, a heart, a habit,

an emotion, an action or behavior, talk, lifestyle, perceptual filters, frames, personality, culture.

And with humans there is also linear change as well as systemic change. In linear change, you work on changing each piece, one at a time, each one step by step. In systemic change, you find the leverage point whereby one small change can have effects that will reverberate throughout the system. (Did you recognize the importance of that line? If not, go back and underline it.) The challenge will be to be able to recognize symptoms and to not get caught up in the shouting of some symptom. That's what symptoms do; they shout. They call attention to themselves, they present themselves as "the problem." But it's a lie.

Symptoms are not the problem, they are a symptom of some underlying problem. Yet it is so easy to begin to think of the symptom as the problem. Yet symptoms are just that— symptoms, complaints of something else, of something else that is wrong or out of alignment.

When you suffer from a head that's aching in pain, it seems that your headache is the problem. Well, it may be a pain, it may be unpleasant, it may be distressing. But it is at best the symptom of something else. Swallow an aspirin and check two minutes later and take another one, and check another two minutes, and eventually you will create a really big problem.

In communicating this, I am moving from tangible to intangible change. The hard stuff to change are the intangible things—culture, beliefs, communication style, how work together, conflict resolution. By comparison, the easy stuff are the symptoms. It is the intangible things at all levels. At the first level are people leaving the company, poor retention, etc.

At the next level of the problem, we find something deeper or higher. The first intangible problem is but a symptom of something else. So we ask:

“Why are they leaving?” “Why are they not staying?” “What's going on that's influencing these decisions?” “What is the problem of how people are being treated in the organization that motivates them to make the decision to leave?”

Again, if people are disengaged and/or bored, ultimately that is not the problem. There are higher problems. Perhaps it is the lack of meaningful challenges at work. Perhaps they are bored as a result of the lack of meaningfulness at work. If behaviors are adaptive attempts to find a solution, that is, an effort to adapt to the current situation, then the behaviors are attempted solutions. So why is most change hard? Here's some answers:

People don't understand the problem—the processes of change.

People do not have effective tools for change.

People do not have skills for applying the know-how to the situation.

People do not have the right frames.

People are not in the right states.

People don't have the right strategy for facilitating the change.

Obviously, change is a complex subject with many facets and dimensions. To your highest and best as a Change Agent!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #31
July 7, 2010

I recently received a question about what executives want in a coach from Doug Cartwright and I asked Graham Richardson, one of our Expert Coaches in Meta-Coach to answer it. Here is Graham's response.

COACHING EXECUTIVES

by Graham Richardson
Horizons Unlimited Pty Ltd.
Sydney Australia

Why do executives primarily want to hire a professional coach? What are they looking for?

There are a number of different reasons for hiring a professional coach and to address the critical things that they are looking for. In what follows I have distinguished different levels of executives and identified what they are looking for.

1. Senior Executive Development:

Senior executives have reached a certain level in their careers and know this--- That what got them here, won't get them there. That is, it is clear that they need to develop new skills--- skills that not so far available to them that will be needed to progress to greater levels of seniority, responsibility, and even to make a difference. They may not even be aware what is needed and they wish to explore with someone who can help them discover what this all means to them. Mostly, coaching at this level has to do with moving from management to leadership skills.

Another dilemma is that, at senior levels, one often needs to focus outward from the role and network and influence people over whom you have no direct line authority. To do this requires the ability to delegate, monitor and see the role less as a functional role (silo) versus a corporate role (whole of business). As a rule an objective external person (an executive coach) will be a better fit than an internal coach. Why? Because of confidentiality and trust. However, an internal mentor may also be appropriate --- a mentor is an expert in the area the executive aspires to and transfers skills and offers advice, while a coach helps the executive to develop well-formed outcomes and strategies, as well as ecological frames and states that facilitate their development – that is, from a meta perspective.

2. **Middle Management Development**

Similar to senior executives, coaching middle management has probably more to do with leadership and developing the ability to lead people and teams to produce results. The coaching will focus on using people skills, or soft skills, rather than in an authoritarian, or command, model. The middle management executive will be talented and successful more as an individual contributor and so now needs to work through people.

I think it should be noted that a key factor in any executive's development is the relationship they have with their manager as well as the culture of the environment. Both of these factors are part of the matrix in which we operate, and can be derailers if ignored.

3. **Remedial**

Usually an executive who needs remedial coaching is talented in one area of performance, but deficient, or dysfunctional in another. It may be that the executive is a harsh driver of business results, but this has an adverse impact in the people management styles. Conversely, such executives may have exemplary people skills, but struggle to hold people accountable for results and so standards are poor. Another scenario is that the executive lacks certain technical skills (or the will) in order to fully execute their roles and the coach can assist in supporting the executive in the non-technical development side of the issue. I think it should be noted that remedial programs tend to have a lower success rate than other coaching programs. Given that, be sure to pre-frame for the protection of all parties.

4. **On-Boarding, or Transitioning**

It can be very effective to provide a new hire with an executive coach to help them acclimatise and come up to speed faster than would otherwise be possible. Getting to know the ropes and navigate a new culture and develop relationships in the power lines of an organisation can be tricky— both the hierarchical and/or the informal politics of culture can determine the long term effectiveness of a new hire, in either positive or negative ways.

Similarly, an executive transitioning through a promotion, or across to a new role can be challenging and may warrant an executive coach to provide support for a time, while the executive finds their feet.

5. **Team Development**

Often it is useful to have an executive coach facilitate the development of an executive team. Teams can range from intact teams (they commonly work together on a day-to-day basis), to looser groups who may form and break routinely, or on an ad hoc basis. This process is commonly referred to as High Performance Team Development. Teams, or groups, can almost always improve performance by getting clear about purpose, unravelling barriers and relationship issues and committing to common goals. Getting to know one another better, strengths and weaknesses, giving and getting feedback are usually very powerful contributors to improving relationships, trust and results.

A Professional Coach?

In business, the stakes are high. As a rule, we do not appreciate the degree of difficulty in performing executive roles, managing constructive relationships, or just being on purpose and the impact these factors have on business results and staff stress levels. There are many stress lines in any system, or organization. Managing up to seniors, across to peers and down to subordinates can be tricky as the atmosphere gets rarer and more politicized. Gender, culture, competency, financial, competition, change, et al, are all elements that create tension and so need attention. So, a coach who knows and understands these dynamics is better equipped to provide an effective service for the executive, the teams they work in and the organization.

Organisations need to choose carefully who they engage as coaches, as the coach is in a position to influence great positive and/or negative outcomes. It may be important to engage a coach who has worked in the corporate field for some years and who is seasoned in the experiences that the executive is facing. However, a coach needs to be well trained in the distinctions of coaching (Socratic mode) and so psychology training is often a good base to build coaching expertise upon. NLP based training is also a very good requisite, because of the acuity in tracking the client and helping to align them with positive and enabling frames.

I think it should be noted that a professional coach is to be sensitive to clinical psychological issues and can appropriately suggest that a client take appropriate professional interventions, as necessary. It is usually best not to proceed with coaching when a client is engaged with a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist, or on strong mind altering drugs. Here is an Example

Senior Executive Development:

As Marshall Goldsmith's book entitled "What got you here, won't get you there" suggests, moving up the ladder isn't necessarily just a promotion. Or, as Ram Charan points out in 'The Leadership Ladder,' there are fundamental differences in the roles from one level to the next. There are traps for the unwary executive who isn't well prepared for their next move up the ladder, because it isn't just a question of doing more of the same, doing it better, or just telling someone else to do what you were doing.

Stuart had been with his global property development company for 5 years in a construction role, managing large building projects with great success. He was given the best teams and resources and could be relied on to navigate complex and difficult negotiations, bring projects in more or less on time, on budget and in compliance with high quality and safety margins. His project teams really liked working with him and relished the next 'big one.'

Stuart had been recruited from competitive property magnate by his previous boss and the time had come to follow his boss up the ladder. His boss was a highly skilled people person, who could navigate the corridors of power cleverly and had backed Stuart, amongst others, to deliver the goods in his portfolio. But, there was a problem.

Stuart complemented his boss very neatly. His boss was the people person and Stuart was the skilled operator. There was a concern amongst the senior management that Stuart would struggle with the move to his boss's upper management role, because he was seen to lack the people

skills. Having had the privilege of working with only the best resources, he would not tolerate anything but outstanding talent and standards from his team members. Anyone he regarded as below par would be removed from his teams and assigned to other projects---in the past. Now he would have to deal with all levels of proficiency and commitment and he had proved unwilling to tolerate or develop anyone but the best.

Another issue was that his boss had shielded him from the complexities of senior management manoeuvrings. When Stuart had been exposed on a few occasions, he had not always endeared himself, by seeming critical and somewhat naive about the subtleties of influencing complex political situations. His strength had become a potential liability. But he was bored and stale and ambitious – and the company didn't want to lose an outstanding performer.

So an executive coach was commissioned to prepare him as a possible successor for transition into senior management. Stuart was keen to engage, but somewhat wounded by his most recent annual appraisal. To date, his assessments had been exemplary. Always a star performer, with the highest ratings and bonuses. If there was ever reference to his people management style, it was always over shadowed by his results in delivery.

His boss was somewhat exasperated, because, although Stuart protested understanding of the problem, the boss was receiving complaints from staff below Stuart about his demanding and intolerant expectations. Stuart would stale-mate the discussion by challenging his boss with the taunt that he was obviously now expected to let his standards and delivery drop to mediocrity, thus damaging profit and reputation. Nevertheless, Stuart's latest appraisal was rated average minus and his bonus was meager and he was upset. In his head he knew that the assessment was a message to change his style in lieu of the succession context, but his heart felt betrayed and hurt and he was complaining bitterly. The relationship with his boss was now strained, after years of enjoyable partnership---he felt used. None of this was helping his promotion prospects.

His coach listened and validated his point of view. It didn't take long to get to the bottom of his depression before he spontaneously conceded that his prospects of promotion looked distant and something had to change – probably him. Together he and his coach touched on what those changes might be and how they might be of benefit. At times Stuart would protest about why it was him who had to change --- after all, look at his track record!

During the process the coach had Stuart do a couple of psychometric profiles and these showed something undeniable --- that Stuart may not be suited to senior leadership roles, as his dominant preference was as a 'fix it man.' He liked getting his hands dirty, rolling up his sleeves and taking a leadership role while 'doing it' with his colleagues. A true team player and leader at the coal face.

Now Stuart faced a dilemma. He wanted to know if he could change his fundamental DNA?! When asked if he thought it was necessary to make fundamental personality changes, he wasn't sure. When asked if he thought 'he had' behaviours, or if his behaviours 'had him' he laughed wryly, but went away and thought about this, like a worm turning in his head. His wife's

opinion didn't help because she wondered why he needed a coach to tell him what she already knew and could have told him quite adequately.

Now the coach asked Stuart to visualise the future and how it would play out on current trajectory and he didn't like the view. He wasn't sure that five years, or more, 'doing it' in a hard hat was such a good look. So he started making new pictures which suddenly looked more appealing and felt like a challenge worth shooting for.

In one of the regular coach facilitated meetings with his boss, he let his guard down and explained these thoughts to his boss. He never got over the reaction. His boss looked at him and said he was shocked and delighted to hear these words from Stuart and that if he continued on this line of thought into the future, there was definitely hope of succession into more senior leadership roles – but he would need get on with it, as changes were afoot in the near term.

In the next few coaching sessions Stuart planned his next steps. He had to change his relationships to his subordinates – less command/control, less micro management, more clarity about setting expectations, more delegation, monitoring and accountability. He found this more easily said than done. Keeping his hands off was tough because he kept wanting to dive in. Avoiding the requests of his subordinates for him to be involved, like it was, was painful. It felt like some kind of betrayal ---for a while. In the role plays during coaching sessions he would growl and hold his head and doubt that he could go the distance. It didn't make it any easier when things went wrong on projects and he was certain they would not have happened if he had been involved.

After a while, he admitted that he was starting to enjoy the new role and behaviour. It surprised him that it wasn't withdrawing from the coal face that he was enjoying, it was his subordinates lifting to the challenge and starting to take responsibility and becoming less dependent on him. Now it was others' success that began to give him pleasure and, especially, his role in supporting their growth and progression---true leadership.

Now he and his coach began to explore new skills, like how to be a mentor and coach to his subordinates, how to manage upwards and influence superiors in a constructive way.

This led to a surprising challenge. His boss seemed to become distant and critical as Stuart's relationships with his boss's peers and superiors improved and they began to communicate direct with Stuart. As Stuart moved out of the shadow of his boss's protection, his boss reacted by withdrawing from their warm friendship. Stuart tried to placate his boss, but to little effect.

Then a bitter-sweet victory. Stuart was promoted to a higher level, but in a different division. His boss too was promoted to the head of his division, so remained the more senior. In time they became more amiable, but it never returned to the partnership they had enjoyed in the early years. Stuart philosophically said that that was progress for you.

When his coach later asked him his opinion on whether people could change, his answer was

something like, “Yes, you can, but I’m still the same, really--- you ask my wife! Actually, is this supposed to work at home as well, because things have changed there too ;-).”

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From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #32
July 14, 2010

DETECTING LOW QUALITY COACHING

When I got a call this week from a senior manager who wanted to talk about Coaching, the conversation turned to *the quality of coaching*. He mostly wanted some ideas about how to flush out low-quality and incompetent coaches. Now he really didn't know about Meta-Coaching, but upon seeing the website (which someone in his organization recommended to him), he was immediately impressed with several things: the rigorous training, the academic background in Meta-Coach training, the extensive materials about Meta-Coaching, and the benchmarking process for measuring competency.

When I asked him what problems motivated him to call me, he said,

“There are two. First, there is the extreme levels of variability between coaches, some are competent, most are not. Second, many of the incompetent ones seem to know how to market themselves in a way that suggests they are competent, but they are not. So I want to know how to flush them out so we can get the good ones in.”

Then he added, pretty much as an after-thought, “How would you?” Ah, that gave me an idea! And I immediately blurted it out.

“I would challenge them to coach me on the spot. Yes, I'd ask them to show me what they can do. I'd give them a problem that I really have and see how they would handle it. If they are skilled, that should be no problem for them.”

He thought that was a great idea. Then he had some doubts. “But how do I know if they really know how? What do I look for?” That gave me another idea. So I asked him to do it with me and I would show him. So he presented a problem, he said he needed to confront one of his top managers about being too flirtatious with some of the women. So I took him on, “How real is this problem for you? How important?”

“Very important, very real. It's something I need to do, but I keep putting it off. I hesitate to deal with it, he's a good friend, and I don't want to offend him and ruin our relationship.”

“So that's your frame!? You'd bring it up if you didn't think it would bother him or offend him and that would not affect your relationship?”

“Well, yes.”

“So you're putting your feelings of comfort and relationship with him above dealing with something that could become a sexual harassment issue and affect the business, his ability to keep his job, and all of the consequences that would occur?”

“Well ... uhhhhh ... I had not thought of it like that.”

“And now that you are?”

“I need to deal with this.”

“And are you going to?”

“Well, yes.”

“When?”

“Well ...”

“Do you know how to begin the conversation and deal with your friend and manager while things are still small and manageable rather than wait until they become large and unmanageable?”

“I think so...”

“Is that something for us to talk about ... equipping you to be able to handle this critical conversation in an effective and fluent way?”

“Yes, I’d like that.”

“Great. Now how was that exchange for you?”

“Well, it felt strong, it felt confrontative, it felt real.”

“Great, that’s what coaching is designed to do—to get to the heart of things, to find the frames of mind, the frames of meaning that’s creating an experience, and to unleash new possibilities and potentials.”

“That’s great. I felt that you were holding my feet to the fire in a way that I haven’t experienced in a long time. No one around here ever talks to me that way. And I was thinking that’s how I need to be talking with some of my reports.”

“Okay, so do you now have a sense of what real coaching is like and can you distinguish it from low-quality, pussy-footing coaching?”

He said he was and thanked me for the experience. He also wanted to know more about Meta-Coaching and ended up saying that Meta-Coaching sounded more like a management training for true leadership which I confirmed and said many who come to *Coaching Mastery* use it specifically for that. He then said that he now realized that the low-quality coaching that he had seen and experienced was “low quality” because the coaches so often colluded with the reality created by the coaching client, accepting whatever they said without doing any reality testing or reality checking. The coaches didn’t have the balls to challenge their clients.

Here’s to your Meta-Coach skill of getting to the heart of things!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #33
July 21, 2010

LINGUISTICS IS OUR MIDDLE NAME

If Coaching is anything, it is a conversation. It is a dialogue and an interchange in language. And given that, no wonder Neuro-Semantics have a real advantage—the foundation of everything we do goes back to the NLP model and that means *linguistics* is our middle name. That’s why the Meta-Coach training begins with NLP, with “Coaching Essentials” and hence with the Meta-Model.

Now do you know what the whole purpose and design of the Meta-Model is? It is to give you systematic control over language—yours and those of the people you engage in conversation. Did you know that? The Meta-Model first trains your intuitions to be able to recognize certain linguistic distinctions that indicate missing portions regarding the construction of meaning and it then gives you powerful questions that address those distinctions. The questions enable you to fill in the missing portions. Those questions give you control over the way you use language so that it serves you well and enhances your life and so that it does not hypnotize you or others without your permission.

When you learned the Meta-Model, you discovered that there are *ill-formed expressions* in language that you and I, and your clients use. All of us utter these kinds of expressions all the time. It’s the way we talk. And a great deal of the time, it creates no problems. But sometimes it does. So the ability to recognize these mapping errors, these cognitive distortions, these big hole expressions simultaneously gives you the ability to do something when a person’s language undermines his or her effectiveness. Now we can inquire about these ill-formed maps in such a way so as to close the holes, straighten out the distortions, and map things more accurately. It enables you to think, reason, and understand more clearly and precisely. That’s why the Meta-Model is also called the Precision Model.

In the days when I was first learning NLP, I remember Richard Bandler frequently saying, “Everything we do in NLP, all of the modeling, all of the models comes from the Meta-Model.” He said that it is truly the foundation of everything we do. I didn’t understand that at first and it took me some time to figure that one out. Yet when I did, I began to give me more systemic control over language, thought, and modeling excellence. And as a by-note, that’s one of the reasons I was so delighted to write the book *Communication Magic* (2001, originally *Secrets of Magic*, 1997) when Richard asked me to write that back in 1997.

It is by asking the Meta-Model questions that you are able to immediately get high quality information from yourself and your clients and that leads to more accuracy and precision. And when you do that, you are able to then *get to the heart of things* very quickly—without a lot of flubbing around. The best way to really learn how to use it effectively is to *use it on yourself!*

That's right, practice each linguistic distinction and its precision questions on your own thinking and talking. If you set out to do that, in no time you will begin to hear yourself, to really listen to the non-sense of your own ill-formed mapping and then begin to correct that internal dialogue. And given the non-sense we have all been trained in by schooling, media, movies, friends, parents, this will greatly benefit your internal talk.

Another benefit of deeply learning the Meta-Model is that you'll learn to hear the structure and form of communications. Most of the time we chatter on and on without any conscious awareness of the form of our talk. We and others will exchange line after line of non-sense and so quickly hallucinate meaning into it that we never really hear the ill-formedness of the suggestions and trances.

Yet all of that ends when you thoroughly know the Meta-Model. Suddenly you will now be able to not only hear and track the content of the story being told, you can also hear and recognize the form of the story. You can hear the structural forms of the story and that, of course, gives you a meta-level perspective whereby you can create transformative change by addressing the form rather than the content.

So if your aim is to be an effective coach, and especially a world-class Meta-Coach, you will want to know how to effectively use the Meta-Model distinctions and questions. And when you know the Meta-Model the next step is being able to use it for the framing and reframing of meaning. And that, of course, takes you to the Mind-Lines Model. That's the model that gives you 26 ways to reframe things—excuses, objections, limiting beliefs. And with that, your simplest of questions will be semantically loaded—locked and loaded for transformation!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #34
July 28, 2010

COACHING

EMOTIONALLY DEPENDENT PEOPLE

Claude Bougie, a skillful Coach in Montreal Canada, with a heart for Neuro-Semantics wrote to me recently asking about the Neuro-Semantic approach to dealing with clients who are emotionally dependent. When I asked Claude what he meant by that, he wrote that they are clients who believe that “it is better to stay in a bad relationship than to be alone.” He also commended that they are using their relationships to get such things as protection, self-esteem, and acknowledgment.

Now as a Meta-Coach, the first question I hope you are asking yourself is,
“Is someone *emotionally dependent* a psychologically healthy person and someone ready for coaching? Isn’t a person like that more a client of therapy rather than coaching?”

And, of course, the answer depends on *the degree of emotional dependency*, the amount of ego-strength to face such, and the depth of not-okayness in self-esteem. Obviously, someone who is highly *dependent* with low ego-strength will need therapy more than coaching. Yet even people who are basically healthy can become emotionally dependent on various things. Any of us can become dependent on experiencing an emotional experience because we can link it with all kinds of things and we can do so unintentionally—only later to discover that it creates a dependency that doesn’t serve us well.

Pavlov was the behaviorist psychologist who first made explicit how *the linking process* works so that we can *anchor* an internal subjective experience (an emotional state) with all kinds of triggers. That explains how we can connect certain emotions to drugs, alcohol, food, sex, companionship, etc. Yet from a Neuro-Semantic perspective there’s more going on— much more.

What else is going on? The construction of meaning about the things that we link or anchor. We come to *believe* that the trigger *is* the cause of our emotion and our experience, that it *is the solution* to our problems, and that *we absolutely need it*. And it is in this way that we begin to *semantically load* the item, giving it more and more meaning. And, of course, the more meaning (significance, value) that we add to anything, the more we invest it with energy and emotion, and then come to depend on it.

So what is emotional dependence? It is the *demandingness* of an experience that comes from the belief (the meta-level meanings) that “I need, I must have, I can’t stand to be without” some item. It could be a relationship, it could be food or a particular food, or an experience, or anything. The only thing that we “absolutely” need are the survival needs. The items at the very bottom of

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (air, water, food, sleep, etc.) are the only things that we are absolutely *dependent* on. Above those, every other *need* can be satisfied in many different ways and it is precisely because there is a range of satisfiers that we can connect our needs-and-desires to things.

But even then we have not created emotional dependency. That occurs *when we set a demanding frame over it*—“I must have it.” “I can't live without it (or him or her)!” It is that demandingness that turns a legitimate need into an obsession and then into a compulsion. We create false emotional dependency whenever we try to get a certain satisfaction (gratification) for a need that the “satisfier” cannot fulfill.

That is, “food” can never satisfy the need for love, affection, safety, security, self-importance, or the self-actualization of meaningfulness, the good life, etc. Load food up with those meanings and you will create an emotional dependency on food that no amount of eating will ever fulfill. Condition your emotions to feel *the need for food* for these emotional values and food becomes semantically loaded and exalted to a position it cannot hold.

So with “relationship.” It cannot satisfy the need for self-esteem, protection, or the purpose of life. It satisfies connection, bonding, affection, sharing, and other values, but not self-esteem. Try to use your relationship for that, try to use “hugs” or “affection” or “I love you” for self-esteem and you will never get enough. You will be like an empty well that can never be filled. It is an emotional dependency that no relationship can satisfy.

All of this speaks about the importance to accurately understand our needs, to differentiate true satisfiers and false satisfiers (the theme of *Unleashing Vitality* workshop), to give the proper meanings to our needs and not to over-load them semantically, and to develop the skills to adequately cope with our needs. And this is precisely what the Neuro-Semantic models seek to do. On the *Meaning Axes* we seek to understand what each particular need is, how to satisfy it, and the best meanings to give it. Then on the *Performance Axes* we seek to develop the competencies to cope with the need and then to master it so that we experience an adequate gratification and move on up to the highest levels of self-actualization.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #35
August 5, 2010

IF THEY'RE SO SUCCESSFUL WHY DON'T THEY COACH THEMSELVES?

I sat down in a restaurant in my hometown last week with a young couple. The guy I knew. In fact, I have known him all his life. He was 2 years old when I first moved to Colorado, the son of some people with whom I became friends and have remained friends all these years. Several years ago I met him again, now for the first time as he had become a young man. It happened when I went to a “Real Estate Group” in town. The group had invited me to come and speak to them about Real Estate, and lo and behold, there was a full grown man where I once only knew a little boy who had played with my daughter when they were children. Now he works in an engineering firm, draws customized blueprints for people, and I recently discovered that he will be getting married this October.

Now years and years ago, I had taught his dad NLP (wow, talk about an induction that makes me feel old!). In fact, his dad attended some of the first sessions I ever did when I first created and ran “Western Colorado NLP Training Center.” Now this young man kind of knew something about NLP, but not really. His interest was more on the order of “Rich Dad; Poor Dad” a book and he and others read together in a study group. Then he heard about my new book, *Inside-Out Wealth*.

But this post isn't about wealth creation, nor modeling wealth creators, nor NLP, it's about coaching. That's because he asked about the next training I'd bring back to Colorado and I told him it would be the Meta-Coach training in 2011. He asked where I was going this next week, and I said Hong Kong for Meta-Coaching. So he wanted to know what this strange thing is, this “Meta-Coaching.”

Now I hardly ever explain Meta-Coaching to someone who has never even heard of the field of Coaching or NLP or self-development. Distinguishing Meta-Coaching from other Coach training programs, that's a subject I am ready to go with and have a full list of bullet points to cover. But someone who doesn't even know that there's such a thing as Coaching— now that was a stretch. So I talked about the helping professions, therapy, training, consulting, then coaching. Then talked about the most successful people hiring at top dollar Executive Coaches or Personal Coaches. That's when he turned with a genuine puzzling look on his face and said:

“If these people are so successful; so committed to their own growth and development; so far along the road of developing their best potentials, why can't they just coach themselves and save all that money?”

Ah, for a truly innocent question! And a question that asks the obvious in the most curious and

sincere way.

“Ah, *self*-coaching ... that is the most advanced form of coaching of all.” I said. And I left it at that, just waiting for the follow-up question.

“It is? But why? What’s so hard about coaching yourself, especially if you are committed to yourself and your growth?” Don’t you love such dumb, innocent, to-the-point questions? And that was precisely the question I wanted.

“Because of blind spots, that’s why. We all have them and even the most psychologically healthy person on the planet, the most self-actualizing person, has blind spots and needs someone who will challenge them, confront them, and not let them sell themselves short or fail to confront them. And this is especially true of the most successful and effective of people because our greatest blind spots hid in our greatest strengths.”

That got him, and her too! “What? I don’t get it she said.” “How could that be?” he added.

“That’s because when stresses come, when pressures arise, we all tend to play to our strengths and it is so easy to over-play to your strengths and especially if you have been highly successful in your strengths.”

They still did not get it. And since that was the very day when CEO Hayworth was forced to resign from BP, I used him as an example.

“I bet he would be a real bear in a board room negotiating with top level executives, don’t you think? I bet his go-at attitude and his ability to shoot straight and think in terms of his shareholders would make him a real powerhouse.”

Yes, their heads were nodding.

“And that very strength was his weakness in terms of handling the public and the media. When people needed to hear his ‘heart’ about the death of 11 people and the loss of thousands upon thousands of jobs due to the oil spill, he comes out and says he just wants his life back! ... His strength of operating from first-person and fighting for himself and his company was his very weakness in terms of managing public relations! We are most tempted at our strengths.”

And that’s why he really needed a Coach — an Executive Coach – and I bet he didn’t have one when he most needed one. They got it but they wanted more, “any other examples that you can think of?” they asked.

“How about King David in the Bible. Now there’s a real go-at it type of guy. A guy even when a kid ready to grab some stones and run out and slay a giant! And this was his strength as a leader of men. But later in life when he was in the palace and he saw Bathsheba, he did the same thing. He jumped into things and ended up having sex with her and having her husband killed before he thought things through. His strength was his weakness. And that’s why we need a coach!”

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #36
August 12, 2010
ACMC Event

META-COACHES PROLIFERATING IN HONG KONG!

For the first time ever, we have just completed *Module III of Meta-Coaching — Coaching Mastery* in Hong Kong. This was the second one this year sponsored and organized by Mandy Chai, the newest member on the Leadership Team of Neuro-Semantics. First in Jan- May in mainland China and now in Hong Kong.

This time we did the full 8-day Coaching Bootcamp which in this part of the world is pretty intense! There's not a lot of trainings that long and that intense. And Meta-Coaching in China is giving me a reputation for being an intense guy. The other sponsor in China said that he didn't know any other NLP Trainer that went as long, as intensely, as focused as me. Compared to me, he said, they are all on Holiday. Well, I am too, but that's my secret!

We had a fairly new team of Team Leaders who did the benchmarking, 4 of them graduated in May and while we usually want people more experienced in coaching and having integrated Meta-Coaching, getting sufficient number of people who know Meta-Coaching and speak Chinese and are in this part of the world is our challenge. But Mandy rose to the occasion and we have sufficient numbers— enough so that I could devote my time to Benchmarking with each of them and benchmarking the benchmarkers.

Assist Team of Benchmarks —

Mandy Chai — Wilkie Choi — Carven Yiu — Mariani (from Indonesia)

Thomas — Solomon — Anderson — Win Ma

In the new group of Meta-Coaches, half are provisional and that's because I've been getting tougher and tougher about the standards and more rigorous in requesting that we see competency in the skills and not let people pass through who are "pretty close." It is also partially that the system itself continues to grow and become more demanding with each presentation of *Coaching Mastery*.

We had two expert Coaches: *Gloria Leung*, a trainer and Coach, and *Angela Spaxman*, a Career and Executive Coach. Angela came with ten years experience as a Coach in Hong Kong and lots of experience with launching Coach Associations to support the field of Coaching. She is an executive coach with NLP background and a commitment to her own growth which exudes from her (www.loving-your-work.com). Gloria Leung, who is also a Life and Personal Coach and who focuses on training, stayed for the whole program and is now a Meta-Coach ... and she will definitely be a tremendous asset for Meta-Coaching in Hong Kong and China

www.synergyplushk.com).

It seems to me that the majority of people in Coaching in this part of the world work inside of organizations and so there is much less emphasis here on people creating their own businesses and running Introduction Sessions here as is more typical in the US, Europe, Australia, etc.

Coaching Mastery, as the third module after the training in NLP (Coaching Essentials) and Meta-States (Coaching Genius) is now maturing from 8 years of evolution and constant feedback for improving it. I told the Team Leaders this I would now love to do a 16-day intensive. There is so much material, so many patterns and processes, we only cover a portion of what's possible to create a really powerful and effective Higher-Level Coach.

Here's a big Meta-High Five to Mandy and the Team Leaders for a job well done!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #37
August 18, 2010

[I wrote this several years ago and never published it.]

EXTERNALIZING THE AXES OF CHANGE

Is it possible to discover *the representational form* of the Axes of change? That is, the way we represent these Axes in terms of their visual, kinesthetic, and auditory formats? When I designed the Axes of Change model (with assistance from Michelle Duval), the model was built it on four meta-program continua and so I created a diagram of four lines as axes. We then created a circle so that they would all be intersecting thereby conveying the idea that the model is not a linear one, but a non-linear, systemic one. From that we identified eight coaching change roles and a central role of facilitator.

To think structurally and dynamically, think of the Axes of Change as having two parts. First we have the first two axes which describes the creation of *the preparation for change*. The work that involves occurs within the two change mechanisms—motivation and decision. To change there has to be energy, motivation, passion, drive. There also has to be a decision. Once the “Make it So!” decision has been made, then we shift gears to actually *implementing the change* by creating and integrating the change. That’s the purpose of the second two axes which deal with the last two change mechanisms—creation and integration.

Another way to look at the Axes of Change is in terms of male and female *energies*. In this, the four axes highlights the “female” or nurturing role of the coach in four specific roles: Awakening, Probing, Co-Creating, and Re-inforcing. Then there is the more “male” or challenging coaching roles: Challenger, Provoker, Actualizer, and Tester. From this point of view, we see the ying-and-yang energies within the change agent’s roles as a coach.

Altogether the four lines or continua come together to form a circle diagram of multiple intersections. Yet in describing them in this way, this is just a way of mapping the roles of change for a change-agent. It’s just one way of setting them forth. And that realization raises numerous questions:

- Now, from all of that, step back, and how you *feel* these axes?
- Is that how we *see* them for ourselves, as a circle?
- How do you see or feel or hear them?
- How do you experience these continua as meta-programs and then how do you experience them as a unified model?

I first thought about this in talking after our 2005 *Meta-Coach Certification Training* in London when I sat with Joseph Scott, and he began describing how he imagined the Axes. In his mind,

he had put onto the Motivation Axes, the levels of change from Bateson. Then on the Decision Axes he had connected the well-formed outcome distinctions from NLP as a way to remember and use the model.

I then talked about this with another Meta-Coach, Ian Taylor, and then later others. From those conversations, I began an exploration of the idea that as we externalize our concept of time, putting *time* outside of us and then creating a time-line, is it possible that we can create an externalized holographic image and feeling of the meta-program axes? And if we could, would this give us a tool as change agents?

In fact, that evening, I invited Ian to allow me to play with the idea and used some elicitation questions to explore how he represented the four axes. From this, Ian had some significant insights and I dare say, breakthroughs, and so wrote a piece about the Axes of Decision and the meta-program of Counting and Discounting.

Discovering the Representational forms

The idea that we encode *concepts* like time, beliefs, social relationships, and meta-levels using images which we can then internalize and that we store and encode them in kinesthetic location suggests that we can look for how we might do this with other concepts. I have written extensively about this in *Figuring Out People* dealing with meta-programs and in my reviews of DHE.

To work with this externalization of our internal representations, the following elicitation questions invites you to explore your own inner processes.

Axes of Change

Away From Aversions Probing — Reflecting	<i>Motivation</i> <i>Decision</i>	Toward Attractions Provoking — Acting
Internal — Co-Creating Matching — Reinforcing	<i>Creation</i> <i>Solidification</i>	External — Actualizing Mis-Matching — Testing

1) The Axis of Motivation.

As you think about something that you want ... what is it? What do you want? What do you really want? Passionately want?

And what is it that you don't want? That you wish to avoid at all costs? That you have had enough of? That you don't even want to consider?

Do you have anything like that in any area of life—work, career, relationship, health, money, etc.?

As you take one thing and represent it, an attraction or aversion, a pain or a pleasure, notice where you put it and how you represent it. What is it like?

How do you represent the desired attraction and the disliked aversion as opposites?

How do you know that they are opposites to you?

2) *The Axis of Decision.*

Now think about a decision that you have made, a fairly big decision about something, a decision that was not easy, but that took some time and thought. As you do recall how you reflected on it, the pros and cons, the advantages and disadvantages, and then the point of decision, when somehow you got to a place of deciding.

How do you think about this decision? How do you represent the thinking, evaluating, and deciding process?

Where do you put the decision-making process?

How much time do you give to reflecting before acting?

If reflecting and acting are opposite ends of a continuum, how do you think about and represent the thinking side versus the doing side?

Where are these polar opposites in relationship to your body?

3) *The Axis of Creation.*

Now think about something important to you, something big enough to have been a significant change in your life, something that you created as a new action, behavior, habit, or way of being to improve the quality of your life. Also begin to think about the mental creation of planning and inventing that you went through and then the first actions that you took to begin to make it real in your life.

How do you represent that creation process?

If there's a thinking stage of planning, inventing, and imagining, then the opposite is the doing stage of trying it out. How do you represent these polar opposites?

Where are these contrasting sides?

How long do you stay in either position before flipping to the other side?

How much time do you give relative to the other?

4) *The Axis of Solidification.*

Now think about a skill that you took from a beginner's state to full maturity of excellence. What skill have you developed from a state of incompetence and ignorance about your incompetence to competence and then on to mastery? Driving a car perhaps? What skill would fit the idea of learning to do something that took a matter of time, practice, repetition, habituation, etc.?

How do you represent this idea of solidification for the sustaining and maintenance of a new skill?

Where do you put the idea of incompetence and the opposite side of competence and mastery?

How long of a time did it take?

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #38
August 25, 2010

BENCHMARKING QUALITY

Benchmarking of the Quality of an Experience

As a Meta-Coach, you know how to benchmark the *quantity* aspects of coaching. That is, you know how to focus on *what* the coach needs to *do* in order to support, listen, question, meta-question, etc. You know the behaviors and the benchmarks of those behaviors on the forms that we use, do you not? I hope so! And knowing that, then you know that we ask behavioral questions: How many times does the Coach do this or that? How often? Does the Coach do the behaviors below the Level 2.5? What behaviors are below that? Which are above that? Etc. If you have been on the Assist Team and benchmarked at MCF chapter meetings — then you know about this foundational aspect of the Neuro-Semantic Benchmarking Model.

But what I have not figured out — yet— but am on the verge of discovering is *how to benchmark for the quality aspects in the coaching experience*. Last year I put the *quality* of each skill in italics at the top on each of the seven skills (on the benchmarking sheet), but that only confused the hell out of lots of benchmarkers! So while it was in the right direction, it was not sufficient. And so overall, it did not help. So the question that I am still working on is this:

How does a coach need to perform the behaviors of looking, repeating words, asking WFO questions, etc. so that the way he or she does that conveys the spirit and heart which an effective Meta-Coach wants to convey?

Would you like to find out? Would you like to be part of some experiences that will take you on a journey of discovery? Well, you can! In fact, two times *you* as a Meta-Coach have an opportunity to be part of this discovery.

Very soon — in September in Pretoria South Africa, I will be doing a full day on Benchmarking with the Neuro-Semantic Community. Come and be a part of it!

Then in early October in Stockholm at the *Coaching Mastery* in Sweden, I invite you to participate in this new level of benchmarking. In fact, I will be assigning the Teams at Meta-Coaching and their Team Leaders the task of *benchmarking the quality* of the 7 coaching skills.

Here is a preview of the search. Start with the phrase: **Benchmark the state of _____ in the context of _____.**

The first line in each of the following 7 core coaching skills, you can see *the states* that we are looking for, the states that an effective coach will be operating from to convey the *quality of the how*. The first line describes the Coach in the states of “warm and caring” ... and so on.

The second line is the objective — what effect it should create in the client. We do not

benchmark the client (the client could put him or herself in that state or experience); instead we benchmark the Coach regarding how the Coach is able to do the following.

1) Support

Warm and caring — while Supporting a client.
So the client feels cared for and believed in by the coach.

2) Listening

Compassionate attention to the person — while Listening to a client.
So the client feels deeply understood and “heard.”

3) Questioning

Respectfully curious — while Questioning a client.
So the client feels the questions are respectful, in service of actualizing his or her highest and best.

4) Meta-Questioning

Exposing empowerment — while Meta-Questioning the higher frames of meaning.
So the client feels led on an inward journey of discovery, expanded self-awareness, and a safe vulnerability to the coach.

5) Receiving Feedback

Respectful reflective openness — while Receiving feedback from a client during the session.
So the client feels safe to disagree, to correct the coach and enable to express his or her self in a completely open way.

6) Giving Feedback

Fierce succinct compassion — while giving Feedback to a client in a session.
So the client feels seen, exposed, and fascinated by the mirroring of the coach.

7) Inducing States

Expressively persuasive — while inducing a client into states
So the client feels connected, open, respected, understood, safe (in the Crucible’s safety) and curious, engaged, responsible, appreciation, motivated, solution focused (in the Crucible’s fire).

Want to be a part of this discovery?? I hope so. If so — here is the contact details:

For South Africa contact — Cheryl Lucas: cheryl@peoplesa.co.za

For Sweden — contact Sara Lee, sara.m.lee@gmail.com

Seven Skills Pyramid



From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #39
September 1, 2010

THE DEPTHS OF META-COACHING

How well aware are you that there are depths within the Meta-Coach System? I find that some Meta-Coaches don't seem to know that. Either that or their "options meta-program" is in over-drive and they are off looking at other systems and seduced to go after some program that's been sensationalized. And yet they do that to their own detriment. They move on after only having a shallow experience of the Meta-Coach system.

Actually, when you graduate from *Coaching Mastery* you have only begun the journey, and only have been exposed to perhaps 5 per cent of the full Meta-Coaching System. When I first created the Meta-Coach system I did so by integrating three models — the NLP Model, Meta-States Model, and Matrix Model. With that in hand, I then interviewed three Coaches in Australia who were highly skilled in Coaching and who were demonstrating that they could make a good living from such— Graham Richard was the first person, Michelle Duval the second, and Cheryl Gilroy the third. And fortunate for me, that gave me three coaching domains: Executive Coaching, Personal Coaching, and Group/Team Coaching. And that's what was in the first MC Training Manual.

In that process, the conversation I had with Michelle was about *the essence of coaching itself*. So we made a list and came up with seven things that coaching *is*.

Communication — Reflexive Communication — Change — Implementation — Systems — Self-Actualization — Business Acumen.

That was 2002 and so I then focused on identifying *a model* that would provide guidance, direction, and theory for each of these facets. And you know what resulted:

NLP — Meta-States — Axes of Change — Benchmarking — Matrix — Self-Actualization Quadrants — Matrix Business Plan.

Later, I realized that there was something missing. So in 2007 I used the Meaning—Performance Axes to map out the Facilitation Model and that became the seventh model in the Meta-Coaching System (replacing the Business focus which is really in a different dimension anyway).

Now with these seven models, you, as a Meta-Coach, have the possibility of answering *the question* that coaches from other coaching systems can seldom answer: *How do you know what to do, when to do it, with whom, how, and why?* And this is what makes MC systematic as a coaching methodology. We are not just guessing, using our intuition, crossing our fingers and hoping our questions and responses will help, we have a theoretical structure for how to facilitate change, development, and transformation in a psychologically healthy person.

At the heart of all of this is *the focused conversation on a desired outcome* and when you learn how to facilitate that, you co-create with your client a KPI and typically can do it within the first ten minutes. Yes, you read that right. And, of course, that is the PCMC level of competency. And if you can't do that yet—it's just a matter of learning the funneling skill. And that's a depth of Meta-Coaching that most are still not at.

That's because after you use the dialectic language of precision questions and meta-questions to explore *what the client wants* and you co-create a well-formed outcome, then comes the funneling for the well-formed problem statement. "What's in the way? What stops you from making your dream come true?" You funnel to a well-formed problem statement to eliminate symptoms, riddles, annoyances, and paradoxes. And the reason for doing that? Because if you spend your time coaching a symptom, you have not dealt with the real problem!

Now you have a clear and precise description of the problem; 50 to 90 percent of the time *that WFP statement* vanishes the problem. The problem disappears. It breaks up. If not, then you need another funneling conversation—to the well-formed solution statement. And when you complete that, then there is the final funneling to the well-formed innovation plan.

[These funneling conversations are taught and trained in the *Unleashing Creative Solutions: Creativity and Innovation* workshop. It is an advance coach training workshop.]

While you are funneling, you are also framing (meta-stating), following the energy through the Matrix, facilitating the four change processes (Axes of Change), and enabling the discovering and development of the client's potentials. All the while you are also noticing and coaching to meta-programs that arise; you are assessing the client's level of needs (using the Matrix Embedded Pyramid– Volcano); and holding a Crucible space for your client.

Did I say that there's a lot of depth in Meta-Coaching? Well, if I forgot to say that, I hope that you are now catching a vision of the richness, the depth, and the quality of the Coaching Methodology that you have begun to learn.

"How am I supposed to know and remember all of that?" Great question! Let's start with the idea of practice—the special kind of *deliberate practice* that is the key to the 10-year rule for mastery (Anders Ericsson's work on expertise, *the Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*, 2006, and also see *Achieving Peak Performance*, 2009). Let's talk about the Practice sessions at MCF chapters. Let's talk about your own self-coaching or being coached for your own Professional Development Plan as a coach and moving toward PCMC and later MCMC credentials. Let's talk about you delving into the depth of Meta-Coaching to become thoroughly skilled and competent with all of the tools that you have in Meta-Coaching. And so the adventure continues ...

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #40
September 8, 2010

TAKERS ARE NOT SYNERGISTIC PEOPLE

Are you a taker or a giver? What kind of an orientation do you have in the world regarding getting and giving? Is your orientation to get as much as you can, to find ways to get more and more and more, or is it to give, to contribute, to make a difference? Or, as a third alternative, is it to get so that you can give?

Now as simplistic as those questions are, your answers indicate *the level of need* that you are living at? Your answer indicates whether you are living at the level of the D-needs (deficiency) or the B-needs (being, abundance).

Deficiency people live at the level of needing survival, safety and security (stability, control, order), love and affection (the social need for bonding, connection, approval, love), or self-esteem (worth as a person and worth in community). If you are living at that level, your mind, perspective, focus, and actions will be focused on *getting*. If this is where you are currently and you are still learning to cope with your basic needs, then this is proper and appropriate. If you have given too much meaning to *getting* and now *getting more and more and more* is your “meaning of life,” then you have semantically loaded it so it is now a neurotic need.

Being / Abundance people live at the higher level of the self-actualization needs and so have a very different focus, perspective, mind, and actions. They think about giving, contributing, expressing what they have within to enrich others, to make a difference. They are at the level of living the higher meta-needs of knowledge, truth, justice, beauty, choice, contribution, wisdom, making a difference, and meaningfulness. They need to *give*. Having adequately satisfied the lower needs, having developed true satisfiers, those needs vanish from awareness and they rise to the higher meta-life and so are self-actualizing.

I became aware of this recently in discussion with some Neuro-Semantic Coaches and Trainers. One Coach wanted me to endorse a project he was working on. I did. He wanted me to read a manuscript and give him feedback. I did. I spent hours doing that for him. He then wanted endorsement of another project. In the process I noticed that he declared himself “a Neuro-Semantic Trainer” in his bio. Well, that was not actually true. So I suggested that he needed to put (“not currently licensed”) so that it would not be a false declaration. I didn’t even ask him to renew his license or anything, just add a little tag-line so it would reflect the truth. But that created a big conflict with him calling me every name he could think to call me.

In another instance, a Trainer told me that one of the Neuro-Semantic trainings was “not a good business model.” When he said that I immediately recognized that this was precisely why he was

not able to be an effective leader— all he ever thought about was “what I can get out of it, how much money I can earn.” Apparently the thought never crossed his mind that it was more than a business model, it was also a community model— a model that enabled him to make money *and* contribute to building the Meta-Coach Community and help with the world-wide branding and the branding in his country.

Getting and Giving — two equally important and valid responses; two responses we all need. You need to *get* your lower needs met so that you can move on up to the higher needs of self-actualization. *And* you equally need to experience *the state of givingness* that occurs at the self-actualization level. If you are perpetually stuck at the *gettingness* of the lower needs, you have probably given distorted meanings to money, security, status, reputation, etc. And what that does is prevent you from being truly *synergistic* as a person.

The Power and Magic of Synergy

Maslow modeled the idea of synergy from Ruth Benedict who created it as a way to compare cultures. We can also use it to compare families, companies, countries, and individuals. In this quote Maslow shows how that being synergistic unifies and combines getting and giving into the same person. The result is that getting-and-giving becomes an integrated whole.

“That one useful meaning of ‘good conditions’ is ‘synergy,’ defined by Ruth Benedict as ‘social-institutional conditions which fuse selfishness and unselfishness, by arranging it so that when I pursue selfish’ gratifications, I automatically help others, and when I try to be altruistic, I automatically reward and gratify myself also; i.e., when the dichotomy or polar opposition between selfishness and altruism is resolved and transcended.”

In the next quote, Maslow relates it to society —to create a “good society.”

“A good society is one in which virtue pays; the more the synergy in a society or sub-group or pair or within a self, the closer we come to the B-values; poor social or environmental conditions are those which set us against each other by making our personal interests antagonistic to each other, or mutually exclusive, or in which the personal gratifications (D-needs) are in short supply so that not all can satisfy their needs, except at the expense of others. Under good conditions we have to pay little or nothing for being virtuous, for pursuing the B-Values, etc.; under good conditions, the virtuous businessman is more successful financially; under good conditions, the successful person is loved rather than hated or feared or resented; under good conditions, admiration is more possible.”

“What we call ‘good’ jobs and ‘good’ working conditions on the whole help to move people toward the B-values; e.g., people in less desirable jobs value safety and security most, people in most desirable jobs most often value highest the possibilities of self-actualization.” (1971: 135)

“We must better design a society that rewards people for behaving virtuously and make it disadvantageous for them to behave badly. *We need good people to make a good society, and we need a good society to make good people.* Both tasks must be accomplished simultaneously.” (1996: 149-150)

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #41
September 15, 2010

SPECIFIC BEST STATES FOR BEING WORLD-CLASS AS A META-COACH

In *Coaching Mastery* since 2002 I have always asked, “What are your best states as a coach?” And today this is also what the other Meta-Coach Trainers ask. That question occurs early in the program, now on Day 3, when we do the State Matrix and we then invite Meta-Coaches to begin integrating their best states into their identity so that it becomes their style. Do you remember that? Can you recall your answers to the following questions:

- What were the three best states that you identified?
- Did you identify more than three?
- How did you arrange or sequence your best coaching states?
- When you step into those states, what *style* emerges from those states?
- How well has all of that settled in to create your current best states and style?

Well, now that is changing. Now a new update is coming. As I have been working on benchmarking not only *the behaviors that you perform as a Coach for each of the seven core skills (the quantity)*, but also *the quality of those behaviors*, the questions that I have wrestled with has been these—

How do we manage the *quality* of those behaviors? What do we need to do in order to infuse that *quality* into the behaviors? What is required of a Coach, especially a Meta-Coach, in order for him or her to *transfer* what’s inside the mind and heart to the external behaviors of the performance so that it is filled with the Coach’s special spirit and feel?

The answer is actually simple. Obvious. The answer is *state*. The Coach has to be fully in the right *state of mind, body, heart and emotion* and that *state has to be strong and robust enough* so that its energy vibrates and infuses the performance of the coaching skills. It is that simple; it is that profound. Then the Coach endows his or her performance with the high level *quality* that makes it world-class.

So it is not enough to do the *right behaviors (sub-skills) that make up the skills*. It is not enough to do a sufficient amount of those behaviors. It is not sufficient to do it at the optimal level. More is required. You must do it *with the right attitude, understanding, meaning, intention, and emotion*. You must infuse what you do with how you do it. And if you succeed, then your client will pick up on your “spirit” — your “heart.” Your internal state of care, curiosity, presence, openness, firmness, expressiveness, etc. will be conveyed through your behaviors. And together these will give your coaching *your unique style*.

So what is the change? The change is that for each of the seven core skills, we now know what is the *best supporting state* is for each skill and what is required if you want to truly be effective and world-class. So from now on we will be recommending that Meta-Coaches *first develop and learn to access these states*.

1) For support — care is the primary state. You access a state of warm, loving, gentle, firm *care* with the goal that the client feels cared for and believed in by you as the coach.

2) For Listening — presence is the primary state. You access a state of compassionate attention that you give totally and completely to the person so that your *absolute presence* to a client enables the client to feel deeply understood and “heard.”

3) For Questioning — curiosity is the primary state. You access a state of respectful curiosity while you ask the most personal question so that *curiosity* enables your client feels an absolute fascination about his or her own life, about discovering outcomes and solutions for actualizing his or her highest and best.

4) For Meta-Questioning — an exposing curiosity is the primary state. You access a state of curiosity that seeks to find out what’s going on with “the man behind the curtain” (Wizard of Oz metaphor) as you search in all of the hidden higher levels of meaning in the back of the mind. You do this so the client feels led on an inward journey of discovery, expanded self-awareness, and a safe vulnerability.

5) For Receiving Feedback — openness is the primary state. You access a state of respectful and reflective openness while receiving feedback from a client during the session so the client feels safe to disagree with you, to correct you in the process so you fully understand him or her, and enable to express his or her self in a completely open way.

6) For Giving Feedback — reflective confrontation is the primary state. You access a state of being a clean mirror and simply, firmly, and succinctly *reflect* back to the client what you client has given while you give feedback to a client in a session. You do this so the client feels seen, exposed, and fascinated by your mirroring.

7) For Inducing States — expressiveness is the primary state. You access a state of being expressively persuasive while you induce your client into states required for his or her experiencing and developing, so the client feels connected, open, respected, understood, safe (in the Crucible’s safety) and curious, engaged, responsible, appreciation, motivated, solution focused (in the Crucible’s fire).

Now the personal coaching question: How are you doing with regard to these 7 *best states for an effective Meta-Coach*? Do you need a coaching session or training workshop this week for any of these powerful states?

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #42
September 22, 2010

GETTING CLIENTS IN AND OUT OF MUDDLES

I am re-reading Bateson's classic, *Toward an Ecology of Mind* (1972). It is my seventh time and maybe, just maybe, I'll understand him this time. (Actually I doubt it, but at least I'm getting a bit closer to his genius!)

Bateson begins his book with a bunch of *Metalogues* with his daughter. These *metalogues* are imaginary conversations that he wrote as if a father-and-daughter are talking about the structures of experiences— a delightful way to edge a reader into the depth of his philosophy about epistemology and linguistics.

“A *metalogue* is a conversation about some problematic subject. This conversation should be such that not only do the participants discuss the problem but the structure of the conversation as a whole is also relevant to the same subject.” (p. 1)

Anyway, they begin with the subject of muddles. The first metalogue: *Why do Things Get in a Muddle?* Daughter wanted to know about this. “People spend a lot of time tidying things, but they never seem to spend time muddling things. Things just seem to get in a muddle by themselves. And then they have to tidy them again.” (p. 3). Finally, father explains, “There are more ways which you call ‘untidy’ than there are ways which you call ‘tidy.’”

Then there is the metalogue: *About Games and Being Serious*. Daughter inquires if the conversations are serious. Father says they are. So “what sort of games are they?” “They are a sort of game that we play together.” Daughter says, “Then they are *not* serious!” Father said, ah, that now brings up the question of what do we mean by “serious” and by “game.” So father says that for him it is not about winning or losing, instead —

“When your questions put me in a tight spot, I try a little harder to think straight and to say clearly what I mean. . . . I think that we get some ideas straight and I think that the muddles help.” (p. 14, 15)

“We talk about ideas. And I know that *I play with the ideas in order to understand them and fit them together*. It's ‘play’ in the same sense that a small child ‘plays’ with blocks ... and a child with building blocks is mostly very serious about his play.” (Italics added)

In Meta-States we would say that this is the state of being *playfully serious* and it is a Game for Learning and Development. When then asked if it is a *game*, father says that it is, but not a game *against* each other, but *against* the ideas. “In the end we are working together to build the ideas up so that they will stand.”

“The whole point of the game is that we get into muddles, and do come out on the other side ... The point is that the purpose of these conversations is to discover the ‘rules.’ It's

like life— a game whose purpose is to discover the rules, which rules are always changing and always undiscoverable.” (pp. 19-20)

Question: Now isn't that very much like the *coaching conversations* that you hold with clients? Sometimes clients come in and they are already in a muddle. Their lives are not tidy. Their minds and hearts and relationships are untidy, that is, not in place; in other words, a mess. So we have a coaching conversation with the intention and design of empowering them to figure out the rules in the back of their minds which then affects their emotions, their relationships, etc. We have a conversation to help our client think through the situation, to think clearer, and to identify the frames that create the challenges and those that resolve things. The design is to then come out the other side of the muddle.

Sometimes the opposite happens. Sometimes clients come in and their lives are so tidy that there's no room for passion, surprise, ecstasy, the emergence of a new potential, love, etc. So the conversation we have with them stirs things up, creates a muddle so that there can be a new re-arrangement of things on the inside. How are you at that? Creating muddles!

In a coaching conversation coach and client *plays with ideas*. You play with the ideas the client brings to you, the rules the client has in the back of his or her mind regarding how those ideas work, what they are good for, not good for, what games they are allowed to play in life, which they are not allowed to play, and so on. You play with the ideas to find out how robust they are, what qualities they bring to life and experiences, how useful they are for the client. You play with ideas to empower your client to become more creative, more innovative, more excited by problems and problem-solving.

Now an *average* coaches focuses on identifying the muddles that their clients are in and then getting them out of those muddles. But *great* coaches — ah, a great coach does that, but only after helping to stir up the muddles of the clients! Merely helping a client tidy up his or her life misses out on the self-actualizing potential. At the end of the first *metalogue*, father says,
“There are infinitely many muddled ways— so things will always go toward muddle and mixedness.”

To which daughter says, “Why didn't you say that at the beginning, Daddy? I could have understood *that* all right.”

“Yes, I suppose so. Anyhow, it's now bedtime.”

And so it ended there. Perhaps a great coaching session is more about awakening a client to clear thinking about things than providing specific answers. Anyway, here's to great Muddles and coaching conversations about Muddles!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #43
September 29, 2010

TRAINING YOUR INTUITIONS FOR EXPERTISE

In *Blink: The Power of thinking without Thinking* (2005), Malcolm Gladwell argues that there are times when expertise manifests itself in a blink-of-an-eye. And he provides many examples of such— experts who looked at a sixth century BC statute and immediately had a gut feeling that it just did not look right; something was wrong. Yet eighteen months of analysis could not find anything wrong. But in the end, the experts were right, it was not legitimate. Their “hunch” eventually proved true (chapter 1). So with John Gottman’s ability to very quickly identify relationships that will end in divorce (chapter 2), and once tennis pro and expert, Vic Braden’s ability to recognize a good serve in the blink of an eye (chapter 3), etc.

What does all of this indicate? First, what it does *not* indicate. It does not mean that there is within all people an intuition about such things! Far from it. Such “intuitions” are not common or universal, they are trained. It is the intuition of a trained expert that allows him or her to do such seemingly magical things.

It indicates then that *a trained intuition* of a person schooled in a particular speciality (with ten or more years of study and experience behind him or her) can sometimes perform seeming miracles. This corresponds to the beginning of NLP when Bandler and Grinder discovered the same in Perls, Satir, and Erickson. In a person who has trained his or her “adaptive unconscious” mind (p. 11) for rapid cognition, they can sometimes “in the blink of an eye” identify critical cues and quickly get to the heart of things.

And *what is rapid cognition*? In Cognitive psychology *rapid cognition* refers to how trained intuition about something can quickly size up something and do so especially when under stress— that is, in contexts of pressure and demands. Gladwell quotes from specialists like Timothy Wilson (*Strangers to Ourselves*) that the adaptive unconscious as rapid cognition operates “fast and frugal.”

“The adaptive unconscious does an excellent job of sizing up the world, warning people of danger, setting goals, and initiating action in a sophisticated and efficient manner.” (p. 12)

Now, wouldn’t you love that when you are under pressure, for example, when you are being watched and benchmarked when you are coaching, or when you are coaching in front of a group, or when you are coaching to meet the qualifications of being added as a service provider for executive coaching? Wouldn’t that be great? Or when you are encountering a client who presents a lot of things and you are trying to identify *the heart of the matter*?

The key, as Gladwell presents it, is *thin-slicing*. This refers to being able to take a thin-slice of a piece of behavior or conversation and being able to see or hear within it the key features that gives you clues as to the inner secrets (or as we would say, structure). *Thin-slicing* is perhaps the critical part of rapid cognition. It is the ability of your adaptive unconscious to find patterns in situations and behaviors based on a very narrow slice of experience (p. 23).

“We thin-slice because we have to, and we come to rely on that ability because there are a lot of hidden fists out there, lots of situations where careful attention to details of a very thin slice, even for no more than a second or two, can tell us an awful lot.” (p. 44)

“How good people’s decisions are under the fast-moving, high-stress conditions of rapid cognition is a function of training and rules and rehearsal.” (p. 114)

Thin-slicing also depends upon something else— knowing what counts. So for Gottman, being able to predict couples who are liable to divorce (he predicts at a 95 % accuracy from observing one hour of a conversation who will and who will not be married 15 years later). Dr. John Gottman has also identified the four key factors (he calls them, The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse of a Marriage!): defensiveness, stonewalling, criticism, and contempt. And to know what counts in that list, he has further identified the most important one of all— *contempt* (pp. 32-33). And within this context, he has identified that “for a marriage to survive, the ratio of positive to negative emotion in a given encounter has to be at least five to one.” (p. 26).

Now in Neuro-Semantics and NLP, we talk about the skill of being able to *identify key patterns* or *pattern detection*. And all of this highlights the value of *pattern detection*— being able to recognize what is relevant to a particular pattern, experience, or outcome. For Gosling, he identified “The Big Five Inventory” regarding personality (p. 55). In another study, the key to whether a doctor will be sued when there’s been a mistake in diagnosis or practice, the factor that counts most of all is the doctor’s *time* of conversing with the patient (just three more minutes than those in the sued group) and his or her *tone of voice* (pp. 42-43).

For the doctors at Cook County Hospital (Chicago), the work of Brendan Reilly and Lee Goldman’s algorithm identified what really counted in terms of predicting heart attacks. They reduced the list to three items (pp. 134, 126-137). The problem that the doctors previously had was too much information— too many factors! And within all of that information overload were factors that you would think would make a difference, but actually did not help with the diagnosis of whether a person would be a candidate for a heart-attack. Again, know *what really counts in that context*.

What does this mean for you as a Meta-Coach? As you learn to identify *the factors that really count in human functioning and experiencing* and discover how to thin-slice bits of conversation and experiences— you train your adaptive conscious and unconscious mind until your intuitions are able to detect the key cues, even if they are subtle and quick. This training of your intuitions over the years eventually turns you into an expert. Then even under pressure, even in stressful situations, you will be able to trust your intuitions and demonstrate high quality coaching that gets to the heart of things.

Would you like that? Great. Then get to your local MCF chapter meetings for practice. If you don't have one, start one! Read, practice, record your coaching sessions, review them, get a mentor, get a buddy coach, get a supervisor to work with in reviewing your sessions. Return to *Coaching Mastery* to revisit, then to be on the Assist Team as a Benchmarker. This will train your intuitions like nothing else will!

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #44
October 6, 2010

META-COACHING — BENEFITS AND VALUES

When I had the following document in hand the other day, some Meta-Coaches noticed and asked me about it. I explained that it is the document for how to sell Meta-Coaching as a Coach Training System and that I send it to those who are sponsoring the training so that they can be more clear and articulate about the Coach Training. Both of the Meta-Coaches asked if they could see it and as they read through the document, they asked if I could get a copy to them. “Why?” I asked. Both said that even though it was about the Training, it had lots of things they could use in selling Meta-Coaching to H.R. departments, senior managers, and others. So with a view that you might also find it use ful for selling your Meta-Coaching, here it is for you also.

Because I often receive questions about Meta-Coach Training, I have prepared the following to identify some of the key benefits and values:

- *Why* attend the world-class Coach Training known as *Meta-Coaching*?
- What are the key benefits and values that a person can expect from attending the Meta-Coach Training System and being certified with the ACMC credentials (Associate Certified Meta-Coach)?

1) Meta-Coach Training enables you to become a Self-Actualization Coach.

Since *Coaching* is based on self-actualization psychology and is all about facilitating people *actualizing* their highest and best— Meta-Coaching provides you the basics of Self-Actualization Psychology and training in how to facilitate the unleashing process for individuals, for leaders, managers, companies. No other Coach Training can claim that. You will learn how to use *the Self-Actualization Quadrants* to awaken and actualize the highest and best in people for creating synergy on the Meaning / Performance Axes. Then you will be able to facilitating people achieving peak performance in their chosen areas. You will be able to facilitate people create meaningfulness in life – and so enjoying peak experiences. You will also experience this first-hand— the unleashing of your skills and potentials.

2) Meta-Coach Training enables you to develop a fully Systematic Approach to your coaching.

Meta-Coaching is the first and still, only Coach training that is fully systematic. We have analyzed “coaching” as involving 7 features or components; then to each we have identified or created a model that enables us to deal with that component. The result is that you can answer *the question*— As a Coach, how do you know what to do, when, and with whom and why? And as you learn that you will then develop the self-confidence for knowing what you are doing and being able to explain why.

This then gives you a scientific foundation for enabling clients to unleash their highest and best potentials. In it you have a way to rigorously measure improvement, progress, and even to measure the competency of any skill or intangible value.

3) Meta-Coach Training enables you to achieve the status of an ACMC Coach.

You will receive an International certification and be part of a world-wide community. The MCF (Meta-Coach Foundation) is equivalent to the ICF as a certifying body. What are the differences? MCF, like ICF, has a set of skills *and has benchmarked* the coaching skills whereas the ICF has not. Also MCF has a board of examiners to provide a way to police the ethics and standards of Meta-Coaching, the ICF has not yet established this. The MCF standards are higher than the ICF.

As a certified Meta-Coach, you will receive ongoing support as you will be added to the exclusive Meta-Coach email group and receive a 2-page article from Dr. Michael Hall each week. It is a way to stay in touch with the other 860 Meta-Coaches around the world. And as a Meta-Coach, you can join (or create) a local MCF chapter for practice.

4) Meta-Coach Training provides you hands-on guidance in lots of practice.

In the Meta-Coach training you will do a full coaching session 7 times, be a client 7 times and be in the meta-position 7 times. This will give you lots of experiences in the actual hands-on experience of coaching.

When you are Coach in your coaching sessions, your skills will be benchmarked by an experienced team leader/ benchmarker. This will give you immediate, hands-on experience about your strengths and weaknesses so that you know what to do. You'll practice under the expert eyes of experienced Meta-Coaches who will provide you on-the-spot, moment-by-moment feedback. No other Coach Training in the world offers this.

5) Meta-Coach Training provides you many rich coaching experiences in the training.

In addition to receiving coaching sessions every day on what you choose which will enable and enrich your experience as a coach, some of the participants will have the opportunity to be coached by one of the Meta-Coach trainers.

You will learn to distinguish the levels of coaching – Performance Coaching, Developmental Coaching, and Transformational Coaching. You will also get to coach many different people over the 8 days to be stretch from coaching just one person.

6) Meta-Coach Training offers you powerful and cutting-edge patterns that you can use in your coaching.

The training manual itself contains 20 to 30 coaching patterns. This extends the 14 you received in Module II (the Meta-States training) and the 10 or so in Module I (the NLP Training). So you will have a large range of patterns that you can immediately begin using as a Coach. You will be able to Extend Meta-programs or Extending your Personality Style; you will learn some powerful questions for Torpedo Coaching. You

will experience the De-Contamination Chamber to get your ego out of the way and be “clean” as a Coach for your clients.

There is the KPI pattern: Getting a Precise Objective for a Coaching Session. There is the Axes of Change patterns for a Non-Therapeutic Change Model for Psychologically healthy people. There is the Unleashing Potentials pattern, the Social Panorama pattern, and many, many more.

7) Meta-Coach Training uses precise behaviors for Competency Benchmarks.

While the ICF and other Coach trainings also have “Coaching Skills,” Meta-Coaching is the only Coach Training System that has benchmarked the skills. Each day you will get immediate feedback about what you’re doing very well and what will take your skills to the next level. This will be tough and challenging and yet it creates a clarity about your skill level that you can’t get anywhere else.

You will also learn the Benchmarking Model and this will enable you to be able to set up measurements for individuals and organizations for measuring progress. And it is with the measuring of progress that establishes “the value” that you add to people and companies. If you can’t measure it, how can you say that your work has such and such value?

8) Meta-Coach Training will introduce you to the different kinds of Coaching domains.

You will learn about many of the different domains that Coaches specialize in— for example, Executive Coaching, Personal / Life coaching, Group and Team Coaching, etc. You will see the Meta-Coach Trainers interview and model one or two Expert Coaches that we invite into the training — someone who has “been there, done that” and provides a flesh-and-blood example of effective coaching.

9) Meta-Coach Training enables you to become an effective Change Agent.

As a change agent, you will learn to facilitate change and to use the four mechanisms of change for people who are psychologically healthy. You will develop skills for the 8 coaching roles as an agent of change and be able to detect where you are with a client. You will then use these processes in your coaching sessions to get hands-on experience with them.

10) Meta-Coach Training involves and trains you for Group and Team Coaching.

You will be put into a group of six others and experience group coaching from a Team Leader so that you norm, form, storm, and then perform. As you then become a high performance team, you will be commissioned to engage in a benchmarking project and to then perform as a team. Later you will step back and reflect on what you learned about Group and Team coaching.

The Meta-Coach Training System

Modules:

Content and Benefits

I: NLP Model

Coaching Essentials

The “languages” of the mind and how communication works.
 How we communicate from state to state and induce state via communication.
 The communication precision model (the Meta-Model Questions)
 The communication filters of our perceptual lens (the Meta-Program distinctions)
 Discover a dozen patterns for state management and effectiveness
 Learn the basic NLP format for modeling excellence through Strategies.

II: Meta-States Model

Coaching Genius

values.

The self-reflexive consciousness unique to humans.
 How to get to the communication in the back of the mind.
 The meta-stating process of setting frames that create our filters and

III: 5 Coaching Models

Coaching Mastery

sessions

shaping your

Learn a systematic approach to coaching:
How do you know what to do when, with whom, how, and why?
 Experience coaching sessions every day; practice full hour coaching

Receive immediate sensory-specific feedback while coaching for
 skills and competency

Axis of Change Model

Change.

Learn a non-therapeutic change model, distinguish therapy models for change from generative change models for healthy people.
 Learn to use the four change mechanisms and engage in the Dance of
 Identify the level of change an individual or group wants.
 Develop the skills for facilitating transformational change.

Benchmarking Model

Discover how to operationalize the language and concepts of clients.
 Conversationally set benchmarks for measuring progress.
 Ground change and establish metrics for measurement.

Matrix Model

system.

client

Learn a cognitive-behavioral and developmental psychology systems model.
 Discover how to identify leverage points for change in a person’s
 Experience how to “follow the flow of energy” through a Matrix.
 Accelerate your coaching ability to “get to the heart of the matter” with a

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #45
October 12, 2010

META-COMMENTING

I came across an article recently that will soon be published from Penny Tompkins and James Lawley. I did a peer review of the article for the magazine. The title of the article is “The Role of Meta-Comments” and it offers some valuable insights about meta-comments. And, of course, for any Neuro-Semanticist and especially for Meta-Coaches, this is important— very important. Why? Because it is meta-comments that you listen for to hear layers in your client’s mind, the meta-levels that indicate the client’s meta-states and frames of mind.

Now in the article, James and Penny note the fact that clients will often make meta-comments on their own comments. When this happens, the person essentially interrupts his or her train of thought for a moment to—

“... pass a judgment, reflect on their knowledge, give notification of a change, or in some other way reveal something about the current state of their inner world.”

What does a meta-comment reveal about a person’s current state of mind, of the person’s inner world or matrix? Penny and James note several features about such meta-comments by clients. In writing about the meta-comment of clients in a coaching context they said that meta-comments are characterized by the following:

- They are embedded in their narratives.
- They are somewhat hidden and easily ignored.
- They can be important signposts for how best to proceed in facilitating the client.
- They are momentary shifts in perspective.
- They give evidence that the client has just “stepped back” to another awareness.

They note also that meta-comments indicate that a person has shifted perspective and moved from a descriptive narrative of their experience to a higher level, to one of self-reflection. I liked their next comment:

“Because we are remarkably consistent beings and we cannot not be ourselves, the structure of what we do in the micro (seconds) is often isomorphic with what happens in the macro (days, months, years).”

“Since meta-comments are about the client’s *relationship with their interior landscape* they often reveal something about the degree of significance or insignificance they attach to a part of their experience.”

This week in Sweden I have heard and noted many, many meta-comments by clients. They have commented on their own comments, states, experiences, even on their own meta-comments(!). Examples of meta-comments are these:

This is important.

Why did I say that?
That makes me wonder if that's what I really want.
No, that's not what I meant. Let me see if I can say what I really mean.
Do I want to go there? That's a hard question.
Does that make sense?
I know I shouldn't say this but ...
It just occurred to me ...
I can't believe I just said that.

Pattern-Level Comments

What makes meta-comments sometimes very important to you as a Meta-Coach is that they can indicate a pattern level of how a given person is organized on the inside— in his or her Matrix. So when you hear a meta-comment like one of the following, it probably provides a highly valuable insight if you hear it and follow it:

That's like my whole life.	I'm back to square one.
I can't stop running round in circles.	How long am I going to complain about this?
I realize it's never going to work.	Here I go again.
It's the same problem in a different guise.	

About such, Penny and James write the following:

“Comments like these are especially important because they mark out that the client is perceiving at a pattern level. With skillful choice of questions, a facilitator can help keep the client attending to the pattern and effectively working with all the examples at once. By transcending and including the multitude of lower level components and examples the client is working strategically.”

Using Meta-Comments

So say you hear someone make a meta-comment, what then? How do you use it? There are actually many choice you have about how to use the meta-comment. Now because James and Penny use the Clean Language patterns, take such and ask about “what kind of...” “What is it like...” “What's about that...” etc. In Neuro-Semantics we ask a different set of questions, questions designed to enter into and/or open up the person's Matrix. So here are some suggestions:

First, for any meta-comment:

- Repeat the meta-comment as you hear it, hold the space for the person, and then pause.
- Or ask: And is there anything else about that comment?

"There's something else I can't quite grasp."

- How do you know that?
- If that's true, what then?

"I'm trying to do this in bits."

- Is that your strategy?
- Is there a belief that drives that?

"Both elements are important."

- And so you need or want both?
- So how can you embrace both? What do you understand about that?

"I know this pattern."

- And the pattern is what?
- What belief holds this pattern in place?

"If I'm honest ..."

- Is that the question— being honest?
- Does that mean you are tempted to not be honest?

"[Laugh] I've been here before."

- And that means?
- If that's true, then what?

"I kind of know that I want something, but [client sits back] I don't know what I want."

- Kind of? But not really? What do you mean?
- So there's an urge?

About using meta-comments, Penny and James write:

“Attending to their own meta-comments is likely be an unusual experience for a client. While it can encourage them to become even more adept at self-reflection and open up areas that were out of their awareness, if you overdo it clients are liable to become self-conscious. Therefore you need to be selective and to calibrate how useful the client's responses to your questions are to them – given their desired outcome.”

Meta-Comments — they are everywhere when you tune your ears for them! So here's to your ability to hear them and use them with grace and power. Any meta-comments about this?

Penny and James then began to categorize meta-comments. As a result they came up with the following areas for meta-comments:

WAYS OF KNOWING

- The first thing that comes to mind is ...
- I'm guessing it must be just a kind of ...
- I'm imagining ...

COMPARISON - Scale

- It's a big deal for me.
- Judgment/Preference
- That's odd.
- Change/Persistence
- Actually in some ways that's new.

TIMEFRAME

- At the moment ...
- I'm at the stage where...
- I feel that's the end of it.

LANGUAGING

- Let me rephrase that.
- I can't verbalise it.
- The question is ..

CATEGORIES OF EXPERIENCE

- That's the pattern.
- I've no new ideas.
- My outcome is ...

CONDITIONAL/POTENTIAL CONTEXTS

- I would like that to be true.
- If only I could get some new insight.
- I *might* do something about it.

TO FACILITATOR DIRECTLY

- No, that doesn't actually feel right.
- Let me think about that.
- Bear in mind ...

NONVERBAL

- [Laughter at]
- [Tears about]
- [A sigh]

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #46
October 20, 2010

META-COACHES AS LEARNING FACILITATORS

“Coaching will become the model for leaders in the future... I am certain that leadership can be learned, and that terrific coaches... facilitate learning.”

Warren Bennis

As a Meta-Coach you are a Change Agent, you are a Self-Actualization Coach, you are a Communication Expert, you are a Facilitator synergizing meaning-making and best performances, you are a Dream Maker, and you are a Matrix Explorer. What else are you? How about being a *Learning Facilitator*? Is that part of your role definition or your identity?

In the quotation above from Warren Bennis, one of the things that many coaches do involves leadership development and a big part of that is facilitating leaders as learners. Why? Because the competency of learning, unlearning, relearning, and learning in new, fresh, and creative ways is, and will increasingly become, a competitive advantage in the twenty-first century. Today the competitive advantage goes to those who are continuous learners, to those who can unlearn as efficiently well as learn.

- *So, how are you at facilitating learning?*
- How are you as a learner yourself?
- Do you have a disciplined approach to our ongoing learning and development?
- How are you at coaching yourself in this area?
- Do you have, or do you need, a coach to facilitate your own accelerated learning skills?

Peter Senge also speaks about this when he spoke about excellenc-ing. In writing about such, he wrote that to practice a discipline (any discipline) requires being a lifelong learner. “You never arrive, you spend your life mastering disciplines.”

“The more you learn, the more acutely aware you become of your ignorance. A corporation can never be excellent in the sense of having arrived at a permanent excellence; it is always in the state of practicing the disciplines of learning, of becoming better or worse.”

I got several shocked responses recently at the *Unleashing Creative Solutions* workshop in South Africa when I talked about my “system” for studying, researching, and developing new things. I commented, as I have many times, that I read one book at a time (and if I purchased it, then I read it twice) and I read in one area (which typically lasts about 18 months), and after I read a book, I type notes on the book and then keep track of the notes by sorting them into notebooks. I also create my own index as I read so that I can get back to passages that I might quote or reference in later writings.

The shock that several mentioned to me was how disciplined I was at reading and researching. I don't know why they were surprised, one said that he just assumed that I had an excellent memory and didn't need to create my own index or take notes or any of the other things. No, my memory isn't natural, it's developed. And my memory is developed through my learning strategies and discipline.

Later, when we moved to the *Innovation Conversation* and covered the many, many processes involved in taking an idea (solution) to market, I mentioned that I write between 5 and 12 drafts of every book. "There is no great writing, there is only great rewriting and rewriting and rewriting." That created more shock. In fact, while in Stockholm I had the delight of talking with three different people about writing and when I mentioned the number of drafts I write, one said, "That's a lot of work!"

"Well, you can look at it that way if you want to, if it helps you. Or you can look upon it as just the process for writing with a clarity that truly adds value to those who read."

To return to the Warren Bennis quote, how do you as a Meta-Coach help people *learn leadership*? The good news is that, from the NLP/ Neuro-Semantic approach, leadership is an experience and every experience has a structure. So why not learn that? Why not study the structure and form of leadership and then facilitate the development of the core competencies required to win the hearts and minds of people? And if leadership is about bringing out the best in people, then why not enable a leader to learn about how to do that? And if self-actualizing leaders apply first to self in order to be authentic, then why not facilitate the learning of self-leadership first?

And, because all of these things lies at the very heart of Neuro-Semantics, you have a lot of resources at hand for becoming one these *terrific future coaches* that Bennis forecasted.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #47
October 27, 2010

META-MOMENTS

A Key to Being Truly a Meta-Coach

Here's a new distinction that I want to offer to all of you who define yourselves as Meta-Coaches. We define ourselves as *Meta-Coaches* because *we coach to the invisible structures in a person's life* which are higher (or deeper) to the client's content. That's why we coach to the meanings driving the client's experiences, to their inner movies, to their languaged classifications, to their meta-programs, meta-states, to their premises, etc. That's why we coach by facilitating the processes for learning and unlearning, for leashing and unleashing, for synergizing meaning with performance, for gratifying needs appropriately all the way up to the meta-needs, etc.

The new distinction is that of *calling for a meta-moment*. Some of you have seen and heard me do this, so now I want to make this more explicit and invite you to add this to your repertoire of skills as a Meta-Coach.

Calling for a meta-moment is a way to invite your client to step-back from the immediate experience and to facilitate the client's awareness and self-awareness of the experience in that moment. It may take any of the following forms:

- Let's take a meta-moment to notice what's happening. What are you aware of in this conversation dialogue? How is it going in terms of moving you in the direction so you can achieve your outcome?
- Are you ready for another meta-moment? Good. What kind of a conversation do you sense that we are having? Is this the kind of conversation that you want to have today? (Clarity, decision, planning, experience, change, confrontation, mediation.)
- Let me call for another meta-moment. Is that okay with you? What state are you in right now? How have you entered into that state? What thoughts and/or triggers have invited you into that state? Is this a common pattern— are you familiar with this state? Is this what we should focus on? Would that make a transformative difference?
- If you step back from what you just said, what are you aware of? Is that the frame that's been creating the interference to unleashing your potential for stepping up to the leadership role before you?

If meta-coaching is a creative-and-innovate experience for a client that's designed for the capitalization of human potential, then calling for a meta-moment enables your client to become aware of his or her invisible structure driving or influencing his experience which you are coaching to. It invites the client to become a collaborative partner in the coaching experience

and enables the client to discover how to enter his or her Matrix of frames.

I think most of us have been too reticent about this, too hesitant, and that we ought to make this more prominent, more obvious, and even more of a branding distinction of Meta-Coaching. To do that, simply use the words, “Let’s have a meta-moment.” And use it to enable the client to stop, to step back, to rise up to a higher level of awareness, and to begin a meta-discovery of his or her Matrix. Now you can use your tracking skills along with your precision listening to provide a reflection for your client that will expand your client’s awareness:

“Let’s take a meta-moment right now. So, in your mind, just step back and what are you aware of regarding the direction and focus of this conversation? ... You began by talking about developing your skills in marketing and that then led to the money issue of the cost of the course that you said you would like to take, then in the last ten minutes we have been talking about your doubts about whether you really want to get so involved in the marketing side of the business. Has this been productive for you? No? Well if not, then is this mismatching of what you start off saying that you want, is this familiar to you? Is it a pattern? Have you ever done this before?”

You might even want to frame this at the beginning of your coaching.

“From time to time, I’m going to invite you to take a meta-moment, to step back from what you’re saying and to see if we can find out what’s going on in the back of your mind. Then we can expose the driving frames and make them conscious. Are you ready for this?”

What is a meta-moment? It is a moment where you invite your client to pause, and to become aware of his or her frames, to identify those frames, to see how they create the categories of his experience, how they support her best skills, etc.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #48
November 3, 2010

BEYOND PAID COLLABORATION

Brenda Wilkins defines coaching this way:

“Coaching is a relationship where a coach supports, *collaborates with*, and facilitates client learning by helping a client to identify and achieve future goals through assessment, discovery, reflection, goal setting, and strategic action.” (2000 *The Coaching Distinction: A Research Based Model of Coaching*, italics added)

Coaching, in this definition, is a form of *paid collaboration*. As a coach you enter into a relationship with your client whereby you collaborate with your client’s goals, values, beliefs, visions, hopes, dreams, etc. To so collaborate with your client, you use the core competencies of listening-and-supporting so that you enter into an intimate and supportive connection with your client. You are paid to *be there* for your client. And if you have developed the coaching skills, you have the competency to effectively collaborate with your client and your client senses that you are there for him or her.

Collaboration involves an equality of persons, it is a walking together toward a common outcome. And when you, as a coach, collaborate with a client, you are resisting the temptation to “be the expert” of your client— you are holding up your client as his or her own expert. You do that because you believe in your clients—you believe in human nature. You believe in the person’s potentials and possibilities. So in *the coaching collaboration*, you enter into a conversational dialogue where you discover and learn together through your questions and mirroring feedback.

All of this *coaching collaboration* requires respect for your clients— for their needs, wants, dreams, hopes, fears, angers, values, agendas, timing, choices, and uniqueness. It requires the ability to keep your stuff to yourself and to not introject or impose it. This is the nature of collaboration. And in the context of a paid coaching client— I’ve been noticing that lots of people are able to do that with graceful skill.

And recently I have been noticing something else. Whenever that same person moves out of the financially rewarding context, suddenly many of them seem totally incapable of being able to collaborate! The first time or two that I noticed this, I didn’t think anything about it. But with repetition, I began thinking that maybe there’s a pattern in this.

So I asked some questions to flush out the frames that may be operating behind this:

- Can you extend yourself in a collaborative partnership when money is not involved?
- Are you willing to put the effort into collaborating with people when there’s no immediate reward, when the rewards of that collaboration may be long-term or even

indefinite and uncertain?

- Do you have any vision about collaborating with people in the community that goes beyond money? Are you willing to develop a vision that would support that kind of collaboration?

One of the reasons I've been writing more about collaboration this year than in previous years is that I see how the lack of collaboration is pulling apart the field of NLP and working like a slow infection making the field sicker and sicker. Yet it doesn't have to be like that. Like any other human experience, collaboration has a structure— there are certain frames and skills in the ability to collaborate effectively. That leads me to another series of questions:

- How collaborative are you?
- Do you have the basic skills of collaboration, of supporting and listening?
- What belief meanings and frames do you have about collaboration?
- Do you have any belief frames that interfere with collaborating?
- Are you willing to set collaboration as a high level intention and value?
- Do you believe that you can do so much more together than alone or apart?

Collaboration is a central value in the original Neuro-Semantic vision. In the days of the Bandler lawsuit against the field of NLP, I saw the destructiveness created by the failure to collaborate. That's when I began to wonder— where would NLP be today if Bandler had collaborated with Robbins? If he had collaborated with me or with any of the key leaders in NLP?

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #49
Nov. 10, 2009

SECRETIVE META-STATING IN YOUR COACHING

If you are a Meta-Coach, you *meta-state*. You learned to do that in APG or in Coaching Genius. Yet many of you only had that very brief 3-day introduction to the Meta-States Model. There is so much more to that Model than the 14 coaching patterns that you experienced. One facet of the Meta-States Model is that of qualifying or texturing of states. You heard about this in the idea of *joyful learning* or *playful seriousness*. The state you bring to the primary experience sets up a meta-state frame that qualifies and textures the state.

And as a Meta-Coach, I hope that you have the meta-state skill of doing that formally. That is, *accessing* a state of joy or playfulness, *amplifying* it so that you have enough energy to work with, then *applying* to the primary state of learning or being serious, then *appropriating* into the person's life and *analyzing* to make sure it is ecological. Can you do that? Do you need to practice that at a MCF chapter meeting? Do you have a buddy-coach to work with on that? Do you need to revisit APG to keep refining that skill?

Now suppose you can do that explicitly and formally. Suppose you have both the know-how to do that as well as the skillful competence. Can you also do it linguistically? Can you do it with your questions and statements as a Meta-Coach? Do you know how to secretly meta-state your clients with these resources? Would you like to set frames that will bring out their best, unleash their potentials, empower their ego-strength, and raise the quality of their envisioning?

Look back to the first paragraph. What do you notice about the meta-states mentioned there in terms of language? What linguistic pattern do you detect there? The pattern is that the meta-state that qualifies the primary state shows up as the modifiers, the adverbs and adjectives. Hence we have *joyful learning*, *playful seriousness*, *respectful anger*, *calm fear*, *curious sadness*, etc. Ah, does that give you an idea of bringing rich and resource-creating language to your coaching?

As a Meta-Coach, you can just ask questions with those qualifiers embedded into your questions and in a very subtle way invite your client inside into his or her Matrix.

“Just how *respectful* would you like your anger to be so that you can be true to your values when they are violated and you feel angry and so that you can also be true to your relationships and be respectful when you share your frustration or upset or anger? What degree of respect do you want to be able to convey?”

That meta-question is a meta-stating question that occurs by implication. You didn't directly and explicitly asked the client to access and apply *respect* to his anger. You did it indirectly and

implicitly. So if your client says, “Twenty percent” or “ninety percent” she has accepted the meta-level structure. Then ask some meta-level confirmation questions: “And you believe you can?” “And that would be highly valuable to you?”

But there’s more. Interestingly, you can take one of these modifiers and turn them into other forms. Surprisingly, this is easier than you might suspect. Happily for you and your client, you can do it with just a turn of a phrase. So joyfully you can now wonder about how you can become truly elegant in your use of meta-questions.

Did you catch the pattern that I am describing and using as I write? If not, then re-read the previous paragraph and see if you now catch it. If not, then interestingly enough, you might find it in the -ily words. Curiously and surprisingly I have been linguistically meta-stating you as I’ve been talking about this! Understandably you can now realize just how easily you can do this, can you not?

Gracefully and naturally you can just ask questions and in doing so, invite your client to frame the question with the *state* that you want them to access.

“As we get started in this second coaching session, understandably I will start in just a moment to ask about the tasking that you took on last time because, surprisingly clients often find that by exploring the tasking experience, it can reveal successes that haven’t been noticed or championed. So if you are ready, curiously I’m wondering how it went?”

Now if you are worried about grammar and the correctness that a Granny Grammarian would demand— you are forgetting that you are not a linguist, you are a *neuro-linguist*. That’s why our focus is not on linguistic correctness, it is on what language is *doing inside* of the minds-and-emotions of people. We use language to induce states, to create experiences, to transform old frames.

So, are you ready for some *secretive meta-stating*? It is abundantly possible and a way to playfully delight your clients so that the changes they make are fun and enjoyable, and curiously, you’d like to do that, wouldn’t you, so that they look forward to those enriching conversations that they have with you.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #50
November 17, 2010

A Neuro-Semantic Difference from NLP

Doing things to People / Facilitating People to Discover for Themselves

One of the things I constantly say at *Coaching Mastery* (Module III of Meta-Coaching) is that Meta-Coaches are to not *do* NLP on people. *They are not do, or stop doing, things to people.* An effective coach does not practice the old NLP habit of being the active agent who *changes* people (or tries to!). Coaching is completely different. Being a Neuro-Semanticist is different. Instead of *doing* things *to* people, if you truly believe that people have the required resources, you seek to facilitate them discovering that for themselves so that they become the *change agent* to themselves!

In fact, most of us trained in NLP have to *unlearn* this. I did. When I first learned NLP, I was thrilled as a psychologist that I could now *do things to people* that would be so much more effective than the things I was currently doing to people! And even though I had also learned the premises of NLP, my NLP behavior for several years was not fully congruent with those premises:

- People have all the resources they need to create the life that they want.
- People are not broken, but work perfectly fine to create the experiences they do.
- People respond according to their maps about the world.

Part of this unlearning involves learning how to resist the temptation. After all, there is a temptation in knowing the structure of experience and having multiple patterns for changing the structure. The temptation is to jump in and guide the process even if the client isn't ready for it, hasn't asked for that, doesn't know about it, and does not even truly want it. The temptation is to assume that you know what the client needs better than the client and to assume responsibility for deciding what the client needs!

I preface this article with all of this because Steve Andreas provides an excellent example of *doing NLP to someone* in his book *Six Blind Elephants (Volume II)*. So I'll use him as an anti-example. Now he does admit that there are numerous mistakes in the transcript that he quotes verbatim, and that's great. It takes a big man to acknowledge one's mistakes and use them to teach others! For that I commend Steve. Yet missing among the mistakes that he quotes is a larger level mistake— that of *doing NLP to a client*. So in Chapter 11 “Reaching Forgiveness: A Client Session” (pp. 265-292) Steve gives advice, teaches, asks leading questions, imposes his strategy for dealing with the situation on the client, does the majority of the talking, tells stories

to argue for his point, and makes mind-reading statements about the client. After re-reading that chapter recently and benchmarking it by the Meta-Coach Benchmarks, Steve Andreas would not have gotten above a “1” on any of the seven skills!

Now also to his credit, Steve does *not* present this client session as coaching, thank God. Yet for that matter he does not present it as therapy or anything else. He presents it as an example of NLP. Also, to his credit, he begins by framing this session and does an excellent framing of NLP premises. He also demonstrates the skill of punctuating the conversation with acknowledgments of the client, and a couple times he holds the frame of the client while asking for her answer, and he ends with some effective testing.

On the other hand, what didn’t work very well, especially from a facilitating of the resources of the client, even facilitating the real problem of the client, he goes too fast, he draws conclusions without asking the client, he talks too much, he assumes the solution to his client’s problems, and then works to impose his solution even though the client never asked for it! It’s a great example of *how not to coach or facilitate or even do NLP with someone*.

Melissa is the client and wants to control her anger. “I have a lot of anger that I tend to explode at people ...over stupid things. I can never slow myself down before I explode.” (267). When Steve asks her “how do you get angry?” she said that she was “thinking of how angry I was and how this was so unfair and how can they do this to me?”

Coaching Opportunity: That’s all the information I would have needed to have begin exploring her matrix of frames. I wonder what she believe about anger, about her getting angry, about unfairness, about people *doing* something to her.

But Steve asks, “How did it start?” He went after the linear step-by-step strategy and sub-modality features. He tried to get her to tell him her representations. But he failed to frame about the “movie in her mind,” so she couldn’t answer him. So she gives him more story and that’s when the advice-giving begins. “You *know* bureaucracies are like that.” (271). She responded: “Yes, but I can’t *stand* that.”

Coaching Opportunity: “Can’t stand...” suggests a prohibition frame, non-acceptance, non-permission. That’s where I would have gone.

But not Steve. “Well, see, you have a choice, though. Given that bureaucracies are like that ...” he begins to teach again! When she finally says that she “does not want to blow up” he asks what she does want and when she does not answer that, he gives her a strategy for handling things:

“What could you say to yourself or how could you think about this, so that when confronted with bureaucracy, and ‘No you can’t do that,’ and so on, you just go, ‘Oh, tell me more.’ or something like that.” (272)

Even though Melissa never said that’s what she wanted, he pursues it. After she finally says “if I was calm,” he asks a leading question.

“Steve: I think so. So if you really want to change the bureaucracy or if you want to

change some other situation— where let’s say somebody else is disrespectful of you, *wouldn’t it actually be easier* if you could just be calm, and centered, and self-composes and say, ‘Look, I didn’t like what you did. That doesn’t fit for me. I want you to change it.’ (Italics added)

The problem is that Melissa never used any of these words and never said that was her objective. Yet he keeps driving to get her to try on this strategy. He has her “close your eyes” try it on and check for objections because he wanted her to be congruent with the new strategy(!). It takes some time further before he discovers that there’s something behind it all — she wants to hurt people as they hurt her. That was her driving force! Finally Steve asks a question, “Is there a particular person who hurt you in this way?”

Yes, her ex-! I would have then found out *how* her thoughts about her ex- is driving her to be so anger-prone. But Steve takes a different approach:

“Your ‘Ex.’ Great. Let’s do a different thing then. Would you be interested in reaching forgiveness with this person?”

Melissa: I didn’t do anything wrong.”

Ah yes, defensiveness. And why? Not because of lack of rapport. But because *he suggested to her what she needed!* So then he went into teaching and giving advice about forgiveness (279). It is good advice, good statements about forgiveness, nothing wrong with what he said, except he is giving advice and trying to get her to understand that she can forgive even if she didn’t do anything wrong! Anyway, Steve then asks for the sub-modality qualities of her ex-! Where is he, how big, how tall? Then he asks for someone she has forgiven, asks where she has that person located and tells her to move the ex- to that position! All this is more *doing NLP to her*.

The mind-reading now comes: “I hear in your voice that you really have forgiven her.” (280). How does he know that? He bases it on the quality of her voice! Later Melissa says “Yeah. I can — I can do it.” Steve says, “But — I hear a ‘but’ in your voice...” (285).

Other times when he gives advice:

“I don’t think revenge is the best way to do it.” (282)

“Now I want to tell you a story about Milton Erickson... (283) about the world being unfair.

“Now that doesn’t stop us from trying to be as fair as we can, and do the best we can in our relationships to be fair, and to be honest, but *life* is fundamentally not fair...” (284)

“You would need to be protected...”

When she says, “I know that he’s never going to change.” Steve says, “Well, you can’t really know that. You don’t have a fortuneteller’s license do you?” (288)

At the end when Melissa asks about playing the new scenario over in her head before a situation, Steve says, ‘You shouldn’t need to do anything.’ So instead of asking, “Would you like to rehearse it? Would that strengthen it for you?” He tells her not to! She says, “I should just go in there and ‘wing’ it. “Steve: Just go in there and wing it.”

If you have the book and want to read a script for *how not to coach*— *this is a great anti-example*. Here you can let Steve Andreas show you how the old traditional NLP approach of *doing things to people* rather than the modern and more Neuro-Semanticist way of *facilitating the best in the client*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #51
November 24, 2010

THE ART OF ASSESSING SELF-ACTUALIZATION

As a Meta-Coach the value of *assessing* a client's current state of living the self-actualizing life and then measuring the progress of becoming more and more self-actualizing and less and less static, stale, and stuck enables you to show the value that you are adding to the client's life. This is important. So how do we do it?

Well, if you want to invest \$130 per client, you can order the POI— *Personal Orientation Inventory*. This was the first measurement of Self-Actualization. Everett Shostrom (a leader in the Human Potential Movement) and Abraham Maslow created it in 1964 after their 1962 consultations. This instrument has 150 two-choice comparative-value judgment items and is used to identify two primary measurements and 10 subsidiary scales. The two primary indicators of self-actualizing is inner-directedness and time competency. Supportive subsidiary scales that indicate self-actualizing includes flexibility (existentiality), responsiveness (feeling reactivity), spontaneity, high self-regard, self-acceptance, positive belief in human nature, synergy, acceptance of aggression, and capacity for intimacy.

You can also take the 19 characteristics of self-actualizing people that Maslow modeled throughout the 1940s and use it as a checklist. You can find this checklist separated under Meanings, States, and Performances in the Training Manual for *Unleashing Potentials* and in the book *Unleashed*. That gives you a way to access the degree a client is living the self-actualizing life according to the Meaning—Performance Axes (the Self-Actualization Quadrants).

And you can take the *Self-Actualization Assessment Scale* that Tim Goodenough and I designed (attached) and use it for pre- and post- assessments with your clients. This one is designed to measure the degree that a client is coping effectively with his or her needs, first the basic needs and then the meta-needs. The premise from Maslow is that we move to the realm of self-actualization as we are able to *basically* and *sufficiently* satisfy our basic needs. The background for this is in the book, *Self-Actualization Psychology* (2009, Meta-Coaching Volume V).

The scale invites a client to determine if he or she is *getting by* with meeting that need or not. That's in the middle. To the left of that is the Red Zone. This is where a person is *not getting by* sufficiently to be healthy and energized and full of vitality. And the further to the left, the more in the Red Zone and the more dissatisfied, unfulfilled, and discontented the person will be. This will demand more focus on the need and on trying to figure out how to get the need. When a basic "need" (= requirement for life and vitality) is ungratified for an extended period of time, the more sick and neurotic the person will become. Needs *drive* us by calling all of our faculties to do service to gratifying the need because it is a requirement for living and being whole.

To the right of the middle *getting by* line is the Green Zone and this is the zone of thriving. A little bit and you are getting by okay, then getting by really good, then great, then optimizing. Now you have lots of energy, lots of vitality and the need as a drive goes away. You are no longer motivated by the drive. That need is no longer a strongly felt value. Now you *move on up to the next level!* Now new needs emerge to drive you.

First assess how a person is doing in coping. Then measure both quantity (volume) and quality. Quantity is how much volume of food, how many hours of sleeping, how long in the gym or time running, how many techniques for keeping oneself safe, etc. Quality is the characteristic and felt results: you got 8 hours of sleep, but what was the *quality* of the sleep? Did you awaken refreshed, alert, and ready for the day?

Next assess for the *semantic frame*. Why did you give yourself those marks? What criteria did you use? What understanding did you refer to? What do you think or believe about food, exercise, safety, love, friendship, status, prestige, etc.? Here you can assess for any cognitive distortion within the person's thinking- frame- mapping that influenced his or her assessment. Here you can do a quality control: Does this mapping about the need enable you to cope well and thrive in meeting the need?

The Self-Assessment Scale enables people to explore the foundation of their biological needs to see if they have a solid foundation for self-actualizing or if there are holes in their foundation. At the higher or meta-needs, a person can explore which of the 7 or 10 most common self-actualization needs is what really drives them and how they are doing with actualizing their highest and best human needs.

I have attached both the description of using the Assessment Scale and the Scale itself that Tim designed. You can see it as pre- and post- assessment testing with yourself, with your clients, re-take it every month, or use it as the content of a 360 feedback. There's lots of ways you can use it. If you want to do research with it, please do. If you want me to be a part of a research project with it, just let me know. It is provided for the enrichment of your coaching practice, for your credibility in being able to demonstrate the difference that you make, and for branding Meta-Coaching as the Coaching Methodology of choice.

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #52
Dec. 1, 2010

COLLABORATION — A SIGN OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION

I had an experience last this past month that I'm guessing you will find familiar. I think it is a common human experience. It's the funny, weird, and amazing experience how you can *know* something at one level or in one area and yet not apply or know when you shift to a different area. That's what happened recently to me when I was in Europe presenting and explaining Self-Actualization Psychology. While presenting the Self-Actualization Assessment Scale, Unleashing Potentials, and Unleashing Vitality workshops, I repeatedly drew out the difference between the foundational "lower" level needs and those of the meta "higher" level needs of self-actualization as I presented Maslow's hierarchical list of needs. Some of the key differentiations are as follows:

Lower Foundational Needs

More biologically determined
More tangible — empirical
Driven by deficiency
"The Jungle" (Maslow's word)
Place of Competition

Higher Existential Needs

Less determined and more open
More intangible — psychological
Driven by abundance and "being-ness"
Transcendence realm
Place of Collaboration

It was the last set of contrasts that suddenly created an "Aha!" moment for me. Why? Who knows? It could have been because I have been writing about collaboration, or because I was at the London NLP Conference and talking to people about collaborating, or because I had been writing about the history of NLP and thinking about the lack of collaboration in the field. Whatever the cause, the sudden insight offered a possible *reason for why* there is the lack of collaboration and *why* all of the arguments for working together, validating each other, supporting others, etc. do not compute with some people.

Question: Why do not more people truly collaborate, create collaborative partnerships, and extend themselves for the larger community?

Answer: They are not living enough of a self-actualizing life! They are still living at the lower needs and still seeking to gratify the foundational needs. So no wonder they are not ready to move upward beyond "the Jungle." Deficiency is still driving them! They do not know the higher realm of collaboration!

Now I knew that; and yet I did not. Intellectually I knew that competition characterizes the lower levels and collaboration the higher. Emotionally, however, I had felt impatient and irritated with

those I felt should know NLP and Neuro-Semantics well enough to move beyond their petty competitions!

What was I thinking? People still struggling in coping with their lower needs will naturally be competitive. And people stuck at the lower needs because they've given too much meaning to them and are trying to make one of them "the meaning of life," are also doomed to the competitiveness of the Jungle.

To enable a person to move to the higher-need drives where *collaboration* is easy and natural, a person first has to learn how to give the lower needs the right meaning and develop the competency to cope with that needs. Only then will the person move on up and become more and more of a self-actualizing person and then live by the *being-values*. Merely trying to persuade people to be more collaborative through frame and reframing (laying great mind-lines on them) will not work long-term. A person may *know* that collaboration is a higher and better way to live, and *know* that he or she "should" collaborate, but unless a person has gratified the lower needs, the person will not *feel the value of abundance and collaboration*. To experience that requires the transcendence of moving into the truly human needs and values.

I walked away from those presentations with a deeper *knowing* of what I knew, but which I had not previously really connected—*collaboration is a sign and expression of self-actualization*. And realizing that, I know have yet another reason for urging people to step up to the self-actualizing pathway. Until a person moves into that realm, living from *abundance* and behaviorally being able to *share* with others in an equalitarian way for win/win negotiations will seem idealistic and unrealistic. It will violate the feel of the deficiency level of neediness.

This also provides you another reason, if you want another, to become a Neuro-Semantic Self-Actualization Meta-Coach. As you coach, you engage in a needs-analysis at the personal level to determine where a person most needs the ability to understand and meet his or her needs. And from there, to move on up to the highest needs— those which are truly fit to be "the meaning of life."

From: L. Michael Hall
2010 Morpheus — Meta-Coach Reflections #53
Dec. 8, 2010

COACHING

AND DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Part I

If you are a Coach then what you do is based on are several *psychologies*. First and foremost is *Self-Actualization Psychology*, next is *Cognitive-Behavioral*, and after that, *Developmental Psychology*.

Why? First because you are a change-agent facilitating the highest and best development in your clients as you help them identify, develop, and unleash their highest potentials. Second, because as you do that the unleashing occurs through meaning and performance and that requires that you use cognitive and behavioral processes. Third, all of this presupposes that human beings develop over their life-span and that there is rhyme and reason to it.

That's why *the Meta-Coaching system* is based on and utilizes all of these psychologies. They provide the theoretical framework for what we do. As further, as an aside, this endows Meta-Coaching an inherit credibility— all of the credibility from all of the research that supports these three psychologies.

Now for the first— read Maslow, Rogers, May, and my works. For the second, read Beck, Ellis, David Burns, NLP, Neuro-Semantics. For the third, read Piaget, Eric Erickson, and John Burton. John Burton? Yes, read *States of Equilibrium* (2003). I wrote the following about this book in 2003 as a book review, and it is just as relevant today. Next week, I will write a second follow-up and one that relates directly to Meta-Coaching.

STATES OF EQUILIBRIUM

John Burton, Ed.D.

L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.

When John Burton Ed.D. learned NLP and Meta-States through his trainings with Bob Bodenhamer, it was immediately obvious to Bob that John Burton's natural creativity would lead him to use the models in exciting ways. Bob knew that John would find new uses and applications for NLP and Meta-States. And so it was. A couple years ago Bob assisted John in writing, *Hypnotic Language*. But that was only the beginning.

Now John has done it again! With his background in Developmental Psychology, he has used Meta-States to write a book that integrates in a most extensive way the best of Piaget, drive theory, Kohlberg, Maslow, Rogers, Skinner, Erickson, Jung, and Cognitive-Behavioral therapy to create one of the most extensive descriptions and applications of Meta-States as applied to personality, therapy, and change. It is the most extensive presentation of Meta-States outside of anything I've written. And it offers numerous new applications of Meta-States, applications that I had not thought of!

States of Equilibrium is an entire book on *states*. It's about primary states, meta-states, and gestalt states. It's about pathological states, sick states, personality disordering states, and about glorious states, empowering states, healthy balanced states, the highest states possible, the "ultimate meta-states." The thesis is that "the human personality is organized around achieving states of equilibrium."

If you are a therapist, this is a must read. This book makes an excellent follow-up to *The Structure of Personality: Personality Ordering and Disordering with NLP and Neuro-Semantics* (2000) that I wrote a couple years ago with Bob, Richard Bolstad and Margott Hamblett. John has filled the book with case studies and lots of practical suggestions. For therapists you will find fascinating descriptions and case studies around addiction, learning dysfunctions, obsessive-compulsive states, depression, fight/flight responses, anxiety, fear, and much, much more. John's analysis of fear is absolutely brilliant. Would you like a taste of it? Here goes:

"Fear is what *might* happen instead of what *is* happening. Even during an event that scares us, the fear springs from what could happen if the situation progressed beyond its current status. I believe fear never concerns itself with the here and now, but with what the here and now might become. ... Fear takes a slippery and elusive form. For in survival, fear must remain at least one step ahead of the present. Living in the present, imagining only solutions to any challenge, makes fear disappear. Fear simply cannot exist when we look into our future for solutions while gazing from the present. Your future does not know your past. ... Fear, and in fact all emotions, attempt to provide us

with vital information ... leaving the translation up to us.”

Isn't that great? Oh yes, another quote about fear.

“Fear is feedback from our future that tells us to take some sort of evasive action. This evasive action comes to us through our resourceful states, which can prescribe solution options.”

You've got to have the book, right?

If you have any question, any doubt that NLP and especially Meta-States can address the “more serious psychological disorderings” of personality, this book will quell those doubts. As an educator-turned-therapist, Burton has amply demonstrated the power of recognizing the meta-level structure of states. He integrates the psycho-social states of development of Piaget into the Neuro-Semantic model. He integrates the role of meta-programs into the construction of a painful Matrix of frames, which he describes as limitation states.

It's also a must read if you are a coach or work with people in a coaching way, that is, facilitating the best in people.

As I read the manuscript, the only regret I had was that John wrote this before I had published *The Matrix Model* (2002) because much of what he has written fits so nicely into that model. He speaks about the cognitive styles of information processing from child developmental psychology and the distortions that we all naturally experience in growing up. He relates it to how our states can go wrong. With that analysis and profiling, John then shows what we can do about it using the formulations of Neuro-Semantics.

While not an academic book, *States of Equilibrium* is not light reading. It will challenge you to think. It will invite you to read and reread the book. You will be able to harvest new learnings with each reading. If you have people who dismiss NLP for being too much of a light-weight conceptually, buy this book for them. It is solid.

I love some of John's turn of phrases, “The Structure of Personality: It's Just a State of Mind.” “Anxiety amounts to a phobic reaction to a particular state.” “The State of the State: The Emancipating Proclamation.”

This is a book about Meta-States. Burton describes and defines the Meta-States model in new ways and exciting ways.

“Meta-stating is like climbing an observation tower. Each successful step lets you see and know more, which results in a greater awareness. A hallmark of human developmental theories is that each successful level of development endows the person with expanded awareness. So we find that meta-stating a person directly elevates the person's level of human development, allowing positive change in thought, emotion, and behavior. Our well-being results from our relationship with our states.”

“Meta-stating expands our awareness of the behavioral driving forces that have been out of conscious sight. Expanding our consciousness illuminates our higher states. This increased consciousness allows access and restores conscious choice.”

“A meta-state in our unconscious mind can dictate to our lower states, requiring that we operate from sadness. Past experience may have led to aversive feelings associated with freedom. In this case, then, to exercise freedom as if it endangers the individual. We may ascend the meta-state ladder going to higher and higher meta-states unless an injured state exists at a certain height. ... The injured meta-state puts a ceiling on further development until it experiences the freedom that healing brings.”

John plays with the layering of states and offers incredible descriptions of highly complex toxic states. For example he writes this.

“Some people fear that if they become convinced of their competence, for example, they would then experience a state they fear even more.”

Did you catch all of the meta-states or layered frames in that? No. Then consider it again: is

“Some people fear (fear state) that *if* (subjunctive state) they become *convinced* (conviction state) of their competence (primary state), for example, they would then experience a state they fear even more.”

On a personal note, I love how Burton has also begun to extend and expand the Meta-States model. This is good. Unlike some in NLP, I want the history of Neuro-Semantics to never, but never get into fights over “intellectual property.” If an idea or model is brilliant, if it maps new places for us to go, and new things we can do –then it is bigger than any one of us, and bigger than all of us together. *And* it should continue to develop and grow. And it will give to ever new models. John has creatively described new things in this field: injured meta-states, laying the meta-train track for a meta-state strategy, climbing and evoking others to go all the way up the meta-ladder, meta-motivation, “injecting a limited meta-state with an awareness boost,” crossing “state lines,” etc. So even though John is not yet a Neuro-Semantic Trainer or Coach, his creativity in this work certainly exemplifies what I’m writing and talking about as the spirit of a Neuro-Semantic Developer.

And even without knowing about *The Matrix Model*, Burton describes the same phenomenon and writes a lot about the Self matrix, the Meaning matrix, and the State matrix.

“The layers of Meta-States vary from person to person. We might find that each layer gets ‘born’ into awareness, or recruited, resulting from life experience. The more layers present, the more need for intervening states. Adverse experiences seem especially likely to prompt additional states into the mix.”

Are you interested in balance, focus, mental and emotional health, emotional intelligence, running your own brain, eliminating stuck and limited states, getting on top of anything internal that might sabotage you? Get the book— *States of Equilibrium*.

From: L. Michael Hall
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Dec. 15, 2010

COACHING AND DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY Part II

John Burton earned his doctorate at Vanderbilt in *Developmental Psychology* and so *States of Equilibrium* is a book that could easily be sub-titled:

Meta-States Meets Developmental Psychology or, Meta-Developmental Psychology and Meta-Coaching

Now if you are not familiar with the key theorists and thinkers in the field of developmental psychology, you will learn a good bit about them in *States of Equilibrium* as John quotes and relates the work of Piaget, Erik Erikson, Jane Loevinger, William Perry, Lawrence Kohlberg, and others to the basic NLP model of “states” and “meta-states.”

States of Equilibrium Highlights Maslow’s Work

In re-reading the book recently, I was actually surprised and delighted to discover how much *Burton* quotes and uses Maslow’s work in his book and in using it to supplement what he wrote about human developmental psychology. John especially focuses on the need for *equilibrium* which occurs in level two of the hierarchy— the safety and security needs.

“In this case primary states correspond to Maslow’s (1962) first two levels of need in his hierarchy, survival and safety. But, when these two levels are the only two from which a person operates, she severely restricts her options.” (p. 40)

The equilibrium states that John writes about throughout the entire book are those that make people most resourceful, most at their best. And obviously, that is a basic requirement for coaching clients.

“Safety acts as a sentinel for all other procedures. Applying this priority of safety to any and all states, we find that safety is the crucial criterion we must satisfy in order to utilize any given state. If we believe a given state becomes unsafe while utilizing it, we then disconnect from that state. We then choose the state that is most similar to the state previously occupied, as long as it is a safe state.” (51)

This need for safety (security, stability, balance) is especially true for the foundational or lower needs. And that enables a coaching client to be ready for the higher needs. It is not true or much less true once a person has basically satisfied that need and has reached some of the self-actualization needs. Then a person may and often does chose unsafe states as an expression of risk-taking adventure to fulfill the self-actualization need.

“Applying Maslow’s hierarchy to states theory a step further, we can see how the levels

of needs in Maslow's theory relate to various levels of states within the individual. Primary states tend to concern themselves with basic needs of survival and safety. Meta-States tend to concern themselves with higher-level needs such as belongingness, or ultimately, self-actualization at a meta-meta-level." (51)

So John stresses the importance of the safety need (50-51) quoting Maslow about this basic need. Where I think that he misunderstands Maslow is at the point of the degree. And he so happens to actually misquote Maslow about it. I refer to this again because many people mis-quote Maslow about this very point.

"According to Maslow, we cannot pursue any need above the one not yet fulfilled." (p. 51)

Well, that is not exactly true. It is not *absolute* in that way. Actually Maslow said that the needs have to be "generally or basically or sufficiently" fulfilled and he even said, one need may be 50% gratified and another 60% and that's sufficient to move up to the self-actualization needs. So at any given point, almost everybody is experiencing *all* of their needs and gratifying them needs to some extent. If it is *sufficient*, they can move on up the levels.

About the lower needs, John wrote the following which explains the problem of *not getting beyond the lower needs* as an adult:

"Focusing on unfulfilled needs makes for a self-absorbed person." (93)

John notes that Piaget stated that disequilibrium motivates learning because people strive for equilibrium (13). And again, while this is certainly true for the foundational needs, it ceases to be true as a person moves more and more into the self-actualization needs and lives for the B-values (*being-values*).

Cognitive Developmental Psychology

Now if you want to understand *the cognitive distortions*, John has written a lot about them and especially from a developmental perspective. He begins by making a list of the childish thinking patterns from Piaget (p. 27-36, 43) and relates how they operate and the effect they have on a person. Then he quotes the list from Aaron Beck (p. 48).

"These thinking styles amount to misguided defense mechanisms: they create the problem and then lock out of awareness of the resources needed to solve the problem." (p. 49)

As John Burton applies the cognitive styles of Piaget, he does so in a very unique way to how we think and feel about our states in childhood. Then, recognizing that this is a meta-stating process, he argues that to the extent that a person marks off some states as off-limits, dangerous, or unacceptable—that person activates his or her own defenses against one's own experiences. This describes the most common way that people get stuck at the lower levels of development and do not progress to the higher levels: they have tabooed and prohibited a *state* and now cannot get through the normal developmental stages. In Meta-States we call these "dragon" states and learn how to dance with our dragons.

In fact, you will find that throughout the book, John works with the idea and process of what happens when a person *fears one of his or her states*.

“When a person believes a state is made dangerous by a situation, thus avoids the situation, the state used in the situation is what the person really fears.” (p. 15)

“The other half of the map-making story, and equally influential, is that we make maps of our internal world. Our internal map evaluates the safety or danger of our emotional states.” (p. 17)

To this end, he speaks about *fear* of assertiveness (p. 47). He speaks about being *fearful* and *uncomfortable* about feeling calm (16). This “dragon” state (Meta-States Model) creates a “shadow” state (to utilize Jung’s terminology). To achieve wholeness as a person and in one’s personality, *accept* one’s shadow (dance and kiss one’s dragon) and then “the person will have full and free access to his entire self” (p. 48).

Coaching a Person’s Sense of Self

As a Meta-Coach, one of the matrices that you are almost always doing with clients, is coaching to their best self, to the potential self that the person wants to actualize and be “the best version of oneself.” So in *States of Equilibrium* you will find that Burton has written a lot about “the self,” one’s sense of self, ego-strength, identity, social self, etc. Chapter 4 is entirely on this subject. There you will read about how to empower the self with enough resources to operate successfully in the world.

“Developmental theorists believe that resisting growth causes more distress than going forward with the natural flow.” (p. 89)

“Self is defined as one’s deepest, most individual resources.” (91)

“Knowing who we are permits us to drop our defense mechanisms because we know our self is intact and safe no matter where we go or what we do.” (92)

“We can identify three crucial factors influencing the evolution of our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors: cognition, social interaction, and ‘sense of self.’” (94)

So this is a book on personality— on how the personality develops over the life-span and the states and meta-states that make up the personality. And from that John writes about the various ways that we order and disorder our personality.

“If we believe we are our states, identity statements spring out such as ‘I am always anxious.’” (p. 17)

Coaching for a Learning Attitude and Orientation

One of the things we do in the Meta-Coach System is to enable people to become life-long learners, and to accelerate their learning as we facilitate enabling a person’s ability to learn, to learn quickly and thoroughly, and to develop flexibility in adjusting to the ever-changing world through continuous learning. About all of this, John writes such things as the following:

Learning is dependent on emotional states (p. 1).

We learn and remember what is most important to us (p. 8).

Learning is adapting to a situation; assimilating information, accommodating by reconfiguring existing beliefs in response to the new information. Intelligence is the

ability to cope with changing external conditions by continuously reorganizing one's map of the world (p. 11).

Meta-Coaching by Meta-Stating

I noted in the book review that I wrote in 2003 that *States of Equilibrium* was the first book on Meta-States apart from my books that thoroughly and deeply delved into the subject and even expanded on the model. Here's some of what you will find in the book:

“Going meta allows the choice of a new state. ... the meta-state always subsumes the one below and becomes the dominant state.” (p. 3)

The way we experience the event and consequent belief about the state is a function of our level of cognitive and human development (p. 10).

Meta-stating is “an awareness expanding technique” (26).

“Adults can explore the wide world of meta-states and choose the response state best suited for any given situation.” (p. 39)

“Meta-stating as a therapeutic intervention, leads a person to higher levels of cognition, emotion, and behavior.” (67)

A person's meta-states is “the power behind the throne” (118).

It was from John that I began talking about going up or climbing “the meta-state ladder” (p. 11).

“Meta-stating is like climbing an observation tower. Each successive step lets you see and know more, which results in a greater awareness. A hallmark of human developmental theories is that each successive level of development endows the person with expanded awareness. So we find that meta-stating a person directly elevates the person's level of human development, allowing positive change in thought, emotion, and behavior.” (179)

“Meta-stating is about this consciousness raising process and increased resourcefulness that results. It parallels and shares significant characteristics with the levels of human development.” (190)

First Therapy, then Coaching

As you well know as a Meta-Coach, we do not do therapy, instead coaching is about facilitating the higher levels of development of psychologically healthy people. Si a caveat about *States of Equilibrium*, it is mostly about therapy rather than coaching. And to that end, there are many things in the book that helps to understand the therapy-coaching distinction.

“Just by imagining our desired state we can associate into it. The awareness that you can determine your own states frees us from environmental slavery. This ability in itself vaults us up one or two developmental levels.” (196)

“Ultimately Meta-States comprise the levels of human development. Access to and use of these higher levels of development, or Meta-States, is available immediately and continuously except in the cases of personality disordering.” (178)

“Meta-stating is common to all effective change-making interventions because central to

personal change is a change of state.” (179)

“Once a person experiences a higher level of functioning, she will voluntarily release the problematic level.” (110)

“All effective therapy seems to operate by utilizing these two principles ... [It] strives to lift the client to a higher level of meta operations. And this higher meta-level also corresponds to a higher developmental level. Symptoms represent nothing other than misguided efforts to reach higher Meta-States of functioning.” (111)

“Blindly re-enacting the past to create a new outcome will not bring the outcome we seek. The spilt milk over which we cry has long since evaporated. The solution to our past always resides in our present and in knowing that the future holds a new present awaiting us.” (90)

“When encountering dysfunction, you can usually assume resource states reside on each side of the non-resource state, supporting it and giving life to the negative state.” (120)

We must utilize a positive state to activate a negative state (133).

If you are looking for a book that will expand your understanding of Meta-States, deepen your comprehension about cognitive distortions, and enrich your ability to deal with developmental issues, get *States of Equilibrium*.

From: L. Michael Hall
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Dec. 22, 2010

COACHING ANXIETY

Holding Negative Emotions as a Coach

“The mother who can hold her infant unanxiously when the infant is itself anxious is giving her child a specific gift. She is holding heartily at the same time that she is preparing the child to separate from her.”

Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self* (p. 126)

Developmental psychologist and theorist Robert Kegan, in the quotation above, describes one of the most fundamental issues of human life. It is the issue of identity, safety, inclusion, differentiation, self and other, boundaries, etc. It is also an issue about *anxiety*. And that’s why this is an issue for Coaches and especially Meta-Coaches.

Now *anxiety* is a very interesting emotion. Basic psychology textbooks define anxiety as “free floating fear.” I always get a chuckle when I read that. The image that comes to my mind is that of a gaseous cloud freely floating about in the atmosphere which could drop on you at any moment so that you suddenly and unexpectedly feel anxiety! But, of course, the problem here lies in the definition itself! If you define something as “free floating fear” you have mixed a nominalization (“fear”) with a metaphor (free-floating) and created a real meta-muddle and confusion. So let me see if I can de-nominalize it.

You may have heard me quote Fritz Perls’ description of anxiety. He said it is “suppressed excitement” and that led to his exploration question, “What excitement are you suppressing?” That fits more with the origin of the word *anxiety*, which from Latin comes from the verb, “to chock, to chock off.” And we know that somatically we experience anxiety by constricting our breath, by chocking off our breathing fully into something (now we have the verbs and processes inside the nominalization, anxiety).

Putting all of these ideas together, when you and I feel *anxious* there’s a sense of threat or fear and yet we don’t have an object. That’s why we don’t know where or how to aim our emoting—our state of feeling-our-meanings is object-less. So we are unsure, uncertain, and not knowing. We feel a disequilibrium, we feel out of sorts, and therefore we don’t know what to do and so the seeming “fear” or “threat” seems free-floating and so we hold our breath, and push down that which could evoke excitement—our hopes, dreams, and visions. And the solution to anxiety? Knowing the threat, knowing what could be dangerous, having a plan, knowing what to do, etc.

Now I write all of this because *anxiety* is, typically, one of the most common emotions that we all experience when we are in the process of change. And that’s why *anxiety* is the emotion that

coaching clients will commonly experience as they are in the process of moving from their known world and reality to the unknown future that they are excited about actualizing. Have you found that? *Anxiety* is the emotion we all experience when we leave *the meanings* that we have created and known to the possibility of having to create and experience *new meanings* that we have not yet fully made or integrated, but desire to experience.

Now for the skill. If you, as a Meta-Coach, like a loving mother with an infant, can “hold” your client un-anxiously when your client is anxious—you *are giving your client a very specific gift*. That is, if you can be present to, understand, elicit, and be fully okay with your client’s anxiety without it pushing your buttons, without you going into your own anxiety, without your need to “fix” it— then you can create a Crucible space whereby you and your client can explore the anxiety.

Then what? Ah, this is the gift that you give. Then you can facilitate the journey inward to the core excitements that is actually driving your client— excitements that make up “the inner voice” that the client is beginning to hear and excitements that imply change, leaving the security of the known, moving into the insecurity of the unknown, and loss of an old way of being and embracing of a new way of being. In other words:

*Anxiety reveals a pathway for actualizing a client’s highest and best hopes and dreams.
Anxiety sounds the bells that direct where you can go with your coaching.*

So as a Meta-Coach, here are some self-coaching questions for you:

How well do you accept, embrace, appreciate, and use *anxiety* in your coaching?

How secure are you with emotions, and especially “negative” emotions?

What do you need as a resource so that you can be with *anxiety* without becoming anxious yourself?

Do you have sufficient understanding about the importance of just holding an emotion without needing to “fix” it?

How easily can you be with the anxiety and say, “Ah, so you’re feeling anxious. Good, be with that and just welcome it in, and as you breathe it in, what are you aware of?

What excitement may be lurking below that uncertainty?”

So, like a loving mother un-anxiously being with an infant’s anxiety, your first order of business in any and every coaching session is to create the context of safety and openness. That’s what the Crucible is all about. You create a space of support, care, and nurturing so that your client can *be* him or herself with you. As a psychologically healthy person they are fairly open and ready to grow and you facilitate that by enabling them to become even less defensive as you start from a frame of unconditional positive esteem and pure witnessing. Do that and then you can begin to hear and experience and “hold” the space for the *beingness and becomingness* of your client. And doing that, you truly show yourself a *Self-Actualization Meta-Coach!*

From: L. Michael Hall
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COACHING CHANGE

If you are a Meta-Coach, you are a change agent. And over the past year I've been delighted when several Meta-Coaches have showed me that on their business cards they have: "Meta-Coach" APMC and under that or next to it, they have: *Change Agent*. A couple have even told me that they answer their phone, *Change Agent— Ready to take you to the Next Level of Excellence*. And as a change agent, you are a very special change agent, you are a *Generative Change Agent*. And that differs remarkably from being a *Remedial Change Agent*.

The difference here is between *the kind of change* — a kind of change which separates a professional Coach from a professional Therapist. And while it is true that you as a Meta-Coach have such powerful tools that you can do a lot of work that has traditionally been the exclusive domain of licensed therapists, in order to keep the field of Coaching clean with sharp distinctions as to what's within its field of influence and what is outside the field, Meta-Coaches make this distinction between remedial and generative change.

I have often mentioned that this is especially important for the field of Coaching and Meta-Coaching at this particular time in history when the field is itself slowly moving to become a profession with its own unique domain. Another reason for this is that in most countries and states, the field of Psychotherapy is well regulated by government bodies and a Coach can get into some real trouble both legally and personally if this distinction isn't practiced.

If you are working with businesses, this distinction is especially important so that you are not framed as someone that people work with you are having problems and need fixing. The fact that an organization hires you and offers your services to middle or upper management should be considered a perk, an extra, a statement that top management sees potential in the client and is investing in grooming that person for higher levels of responsibility and competency. You want to be seen as someone that clients look forward to working with, who clients talk about and brag about, who sings in celebration — "I have a personal or executive coach!"

In fact, every time you define yourself and present yourself as a *Meta-Coach Change Agent*, you have the opportunity to set the frames for *the kind of change work* that you do with individuals, groups, and organizations. You can set frames that make the remedial — generative change distinction which can then open up a conversation about what distinguishes these two forms of change and transformation.

Remedial Change

Generative Change

Client—

Weak and fragile sense of self	An okay sense of self
Low ego strength	Sufficient ego strength
Lives mostly in the past	Lives primarily in the present
Weak coping skills	Good coping skills
Low or poor resilience	Basic resilience for life's set-backs
Reactive to negative emotions	Generally accepts negative feelings
Avoids taking responsibility	Wants to take responsibility

Change Agent —

Focuses on the past	Focuses on the future
Cares, Gentle, Supporting	Supporting and Challenging, Stretching
Re-parents the client	Is collaborator with the client
Is the expert of the client	The client is the expert of the client, Coach is the meta-process expert

Now the change mechanisms with each of these kinds of change differ from each other. To facilitate remedial change involves a different set of change mechanisms than to facilitate generative change. With the therapy population, a change agent has to be prepared to work with resistance. That's because he will be working primarily with people who desperately need to change and yet who also will desperately fight it, defend against it, won't feel safe to embrace change, and who easily personalize. By way of contrast, with the coaching population, before you are change-embracers— people who think about change, want to change, plan to change, and who get excited to the prospect of change. The coach as a change agent has the opposite problem— typically she has to restrain the change-embracers from changing too quickly. She has to get them to look at the price of change and make sure that the change is realistic and ecological.

In remedial change, the therapist is working to find a remedy for something that is wrong, to fix what is broken and dysfunctional and to get over the past so that he or she can come fully into the present. In generative change, you as the coach are working with a client to generate new and creative new choices for moving into a bright and compelling future. In the first, the therapist is focused on enabling the person to become "okay" and able to accept life on life's terms. In the second, the coach focuses on challenging the client to move up to higher and higher levels of development. May you be a marvelous generative Change Agent and change the world— one client at a time!