

# **MORPHEUS**

## **META-COACHING PATTERNS AND SKILLS**

### **VOLUME VII**

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# MORPHEUS — 2015

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**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #1**  
**January 7, 2015**  
**PCMC Series #2**

## **INTELLIGENCE GATHERING**

### **Job #1 in Coaching, Esp. For PCMC Level**

If you want to do a great job in Coaching, Job #1 is required. Do you know what that is? You won't be able to progress very far or stay on subject with your client if you don't do this. So your first task is: *Effective intelligence gathering*. That is Job #1. At the PCMC level this is not only a fundamental requirement, you also have to be able to identify where you are in the process. This satisfies the condition of *thinking strategically*.

While I believe that the reason is obvious, I will repeat it here for emphasis. When you begin *you do not know what the client wants or needs*. Even the client probably doesn't know what he or she really wants or needs. So you have to engage in intelligence gathering. If you attempt to start "coaching" before you do this—you are sure to miss it, to impose your own maps on the client, to not understand your client, to ask the wrong questions, to facilitate the wrong direction, to get frustrated in the process, etc. Is that reason enough?

How? How does an effective Meta-Coach do effective and thorough *intelligence gathering*? The answer is one that you already know at least the first step. Several have asked, What's required for PCMC? Here are the seven steps that you need to do at the PCMC level:

- 1) Begin with the Well-Formed Outcome Questions. Ask them in sequence.
- 2) As you do this exploration, keep checking, testing, and clarifying so that you, and your client, get as clear as possible as to what is wanted.
- 3) Ask until you identify the relationships in all of the factors presented.
- 4) Keep gathering information and clarifying until you have a visual and auditory Landscape images of your client's desired outcome. This is Landscape thinking and talking.
- 5) Run a checklist with the eight Matrix distinctions.
- 6) Detect the critical patterns that emerge in this exploration.
- 7) Summarize with, and for the client, how his experience works. This identifies the strategy process.

**Step 1:** At the PCMC level, if you have been gathering information for 20 minutes and you have not reached Question #7 yet (What do you have to do to get what you want?), then we stop the process, explore what you do know, your strategic thinking at that point (what are you doing, where are you with your client, what kind of a conversation does your client want to have, etc.).

- If your client's answer to #7 is "no," then you need to conduct a Clarity Conversation and facilitate an understanding and clarity about what your client has to do to get what she wants.
- If she knows what to do, does she know all that she has to do? If not, perhaps Clarity

Conversation. Or perhaps beginning to create a Plan. At least continue through the WFO Questions to gather more information.

**Step 2:** The checking, testing, and clarifying describe *the energizing and refining questions* which we introduced two years ago (2012) at ACMC. For PCMC, these are absolutely required. If you have not learned these questions and how to use them for intelligence gathering, you will need to do that for the PCMC level. The ability to ask these questions in your exploration both demonstrates critical thinking skills and further develops critical thinking competency.

**Step 3:** This indicates the ability to begin to use the data that you have collected in your intelligence gathering and to explore how all of the elements, variables, and details interact. How do they function? What comes first, second, third, etc.? This begins to generate the client's "strategy process" for experiencing his present state and/or the desired state. This also reveals your ability to think systemically as a coach.

**Step 4:** This is the Landscaping skill. Often you have heard me ask, "What would I see or hear if I could peek into the theater of your mind and see what you see, hear what you hear?" This is an elicitation of the client's VAK. It gets a sensory-based description of what he is literally representing. It asks, "What is the landscape of your current representations? How to do present to yourself the desired landscape?" [You will learn more about the landscaping skill when you revisit *Coaching Mastery* or attend the PCMC training.]

**Step 5:** This gives you a way of making sure you are being thorough in your intelligence gathering. By running a checklist with the Matrix distinctions, you insure that the eight distinctions are represented in the client's landscape and none of them are missing.

**Step 6:** This makes sure you are getting the meta-landscape and not just the primary one. The meta-landscape is about understandings, beliefs, decisions, identities, rules, standards, etc. By focusing on detecting the critical patterns which emerge in the exploration, as the coach you will have the ability to zoom-in on the critical change factors in the person's system.

**Step 7:** Finally, this step activates your skill of summarizing. Here you provide a summary of the landscape, the relationships at play, and the governing patterns and frames which explain how the client's experience works.

All of this is a high level, PCMC level skill, of *intelligence gathering*. With this, you are now ready to coach the client *to the client's agenda*. Until this point, you are using your coaching skills and tools to gather enough information so that you have an informed understanding of what your client really wants. You've coached Clarity and Decision to get to this place. Now, is that how you coach and Meta-Coach?

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #2**  
**January 14, 2015**  
**PCMC Series #3**

## **STRATEGIC & CRITICAL THINKING FOR MOVING UP TO PCMC**

In spite of having conducted several PCMC assessments, I still learned many new things at the recent PCMC training in Guangzhou China. One of my discoveries was the critical importance for a Meta-Coach to be able to engage in both *strategic thinking and critical thinking*. Those who were able to do that were much more effective than those who were not. Several really struggled with this during the Training and since these thinking patterns are essential for effective coaching, I am and will be addressing this in the next posts.

*Strategic thinking* refers to being able to identify *where* you are with a client, *where* your client wants to go, *where* the client is with him or her self, and the process for moving from current state to a future desired state. For this reason, your first task as a coach is to *do intelligence gathering in a high quality way* (2015 #1 Meta-Reflection). From that intelligence gathering the next step is to ground the difference between *Now* and *Then*. That's actually the design of the contexts questions (WFO questions 4, 5, and 6) as well as question 7. These establish the time-line and action steps for *how* to move from one place to another.

The most basic NLP model that supports this kind of strategic thinking is the SCORE model. By making sure you have identified and mapped out five factors: symptoms, cause, outcome, resources, and effects, you at least get the basic landscape of the situation and that enables the first level of strategic thinking. Yet this is just the beginning of thinking strategically. There's more. It also involves thinking about relationships between different variables. For this you will need to learn to ask lots of strategic questions. Here are *some basic strategic questions* to memorize and to begin regularly using in your coaching.

- How does X relate to Y?
- Is the relationship linear or is it system?
- Do they mutually influence each other or is it a one-way relationship?
- Is X a symptom of Y? A cause? A contributing factor?
- Does X appear directly in the scenario or does it emerge as a gestalt factor?
- How does your client's experience of X work?
- What is the strategy process of your client *not* changing?

These are also *critical thinking questions*. How can that be? What does that mean? That's because strategic thinking involves being suspicious, skeptical, and full of wonderment, "What else is there?" "What could I be missing?" "What is so obvious that I am not seeing it?" These *critical thinking questions* play an important role if you are to do a thorough job in thinking strategically with your clients. What are the basic critical thinking questions? Begin with the questions inherent in the

Meta-Model challenges. Do this to get precision in the description of the client's outcome and the client's challenges (problems) that are preventing the realization of the outcome.

Most coaches are too impatient and shallow in their thinking to ask these two sets of questions. Don't be one of them! Step up to this advanced level by developing more patience so you can be persistent enough to be thorough in your intelligence gathering. After one of our sessions in China, Mandy Chai noted that the particular coach was far too task-driven and achievement oriented and that it was that attitude which was the factor in the session that was undermining that coach's effectiveness. The coach was being too impatient and therefore rushing over the information gathering stage. She was thinking too much about getting the KPI and succeeding! The client was just an item on an assembly line to the coach.

Critical thinking is also essential to pick up on your client's patterns, especially the patterns of cognitive bias that distorts how he is making meaning.

If your client is biased to ever-raising the bar so that every success and every baby-step forward is viewed as "nothing," and you don't recognize his *discounting* pattern— your "help" as a coach may actually reinforce the cognitive distortion and make it worse!

If your client is wanting to put up with and endure a family member's over-controlling— you will "help" the client for a minute or two, but you have only put a band-aide on the symptom. You have not probed to the real problem.

We now know from the neuro-sciences that when we are operating under conditions of high uncertainty when things are ambiguous, we all have the tendency to use shortcuts in our mental processing. This is when we use whatever "rules of thumb" heuristics from which we then make snap decisions. This is our problem. In coaching when you begin you are obviously in a situation of "high uncertainty" and things are "ambiguous." This is when you especially need to ask the WFO questions and refine those questions with checking questions, clarification questions, testing questions, and exploration questions— doing that facilitates your critical thinking skills.

### **Your Next Step**

Want more? Then sign up for Colin Cox's Pre-Conference Workshop on Critical Thinking Skills. How to think like a Neuro-Semanticist! Contact [Sherran@apti.com.hk](mailto:Sherran@apti.com.hk)

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #3**  
**January 21, 2015**  
**PCMC Series #4**

## **BAND-AID COACHING**

When it comes to any profession that works to invent, create, or deliver solid answers, solutions, and/or results—*one critical key for success is being thorough*. The secret is doing an excellent job *in intelligence gathering* (#1) before jumping to conclusions or solutions. Otherwise, the solution will be like putting a band-aid on severed limb!

*Band-aid*: A makeshift, limited, or temporary aid or solution that does not satisfy the basic or long-range need. The proposed reform isn't thorough enough to be more than just a band-aid that deals with a symptom rather than the cause.

This occurs in coaching when a coach focuses on symptoms and/or treats symptoms as critical influencing factors. But the problem is a complaint, a grumble, an emotion or emotional upset and not the cause. It's just a symptom. Yes it is loud, noisy, and maybe urgent. It may be demanding. But it is a symptom none-the-less. It is not the cause, not the real problem.

Symptoms are like that. They are obvious— loud and noisy, urgent and demanding and so can easily capture your attention and confuse you so that you think of them as bad, terrible, horrible, that you have to do something about it immediately, if not sooner! But don't do that! Stop! When you get a circus of loud, urgent responses from your client— take a Meta-Moment and check it out, "Is this the real problem or just a symptom?"

The problem with symptoms is that they are *symptoms*—they are *not* the problem. They are pseudo-problems. They result from the real problem and so hide the real problem. Real problems are more likely to be hidden, unseen, even invisible. The symptom is a divergence. It is there to distract you.

This, again, highlights the importance of the Clarity Conversation—the conversation that you engage in as a coach to identify the real problem. This is where a well-formed outcome and a well-formed problem work together to enable coach and client to figure out what's really going on and what's really needed to be addressed. Figuring that out solves 50 percent and maybe even 70 percent of all problems. So always coach first and foremost for Clarity via your intelligence gathering. [This is what the third workshop in the Self-Actualization series is all about.]

Symptoms also tend to be external consequences and because of this, it is easy to focus on them, blame them, and want to solve them. They are easily identified, visually and auditorially, so we say of the symptom, "That's the problem." Yet it is not. It may be unpleasant. It may be even painful, distressful, and highly undesirable. But it is not the real problem. It is a symptom of a problem.

- A headache is unpleasant and could be painful and highly distressful. But taking another aspirin every few minutes to cover over that symptom will never get to the source of the



headache.

- A bee sting is similarly unpleasant and painful. But if you focus on the sting and don't find out where the bees are building a nest or getting in, the stings will continue.
- Feeling low energy, tired in the afternoon, unmotivated for exercise, etc. is not pleasant. But if you don't get to the source— getting sufficient sleep, eating right, exercising regularly, etc.— focusing on the symptom will not facilitate effective or long-term success and change.
- Stressed out by too many irons in the fire and exhausted are more symptoms. And band-aid coaching will focus on them rather than prioritizing values, saying no to good things, and setting up a disciplined approach to life.

*Band-aid coaching is superficial coaching* that operates from a basic failure— failure to distinguish true cause from symptom. It may be complicated by a coach who fails to challenge clients to put up with temporary dis-comfort in order to set up a long-term strategy that will eliminate the unpleasant symptoms. It may be convoluted by a coach who guarantees to coach without upsetting the client or inviting the client to be uncomfortable. A terrible thing to ever say to a coaching client is, “If you feel uncomfortable or upset, let me know and we’ll stop.” Coaching is about challenge! It is about disturbing the comfort zone of the client and provoking her to step up to be all that she can become.

Band-aid coaching occurs when you, as the coach, do not challenge the client to face reality on its terms and check out if one's mental maps and expectations are realistic.

“Is that realistic?” “If you think it is, how is it?” “How will you be able to do that in that time-frame or with your current skills?”

Symptoms are often the result of unrealistic expectations. The symptoms of impatience, emotional upset, anger, fear, stress, etc. are most often created by unrealistic expectations. Until those expectations are identified, explored, and re-adjusted— doing band-aid coaching will only perpetuate the actual problem of limited beliefs, understandings, framing, and meaning.

### **Meta-Coaching News**

The next time I will be doing *Creativity and Innovation— Unleashing Creativity* will be in Mexico City, Jan. 30, 31, and Feb. 1. Contact Ivan Robles for information:

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #4**  
**January 28, 2015**  
**PCMC Series #5**

## “AND YOUR ANSWER IS...”

*Clients asks themselves questions.* Have you ever noticed? In one of the sessions at the PCMC training in December, I counted 12 questions that the client has posed to himself, twelve questions — all which were versions of the same inquiry. Do you think that was important? Yet the coach did not once seemed to notice and not once did the coach ask, “And your answer is?”

Nor was that an exception. At the ACMC level it occurs *all the time*. And I don’t think I’d be exaggerating to say that it occurs in every session. If it doesn’t, it is close to 99% of the time and just that often Coaches do not seem to hear it. Ah, yes, something else “not heard.” At the PCMC level, in every single session the client ask him or herself a question and *most of the time*, the Coach did not give any indication that he or she heard it.

Yet, if there is a question being posed, you can almost always count on the fact that your client has also been postulating his or her own answers (that’s inferential listening). And if she is still posing the question while talking to you as a coach, don’t you think it would be worth your time and effort to find out what she thinks the answer might be? Of course! That’s a no-brainer. So ask. Slow down and find out. A coachable moment lurks at this juncture. “And your answer is...?”

Actually, client self-posed questions almost always offers you, as the coach, a great opportunity for getting deep inside, sometimes to “the heart of the matter” and discovering what is often in “the back of the client’s mind.” Now if you ask, “And your answer is?” and the person says that he doesn’t know, do not stop there. Follow up on it. How? Well, here are some things that you could ask:

- If you were to guess, what would you guess? Take a stab at it, let’s see what may come up.
- Have you ever had an answer ... and maybe now you are questioning it?
- What answers have others suggested to you? What do you think about those answers?
- What do you hope the answer might be?
- What do you fear that the answer might be?

Clients ask themselves questions and *if you are listening for them*— they are obvious. They are right there out in the open ready to harvest. So, does that give you an idea? I hope so. *Listen for client self-posed questions.* And yet beginning coaches never seem to notice this and even pretty skilled coaches often don’t seem to be listening.

Here then is a challenge for the coming week: Set a goal to catch the questions that your clients are asking! Typically there’s hardly ever a session where the client doesn’t pose at least one question to him or herself. In all of the 25 sessions I heard in our PCMC training in China—I did not hear a single session where this did not occur.

Sometimes, however, the way the client poses a self-question may require some very intense, focused, and deep listening. Why? Because the person does not ask it directly or he does not explicitly say, “I keep asking myself one question and it is ...” Sometimes the self-questioning shows up in different forms:

- Meta-Comments spoken as an aside or after-thought. “That’s really what I want to do. But maybe it’s not possible. Should I really devote so much interest in this?”
- Suppositional statements not framed as a personal question but as a general concern: “How could anyone get through to him, he’s the kind of manager who is just not interested in subordinate comments.”
- Unfinished sentences. “Sure I’d like to achieve that, but who am I ... I mean I’d have to change so much and that’s too much.”

In some of the sessions that Graham Richardson did (on the DVD series from Brussels) one of the ways that he responded to self-posed questions by clients was to use silence. He just waited. And sure enough ... a few moments later they said more about it.

*“And your answer is...”* powerfully respects the client—his or her view of things and probes for hidden knowledge. It says in effect that the client knows more than the client may be saying and that if we honor that, if we harvest that—we may deepen the conversation significantly. This statement also facilitates the client’s self-actualization—actualizing the client’s creating and problem-solving.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #5**  
**February 4, 2015**  
**PCMC Series #6**

## **RECEIVING FEEDBACK AT THE PCMC LEVEL**

As you well know, in the Meta-Coaching training of *Coaching Mastery* we present the mirroring skills of receiving and giving feedback. The metaphor of a *mirror* is probably the most radical aspect of thinking about “feedback.” That’s because if you, as the coach, can be a mirror to your client—if you are calibrating and listening intensely and in a deep level of detail, then you can reflect back what the client offers. This presents a tremendous gift of how you see your client.

I say *gift* because like any clean and undistorted mirror, a *mirror* adds nothing to the reflection. What it receives, it reflects back. And this is the gift that initiates a self-organizing change. Have you noticed that? Put a person in front of a mirror and just watch that person immediately start making changes. It’s amazing, it is not? No need for motivation. No long struggle with decision. Changes start occurring immediately. And why? Because the person can see *what is* and can see precisely what needs to be changed. The mirror in reflecting back provides specific information that the person can use and the clarity to use it immediately.

So your skill of cleanly receiving and reflecting back, *mirroring*, is a very powerful change skill. But it is not easy. And you know this. You began practiced “giving feedback” to the specific benchmarks on Day 3 of *Coaching Mastery*. I always hope that when new Coaches-in-training start to *give* feedback that it will deepen their appreciation for the benchmarkers and the difficulty of giving clean and helpful feedback that will *mirror back* to the coach what he or she did well and what to do to take their skills to the next level.

At the ACMC level, we also have developed specific benchmarks for how to receive feedback both from the client and from a benchmarker. At the 2.5 level, we expect that you will minimally *reflect silently* on the feedback, considering it, acknowledging what you have received, and receive it neutrally rather than reactively. Below 2.5 a person does not *receive* the feedback but disagrees, gets defensive, “explains” how he is right, argues with the person, discounts it, etc. Not good. These are anti-learning expressions. They mean that the person isn’t learning anything.

Minimally, when a client or a fellow coach takes the time and effort to provide you feedback, unless they are joking around, then *somehow what they are offering makes sense to them*. And given that, then, minimally, do you not wonder how? So start there. *Receiving* feedback well does not mean you have to agree, but it does mean that you are interested, curious, and open. So stay calm and cool, and stay in a neutral state. Begin by *acknowledging* what is given to you. Then reflect upon that. If it doesn’t immediately strike you as true, then begin to wonder how it could be true. Then ask.

Sometimes the person giving you feedback may not be giving you the cleanest of feedback. They may be contaminating it through their own inability to be totally present to you, in sensory-awareness of what you are saying and doing, calibrating to what's going on, etc. They may be new to the process and be missing a lot. They may not be able to recognize the behavior of a skill or know how to record it. That would be one set of conditions that may make the *receiving* of the feedback challenging. Another set would be if you hear information that surprises you or that disappoints you or that you disagree with. So how will you respond then?

At the ACMC level, the 2.5 level indicates that you are *not* personalizing and not making it about you. It the most it is about what you said or did or failed to do, it is about your behavior, not you as a person. Being defensive, upset, closed, etc. shows a very low level skill in receiving feedback, level 1 or 2. Yet we want to get far beyond that to the PCMC level.

What then is *receiving feedback like* at the 3.0 level? At this level, you have become so comfortable with feedback that you are first of all in a state of appreciation and excitement. After all, here is a living human mirror giving you a way to see yourself. Someone has taken her time and effort to focus on you and your skills. Even if they are new to it and can only give you low quality feedback, there's always something to learn, something to gain. So at 3.0 level you immediately explore it. You ask questions to understand the feedback and to understand what and how the person giving the feedback saw or heard something.

At this level, I expect that you will be asking anywhere from three to ten questions and that you are in a state of curiosity, interest, and excitement. You will also be asking questions for what to do next, what could you do to improve, you will be looking for how you could integrate the feedback so that it makes a difference. This is the PCMC level of skill in receiving feedback.

For a full 3.0 score, we look for and listen for you asking at least five questions about the feedback. This indicates that you have a robust attitude about feedback and know how to use feedback for finding the next refinement. You then speak about or ask help for designing a deliberate practice so that you can move past wherever you are. During our PCMC training in China in December, I noticed that the more questions which a coach asked during the feedback, the better that person would do the next time. And especially, those who asked for more information about how to implement the suggested changes, they were the ones who would thereafter make quantum leaps in their skills. Ready to become a receiving feedback Pro?

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #6**  
**Feb. 11, 2015**  
**PCMC Series #7**

## **THE ART OF CHALLENGING CLIENTS**

Coaching is about challenging. That's fundamental. In fact, the Meta-Coaching System itself was structured from the beginning with *challenge* at its center. Modeling coaching after Graham Richardson, I picked up on his style as being "ruthless challenging" and later designed the Facilitation Model around two themes—*compassion* and *challenge*. The result is that the coach should be *compassionately challenging*. How about you and your skill of challenging?

Challenge shows up in the coaching skills. We put it under "support." One way to *support your client* is to challenge her. It is to refuse to let him sell himself short. People tend to do that. Many clients, even coaching clients, have a tendency to opt for "the path of the least resistance," to get back to their comfort zone and to what's familiar. What they need is challenge. They need to be challenged to catch a bigger and bolder vision of life, of what they are capable of, of what they can contribute and achieve.

"If you feel uncomfortable in the coaching process, that's good. It means [here comes the frame] that you are getting out of your comfort zone and that you are beginning to step up to making real what's possible for you."

Challenge is also built into the core skill of coaching—questioning. After all, at some level every question operates as a challenge—it is a challenge to understand something, to clarify something, to find a resource, to figure out a problem, to make a decision, to create a new solution or meaning.

That questions challenge explains why some people have to be prepared for coaching. That's why you preframe the asking of questions:

"I'm going to be asking lots of questions and many of them may be disturbing, uncomfortable, even upsetting. I'm doing that *because* [now comes the frame] in order for you to discover and create the solutions that will unleash your best potentials."

When NLP invented the Meta-Model Questions, instead of calling them *questions*, the developers called them *challenges*. That's how they used those original questions. Why? Because the Meta-Model questions challenges a person to go back to their experience (in their mind, in accessing a state or situation) and re-mapping it with more precision. That's why the Meta-Model is also called the Precision Model. So you ask those challenging questions,

"Who specifically?" "Where specifically?" "When specifically?" "What do you mean by the word 'relationship'— who is relating to who and in what way?"

Challenge is also at the heart of the Axes of Change Model. In fact, as you know it all begins with the role of Challenger in first axis of Motivation. Here the challenge is to turn the spotlight on current reality and help the client to face what is happening right now and what will happen in the

future if a change doesn't occur. When you challenge at this point, you are working to get a client to fully face his situation and to not dismiss it, discount it, ignore it, etc. And when you tap into the power of consequential thinking—you are facilitating your client to think consequentially about the things that will happen, and get worse. You are challenging by amplifying the consequences so that there's sufficient aversion so she will move away from what she does not want.

Challenge next occurs in the Decision axis after the thoroughness of thinking through all of the pros and cons of the change. Then after that, especially for people who favor being reflective rather than active, now as an effective coach you provoke your client! This may be the challenge of the decision or possibly that of a tease:

“So will you make this change?” “You will? How committed are you? Gauge it. Okay, what do you need so that you will make a hundred-percent commitment?” “Are you really man enough to take this on? I don't know. Maybe you will chicken out.”

Challenge will occur when you move to the Creation axis and you need to get your client to take action and actualize all of the creative planning. Now the challenge is that for executing the plan, embodying what your client says she wants, and setting up an action plan with tasks for actually implementing things.

“What will be the very first thing you will do today that will begin to make this change real in your life? When will you do that? Who do you want to ask to hold you accountable for doing that?”

Challenge comes in the Integration axis when the change become strong enough to put it to the test. Now as Tester you are ready to find out what else needs to be developed to make the change part of the person's lifestyle and hence, sustainable.

“Where does it not work as well as you would prefer? Where could it be better? Is there a time or place when it doesn't work at all? So what resource do you need?”

Because challenge is everywhere in coaching, a fundamental skill as a coach is that of *challenging*. If that is true at the APMC level, it is supremely true at the PCMC level. In fact what I realized after our December PCMC training, as I reflected on things, was that if a Meta-Coach does not *challenge 3 to 5 times* during the session, the coach is *not* at the professional level. Any coach who makes the client's comfort his primary purpose is not coaching but parenting or doing therapy!

So how are you at challenging? How are you at loving to receive a challenge? How much challenge do you schedule into your life on a regular basis? These questions explore your basic relationship to challenge and that's critical because how you relate to *challenge* generally will influence how you develop your skill of challenge as a coach. There's more to say about this—and that will be the subject next week.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #7**  
**Feb. 18, 2015**  
**PCMC Series #8**

## **MORE ON CHALLENGING CLIENTS**

The question under consideration is: “What’s the difference between a coach at the APMC level and one at the PCMC level?” Recently I’ve been hearing this question more and more. While there are several answers, one of the most fundamental answers is that the PCMC coach does more challenging, and the challenging she does is much more refined and focused. Not only is it *compassionate* challenge, it is challenge that generates within the client a creative tension.

What is this *creative tension*? I wrote about it in the new version of *Coaching Change* (chapter 11, p. 164). Peter Senge in *Fifth Discipline* says that a great vision does not necessarily immediately create joy but *creative tension*. This arises when a person senses the distance between today’s reality and tomorrow’s vision. Creative tension identifies *the gap* between present state and desired state—and this is the space where change occurs. Yet this gap of creative tension is also the very thing that seduces many to turn away from their vision. Many do not have an empowering way to respond to this tension. They are defeated by it, not awakened. That’s why the effective coach has to challenge the client to deal with this.

How do you experience this *creative tension*? How do your clients? Negatively as anxiety, stress, frustration, worry, anger, fretting, etc.? If so, such people do not let visions awaken them to new possibilities. That’s because they confuse “tension” with negative emotions which they seek to avoid, reduce, or medicate away. No wonder you have to *challenge* them! By avoiding such emotions a person simultaneously undermines the creativity in the tension.

The challenge for your coaching client is to fully *accept the creative tension*. It is to translate it into positive energy for change and thereby enter the human adventure of creativity. In the words of George Bernard Shaw—

“This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one ... the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.”

So, as a coach, you challenge. You invite your client to raise the level of his vision and of her performances. You challenge your client to stop selling himself short of what’s possible. Csikszentmihalyi put *challenge* as the vertical axis in his Flow model corresponding to the *meaning* axis that we use. He said that when a person combines challenge and competency they move into the flow zone. We call that the genius state—quadrant IV of the Self-Actualization Quadrants. That’s why you challenge—because when a person steps up, she moves into the joy of the “flow” state.



This reframes challenge, does it not? Challenge is stepping up to be your best self, to unleash your highest potentials. Challenge is the adventure of life, the adventure of being awake and of growing. Challenge is what makes life worth living—it makes it exciting and fun.

Beginner coaches often are so nice to their clients and don't want them to feel uncomfortable, they play safe and small when it comes to challenging. What they tolerate in and with their clients are challenges which are too small, too easy, too much just "child's play" so there is really no challenge at all. I had a coaching session recently with a coach-in-training where he said, "I walk around on egg-shells with people, I am so gentle that I don't even dare to challenge."

"So is that how you want me to treat you in this session? Do you want me to treat you as if walking on egg-shells? As if you are fragile and could easily be broken? Do you want me to be very careful and gentle with you?"

"No!" he said with a very definite tone of voice.

"So you can take it? You can handle it if I challenge you?"

Shaking his head up and down, he said, "Yes, of course."

"Oh, so you can take it but others can't. Is that right. [Pause] You want it and need it but others are too fragile. You have to be careful."

Smiling what looked like a half smile, half embarrassed look, he then rolled his eyes, "Okay, you got me. I get your point."

But, of course, I wasn't through. "And what's my point? How have I 'got' you?"

"Well, now I think it is actually disrespectful to treat people as if they are fragile and can't handle things. To not challenge people is to say that they don't have what it takes."

"Good. That says it very well. So, what will you do about this? What's going to be different in how you treat people, how you coach?"

Challenge says to the person being challenged, "I believe in you! I believe that there's more potential in you to be unleashed. So step up, man up (or woman up)!" How do you challenge? Identify a strength or talent or potential in a person and then ask that person to step up to being more, doing more, having more, giving more, etc. To challenge draw a word picture of a new possibility and present it to the person as a possible vision. As a coach, this is your job description. This is why your client is there.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #8**  
**Feb. 25, 2015**  
**PCMC Series #9**

## QUADRANT CHALLENGING

There's another level and kind of challenging in Meta-Coaching, one that is actually *unique* to our models, and one that is very powerful. Recall the Self-Actualization Quadrants and *the strengths* that are indicated by the high level quadrants of either Meaning or Performance.

In Quadrant II the strength of the client is that of *doing*— performance, action, and task. This person is action-oriented. He is probably proactive, an initiator, task-focused, practical and pragmatic. The likelihood is that this person wants and cares about results and so results is on the mind. Results colors his thinking about himself, he *is* a task-oriented person. It's part and parcel of his identity. And when things, for whatever reason, are not going well, he over-does the performing. He works harder and harder. He gets more and more stressed about the outcome not reaching his wants, his expectations, his inner demands.

In Quadrant III the strength of the client is that of *thinking*— imagining, dreaming, constructing, interpreting, inventing, etc. This person is idea-oriented. She is probably thoughtful, mindful, and reflective. She cares about the quality of her thinking— her dreams and hopes and imaginations. The high quality meanings show up as the concern for understanding, comprehension, and clarity. She will call this being “confident.” When things are not going right, she will over-think. She will demand more clarity, more understanding, more comprehension. She will want everything to be just right, perfect, flawless before taking action. If there are questions in the back of her mind, she will begin to question herself, doubt herself, fear taking the risk, hesitate, and get more and more nervous.

For the sake of ease of communication, I have labeled Quadrant II people as *Performers* and Quadrant III as *Dreamers*. Performers outstanding strength is doing; Dreamers towering strength is thinking and imagining. Because of these strengths, each will tend to over-do the strength when the person is in stress. We all do. Yet this the person's very towering strength becomes one's blind-spot and weakness. So rub your hands together—this is the place for challenge.

Here *the challenge* that you will provide is two-fold: what they will no longer do and what they need to begin to do. For each you will *challenge them to stop their strength*. This will seem counter-intuitive and will feel wrong, strange, bad, stupid, etc. For the Performer your challenge will be to *stop doing* and begin to go in the other direction— to take time to reflect. This will be so counter-intuitive to the Performer. She would never think to do that! “Take time?” “To do nothing? Just think? How is that going to get results?”

For the Dreamer your challenge will be to *stop with all of the mental preparations* and just go do something! Now the paradox of the paradox is that first the person says “Yes I know” and then adds

the “but...” and so this will feel extremely counter-intuitive. “Yes I should take action, but I’m not ready. One more book. One more training. One more coaching session, then I will be ready.”

Challenging Quadrant II and III people to do what is counter-intuitive, what goes against their towering strength, is *the specific challenge that invites the synergy of self-actualization*. What a powerful challenge! Now you are truly inviting the person to go where he or she do not normally go and would not go unless that person is challenged to go there. Do you have to let them know and understand why? Yes usually that’s important for both quadrants and, of course, especially with the dreamers since they are *why-people* anyway.

With this challenge expect objections. They will come. After all, you are asking them to do something that is counter-intuitive, something that they “intuitively” sense/ feel/ know is wrong. So they will object. Now, to hold the challenge, and drive it home you have to repeat the challenge.

*Challenging the Dreamers:*

Oh, you are not ready? Are you still worrying that you are not good enough, not confident enough, not perfect enough?

How long have you excused yourself from not acting because you’re not ready?

It’s scary? So you are going to let fear stop you? What resource do you need to face the fear anyway?

How long have you thought and dreamed about this, planned, but not acted?

*Challenging the Performers:*

You said it is no longer inspiring, so are you willing to step back and reflect on the meanings that you can create and invent that will rejuvenate your spirit?

Oh, you have so many things to do! Isn’t that the problem? When will you take time to evaluate the meanings that are creating the over-drive and the under-inspiration?

You don’t see how reflection will help? Are you willing to give it a try?

How burned-out are you? So that’s not working, or is it?

I have put this level and degree of challenge as a PCMC level skill. That’s because I seldom see or hear this kind of challenge at the ACMC level. It requires that, as a coach, you *hear* the strength in the person and recognize when it is over-done and when a situation calling for *synergy* is present. To your Meta-Coaching!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #9**  
**March 4, 2015**

## **LANDSCAPE THINKING AS A COACHING PERSPECTIVE**

Did you know that when you coach with the Well-Formed Questions you are simultaneously using the SCORE model, the Matrix Model, the NLP Communication Model, and the Meta-States Model? You are! Well, that is if you use the WFO in the way that we recommend at *Coaching Mastery*. Would you like to hear that again? Good. Then, as a picture of what you are doing, *think about it as eliciting three landscapes*. Make a picture in your mind of three environments which your client is attempting to navigate: Present state, Bridging state/s, Desired state.

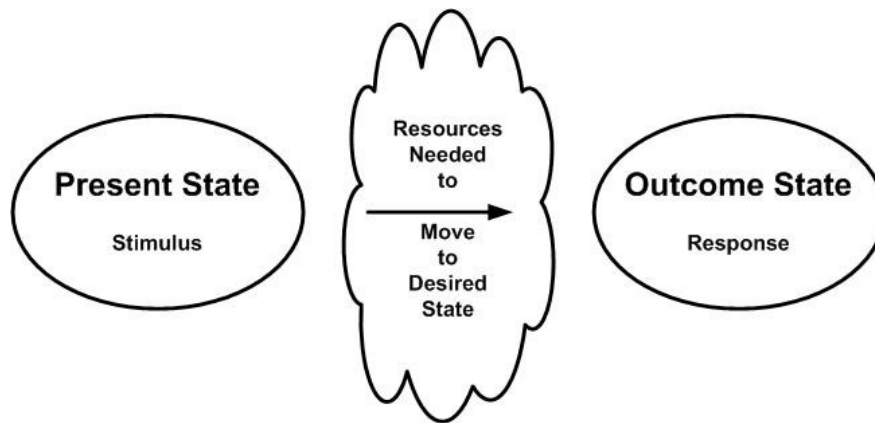
To ask the first question, “What do you want?” is to begin to map out the landscape of your client’s perceptual world. This question is about the future. “At some time in the future you want something that you do not have right now, what is it?” When you get that, you get your client’s *future desired state* (D.S.). Yet to ask this implies a *present state* (P.S.), one which is different from, and not the same as, the *desired state*. At this point, you now have two landscapes:

**Present State**                      -----                      **Desired State**

At this point also you only have the vaguest of descriptions of these landscapes. What will be in the desired state? What will the person be thinking, feeling, saying, and doing? How will it differ from the present state? What is in the present state that will change in order for the desired state to arrive? Can you make a picture in your mind of both of these landscapes? What other information do you need to gather so that you can “understand” what the client is referring to? That’s why we ask the second question, “What will you see, hear, and sense when you get what you want?” Ask that also about the present state.

The first questions implies *present state* and *desired state* and that means sorting out the Symptoms of the PS— what symptoms (emotions, behaviors, experiences) does your client want to move away from? What Causes these (meanings, understandings, beliefs, frames)? What is the state that your client desires (DS)? What Effects will result when she reaches that state?

With this another thing is implied. The time frame (hence question #4), *when* do you anticipate that you can get what you want? And with that you have a third landscape, the line—in the diagram above. How long is that line? A week? A month? Five years? And what’s occurring during that time? To answer that, you need to use most or all of the *How Questions* (questions #7 through 14). That will detail out the bridge from Now (PS) to the Then (DS). Question #7, of course, is the most important one— “What do you have to *do* to get what you want?”



Back to the *Present State* we need to ask Question #8, “Is it in your power?” “Can you initiate the activities of Question #7 and sustain them?” Also Question #9, “Can you do it?” “Do you have the skills and competencies for pulling off the actions?” Within *Present State* we ask Question #3, “Why do you want that desired state? Why is it important for you?” This gives the person the engine for driving the change and/or the unleashing to get what he wants. All of these questions fills in more details about the present state.

Next, the pathway that bridges PS to DS. Here we have *the process questions*. If there are lots of things to *do*, then the person probably needs a plan or strategy. And if there’s a strategy, she will need to identify the feedback to monitor that will let her know how she is doing. Resources can sometimes be harvested from past attempts to achieve an outcome, hence Question #12, “Have you ever done this before?” “If so, what worked? To what extent did it work? What did you learn? What didn’t work? How do you know?” Along the pathway are coaching “problems,” that is, things that interfere with reaching one’s goals, blocks and sabotages. “What’s in the way?” And if something is in the way, what resource/s do you need so that you can deal with that and achieve your objective?”

The checks at the end of the Well-Formed Outcome Questions are for the *Present State*. Stepping back to reflection on the three landscapes, you can now enable your client to check out the ecology (Question #16). “Is it ecological? Would it run your health, finances, relationships, etc. if you go for this desired outcome?” Earlier the client said this is really important, but now, knowing what is in the landscape of the journey, is it still important? “Is it compelling? Will you have fun and joy making this come true?” If the client checks these off, then the big question, Question #17, “Will you do it? Are you ready to make a decision to make this happen?” Then finally, the convincer question, the epistemological question of Question #18 that will let your client know when to throw the party for the achievement of the goal, “How will you know that you have achieved it? What will be your measurement, your evidence?”

As you use the 18-Questions to do *Landscape Thinking* about your client’s objective in the coaching session/s, you have actually covered all of the matrices of his Matrix.

State: Present State, Desired State, all of the States along the way.

Meanings: What it is, how it works, significance. How will you know?

Intention: Why it is important? Will you do it?

Self: Why is this important for you? How will it affect you? Is it ecological in all of your systems?

Power: Is it in your power? Can you do it? What do you have to *do* to get what you want?

Others: Does reaching this goal involve others? “With whom?”

Time: When do you want it? Have you ever done it before?

World: What do you want? What domain is this in? Career, home, health, etc.?

*Landscape thinking*— listening to and representing in your mind (or on a piece of paper) the three landscapes that are inherent in anything and everything that your client says that he wants. If you don't know the details within each of these spaces—you have not done sufficient intelligence gathering to understand your client. And if you don't yet understand these spaces of your client, you definitely are not ready to coach.

In spite of what some coaches have said to me, the WFO questions are not designed to torture you. It is not my sadistic tool to make you sweat! These questions are needs-analysis questions, profiling questions, and orientation for a coaching contract question. Did you know that? Are you ready to discover that?

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #10**  
**March 11, 2015**

## **RULES: WHEN TO FOLLOW THEM**

### **WHEN TO BREAK THEM**

When it comes to the creation of rules—we all are rule-creators. Over the years of your life you have made lots of rules and you are today still making rules. The rules that you make show up as your ways of doing things, your procedures, even as your beliefs about how things should be done. Once fully installed, they become your habits, your rituals, your culture. We also make rules for all of our relationships— home, work, organizations, government, etc.

Why? Rules oftentimes arise due to some circumstance that arises and which we want to prevent from ever happening again. “Always look both ways before crossing the street.” Obviously, rules can be critical and life-saving. They can be asinine and foolish. They can be relevant and timely and they can just as easily be irrelevant and out-of-date.

*Rules* are made to be followed because they are structured procedures or guidelines which give us information about how to successfully achieve something. As such they bring stability and safety to our lives, minds and hearts. Rules secure relationships, jobs, tasks, understandings ... lots of things. Yet all rules are not the same:

- \* If- Then rules.
- \* Context rules.
- \* Arbitrary rules
- \* Organizational rules
- \* Ground rules
- \* Ritual Rules
- \* Cultural rules
- \* Historical rules, Traditions
- \* Heuristic rules
- \* Conflict resolution rules

Rules are norms and because of that, they reveal values. Sometimes rules provide detail instructions for how to do something. In this a set of rules operate as guidelines for operating in a given area or field. Because of this also rules can set a direction, generate a pattern of response for effectiveness, set the constraints within a situation, and establish boundaries. Rules are usually limited because they enable to us adapt our interactions within a specific environment.

This is why we need rules and why we are generally disposed to follow rules. We follow rules basically because they help us navigate the events and contexts of life. And yet because rules are almost never absolute and universal, there are times and situations where the best thing is to break the rule. But when? When is it best to break a rule?

Here’s a rule about rules: *You have to know a rule in order to break a rule.* The rules for learning to play the piano guide a person first to learn the keys and then play the scales. These rules enable a person to understand the functioning of the keys and pedals and the production of melodies as one makes music. Break these rules and you get noise. Yet masters know when and where and how and

why to break those rules. When they do, they can create new expressions of music. Following and breaking rules work together then. While these sound like opposites, they are not. They both equally apply but not at the same time and not by the same persons.

While rules are made to be followed in order to create order and structure, they are not infallible. So they are made to be broken when conditions and contexts change so that the guidelines are no longer relevant or effective. Rules are not commandments handed down on Mount Sinai, they are human rules that apply generally, even most of the time, but not always. There are almost always exceptions to rules. That's because they are dependent on context and priority. After all, what do you do when there are two different rules which conflict with each other? How do you follow or obey both at the same time?

If you can, at times, break a rule, what are the conditions and/or criteria for knowing when and how to break a rule? These conditions and criteria will prevent you breaking a rule just because you feel like it. It is not sufficient to break a rule just because you don't feel like following it.

### ***Conditions and Criteria for Knowing When to Break a Rule***

#### *1) Break a rule when a rule is subordinate to a higher rule and the higher rule needs to be followed.*

Because we can create rules about rules, we can position rules according to levels— to the level which they govern. This enables us to identify and create a rule hierarchy. Sometimes one rule will be the basic and general rule, then there will be another rule that will identify the exceptions to that rule.

- Wipe your feet before entering the house.” “In an emergency, get to the hurting child as fast as possible even if you are tracking mud into the house.”
- “Don't spit, it's impolite.” “Get him to spit it out— he's choking.”

#### *2) Break a rule when there is a higher dominating value.*

When there is a traditional value that doesn't allow for a humanistic concern or value to be fulfilled, then break that traditional value or rule.

- “Man is not made for the Sabbath, the Sabbath is made for man.”

#### *3) Break a rule when there are functional concerns that are more important.*

Nothing works all the time, when following the rule adds nothing; serves nothing.

- “Match your client” – match the client's volume, tone, and/or tempo; but don't do it if it is too low, or ineffective because it induces an unhelpful state. Intentionally mis-match in order to interrupt or to avoid reinforcing something that does not need to be reinforced.
- Follow WFO questions in sequences, but break the sequence and skill to question #8 or question #16 if something jumps out at you in the conversation which violates the area of control or ecology. This would be an exception to the rule.
- If a client goes into the wrong state, goes in a wrong direction, adopts a wrong focus, then interrupt, reflect, offer some guidelines or suggestions.



## ***How to Break a Rule***

There's an art to breaking rules. If you break rules because you are unable and incapable of following it, you are not doing so intentionally or purposefully. You have no choice. You can't follow it in the first place! So if you want to become truly efficient and gracefully skilled in breaking rules, you have to first of all be able to follow it. Then you can choose when and where and how to not follow it.

### *1) To efficiently break a rule, first know the rule.*

Knowing the rule in the first place means that you first of all understand the reason for the rule, its purpose, and the intention behind it. Now knowing when there is an exception, when a higher principle, rule, value, or function is at stake, enables you to break it with precision and intention. Otherwise you are breaking a rule because you are ignorant, sloppy, or undisciplined. Do you know why you are breaking the rule? Can you articulate the reason?

### *2) To efficiently break a rule, consciously decide when to break it.*

Now in consciously making this decision, you have to comprehend the when, that is, the time element of a situation, event, process and then know when to most powerfully and elegantly break the rule. Do you know at what point that the breaking of a rule will offer the most impact?

### *3) To efficiently break a rule, know the meta-rules for breaking rules.*

What are the meta-rules for breaking rules? How do one of those meta-rules apply in a given situation? What is the next-level rule that arises in a context when there is a basic primary state rule?

- If the rule for creating rapport is to match and mirror, then the meta-rule for breaking the matching rule is— Break primary rapport when you need to interrupt a pattern or provide a cognitive shock to awaken a client.
- If the rule for listening is be fully present to your client, then a meta-rule for breaking that rule is “Let an emergency to life and limb grab your attention so that you notice when to stop listening and shift to another response.”
- If the general rule for questioning is to operate from a curious know-nothing state, then a meta-rule might be: Let your knowledge of ecology or ethics interrupt your state so that you don't reinforce something that may be detrimental to your client.
- If the general rule for challenging a client is to keep looking for where to invite your client to step up, stretch beyond the comfort zone, then a meta-rule might be: Do that except when the client is in stress-overload or traumatized.
- If the general rule in coaching is to support your client, a meta-rule might be do that unless the support violates the client's ecology or ethics.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #11**  
**March 18, 2015**  
**Coaching Patterns Series #1**

## COACHING PATTERNS

In your *Coaching Mastery manual* you will find the following that I put in the manual about coaching patterns.

- **Coaching Patterns.** There are two dozen or more Neuro-Semantic and NLP patterns in this manual—patterns for facilitating a client in a way that empowers, re-resources, and unleashes one’s personal powers. From these kinds of patterns, a beginning coach can advance to *conversational* coaching. (Page 9)

Then in the back of the manual, there is another page about coaching patterns (p. 249).

### BEGIN WITH PATTERNS— SHIFT TO CONVERSATIONS

“Coaching is a *conversation*. It is not primarily or merely “running patterns” with people. In spite of this, most of us as coaches begin by using patterns—we begin our coaching careers by first learning how to coach the various NLP and Neuro-Semantic patterns. Then over time we learn how to make the patterns *conversational*. Patterns are recipes for “running your own brain,” managing your own states, and developing your own personal mastery in various areas.

“In this manual and in Meta-Coach Training, we use numerous patterns as we prepare ourselves with the special states, frames of mind, and skills which empower us to coach. As a Meta-Coach you will want to know and be able to use the basic patterns that come from NLP and Neuro-Semantics. You can also use these patterns as you *self-coach*. For more patterns, see —

- 1) *The Source Book of Magic, Volume I*. This book has 77 of the most basic NLP patterns.
- 2) *The Source Book of Magic, Volume II*. This massive spiral bound book has 143 Neuro-Semantic or Meta-State patterns.

“Learn the patterns by heart. Run them following the pattern *precisely and exactly*. As you gain familiarity with what you can and cannot do with the pattern, then you will be able to begin to move to a more conversational approach. If you favor options as your meta-program, and especially if you suffer from *option-itis*, then get some coaching on how to expand your meta-program to procedures so that you can learn the pattern accurately.”

### Patterns for Coaching Excellence

For several years, I have been thinking about writing about specific patterns that Meta-Coaches have expressed interest in. So next week I will write about the Drop-Down Through Pattern, and after that the Allergy Cure Pattern. If there is a pattern in one of the *Source Books*, or other training manuals, that you are interested in using as a Coach, write to me privately and let me know.

*Patterns give you structure.* So when you first learn one, *learn it precisely.* Follow it *step by step*

and use your critical thinking skills, your meta-modeling skills, to understand how it works, and why it has been organized as it has. Only then will you be in a position to begin altering it. If you do not do this, you will not learn it right. Your use of it will, first of all, not be accurate, will not be precise, and could actually do harm. Also, practice it until you can do so *conversationally*. That will give you the ability to then use it in a natural and elegant way.

This is where the options meta-program as a thinking-pattern and as a perceptual pattern will *not serve you very well* and can actually undermine your learning if you start with it. Start with the procedural side and once you have practiced it 10 or 20 times, then begin playing around to see how many ways you can adapt it and still get results.

*Patterns reveal strategies.* Many patterns actually provide the strategy for attaining a certain outcome. The pattern in your training manual on Receiving Feedback is precisely that. So is Releasing Judgment, Inducing State, and many others. So when you *run* a pattern, you are directing a client through the strategy (the process) whereby he or she can achieve a certain result. This gives you a real heads-up about how certain experiences work. So in your chosen area of coaching— there will be certain patterns that you will use over and over. Discover them, learn them, and practice them until you become truly skilled and elegant with them.

How shall you discover the pattern that you need? Start with the APG patterns. There are 14 of them. Get out your Meta-States training manual and go through those patterns over and over. They are basic. They deal with many of the primes of human experience. If you have questions— contact your Neuro-Semantic Trainer. By the way, no one *gets* APG in one or two times. Aim to revisit APG several times. I know PCMC coaches — who are PCMC level coaches— because they revisited seven or more times.

Next, go through the Matrix Section in your manual. Each section has a list of patterns and these direct you to those that are most appropriate for that area of the Matrix. Almost all of these are in the *Source Books*. If you cannot find one there, or know of another NLP or Neuro-Semantic pattern, just write to me privately and I'll send it to you.

In understanding patterns, there is not only *the structure*, there is also the *elicitation question*. This is the question that you use to elicit the strategy process which the pattern facilitates and it is the question that enables you to know which pattern to use for which situation. Does my client have a situation that fits the elicitation question? Apart from knowing these things, you will want to know and be skilled in using a pattern. In APG you learned the five steps for every meta-state process: accessing, amplifying (if needed), applying, appropriating into context, and then stepping back to analyze to make sure it is ecological. In NLP you learned the basic structure of state accessing and then the ability to follow a strategy as a step-by-step process.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #12**  
**March 25, 2015**  
**Coaching Patterns Series #2**

## **THE DROP-DOWN THROUGH PATTERN**

In *Source Book of Magic, Volume II* we named this pattern as *the Drop-down Through to Rise Up* pattern. This pattern uses the reference and the metaphor of *dropping* or *falling* and uses that idea and *feeling* as the frame for this experience. Here you will apply the feeling of falling to an experience for the purpose of “dropping down” and away from the meaning frame and the embodied feelings so as to release them. This is a meta-state process, an upside-down meta-stating.

Here you apply dropping until you enable your client we get to the bottom of things ... to a feeling and to new frames of meaning. Eventually your client will fall or drop down and hit “the ground” or a void, an emptiness, a nothing. But that will not be the end. After that you will facilitate dropping below that. By starting with a painful emotional state which a person actually feels in the body and dropping below that feeling to what was before that, your client will eventually drop into less and less intense states. Then, frames-by-implication, after you pass through the ground and move into increasingly more positive states. After the third or fifth positive states we use that to meta-state the first and to “clean the pipes” so to speak.

*Elicitation Question:* When you think about X (stuttering, rejected, etc.), where do you feel it in your body? Point to where you feel it?

*Distinctions:* You will probably get lots and lots of information, so get a pen and paper to write down the process.

### **1) Identify the experience and emotion you want to transform.**

When you think about X (stuttering, rejected, etc.), where do you feel it in your body? Point to where you feel it?

What emotion, feeling, memory, or experience would you like to transform?

Where do you feel it? What do you feel in your body which feels dis-empowering?

How does this emotions or experiences undermine your objective?

### **2) Step into that experience to experience it.**

For the purposes of transformation, recall that experience and step into it so that you see what you saw, hear what you heard, and fully feel what you felt. Be there again .... Good.

Where do you feel this in your body? Point to the place.

What does it feel like? [Describe in kinesthetics, not emotions. Describe any sounds, any sights or colors.]

How intense are you experiencing this?

Good, just be there with it for a moment, noticing ... just noticing it fully... knowing that it is just an emotion and that you are so much more than any emotion...

### **3) Drop down through the experience.**

This may feel strange, but you do know what it feels like when you *drop* ... so feeling that feeling of *dropping*, just drop down through that experience until you drop down underneath that feeling...

What feeling or emotion lies underneath that emotion? [Briefly describe what you sense, hear, see, etc.]

Now just imagine dropping down through that feeling... [Use the person's precise language.]

What feeling comes to you as you imagine yourself dropping down through that one?

[Keep repeating this dropping-down through process until the person comes to "nothing..." That is, to no feelings ... to a void or emptiness.]

### **4) Confirm the emptiness**

Just experience that "nothingness" or "void" for a moment. Good.

Now let that nothingness open up beneath you and imagine yourself dropping through and out the other side of the nothingness.

What are you experiencing when you come out the other side of the nothingness? What or whom do you see? [Repeat this several times .. to a second, third, or fourth resource state — joy, love, oneness, justice, beauty, etc.]

### **5) Take the positive states and meta-state the first problem state.**

Use each resource state to meta-state each problem state.

And when you feel X about Y, how does that transform things?

And when you even more fully feel X — what other transformations occur?

Valid and solidify: just stay right here in this X resource and as you experience it fully, what happens to the first problem state (#1)?

When you *feel this* (fire anchor for each resource) ... what else happens to those old problem states?

### **6) Test**

Let's see what now happens when you try, and I want you to really try to see if you can get back the problem state that we started with.

When you try to do that, what happens?

Do you like this?

### **7) Check ecology and future pace.**

Are you fully aligned with this? Any objections to this in the back of your mind?

Would you like to take this into your future?

Would you like to have it in all of your tomorrows and into all your relationships?

**Afterword:** If you have questions about this pattern, write to me ([meta@acsol.net](mailto:meta@acsol.net)) and I'll publish the questions and answers next week.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #13**  
**April 1, 2015**  
**Coaching Patterns Series #3**

## **PATTERNS FOR COACHING, NOT THERAPY**

After sending out last week's pattern on the *Drop-Down Through Pattern*, I had nearly a dozen emails about the pattern. The biggest misunderstanding was this—some got the impression that it is a therapy pattern. Now where did they get that idea? It is *not* necessarily a therapy pattern and I certainly did *not* send it out to the *Coaches* egroup if I had any idea that someone would think that it is a therapy pattern for coaches! We spend a lot of time at all of the Meta-Coaching modules to distinguish coaching from therapy.

In fact, if you are a Coach—*never, but never do “therapy.” Refuse the invitation to do therapy!* Have other people that you can refer to for therapy and never, but never get involved in doing therapy when you call yourself a Coach. It is incongruous and worse, it is dangerous. In fact, if you do not have a degree in therapy—in most countries and most states, you are doing something illegal. In the State of Colorado where I live, if you do “therapy” or announce that you do therapy and you do not have a License by the state, it is a felony and you can be prosecuted and actually sent to prison if convicted. It is that serious. So a warning—unless you are trained and qualified, do not do therapy!

Now, does the coaching process bringing healing and renewal to people's lives? Of course. It has a very strong therapeutic effect. But so does being a good friend. So does being a good listener! So does being friendly and compassionate. In fact, the more you are a *good human being* with a good heart and good skills of communication—you yourself will be a therapeutic influence on most people. Isn't that great?

Now the *Drop-Down Through Pattern* is *not* a therapy pattern. It is rather a pattern for dealing with the *meanings that get embodied in our neurology and physiology* and how to get them out of the neurological patterning. Now if you get something mind-to-muscle into your neurology, that does not in and of itself make you a therapy patient. Normal people and psychologically healthy people can get things installed in their neurology/ physiology and they may later need to release. That's what this pattern enables you to do.

The fact is that if you repeat any patterning often enough and long enough, you will commission your body to feel the meaning—the *idea* inherent in that patterning. This is what physiology does—it *actualizes*, or at least tries to actualize, what you believe. The meanings that we construct in our mind about ourselves, others, and the world—our bodies try “to make real” (actualize). That's why we say in Neuro-Semantics, a belief is a command to the nervous system.

Take stuttering. That was the issue that Bob and I addressed when we first used this pattern and updated it with what we know about Meta-States and Neuro-Semantics. The mere fact that someone stutters on words and sounds does not mean that the person needs therapy. *The person may just need a better strategy.* Many of the people who stutter are like that. Others do need therapy. They have had numerous traumatic experiences where people rejected them, laughed at them, mocked them, and then they took that experience and built very limiting beliefs about themselves, their identity, their worth and value, their loveability or lack of it, their beliefs about others, about the future, etc. In other words, they traumatized themselves with limiting and even toxic beliefs— and that’s what did the damage to them and within them. So some do need healing. If the person is living in the past, traumatized so that they are not okay, and lack the ego-strength to face it, then yes, they probably need therapy.

But many do not. Many have the ego-strength to face the inadequate strategy about non-fluent speech that they have developed, suspend that strategy, and create a more effective one. They have not, and do not make their speech, a condition of their value as a human being, their self-esteem is intact. And they have many other skills for coping with life, work, relationships, etc. they just have a poor strategy about repeating a letter. Perhaps they have come to fear speaking non-fluently and that fear has been embodied so that it affects their breathing.

Any meaning belief that you repeat long enough will get translated into a physiological patterning. It will get into the body. Now if you discover that it is not useful, it doesn’t empower you, does not make your life better, then how do you get it out of your body? Answer: Use the Drop-Down Through Pattern to release it from the patterning. Then replace it with a more appropriate patterning.

To *coach this pattern*, matter-of-factly ask about what commands and messages the person has sent to his or her body that they now find ineffective and unuseful? Check that they have the ego-strength to face this, that they know that they are more than whatever that inadequate response is, it is just a response, and not “them.” Then use the pattern as you would any pattern that is designed to enable and empower the person to manage one’s mind-body system more effectively. Don’t assume that the pattern will be unpleasant or painful. Don’t act like it is some mysterious therapeutic magic. *Treat it as a communication process.*

“You have sent messages to your body to X (i.e., try not to mis-speak, to speak properly and correctly and never stumble on a letter).” Your body has done a great job in actualizing that message. But now you have over-loaded the articulation of your tongue with so much meaning and you call it ‘stuttering’ and you now find that it is more of a problem than a resource. Well done! Your body works! Your mind works! Your mind-body system works. But now you want it to perform differently. So let’s release the old patterning and then we can begin some new patterning. Ready to go? Great!”

This is coaching attitude— believing in the person and *challenging the person to step up, stretch beyond his or her comfort zone, and access new resources.* Be clear, be precise, be matter-of-fact, pace— pace—pace and then lead to where the client wants a new lease on life.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #14**  
**April 8, 2015**  
**Coaching Patterns Series #3**

## **THE ALLERGY CURE PATTERN**

### ***The Concept***

What is an allergy? What is an allergic response? An allergic response involves the immune system's adaptation as sneezing, coughing, skin reactions, etc. to a non-toxic element such as to the hair of a cat or dog, to springtime pollens, etc. With us humans, we can even develop an allergic response to emotional subjects—such as being criticized, to a certain person, to ideas that do not settle well with us and so on. It's amazing!

Allergy: A hypersensitivity to a substance that causes the body to react to any contact with that substance. Hay fever is an allergic reaction to pollen. An overreaction of the immune system to a previously encountered, ordinarily harmless substance, resulting in skin rash, swelling of mucous membranes, sneezing or wheezing, or other abnormal conditions.

Metaphorically we say that a person has an allergy (adverse sentiment) to hard work, to studying,

Now conceptually, an allergy involves *a mistake in the immune system*. The immune system has associated or learned to treat a non-dangerous substance as if it were an actual threat when in reality, it is not. As a result, our immune system attacks some harmless antigens *as if* that substance is truly dangerous to us. In this conditioning (or connecting of a non-dangerous object with this over-response), the immune system has simply made a mistake in its coding and the cuing of its response. While these mistakes typically happen in the everyday events of life, they can also occur from a psychological trauma. When that's the case, use the Movie Rewind pattern (also wrongly called "the Phobia Cure" pattern or worse, the Visual-Kinesthetic Dissociation pattern) to deal with the trauma, then return to this pattern.

This pattern involves re-educating the immune system so that it stops attacking a non-toxic element and benign substances. This pattern was created by three of the best NLP Trainers in my opinion—Robert Dilts, Tim Hallboam, Susie Smith. For more about this, see the book, *Beliefs: Pathway to Health*. The pattern in this form is in my book, *Source Book of Magic, Volume I*.

The term "allergy" comes from Greek word *allos* for "other." This seems to stand in distinction to "self," to other, to what is not-me, which, of course is the key distinction which the immune system manages.

The immune system recognizes that a particular substance, called an *allergen* (for example, dust, mold, or pollen), might be dangerous. Antibodies, special molecules whose job is to round up the invaders, charge into action. The immune system, however, can overreact, causing some people to be so sensitive to these outside substances that they develop



unpleasant symptoms, such as rashes, runny noses, or even serious illness. People with severe symptoms can get a series of allergy shots that prevent or lessen the allergic reaction by training the immune system to accept the allergen. Oddly enough, many people develop allergies after repeated exposures to an allergen. The difference is that controlled, small exposures through shots prompt the immune system to grow accustomed to the allergen, while accidental, large exposures provoke the allergic reaction. There is a lot that we do not know and much still to learn. The amazing then with this pattern is that it works with one of our deepest nervous systems—the immune system. Amazing also is that fact that this pattern does not work regularly or dependably. Someone well trained can make it work about 50% of the time.

### **Distinctions:**

- Sorting out two things that are very similar like cat hair and dog hair, one to which a person has an allergic response, one which the person does not.
- Detailing very specifically the distinctions within the two very similar cases.
- Facilitating the state of safety and protection to re-inform the immune system that the mistaken item is not threatening or dangerous.

### **Elicitation Question:**

- When and where and to what do you have an inappropriate allergic response?
- 

### **The Pattern**

#### ***1) Calibrate to the allergic responses.***

What does it *feel* like (or sound like, look like, etc.) when you experience the presence of the allergen, that is, the cat hair or whatever the trigger is?

How do you know you have an allergy?

As you ask this question, closely watch the person's physiology, eye accessing cues, breathing, etc. to calibrate to their state and responses. Calibrate to what degree they do or can experience the response *just thinking about it*.

Are you feeling any of it right now? How much? Where? What is that like inside your body for you?

Anchor the allergy response at this point. Test the anchor to make sure you have it anchored. Then you will have it available at other times in the process.

#### ***2) Frame the allergy as a mistake.***

How do you feel when you realize that the immune system can make mistakes and get turned on when nothing in the environment necessitates its response?

In this case, the cat hair (or other trigger) is not dangerous as you know. It's just the case that your immune system has made that mistake and somehow thinks of it as dangerous when actually there is no danger. It has made a mistake about what it needs to attack and what it does not.

How do you feel about us re-teaching or re-train your immune system so that it can learn, quickly, how to function more effectively? Good. Are you ready?

**3) Check for the ecology of your mind-body-emotion system and for secondary gains.**

How would you experience your everyday life if you didn't have this response? [Give time to let the person process this. Remember they may have no words for it.]

What does having this allergy do for you that may have some secondary benefit? [They may not know the answer to this consciously, if so, say, "Go inside and ask, 'Is there any benefit that is derived from this allergy?'" Patient go slow and let the person process.]

What do you receive that's a benefit to you or positive in some way that comes from having this allergy?

**4) Identify and anchor an appropriate counter-example resource.**

What would serve as a good counter-example to this allergy trigger that seems as similar to the allergen as possible and yet one to which your immune system reacts appropriately. For instance, if you are allergic to cat hair, but not to dog hair.

Now imagine yourself now in the presence of this similar agent with which you feel totally safe. Anchor this safety feeling.

**5) Step aside from the trigger to a place of safety.**

For now I would like for you to imagine that right here in front of you is an impenetrable plexiglass shield. It goes from wall to wall and from floor to ceiling so that you can feel perfectly safe. Now while *feeling this* (fire anchor) just imagine seeing yourself over there on the other side of the plexiglass having your immune system functioning appropriately.

As you watch, you can remember that this represents *The You with the effective immune system* which allows you to enter into the presence of allergens without reacting... How's that?

**6) Now introduce the allergen gradually.**

As you watch yourself over there behind the plexiglass shield, let's slowly introduce the allergen that has caused a problem for you. Let the allergen gradually move behind the glass giving your immune system a chance to get used to it.

At this point you will probably see a physiological shift which indicates that the person's immune system has begun to adjust. Now ask the immune system for a signal that it has absorbed the new information. These will be internal visual images, auditory sounds or words, kinesthetic sensations, etc. The response will essentially signal you, "Yes, all right, I've got it. I'll change the notches on my flag so it doesn't match up with any of the T cells I have."

**7) Re-associate to the old trigger for the allergic responses.**

Now as I continue to hold this safety and resource anchor, I want you to simply allow yourself to step into the you, behind the plexiglass and fully experience the allergen that used to create an allergic response for you and don't try to do anything, let's just see what happens.

**8) Calibrate and future pace.**

Do you feel a change in your physiology, eye accessing cues, breathing, etc.?

As you imagine moving into your future with the non-allergic you, what do you see, hear, and feel? How much more resourceful does this make with you?

Now as you imagine a time in the future when you will come into the presence of this allergen that caused a problem and you find has no effect now. Step into several of these times and notice how comfortable you feel.

**9) Test.**

If you can actually test carefully, do so. If not, imagine the allergen and re-calibrate to see that physiology remains changed.

**Meta-Coaches**

What other pattern would you like presented here?

Write to me at [meta@acsol.net](mailto:meta@acsol.net)

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #15**  
**April 15, 2015**  
**Coaching Patterns Series #4**

## **THE PERSONAL DISCIPLINE PATTERN**

“Discipline”—I hear people talk about it a lot. Everyone wishes that they had some more. Everyone also despises it, well okay, not everyone, but probably most people. And what is discipline? The definition I use frames it as one of the most positive and powerful resources a human being could have:

*Discipline* refers to doing what you do regularly, consistently, and orderly so that you are able to follow-through and do what you say and make it happen.

So, do you want to be able to do your best work, performances, and achievements regularly and consistently? Do you want to do that in an orderly way to increase your confidence that you can repeat it anytime and every time that you so chose? Do you want to have the personal self-efficiency to trust that you can and will follow-through on what you say you’re going to do? If so, then we are talking about *discipline*.

Like the term disciple which refers to being a follower of a person (a teacher or master) or a process, that is, someone receiving instruction and learning a way of life or a way of operating in a particular field. The term discipline an refer to training to act in accordance with established rules accustoming to systematic and regular action; a set of drills, a system of rules of conduct or method of practice. What do you want to be disciplined to? A disciple of?

*Sources:* I first put Discipline in the Inside-Out Wealth Manual and this one comes from the training on Productivity.

### **1) Identify the Discipline that you want.**

What is the discipline that you need in order to be productive? In what area or field?  
You will discipline yourself to do what?

### **2) Meta-State with a strong Focus to the discipline.**

If discipline is a matter of focus, how focused or not are you on that discipline?  
How strong or robust is your focus?  
What is the quality of your focus?  
What is the consistency of your focus? Are you able to keep it?  
Does your focus on the discipline oscillate?  
Do you have a strong compelling reason *why* for your focus?

### **3) Add a strong anti-resistance to the discipline.**

What seduction arises to your discipline? How do you handle those seductions?  
What seduces you to let go of your focus? Make it an exception? “Just this time...”  
What is semantically loaded for you which interrupts your focus?  
Do you have the ability to resist it?

“Not now,” “later.” “It’s not a big deal.” “I just do this everyday.”

**4) Add Efficiency to your discipline.**

Do you have an efficient way to get the task done?

What do you need to learn, discover, or understand that will enable you to be more efficient?

What resources do you need to be more efficient?

**5) Use compelling linguistics in your talk about the discipline.**

How do you talk, describe, language the disciplined actions? (Your code for the discipline.)

Any negative words, frames, and/or metaphors that you need to change?

(Hard, painful, work, not free, controlled, etc.)

What would be some fabulous and compellingly rich words by which you can describe the discipline?

**6) Add Effort.**

What do you think of the idea of effort, of extending activity to get something done?

How do you think about sustained effort?

What does it mean to you? Any meanings to eliminate? What meanings to add?

**7) Time-Bind a decision for the activity into your future.**

What decision do you need to make to bind the required activity into your future to fulfill your purpose as you realize your goal?

Are you ready to make a resolution to bind together a segment of future time that's required to realize your purpose?

**8) Add persistence to the discipline.**

*Persistence*, as the ability to sustain effort in pursuing your aims and desires in the face of opposition or difficulty, is obviously critical.

Andrew Carnegie modeled the secret of wealth accumulation of Napoleon Hill:

“A twenty-year research of hundreds of well-known men, many of whom admitted that they had accumulated their vast fortunes through the aid of the Carnegie secret.” (pp. 16-17). “I had the happy privilege of analyzing both Mr. Edison and Mr. Ford, year by year, over a long period of years and therefore, the opportunity to study them at close range, so I speak from actual knowledge when I say that *I found no quality save persistence*, in either of them, that even remotely suggested the major source of their stupendous achievements. . . . persistence, concentration of effort, and definiteness of purpose were the major sources of their achievements.” (p. 164)

Thomas Stanley and William Danko (1996) research in wealth in America:

“*How do you become wealthy?* Here, too, most people have it wrong. It is seldom luck or inheritance or advanced degrees or even intelligence that enables people to amass fortunes. Wealth is more often the result of a lifestyle of hard work, *perseverance*, *planning*, and most of all, *self-discipline*.” (pp. 1-2)

“Those who have cultivated the habit of persistence seem to enjoy insurance against failure. No matter how many times they are defeated, they finally arrive up toward the top of the ladder.” (Napoleon Hill, p. 154)

Do you have the mind-set of persistence? Definiteness of purpose, desire, self-reliance, definite plans, accurate knowledge, cooperation, and habit?

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #16**  
**April 22, 2015**

## **HOW TO WRITE A CLIENT CASE STUDY**

There are several prerequisites for reaching and completing the PCMC credentials. There are the number of paid professional coaching hours, there are the hours of buddy coaching from another Meta-Coaching, and the hours for Self-Coaching. The paperwork for these is minimal, just recording the fact that you completed these. Conversely, the paperwork for the Client Case Study involves more. The ACMC Manual describes in as follows:

Create a document of a case study of 5 to 7 pages (not more than 7 pages) of a client who you coached within a formal Coaching Program for seven or more sessions. Use the following as a checklist for what the content of the document must contain.

- 1) Client details (name and email address) with one line summary of coaching outcome and results.
- 2) Write a description of the presenting situation. What did the client need or want? What concerns or issues were presented? Briefly describe how you contracted for the coaching program (i.e., did you use an Intro. session?).
- 3) Write a description of the outcomes selected for the coaching from the first session. Make sure the description is stated in a way that fits the well-formed outcome pattern.
- 4) Write a description of the overall design of the Coaching Program.
- 5) Write a description of your coaching style and format (i.e., phone, face-to-face, email, etc.).
- 6) Describe your fee structure and schedule.
- 7) Write a summary of each session: kind of conversation you had (clarity, decision, planning, experience, change, etc.), the patterns or processes that you used, overall result of the session, feedback and evaluation given or used, client take-aways, the tasking you co-created, etc.
- 8) Include any evaluations that you obtained from your client.

### **The Art of Writing a Case Study**

Writing a Case Study gives you a chance to step back and take a meta-position to what you experienced with your client and gives you a chance to think through the processes you used and the effectiveness of such. Because of this the thinking and writing process itself provides an excellent way to identify the structures that are there, or were there(!), and the structures that you can tune your eyes and ears for in the next sessions. But what do you write? Here's an answer.

1) *Outcomes*. My client at first said that his outcome was to achieve X. Whatever X is, it will almost always (99% of the time) be vague, general, and frequently ill-formed. So in the first session as you use the 18 Well-Formed Outcome questions along with the checking, clarity, testing, and exploration questions, you will help the client re-formulate what he wants. So identify what that coaching for clarity results in: By the end of session one, my client said he wanted Y. If this shifts

3 or 4 times in the session, write down the succession of outcomes. Because some clients are very unclear about what they want, you could very well do the WFO questions for several sessions.

My client said he wanted to change some beliefs that's holding him back from leadership. I asked, What are those beliefs? He didn't know. I asked, How do you know there are beliefs holding you back from leadership? He didn't know. I clarified "what kind or area of dimension of leadership do you want to step up to?" As we talked about that and we got his goal more grounded, we discovered that he was afraid of conflict, afraid of standing out, afraid his old buddies would think that he's acting superior, etc. I asked what he believed about these areas and we found numerous beliefs that he agreed were limiting.

2) *Processes*. Identify what you did in the sessions. What processes did you use? What Models guided your thinking and interacting? Did you use any particular patterns? If so, how did you come to decide on the given pattern? How did you introduce it to your client? As you used the pattern or process, how did it go? Did you have any troubles with it?

I began with the WFO questions and then used the Testing, Checking, and Clarification questions to specify the limiting beliefs. We then used the Meta-Model questions to describe fully what empowering beliefs would entail. Once we had the first two, I used the Meta-Yes pattern to de-stabilize the old and begin installing the new. His homework was to express the belief and ask 10 confirmation questions for the new belief and 10 disconfirmation questions which would elicit a 'no' for the limiting ones.

3) *Thinking Processes*. If we could peak into your consciousness and follow the line of reasoning which you did to come to the conclusions that you did, what would we see or hear? What was your line of reasoning? What were your premises or assumptions in deciding to do what you did?

Recognizing that my client was mid-way up the scale of being global, and also highly kinesthetic, I realized that things worked best if he would create a ritual for his patterns. So with Meta-Yes and Meta-No — having the belief written on a piece of paper and standing away from it ... and reading the disconfirmation questions, he would access a "no that is not ecological for me, not good for me" and step further away from the limiting belief. We did the opposite with the empowering belief. "How far away does the empowering belief seem to you?" He say 10 meters, so we went there and in the coaching session, I asked the confirmation questions, "Do you want that belief?" With each yes that he felt I would ask, "How much does that pull you toward that belief?" and he would move.

4) *Challenges*. What occurred that challenged you? What surprised you, confused you, or especially delighted you? Did anything upset you? How did you handle whatever it was that occurred?

The first challenge was discovering that he was primarily kinesthetic rather than auditory. I began with the auditory processing, which is my favorite system, but noticed that it did not effect him much. I then tried vision. Finally after we used a kinesthetic process I began hearing all of his kinesthetic predicates, which I had missed before.

5) *Style*. What was your style of operating in the session? What were your states and how did that influence the coaching session? Were you in your best states? Your worst states? If your client described your style in the session, what would your client say? (Yes, you will probably have to

guess.)

My style is more sitting and talking, so with this client I found I had to stretch out of that favorite style. Once he asked if we could go for a walk during the coaching. I really did not want to and resented the first 15 minutes of the walk, but eventually I let it go. I kept reminding myself that I am here in service of the client, not the client is in service of me. It was getting the ego out of the way... and I refreshed that pattern two times to get ready for the session with him.

6) *Tasks.* How did you and your client come up with, identify, and agree upon some tasks that would carry the benefit of the session out into everyday life? How did you introduce the tasking? How did that go over? How much buy-in to the tasking did the client express or demonstrate?

The tasks were easy with him— easiest ever because he was eager to do things and all I had to do was prod him about turning a pattern into a ritual. I learned a lot about co-creating tasks with clients from the sessions with him.

7) *Results.* What resulted during the session and after the session? What states, actions, insights, discoveries, etc.? What did the client say was the best thing in the session? What did the client say was something that you could have done that would have improved things? How did you respond to that feedback?

His original fears about conflict, being thought arrogant, etc. that held him back began to lessen and he began stepping up to take on many of the mentoring activities that his manager had been encouraging him. I introduced the leadership benchmarks to him and we used them to identify specific behaviors. One task was to write them out and put them on his wall in his office so that he would constantly encounter them. After three months, he was asked one day to sit in on a disciplinary case with an under-performing employee and using his genius state of leadership, he later said that it was surprisingly easy to walk through the steps with the man.

8) *Reflections.* What insights or reflections did you have after the session? Did you make any learnings about yourself or what to do in future sessions?

I learned a lot about the importance of representational systems. I have to admit that it was all theory before, but now it was much more real. I learned flexibility in how to use various patterns with different clients. I also examined my own attitude of wanting to do the session the way I wanted to and had over-valued my “style” as if it were sacrosanct.

A Client Case Study offers you a way to analyze your sessions, your way of operating as a Coach, and a way to give feedback to yourself. If you are using the inherent supervision processes that are built into Meta-Coaching, by reporting on some of your sessions at MCF chapter meetings, you can continue that benefit by yourself through the process of writing up Case Study Notes from time to time.



**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #17**  
**April 29, 2015**

## **THE MYSTERIOUS SPACE IN WHICH THEY LIVE, MOVE, AND HAVE THEIR BEING**

It is all around you and yet you cannot see it. It is in every conversation, and yet you mostly do not hear it. That is, you do not see and hear it unless you have been trained to. I'm speaking about what will seem mysterious to those who do not know about it—semantic space.

What is semantic space? It is the physical space in front of and around a person in which that person projects his pictures and representations. It is the physical movements, gestures, and pointing in which she attributes meaning to these actions and their referents. What is normally just space, just movement, and just a gesture becomes *semantic* in nature when a person constructs or responds to such from his or her set of meanings. Now that space is loaded with meaning.

This is not the so-called and falsely called “body language.” There is no such thing as “body language.” The body does not have a “language.” How you use your body, how you hold yourself, the posture you adopt, the movements you make, the gestures, etc. *mean* nothing apart from the *meanings that you attribute to them*. And mostly, you do not do this consciously. And yet in a patterned and structured way, you move and point in ways that reflect your internal meanings. When you do, you create and express your *semantic space*.

In NLP, the language we use for this is “anchoring.” *We set an anchor* by using a gesture, by pointing, by looking in a certain area, by moving, etc. when we say something and then attempt to demonstrate it via the way we use our body. Now, of course, if you don't know that this is semantic space, then it will all be invisible to you. You will not see it at all.

Conversely, once you know that people using language and systemically moving and gesturing creates semantic space, then you will be able to see it everywhere. When this happens, it will be like learning the secret code of communication that will enable you to see so much more than you have ever seen before. Once you do learn to “see” it, you will find that every client will be consistent and methodical about their semantic space. Their internal pictures and where they put things, to their right or left, above or below, near or far, and so on —becomes a structure that they project onto the outside world. And because of this, we have the Time-Line Model and the Social Panorama of NLP. And who knows what further models will be developed using this concept. [That is the *Time* and *Others* matrices have been further developed using this, what about the other matrices?]

This is the landscape of their semantic world in which they live. What they project and express on the outside reflects what's inside. So as a Meta-Coach, if you use this, it will create rapport with people. And not seeing it and/or ignoring it will often break rapport. The person will feel un-seen and not understood. Now when you do begin to see it, you can also begin to bring it into that

person's awareness and facilitate them becoming mindful of it. Now, why would you want to do that? Because their semantic space may be ill-designed and actually undermining their effectiveness.

Just as a person can construct a time-line orientation so that his past is in front of him and in the way of his future and so creating a limiting perspective and be unaware of that, so others can construct other features of their semantic space that creates other limitations and be totally unaware of it. This is where your ability, as a Meta-Coach, to see, identify, mirror back, and then invite awareness about its effect and choice about what to do, provides a tremendous gift to your client. This actually is one of the PCMC skills— Re-ordering, restructuring a client's semantic space.

Working with a person's semantic space can accelerate the discover process of coaching, identifying what exists in a person's world, how that world works, and what is missing. And in this, people construct the craziest things. They might have their enemies close to them so that they then feel threatened and stressed. They may have a barrier in their way. They may code their life-space as a dark room that they wonder what else is there and not know and then wonder why they feel like they are "shooting in the dark."

Metaphors provide a great way to listen for semantic space. As we do with so many things in NLP, contemplate the possibly that a person's description is not metaphorical, but a literal description of their internal world. It may not be, but contemplating that possibility gives you a new way and a second way to listen to people.

"You say you have felt all your life that you are living in a valley and don't have a larger perspective of life. So where is the valley? And where are the mountains that create this valley? And when you move up to the top, what do you see?"

There is a mysterious space in which all of us "live and move and have our being." In Neuro-Semantics, we call this space—semantic space. Lots of things live there. Your sense of time is there. Your social world (panorama) is there. In it you have beliefs and values. In it you sometimes mime activities and processes. Sometimes you choreograph a drama that you have experienced or that you are creating. In it you put things and concepts. You may put the direction that you are going. You may put authority figures in a particular place. You may have a place for where those who have passed on are. The choices are as endless as the experiences that we humans can have.

This internal landscape that's being every moment experienced and expressed into the outside world is a process of communication and of a person's psycho-logics. It is present and it is dynamic. And all you have to do is train your own sensitivity to it. And when all of us do this and we finally get international attention, semantic space will be the key expression and we can retire "body language." May that day soon come.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #18**  
**May 4, 2015**

## **ACMC— THE BEST EVER**

*The ACMC we just finished in Oslo Norway is overall **the very best yet.*** That is saying a lot and I certain am not saying it lightly. This was the 72<sup>nd</sup> ACMC since 2002 and while we have had excellent teams or excellent presentations, or excellent results, typically the excellence has been in one facet of *Coaching Mastery* and not all of them simultaneously. We have had much more skilled teams in terms of ability to benchmark, but we have never had a team more unified and collaborative. So with three Meta-Coach Trainers present (myself, Femke, and Lene), each of us having attended a great many *Coaching Mastery programs*, we unanimously agreed that this was the best.

- Why did we come to that conclusion?
- What criteria did we use in making that evaluation?
- And what happened there that made it *the best ever*?

### ***Preparation:***

Several things came together to make this the best. First was *the preparation* that Lene Fjellheim and CoachTeam put people through in order for them to get to ACMC. I also hope that Lene will follow up by writing in more detail about this to the Trainers egroup. Lene organized CoachTeam to include *Coaching Mastery* as Section III of four sections. So the preparation includes the entire NLP Practitioner and Master Practitioner. That means all of the participants are well trained in the full NLP Communication Model. So while we set up the “fast track” of *Coaching Essentials and Coaching Genius* for those new to NLP, sadly that has become the norm rather than the exception.

But wait, there’s more. Lene also runs a Preparation Day for Coaching Mastery. People come together and are given information to help them better anticipate and prepare for ACMC. What this means for *Coaching Mastery* is that we have a higher level of quality in the participants. Consequently they ask better questions, deeper questions, and they are much more ready and able to use the patterns and enter into a dialogue conversation. There’s another thing: Lene and her CoachTeam associates also demonstrate a high level *collaborative leadership*. The way they run their business is a living example of the collaboration that we talk about in Neuro-Semantics. So when the training began, things ran smoothly with almost no bumps in spite of several challenges.

### ***The Assist Team***

At the end of the training, I had to admit that this also was *the best Assist Team ever*. For me, this was amazing. I did not expect it. I did not expect it because it was for the most part a young and inexperienced team. Only a couple had been on the team before. Only a few had benchmarked before, so I did not expect that this team would be the best ever—not at all. Yet in the two days of training, the sessions involved—content wise—the deepest. The sessions were exceptionally real and authentic. No one held back. Everyone stepped forward and upward in terms of authenticity. And, while this would normally lead to a mood of seriousness, it did not. What we had in the team

from day one was lots of laughter and fun— *lots!* And the fun continued. We laughed long and hard in so many of our sessions.

Now you would think this might lead to people not taking their tasks serious and so slack off. And with previous teams, this has happened. But not here. The team of 16 was one of the most active and committed teams ever. No one had to be reminded of what to do. Everyone was absolutely eager to step in and pull his or her part. I was impressed. On the last day we rehearsed the Inspiration Presentations for the Graduation. Then when Graduation came— every single one of them was *on point* and effectively presented their inspiration. That made it the best Graduation ever. Of course, it didn't hurt that CoachTeam set up tables with candles and champion on each table to set the tone for the evening.

I also have to complement the team for the incredible way they took feedback— completely open and receptive. Each showed a very high level for feedback and I think that was transferred to their groups and coaching sessions. Who was on this fabulous team?

**From Norway:**

Ann Cathrin Hansen	Ann Lovis Haanes	Birgitta Vikstrom	Erica Grunnevoll
Jeanette Sleveland	Marga Dijkman	Nils Petter Olsen	

**International:**

Per Hed (Sweden)	Raquel Couto (Brazil)	Sandra Starkey (South Africa/ UK)
Holli Hanson (USA)	Shawn Dwyer (Australia)	Jaco Fourie (South Africa / Ireland)
Henrik Schalen (Sweden)		

***Business Project of the Teams***

For years I have felt that the Business Project was the part of Coaching Mastery that was the most misunderstood and not done very well. I have taken responsibility for that and have sought to fix it. In the past year, I have reformulated the project. Now participants and teams start with the instructions for the Business Project (page 91) and a two-page worksheet to fill out. This time the teams were mostly on target as were their presentations. One team wrote an Executive Summary that was so good, we will be using it as a great example. That's saying a lot!

***Co-Trainer, Femke Mortimore*** (formally Stuut)

Femke is now "with child" and had to step out for an hour or two nap each afternoon of the Boot Camp. Yet when she was there, she was *on* and at the top of her game. We never once conferred to decide what we would do or who would do what. Everything was decided and performed in the moment on the stage ... and yet you would never have known it. You would have thought that we had spent hours planning. That's how knowledgeable and skilled Femke is— ready to pick up the theme at any moment and run with it. And not only run with it, but deepen the subject! That's the result of doing so many APGs and of running your programs on benchmarking and preparing APMC people for the next level. Femke did absolutely fantastic and can easily carry on the quality of APMC training in the years to come.

So putting all of this together—it was not only an excellent *Coaching Mastery* Boot Camp, but the best ever. And next year, Lene and Femke will be repeating this with most of the same team and this will be the only place where we will have *Coaching Mastery* in Europe in 2016. It will be limited to 45 max— just in case you're interested.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #19**  
**May 13, 2015**

Last week I forgot to include Dr. Henrik Schalen (Sweden) as part of the Assist Team in Norway. How could I have forgotten Henrik? He was a key person bringing laughter and authenticity to our group.

## **HOW DO ALL THE MODELS FIT TOGETHER?**

*How do all of the Meta-Coaching Models fit together?* Have you wondered about this question recently, like during the past few hours? Or during the last day or two? This is one of the questions that was sent to me to address here on the Coaches' Egroup. I get this question frequently during ACMC. Often by PCMC most people have this one figured out. Here is part of the answer.

The answer goes to Day 1 of ACMC, and in fact, to the first hour. That's when the Meta-Coach Trainer identifies *the seven things that coaching is*— and the seven models that address those seven operations of coaching. Together the models explicate how the coaching operations work to facilitate the client's goals and development. For more about that, see pages 23-24 for "The Meta-Coaching Models."

Since coaching is essentially *a conversation*, all of the Meta-Coaching models came together to detail the communication process.

- *NLP Communication* establishes the basis and essential features of communication.
- *Meta-States* deepens the communication by getting to the meta-framework of it.
- *Meta-Programs* identifies the solidified meta-states that are now the person's perceptual filters.
- *Matrix* describes the communication processes in terms of the system loops as information enters and energy exits the mind-body system.
- *Axes of Change* uses the mechanisms of communication change.
- *Benchmarking* connects conceptual communication of meaning to behavioral expressions so the communication transfers from mind to action which we can then measure.
- *Self-Actualization Quadrants* wed meaning and performance into a synergy that integrates both so it optimally flourishes.
- *Facilitation* wed the compassion with challenge synergy to enable all of the operational functions in the communication process.

Therefore with regard to the basic *Coaching Conversations*— you can now see how each model enables you to facilitate those conversations:

- For the *Clarity* conversation, use *NLP's Meta-Model* and Well-Formed Outcome pattern and/or use the meta-questions of *the Meta-States Model*.

- For the *Decision* conversation, use Axis 2 of *The Axes of Change*.
- For the *Planning* conversation, use the Well-Formed Outcome pattern as well as any NLP Creativity pattern.
- For the *Resourcing or Experiencing* conversation, use any of the 300-plus NLP and Neuro-Semantic patterns, or use *The Matrix Model* to customize a matrix for the desired experience. Also use the *Self-Actualization Quadrants* to specify the meaning to be performed or the performance to be enriched by meaning.
- For the *Change* conversation, use the *Axes of Change Model* or use the *Crucible Change Model*. Or use the *Self-Actualization Quadrants* unleashed pattern to identify what to be unleashed from and unleashed to.
- For the *Confrontation* conversation, use the synergy of the *Facilitation Model*, the testing questions, and the patterns dealing with either incongruency or blind-spots.
- For the *Mediation* conversation, use the conflict resolution patterns of NLP and Neuro-Semantics, the Meta-Model questions, the meta-questions.

To supplement this, here is an overview description of the eight models—their source and how they interact in coaching.

**The NLP Communication Model.** The model which ties all eight of the Meta-Coaching models together is the NLP Communication Model. After all, they all originated from the basic NLP Communication model. Coming together from Bateson, Korzybski, and Miller, the NLP model began with looking at expert communicators and seeking to understand their performance excellence. They talked and people changed. “How does that work?”

They stumbled upon the answer. They just so happened to use the Transformational Grammar model to understand the language of people; they just so happened to find the representational systems in Perls and Satir’s work; they just so happened to use Miller and his associates work in the new developed Cognitive Psychology Revolution; and they just so happened to stumble upon quotes from Korzybski and his use of the phrases “neuro-linguistic” and “neuro-semantic.” When all of that came together, they found themselves with the basic NLP Communication Model explains how people mentally “map” a model of the world which induces one into various states and use then the same to communicate to others.

**The Benchmarking Model** came directly from the Meta-Model in de-nominalizing and detailing more specific descriptions of the activities (actions) that people engage in. It arose as we sought to figure out a way to identify the evidence of the coaching skills— Listening, Supporting, Questioning, etc. Where does this fit in the Meta-Coaching System? We use it to create sensory measures for a desired experience (like leadership) and then give feedback to that goal.

**The Meta-States Model** was my attempt to model the experience of Resilience. That goes back to the modeling project that I took on from 1991 to 1994 and to an in-depth exploration into Bateson’s and Korzybski’s work about reflexivity. From that I realized that NLP had only modeled the representational mind and not the mind’s reflexive consciousness. I contributed that to the NLP model in 1994. Where do we put the Meta-States Model in Meta-Coaching? It is inside of the NLP

Communication Model detailing *the meta-move, the meta-cognition* that we do when we think/feel *about* previous thoughts-and-emotions. Meta-States deepens one's awareness about what is *behind* and *deep within* representational consciousness. It taps into the layering of the mind with what we call "logical levels" and exposes the realm of beliefs, decisions, identities, permissions, intentions, memories, imaginations, etc.

**The Meta-Programs Model** came earlier (early 1980s from Leslie Cameron Bandler) but had remained just a few "distinctions" (14) until Bob and I put together *Figuring Out People* in 1997. Then also, using the Meta-States model I was able to identify the source of meta-programs as solidified meta-states. No one before or after even attempted to explain the origin of meta-programs. So tapping into the extensive research in the area of Cognitive Psychology, Bob and I were able to expand the 14 meta-programs to over 60. Where do you put Meta-Programs in relation to the other models? They comprise *the kind of thinking* that we use to create our beliefs, decisions, intentions, understandings, etc. they are deep inside the NLP Communication Model.

**The Axes of Change Model.** Then using these four models (NLP, Meta-States, Benchmarking, and Meta-Programs) I modeled the experience of *generative change* in contrast to therapeutic or remedial change. From the beginning, NLP had talked about generative change and compared it to remedial, but no one had modeled the difference. I had the privilege of doing that when I modeled the first expert coaches of Meta-Coaching. That resulted in The Axes of Change Model which uses four meta-programs: motivation (toward, away from), response (reflective, active), reference (internal, external), relationship (match for sameness, mismatch for difference) and four change mechanisms (motivation, decision, creativity, integration). Where do we put the Axes of Change in the Meta-Coaching System? It goes to the structure of the Change Conversation as well as to the Motivation Conversation, the Decision, the Creativity, the Integration Conversation.

**The Matrix Model** arose primarily from the Meta-States model of key meta-level phenomenon (meaning, intention, self, power, others, time, and world) and how they are embodied in the NLP distinction of state. This arose also from the key distinctions in Phenomenology [I plan to share this in some coming articles and in the third-edition of the Matrix Model.]. Within the Matrix Model is the NLP idea of frames (Bateson) and how we construct our meanings of reality and "never leave home without them." Where do you put the Matrix Model in Meta-Coaching? It can be used as a model of any and every experience which we model as we ask meta-questions and the Meta-Model grounding questions. Doing so obtains the strategy process for how the person has created the experience.

**The Meaning—Performance Model** with the resulting Self-Actualization Quadrants. This arose as I began my anticipated one-month study (!) of Self-Actualization in 2003. Yet what started as a quick study extended for a decade. I was able to model the self-actualizing research of Maslow and Rogers in 2005 with the Meaning—Performance Axes and how self-actualizing people are able to make their dreams (meanings) real (actual) via their actions (performances) as they synergize the two. This model entails NLP, Meta-States, and the Matrix. Where do we put it in Meta-Coaching? In all of the conversations getting to a client's understandings and beliefs about the experiences (performances) that a person wants (hence the Well-Formed Outcome questions and the SCORE

model that sets out the strategy from Now (present state) to Then (desired state). And in all of the Conversations wherein a client wants to actualize a particular idea.

**The Facilitation Model** is based directly on the Meaning—Performance Axes and answers the questions, “What does a client want from a coach and from the coaching?” The answer was modeled from Graham Richardson and others, *compassionate challenging*. So on the meaning axis is compassion— a coach and a coaching process that compassionately cares and makes the encounter safe. Then on the performance axis— a coach and a coaching process that gets a person into action, challenges to step up, and not allow the person to sell him or herself short. Where do we put the Facilitation Model in Meta-Coaching? It is inside of every *process* that we facilitate: communicating, changing, grounding, learning, unleashing, embodying, etc.



**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #20**  
**May 20, 2015**

## **HOLDING A 3-WAY CONVERSATION**

Managers within organizations often invite coaches to come in for the purpose of coaching someone who that manager believes needs coaching. The manager may think that person is a high potential and needs to be coached for the next higher level job or be groomed for leadership. Equally the manager may think the person is under-performing or actually unqualified and needs to be coached to deal with such. In other instances, a manager may actually want to get rid of the person, fire him, but doesn't have the courage to do so. Regardless of the reason, the manager ends up inviting a coach into her organization for the purpose of coaching a client who may or may not want it.

How should a coach approach this situation? How does a skilled and professional coach handle such situations? Around the world the answer is to hold a *three-way conversation*. This is the conversation between three people: the sponsor of the coaching, the client of the coaching, and the coach. This, however, is actually the second conversation. The first one occurs privately between the manager and the coach about someone which the manager thinks needs coaching. The manager explains the situation and asks the coach what he or she thinks about coaching the person.

The danger point with this conversation is that it is one person's perspective and the truth value could lie anywhere along the continuum from completely biased and mis-informed and untrue to completely accurate and based on evidence. As a coach, you have to be careful here because you could indiscriminately accept the manager's frame and descriptions. Then you would become the manager's clone as it were and not even looking for or asking if the situation could be different from the description.

This is where the three-way conversation comes in. The design of this meeting is to find out the facts of the situation and to see if there is a situation where coaching would be an appropriate response. The purpose of this conversation is to explore the possibilities of coaching, to determine the objective of the coaching if it is relevant and appropriate, to identify what the coaching would be about, to establish an agreed-upon contract between the parties, etc. For the exploration meeting, the manager would probably set the frame for the meeting:

“This meeting is to see if coaching would be an appropriate choice in this situation, and if so, the particular conditions of the coaching.”

At this point, several things could result.

- 1) Ideally, the client will agree to be coached for the purpose of reaching the outcomes as stated by the sponsor. The client may be excited about the prospects of the coaching and even suggest additional other goals for the coaching that will serve both the organization and the person.

2) The client may accept the objectives while still not really choosing them. The client accepts them and is okay with them. The buy-in by the client here is not one of excitement but occurs for the purpose of being a good team player. Rather than involving a deep buy-in, it is a surface one.

3) The client does not buy-in to the objects set forth by the manager, does not want to work on those outcomes, feels resistant to it. He says he doesn't agree with the manager's perspective and does not want to be coached to the objectives set forth.

In this third case, there are probably hidden agendas at work. Perhaps the sponsor doesn't know what to do, may be incompetent in challenging people or confronting their reports and so escapes his responsibilities as a manager by bringing the coach in. In this case the person who actually needs to be coached is the manager! Here the opportunity is to help the manager see the value of being coached on managing, confrontation, dealing with and resolving conflict, and dealing effectively with people.

Or perhaps what's really going on is that the sponsor wants to fire the client and so has invited the coach into the organization to use the coach to provide him or her reasons that legitimize firing the person. This is the most dangerous position for the coach. If a manager is using you to justify the firing of a person, then you are being used as "the hatchet man." Again, the manager is shirking his or her responsibilities and tasks and shifting it to the coach. This is not a true coaching context and should not be accepted.

How then do you flush out the hidden agendas and find the real reason for you being called in? One suggestion is to get the manager to add to your contract — which the manager will sign on behalf of the organization: "Person X who Coach Y is being contracted to coach is not under threat of being fired and will not be fired during the next 6 months." Getting a commitment from the person sponsoring the coaching and the organization that the coaching client will not be fired will help to avoid this problem. I know of two cases where the manager refused this and consequently so did the coach which then led the manager to say, what am I to do? The coach suggested coaching for the manager for developing his understanding and skills in effective management, and the original problem went away.

Be at least a little bit suspicious when a sponsor wants you to coach someone else for a problem between that sponsor and that client. Wonder you is the real client and use that wonder to ask lots of questions to challenge the idea that the manager would have no role at all in the client's responses. Call for a three-way meeting and use all of your Meta-Coaching skills in that meeting. Ask what the sponsor wants for the client, if the client wants what is being suggested, what the client does want, agree upon external KPI for the program, and then set up total confidentiality for what happens *inside the coaching sessions*. That's not for the sponsor, only the external behaviors that the sponsor wants from the client. Your clarity in these matters will determine your success.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #21**  
**May 27, 2015**

## **CATCHING COACHABLE MOMENTS**

There are moments when you are coaching when the client will be highly coachable. We call those moments— *coachable moments*. And the skill you need is to be able to recognize them, catch them, and respond to them effectively. Do you know how to do that? Are you able to recognize them *in the moment* rather than recognize them later when you are reflecting on the coaching conversation?

The obvious moment is the where the client has a sudden *Aha!* and in that peak experience shouts *Eureka! Now I Understand!* That's obvious. Immediately ask them, "What do you have? What are you just now aware of?" And when you do, be as excited as your client, match her energy and enthusiasm (otherwise you might kill it) and be ready to celebrate the insight with the person.

The not-so-obvious moment may be a *moment of tension and pressure*. When you notice that a client is struggling to say something or struggling with some bodily tension and pressure— get ready to step into an anticipation state and to wonder, really wonder, about what's happening. In a significant conversation, there will be the tension of the person's energy as mentally and emotionally they are experiencing something and perhaps attempting to express what he is experiencing. And the tension that then shows up in the body could be either positive or negative. It could be anger, frustration, uncertainty, stress, confusion, joy, delight, anticipation, etc. Whatever it is, let it arise and just be with it.

*Just being with the client's state*, whatever it is, gives space to allow it to be. This is what we call creating and holding a crucible space. You become a crucible for your client. Then whatever she needs to bring to the table, she can. Then whatever he needs to express and deal with, he can. At this point, you, in fact, may say nothing. You may just hold the space in silence while you hold eye contact and nod and indicate with your countenance that it is okay and you are there. Present.

Now if you want to spoil this moment, feel anxious that you need to fix it. That's a great way to mess it up and miss the moment. Remind yourself that whatever your client is experiencing, positive or negative, is *just human stuff*. And it is not only okay, it is great. It is a *human experience* and if it is present—it could be the very thing that most of all needs to be addressed. So put yourself into a state of care and compassion, a state of wonder and curiosity, a state of assuming nothing, and then just offer yourself and your presence to your client. This is the time, most of all, for sacred listening.

Now the tension that you are picking up and/or that the client is experiencing could be emotional tension, physical tension, mental tension or a combination. It indicates that the person's system (mind-body-emotion system) is activated and that some meaning has mobilized it. But what meaning? How much mobilization? What has been activated? What does the client feel like doing? All of these curious questions enable you, as the coach, to begin exploring with the client for

discovering the frames about the activation, the context, the triggers, and how the system is constructed. Now you are at the place of *the coachable moment*.

Tension then is a client's system calling to you. What you need is the skill for *listening for the tension*. At that moment, begin exploring:

What tension or stress are you feeling? Where is it in your body or mind? How intense is it? What's creating it? What are the contributing factors? Is this familiar? Have you felt this before? When and where? What do you believe that's activating this? Let's say that's true, so what? What would that mean to you? What else are you aware of? What's the worst case scenario? What's the best case?

One characteristic of a coachable moment is that the client suddenly becomes aware and open to himself. He notices something and as you does, he becomes transparent. He, as it were, steps out from behind his personas, masks, roles, etc. and becomes real. Suddenly, *the real person appears*. Now this often will actually frighten the person especially if *being real* is not a common experience for the client. She will fear it. He might even despise it. This is where holding the crucible space becomes even more critical:

“Thank you for this disclosure. I mean it, now you are becoming real. So thank you. And I want you to know that the disclosure is safe with me and confidential here in this coaching session. ... [pause] So how are you going? What else are you experiencing?”

Holding the space obviously means using silence and being in a state of care and compassion, yet it involves more. It also means setting frames with and for the client to validate his experience.

“Opening up to this means that you are a real live human being and this is a very important step toward actualizing your highest values and meanings and your best performances. You may be tempted to think of this as a weakness or a problem, it is actually your strength, it makes you human. It's nothing to be ashamed of, it is just something to accept (or appreciate).”

“Thank you for these tears, we have touched something real and something significant, so thank you. This means we are close to an issue that needs addressing. Tell me, what kind of tears are these? Tears of sadness, or joy, or discovery, or relief, or what?”

When we coach, coaching becomes real and powerful when we have those coaching moments when suddenly the human being shows up. When they do, the coaching conversation gets deep and significant. Then you get to see transformation in the raw. May you see and enjoy many coachable moments in your coaching.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #22**  
**June 3, 2015**

## COACHING INTENTIONALITY

Over the past 15 days, I have heard many of the new Trainers present *The Intentionality Pattern* of APG. In the beginning I presented the Psychology of Intentionality in the first three days during the presentation of The Psychology of APG. Then those who got the Intentionality pattern as their pattern would present it repeatedly until Days 11 and 12 when they do their final 30-minute presentation. In the process, I would often step in to assist with giving feedback about the pattern—its structure and format, its meaning, and how to effectively train it.

Now to effectively train or coach this pattern begins with setting the frame that human consciousness has two dimensions: attention and intention. Attention we share with the animals. They live attentionally. So do small children. And living solely in *the attention dimension of awareness* means that one is easily and highly triggered by anything that can grab one's attention. This means anything that is bright, loud, dramatic, moving, surprising, intense, etc. People who live in that dimension can in fact become highly sensitive to sensory input and if they access a higher vigilant state— can have so many attentions that an observing psychologist might say that the person is suffering from ADD or AHDD. But that's not true. There's no deficiency of attentions— there is in fact too many attentions. What's deficient is intentionality.

Intention is the dimension that enables us to truly live humanly. Intention enables us to transcend attentions and operate from our highest values and visions. When a person *knows* that something is important but *does not feel* that it is important, he will want and wish to do something, but will not be able to force his attentions to keep attending it. He *knows*, but does not *feel*, and so fights to control his attentions, and usually without success. This is the elicitation question of the pattern. “What do you *know* is important, and at some level you want to do it, because it is important, but when you attempt to *do* it, you find your attentions going elsewhere? It is as if you have ADD.”

If *attention* is what is “on your mind,” then *intention* is what is “in the back of your mind” as your purpose. And yet, as the old saying goes, “The pathway to hell is paved with good intentions.” So *intentions* alone is not the solution. It may be part of the solution, but merely having good intentions is insufficient. What then is sufficient? What is the solution?

The Neuro-Semantic solution is to synergize your attentions to your highest intentions so that you set a self-organizing attractor. Then, “Energy will go where attention goes as you direct it by your intentions.” So how do we do that? Simple. Ground the situation where your attentions are not focusing with laser-beam focus. Then access *the importance* of that situation. Then, *holding the importance frame*, keep moving up, level upon level, until you reach a high level intention that has a great deal of “energy” (emotional intensity of the feel of importance). Then, step in and fully experience that state.

From that high level *state of felt importance* then you can meta-state your grounding situation with it. To do that, be with the state. Enter into it. Feel it and then when you are ready, and only when you are ready, open your eyes and see that activity *from the state of felt importance*. As you do, notice how the intentionality of your felt importance *changes* your attentions and gets your attentions to do service for your intentions. With that linkage, then confirm it, future pace it, and get the person to lock it in with a decision.

Doing this is *coaching intentionality*. Do be aware—when a human being becomes intentional, she becomes purposeful and moves out into life with a focus and force that enables her to make things happen. It's a powerful state.

The intentionality of this pattern is *vertical intentionality*. You are inviting a person upward to the person's values. You are enabling him to get his *whys*—“Why is that important?” And when he gets his biggest why, he will have created a meaningfulness that will give him the power to focus as never before.

This is *not* the horizontal intentionality. That would be a goal-striving type of intention where a person is focusing on an outcome, on results, on objectives. This is one way this pattern can be misused. If the person gives you “the why of outcome,” that is, what he would get in the outside world if he does what he knows is important, you have only gotten a very low-level why and a why of outcome, rather than a why of importance. Notice. Question yourself: “Is this answer the why of outcome or the why of importance?” “Has the person given me a value or a result?” If a result, accept it and ask “why is that result important?” The key to this pattern is going up with the *vertical intentions*.

Having seen this confusion in several of the new trainers and having corrected the confusion a number of times I realized that the meta-program of *how* drives some people to the outside, to the practical results. This is fine. But it distorts this pattern. Here you need the meta-program of *why*. “Why is that important to you?”

I hope you are coaching intentionality — if so, here are a few critical distinctions about how to coach it effectively.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #23**  
**June 10, 2015**

## **HOLDING A FRAME WHILE COACHING**

Because Neuro-Semantics focuses on meaning, the meaning-making powers of a human being, quality controlling how we construct meaning by asking precision questions and meta-questions, and by checking for cognitive distortions and biases, *the subject of meaning is central is everything we do*. We also know that because *meaning* does not exist *outside* of us, we know that meaning is an inside-job. It comes from the inside and as it does it shows up in our neurology and physiology as our emotions and physiological states. That's what an *emotion* is, the feeling of meaning in our body.

We also know that much of our meaning-making as well as the meanings that we construct and live by are outside-of-conscious awareness. Meanings that we have communicated (intentionally or unintentionally) get *embodied* so that they show up in our bodies. Meanings that we create or adopt can also get installed as our mental-and-emotional *frames of reference*. These are almost always outside-of-conscious awareness. These frames-of-reference describe the mental or understanding contexts that we assume in order to make sense of things. We call them assumptions, premises, and presuppositions. In short we call them *frames*.

The original understanding about *frames* came from Gregory Bateson. I don't know anyone who has single-handedly introduced the idea of frames more than Bateson, and so from Bateson has come framing and reframing. From the Mental Research Institute (MRI) and the group of original thinkers—Don Jackson, Jay Haley, Paul Watzlawick, Bill O'Hanlon, John Weakland, Richard Fisch and others, Bateson was the person who led these men (there were no woman in the original group) to develop Ericksonian therapy, Brief Psychotherapy, NLP, and other fields. From this came the NLP book on *Reframing* (1985) and what was originally called “the Sleight of Mouth” patterns—which we call *Mind-Lines* (1997).

Today in Meta-Coaching, the communication skill of framing is central. It is indeed the first advanced skill required for the PCMC level. It is in framing that you “set the frame that enables a client to more effectively discover himself, reach her goals, refine his meanings, and unleash her potentials. Further, there are numerous facets of *framing*. You can:

- *Pre-frame* as you set the mental contexts for understanding and experiencing in the coaching session.
- *De-frame* as you take apart words or experiences that undermine a person's resources.
- *Reframe* from a meaning that limits to one that enhances and empowers.
- *Post-frame* so a client thinks consequently about decisions and directions.
- *Outframe* as you invite your client to meta-state himself with beliefs or resources that transforms the experience to serve him.
- *Analogously frame* to less directly offer insights, changes, or resources.

- *Counter-frame* to challenge and confront a client with the congruency of a meaning.

And there's more! Lots more. You can set a *relevance frame*, a *preventive frame* (to prevent misunderstandings), a *time frame*, an *overview frame*, a *belief frame*, *identity frame*, *decision frame*, and on and on. If you want a whole book on this subject—read *Mind-Lines* as well as *Winning the Inner Game*.

### **Can You Hold a Frame While Coaching?**

A frame is an interpretative schema or a mental context which enables a person to understand something. The easiest way to set a frame is by stating something which provides the other with knowing how to interpret something.

- “I’m going to interrupt you frequently because I’m listening to the premises and assumptions behind your words which may be creating interferences for you in achieving your goals.”
- “Yes, I’m smiling, that’s because I am about to invite you to step back and enjoy the silliness of a belief that has been problematic to you earning money, are you ready for this?”

To hold the frame is simply to repeat the words that you have given which define the way (or style) for interpreting something. And why *hold* the frame? Because we all can so easily get caught up in content. And when we do, the new frames will slip away from our awareness. So we *repeat the frame* in order to *hold* it in mind. Otherwise clients will lose frame and forget what you are seeking to do in the coaching conversation. Some of them will get distracted, others will keep interrupting themselves, others will chase rabbits.

In a way similar to how you might “refresh the screen” on your computer, *holding a frame with your client* helps to keep the context fresh so that you and your client know where you are and why. This is especially important if the new frame is very different from the person’s typical frame of mind. Your client might even ask you, “Now what was that frame?” It can be easy to forget when it’s that new.

But what if you can’t hold the frame? What would be in the way if that happens? Probably a previous inner commitment in you or in your client which will not let the new frame stick. This happens when you introduce a frame that directly contradicts the old frame. It happens when there’s a next-higher level frame that prevents the validity of the frame. Then you have to enter into the old matrix of frames and expose the operational assumptions.



**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #24**  
**June 17, 2015**

## **IS IT TIME TO RESET THE COACHING SESSION?**

Have you ever begun a coaching conversation with client and you just sensed that something was wrong? Or perhaps you began, and then the direction which the conversation took, for whatever reason, it was just wrong. It was off-track and you may or may not know how it got off. So what do you do if you start off wrong or get off-track? What then?

Or what if you have been going for five to ten minutes, and your client gets irritated with you or with the session? What if he gets upset and frustrated with the coaching and let's you know that it is just not working? What then?

The answer for you as a Meta-Coach is to *Reset*. Sometimes either you or your client, or both of you, may simply not be in the right state when you began and things just don't get off to the kind of start that you want and need as a professional Coach. Sometimes the conversations that either you or your client had prior to beginning the coaching session was not separated clearly enough from life-before-the-session, and so that previous life, as it were, contaminated the coaching conversation.

Whatever the cause or reason, *just take a moment— a meta-moment and do a restart*. You can do that by saying something like:

- “This conversation doesn't seem to be the conversation that I want or that you want, what do you say we start over? Would you like to start over? Then let's do that. [Standing and reaching out one's hand] ‘Hello! I want to welcome you to your Coaching Session today—one that I hope will be a great conversation, full of insights and transformations. Are you ready?’”
- “Things don't seem to be jelling—the chemistry between us seems to be off today. Could we start again? I'd like to do that so that you can have the highest quality coaching session that I could possibly delight you with.”
- “It looks like what I'm doing in this coaching session is not working. You said you're frustrated. So if you will, let me reset things so that they will be more suitable for you.”

I was supervising a coaching session a few months ago and about five minutes into the session, I interrupt the coach asking him about where he was with his client and what he was intending to do. A minute later I interrupted again and asked, “Do you really want your client to answer *that* question?” Then I paused. He said, “No I don't. ... but what am I to do? How do I take that back?” Noticing that the client seemed really irritated and in a state of annoyance or frustration, I asked the client if the session was going in a way that he wanted it to. “No, it is not.” was the terse answer spoken with a lot of tension in the throat. “Would you like to start all over and get a better start?” The question seemed to surprise the client. “We can do that?!” “Yes, of course.”

I then asked both to stand, shake off their state, asked if they liked strawberry or chocolate ice cream better and if they ever put ice cream down their shirt or pants ... and asked with a smirk, “wouldn’t that be cold and messy and fun?” With them both smiling at my silliness, I asked them to change chairs with each other. They did and soon they were off to a new beginning— which completely transformed things. A few minutes later I thought, “This conversation is completely different from the first one. The difference is day-and-night.”

To reset a coaching session, simply notice where you are at with your client or where your client is with you and then run some quality control questions about it.

- Is it really working?
- Is it the best you can do as a coach?
- Is the client in his or her best state for coaching?

Then call for a *meta-moment* and introduce these questions to your client to check where he is. If the way the session is going is *not* the way you or your client want them to go— then invite a reset. Simple as that.

Why not? Sometimes we rush into the coaching session and simply do not establish a boundary between where we were before and what we’re doing that’s special and unique in the coaching session. Sometimes we begin to take the coaching session too much for grant and forget that it is “a conversation like none other.” Sometimes we do not have the mindfulness that we need in the coaching conversation.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #25**  
**June 24, 2015**

## **WHEN A COACHING CLIENT SUCCEEDS**

As you well know, we are always benchmarking the skills of coaches. We do that to make sure that they are truly skilled in their knowledge and competency in handling the coaching conversation. In that way we can ensure that the coach will be able to facilitate the coaching processes of self-discovery, change, and self-actualization.

- But what about the client? How do we evaluate a successful client?
- How do we know if the client has truly succeeded in the coaching?
- What is criteria do you use to discover if your client succeeds?

When I was recently asked this, I had to pause. “That’s a great question and one that I have never been asked before!” Then, the more I reflected on that question, the more I realized that lots of clients actually come to coaching and leave coaching without getting a *true coaching outcome*. They may be happy when they leave, but still they were not actually “coached.” They may have afterwards felt more comfortable and pleased with things, but they did not experience actual “coaching.” So let’s explore the criteria that will let us determine if our clients are *actually experiencing “coaching” or if they are getting some cheap substitute*.

First, the cheap substitutes. I just mentioned them. Did you catch them? Peace, comfort, and happiness. If your clients are walking away feeling peace and comfort, you are probably doing counseling, not coaching. And when you do therapy you are not only *not* coaching, you are helping someone find equilibrium and quiet so that whatever fight or conflict or war that’s going on inside of them settles down. Yet when you do therapy and call it “coaching,” you are confusing the boundaries of both professions. If your client need is peace and comfort, send them to a pharmacologist, a hypnotist, a happiness-guru, or a drug dealer. Don’t call what you are doing “coaching.”

*Coaching is essentially about the challenge of self-actualization.* That means your job is to disturb the peace, induce states of discomfort, and aim people for experience and achievement, not happiness. Therapists aim for equilibrium; Coaches aim for disequilibrium. What then is the criteria for *real* coaching?

1) *Deepened Self-Awareness.* The coaching conversation evokes a greater self-awareness in the client. First and foremost, *real* coaching facilitates the client to deepen his understanding of himself and to become more mindfully conscious of his real self. This is no superficial conversation. The coaching conversation involves questions that make the client *think... reflect ... pause ... wonder and become curious about the answer*. So at the end of the session ask, “What did you discover about yourself in the coaching conversation today that you did not know?”

2) *Learning and Meta-Learning*. The coaching conversation enhances the client’s learning, learning state, and ability to learn and meta-learn. That’s what all of the thinking and reflecting leads to— an expansion of the ability to learn, to come up with new ideas, to gain new insights and understandings. So end your sessions with, “What did you learn today?” “What did you learn about yourself?” “What is the best new insight that you gained today?”

3) *Critical Thinking*. The coaching conversation enables the client to do more accurate critical thinking. Learning is not sufficient in itself, the client must learn to do intelligent learning. This means chasing out the cognitive distortions and biases. This means learning how to question one’s thinking and assumptions. It means using the know-nothing state and the skeptic state to identify premises that may be unfounded. We call this critical thinking. So ask your client on her way out, “How much mental energy did you have to exert today in doing critical thinking about yourself and your life?”

4) *Empowerment*. The coaching conversation evokes empowerment in the client. When there is *real* coaching, the client will feel more empowered and less like a victim of circumstances. She will begin taking proactive actions in life which implies that she feels that she is in charge of her life. She first of all discovers her innate personal powers and begins using them. Ask her on her way out, “Do you feel that now you can *do* something which you didn’t think you could do when we began?”

5) *Responsibility*. The coaching conversation facilitates new levels of responsibility. From empowerment comes response-power or response-ability. By enabling the client to feel more at cause to handle the demands of life, you shake him out of his old habits of procrastination, inertia, indecision, etc. now you can ask as he is leaving, “Did you feel in the coaching session that I invited you to be *at cause* for your life?”

6) *Meaningfulness*. The coaching conversation inspired a greater sense of meaningfulness in life and enabled the client to create more enhanced meanings. “Inspiration” here is not just now fuzzy feelings of warmth and kindness. Inspiration means feeling that life is calling you to live up to your potentials. Inspiration is putting spirit into a person so that she will step up to challenges. And this comes from meaning— the understanding and significance that we give to something. And because nothing means anything inherently, and because you are the meaning-maker, anything could be endowed with the richest of meanings. It is a matter of enabling your client to create great meanings? “As you leave today, name three great meanings you have or are creating in your life?”

7) *Challenge*. The coaching conversation challenge the client to step up to become everything she can become. Now we are getting to the heart of things. This is the *heart of coaching— challenge*. This is *the difference* between coaching and therapy. Coaches challenge clients to become the best version of them. They challenge clients to get quiet and listen to their inner voice, to discover their real self. “Did I challenge you sufficiently today? Could I have challenged you more? When and about what?”

Are you ready to benchmark what your clients are actually getting from the coaching. Here are a set of questions that you can begin with. Happy Exploring!

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #26**  
**July 1, 2015**  
**PCMC Level**

## **THE CODE**

When you speak with any human being and carry on a conversation about anything, that person has and uses *a code* that governs his thinking, perceiving, understanding, deciding, etc. As the human race we have always known, well at least for thousands of years, that the code involved words and metaphors. So we listened to the words and metaphors to understand the person's meanings. Later in human history it became common knowledge that people also use visual images. Then with NLP we discovered that the code actually involves all of the person's senses—images, sounds, sensations, even smells and tastes.

With the NLP discovery of the sensory-based foundation for the internal *code*, we discovered the “languages” of the mind. In the first NLP books this was described as the sensory representational systems and the linguistic representational systems. And with that we had the NLP Communication Model. This is what John Grinder later began calling the classic code of NLP. In 1983 he felt it was insufficient and so he added some other pieces to it and called it “the new code.” He primarily added the perceptual positions. That was 32 years ago.

In January 2008 I formalized “the newest code” (e.g., Neuro-Semantics) and presented it as a paper that's now an article on the website by that title. In it I added several new things to the basic NLP code: Meta-States, Reflexive Logical Levels, Frames, and Meanings. But so what? What does this have to do with your coaching? What does it add to Meta-Coaching?

The answer is “A lot!” The answer is that when you know a code, you know how a process or an experience works. And when you know how an experience works, you can see the invisible structure that's governing that process. And when you can see the invisible structure of an experience, you are seeing the code and can then facilitate transformative change pretty quickly. Now, isn't that a lot?

This ability to *see the code* as you work with a client really speaks about the new level skill that moves you from ACMC level to the PCMC level. We usually speak about it as “seeing the structure,” recognizing the processes, and being able to distinguish structure from the content. The misunderstanding that some have is that when you move to that level, you no longer care about content. That is no true; not at all. What is true is that you are able now to distinguish the first level of content information that grounds the experience and the meta-level contexts that frame the content. And by being able to hold both in mind simultaneously as you have the coaching conversation that is like none-other, you will be able to invite your clients to get to the heart of the matter quickly and efficiently or making structural changes.

Now the code involves all of the basic coding of NLP so you still have to notice representational systems and linguistic representational systems. But now you have a more extensive ability to recognize and work with the person's code. Now you are looking for the frame and the frame-of-the-frame that's governing an experience. And now also you are able to use the Matrix Model as a coding tool and then watch the whole system as it operates.

By learning the eight-distinctions of the Matrix, you have eight classifications or categories for storing and encoding the rich information that your client gives you about any experience. The three most important pieces of the code are in the process matrices of state, meaning, and intention. These inform the person's sense of self which is comprised of the other five matrices of self, power, others, time, and world. The person's total "identity" or "personality" is encoded in his sense of value (self), competencies and resources (power), relationships and interaction skills (others), through the dimensions of time (time), in a variety of environments and universes of meaning (world).

In Landscape Thinking with your client (2015, #9 Reflection), I recommended using the Time matrix to set out a time-line for Now (present state) and Then (desired state) (when?). In the Now circle is the person's meanings and intentions (Why?) as well as state. Out in the Then circle of the desired objective is the person's World (what? and where?), the Others who are involved in it (Who?). On the time-line between these two areas you have all of the process questions (how?) that explore the person's skills (actions, plans, resources?) for getting what he wants. So you can use the Matrix and the 18-WFO questions together as your structure for facilitating the coaching conversation and experience.

With this code, you can hear your client's code. Isn't that amazing? Now you can ask yourself these kinds of questions to direct your own actions:

- Has your client coded her journey to her future desired outcome using all of the structural bits within the WFO questions and Matrix Model?
- If not, then what's missing?
- Where is her code needing something?

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #27**  
**July 8, 2015**

## **“BODY LANGUAGE” MYTHS**

Words are funny. Sometimes a word or a phrase is used so much that even though it is non-sense and refers to nothing, people who use it regularly will eventually begin thinking that it is real and then believing in the non-existing reference. Incredible! Yet it happens and because it does, one of the things we do in neuro-linguistics and neuro-semantic is call attention to this and become as conscious of it as we can so that we can then use language mindfully.

In Meta-Coaching when we go through the list of Cognitive Distortions we point this out about the distortion of “labeling,” and then we see an example of it in the distortion of “awfulizing.” The word “awful” is a *pseudo-word*. This is how Korzbyski described it in General Semantics. I wrote about this in *Communication Magic* (2001) and added *Pseudo-Words* to the Meta-Model. It is now part of the Extended Meta-Model that we teach people in Neuro-Semantics. I hope you learned it when you learned the Extended Meta-Model.

“Awfulizing” came from Albert Ellis, the developer of *Rational Emotive Therapy* and who repeatedly pointed this out in his books. “Awful” as a word is an amplification term for “feeling bad.” So, what does “awful” refer to? That’s the whole point, it refers to nothing.

“Yes I know X is disappointing, how is it awful?” “Yes I know you didn’t want and feel disappointed about Y, but how is it awful?” “True, it is sad that Mr. Z. died, but how is it awful?”

As such *awful* refers to nothing other than what disappointing, sad, upsetting, etc. refers to. So also the amplification words “terrible,” “horrible,” “catastrophe,” “end of the world,” etc. These are pseudo-words.

The same is true for the term “body language.” There is no such thing. The phrase does not refer to anything actual or real. Yes I know you have used that phrase all your life. Yes you have also heard it all your life. Yes, people all around you use it everyday, but it is a pseudo-term and refers to nothing. Yet if you believe in the nothing that it refers to(!), you will start to deceive yourself and start to see “body language” when there is none.

The idea of a “language” refers to a symbolic system of symbols which stand for something else. “Dog” is a true word when it stands for the living, breathing, running, licking-you-in-the-face animal that you have as a pet. For there to be language, there has to be the system of symbols, and a commonly agreed upon “dictionary” for the use of the symbols. There has to be some form of grammar that holds the symbols together, with the rules of grammar.

But put that word with “body” and what do we have? There is no set of symbols, no grammar, no commonly agreed dictionary of use, no grammatical rules. Ask anybody, “What is the body

language for ‘I am upset?’” Then watch them. Do they access the state of “upset” and then show it in their body? If they do, then ask another person. Is it the same? Then ask 10 persons, 100 persons. From that, do you find the set of symbols for “upset” for “I” and for “am”? Is there a “body language” for “I am upset!”? What about the “body language” for “It is 6 o’clock, let’s have dinner.”? What is the grammar or set of grammatical rules that governs how to use the body and one’s gestures to put these “body symbols” together? These questions highlight that we do *not* have a “language” of the “body” or of the expressions of the body.

When we refer to a person’s movements and gestures as “body language” we are not only using a pseudo-term, we are also assuming a lot of things which just are not so. That’s why we cannot write a book of “the language” of the “body” and call it “the dictionary of body language.” Yes, I know people have tried to do that. I have read many of those books. But the whole thing is based on a false premise—that there is a grammar of the body symbols for various meanings. And the books lead to a lot of non-sense like “to fold your arms on your chest means you are defensive.”

Do some research. Ask a person to show his or her gestures for various ideas, states, or meanings. Ask them for the “body language” of how they say “disappointed,” “fearful,” “jealous,” “defensive,” “open,” “compassionate,” “challenging,” “conflict,” “betrayal,” “trust,” etc. Or just see if you can identify your “body language” for such terms. For most people, they move their hands and make various gestures, but there’s no consistency. And they change it next time they speak. In terms of a “language,” they are making noise! Lots of noise, clamor, banging, but no consistent “language.”

In Neuro-Semantics, we ask people to become aware of a person’s *semantic space*—*how a person uses his space, refers to that space, how she moves her body or gestures with her hands*. Is it consistent? Does it help to convey an idea? Watch a client—does he consistently use his hands and gestures in a systematic way? Or does he express “nervous energy” by the way he moves and gestures? Sometimes in coaching, we assist a person eliminate gestures and his use of space that is undermining the person’s effectiveness.

So, bottom line, *there is no such thing referred to by the pseudo-reference of “body language.”* Personally, I do not use that terminology. You will never hear me talking about body language except as here when I am pointing out that it is a pseudo-word. Instead I talk about semantic space, gestures, gesturing, moving, use of movement, etc. This sensory-based language enables us to be more precise and clear regarding what we are talking about. It also highlights the fact that the gestures and movements that one person uses to convey an idea or state is always unique to that person. In this, each individual develops his or her own private “language” although it is still not a language, it is that person’s patterns or system. Here’s to eliminating that non-sensical and harmful non-word!



**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #28**  
**July 15, 2015**

## **SEEING THE CODE WHILE COACHING**

In Reflection #26 I wrote about *The Code* which we use in Meta-Coaching. This is the code which is based on the codes of NLP and Neuro-Semantics and which you learn in Practitioner, Meta-States, and in ACMC. We use these codes to detect, identify, recognize, and then work with a person or a group as we facilitate the unleashing of potentials. This is the ultimate value of knowing the human code. Yet there are other values:

- When you know the code that a person uses, *you know how that person's processes (or experiences) work.*
- Then, when you know how an experience works, *you can see the invisible structure which is governing that process.*
- And when you can see the invisible structure of an experience, you will be able to quickly and thoroughly get to the heart of things and to the leverage point of change.

This past week while in Guangzhou China co-training ACMC with Mandy Chai I used that experience as an opportunity to practice *seeing the code* in people. I focused on paying attention to detail out “the code” that a person was using to determine how much of the invisible structures I could hear and see as a person would be coached during the sessions. Now it is a really fantastic opportunity when you are in the meta-position or when you are benchmarking a session because you can just observe.

One time while watching, the code was so obvious (well, to me) and yet so obvious to the two in the dialogue. It was a basic NLP mis-matching. He was trying to coach on the auditory channel and she was definitely visual and kinesthetic. The basic representational VAK system code was in full display but neither recognized it. The benchmarker didn't catch it either. So being in the role of supervising the benchmarker and the session, I called for a time-out. “What sensory system is your client using?” I asked the coach. He didn't know. I asked the benchmarker, “Have you noticed?” Nope. I repeated her words, “I need to *feel comfortable* when I see my goal, if it *makes* me feel *uncomfortable* or *pressured*, I just don't know what to *do* to *get out* of that state.” “Any ideas now?”

### **What is the Code?**

The code which a person uses to make sense of things refers to how the person is using information to format understanding. Don't expect this code to be visible, it is not. It is invisible and a structural format which the person uses to “think” and to “know” and to “make sense” of things. It could be the VAK, it could be evaluative words, cause-effect linkages, meta-program distinctions, etc. Computers ultimate code goes to the zeros (0) and ones (1) and then use various programming language as the code for programming the computer. We humans also use a code: language, the sensory system, pictures, models, etc.

When you recognize the code then you can more easily get to the “heart of the matter.” And there you will find leverage points of change. The code that you or I use encodes the way we construct meaning. The meaning-making process is the fundamental code that we want to detect in our clients. So to see the code is to see the structure of a person’s construct. Using the foundation of NLP and Neuro-Semantics, this means that you learn to *see (perceive)* the processes of:

- Communication—how the person inputs and processes information which he then represents in the theater of his mind.
- Reflexivity—how the person reflects again and again to create layer upon layer of self-reflexive awareness about the representational information.
- Perceptual lens—how the person integrates and embodies the reflexivity to create what’s called meta-programs which now color and filter her perception.

Now using the Matrix Model as a template for this, the code is the Matrix Model code.

- 1) The Representational Code: The see-hear-feel movie that each person constructs and holds in mind.
- 2) The Sub-Modality Code: How is the movie edited? What are the cinematic features that are dominant within the movie?
- 3) The Linguistic Code: The language patterns and forms that you use to classify the experience represented in the movie, the categories that you construct to interpret the movie. Especially the cause-effect patterns (C–E), the complex-equivalence patterns (CEq.), nominalizations, the If–Then rules, the instructions or directions, guidelines (Lost Performatives), etc.
- 4) The Reflexivity code: The layers of more words, evaluations, metaphors, emotions, etc. that you construct as the next level of thinking-feeling about the previous level.
- 5) The Systemic code: The system principles that describe how the human mind-body-emotion system works, how the information-in and the energy-out operates with the information being processed.
- 6) The Context code: where and with whom one is constructing meaning. This includes the environment, both physical and social, which the person is using. The person’s choice of selecting what to foreground and what to background. It includes how the system works in a given environment and does not work in a different environment. Where does it work?
- 7) The Time Code: This refers to when, how long, the speed of operations, how it works over time. After all, the concept of time plays a critical role in the Matrix.
- 8) The Intention Code: The person or organization’s purpose, agenda, motive, motivation for engaging in an experience.
- 9) The Neurological Code: How a person embodies the meanings so that it shows up as his or her state— creates the landscape of one’s external space— semantic space. This includes a wide range of things — movement, gesture: space, location; physiology: state, breathing; posture; eyes; voice: tempo, tone, volume; face: flushing, tense, placid; direction: orientation:

These are among the things to learn and to listen for when you are with a client. No wonder most of us have to spend a lot of time *learning how to really listen!* Normally these things are outside-of-awareness and so invisible to us. Can you “see” and “hear” these structures? If not, pick one of them and practice listening for the distinctions of that code. Once you do that for 30 days or 90 days and it’s automatic with you, pick another one and practice it.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #29**  
**July 22, 2015**

## **THE FIRST BOOK OF META-COACHING**

*Finally after 13 years I have now completed the first book of Meta-Coaching.* The “first” book? Yes even if that seems very strange! The truth is that it took me 15 years before I could actually write the book. I certainly could not have written it earlier. If that’s a mystery, here’s an inside look to that mystery.

As you know, the Meta-Coaching System was given birth officially in 2001 when I interviewed three expert coaches—Graham Richardson, Michelle Duval, and Cheryl Gilroy. I met them all in Sydney when I was conducting NLP and Neuro-Semantic trainings, especially Master Practitioner where I met all three. Karen Corban wanted me to put together a training in the new area called coaching. Several years earlier I had modeled Dan Bagley, Ph.D. in Florida when I was doing Master Practitioner there in 1997 and demonstrating *how to model* for the Master Practitioner training I modeled what he was doing as an Executive Coach. And several years prior to that, 1992 I put together a basic NLP Coach Training program, “Empowerment Coaching.” I would have continued that, but with the discovery of the Meta-States Model, I shifted my focus on that from 1994 through 2000.

We launched the very first presentation of Meta-Coaching in Sydney in 2002. At that presentation of ACMC were the three expert Coaches who co-trained with me. It seems strange now, but we had only *three models*: NLP Communication Model; Meta-States Model, and the Matrix Model. That was it. The following year in London we created the beginnings of the Benchmarking Model (2003) and later that year the Axes of Change Model. It would take two more years to fully develop the Benchmarking model and in 2005 I introduced the Self-Actualization Quadrants based on the Meaning–Performance Axes. It wasn’t until 2007, using the Self-Actualization Quadrants, that I figured out the Facilitation Model.

That’s why *The Meta-Coaching System* book could not have been written back until now. Later came the books on Self-Actualization (2007, 2008, 2009), the Leadership Axes (2009), the Spiral Trust Model for Group and Team Coaching (2013), the book on Executive Coaching (2014), Political Coaching (2015). So now you know why. *The Meta-Coaching System* book could only have been written now as the model given that it is only now a complete as a full system.

Prior to the launching of Meta-Coaching in 2002, I read dozens of books in the field of Coaching to understand where the field was, who were the key thinkers and developers, what had been developed, how much of NLP had been brought into the field, etc. What was dominant in the journals and in a few books was that the new and burgeoning field of Coaching was in a state of disarray. While there were, even then, many models and ideas, there was no theoretical basis for Coaching. Further, people were using every psychotherapeutic model to “inform” Coaching—there

were lots of books using TA (Transactional Analysis) (TA), there were books using Psychoanalysis (!), Gestalt, Cognitive Psychology, etc. In the journals the biggest complaint and warning was that the field of Coaching in 2000 was a “grab bag of tricks” and that people were using “any and every latest technique that they found last week’s self-development workshop.” There was no systematic approach to Coaching.

That was my cue. It gave me a vision which then became a project. I decided that in creating Meta-Coaching the focus would be on creating *a systematic approach*— the *most systematic approach in the world*. And to facilitate that I would write the curriculum of the Meta-Coaching system. I made that decision because I knew that if I could put the entire content in print, by writing it out I would have the opportunity to make sure it would be consistent and fully integrated as a system.

Now if you had asked me in 2001 or 2002 about how long that project would take, I would have estimated a year or two. How foolish and naive I was then about creating a fully consistent and integrated system! In fact each year along the way I always thought, “almost there, just another month or two.” My naivety often knows no bounds! Even in 2003 when Michelle Duval and I were talking about “the psychology of Coaching,” Self-Actualization Psychology, she asked me how long it would take to find the Self-Actualization Model that we could put into Meta-Coaching? I said, “Two months.”

As it turned out, those two months stretched into two years until I was able to articulate the Meaning—Performance Axes and the Self-Actualization Quadrants (2005) which led to the first Self-Actualization workshop— *Unleashing Potentials*. Evidence of my naivety at that time was the name I gave to that workshop, “The Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshop.” A year later I had to back off on the “ultimate” as we rolled out the next workshop, *Unleashing Leadership*, and then *Unleashing Creativity and Innovation* (2007) and later *Unleashing Vitality* (2008). And the fact is that even today (2015) I have not finished researching, studying, and writing on the Self-Actualization Psychology of Coaching. More books and trainings are in the planning. So the “two months” turned into two years, then twelve years. So much for my predictive abilities!

Today *The Meta-Coaching System* book is the most systematic approach to Coaching in the world. Today we train Coaches to be able to answer “the systematic question:” How do you know what to do, when to do it, with whom to do it, how to do what you do, and why? Is there any fear that by writing out the whole *Meta-Coaching System* book others will take it and steal it? Hardly. As you well know, *knowing* it conceptually and intellectually is different from being able to *perform* it. People can know and not do. This knowing—doing gap, in fact, is one of the primary reasons for Coaching in the first place.

Today the new book *The Meta-Coaching System* gives you a complete overview of the system so that you can “sell” it to your clients, to organizations, to government agencies, etc. I’d recommend that you get a copy of the new book and learn it inside-out. It will refresh what you know about Meta-Coaching and give you the language by which you can present this as your brand in the field of Coaching.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #30**  
**July 29, 2015**

## **FRAMING TO DETECT PATTERNS**

Today I am here in Mexico City with the PCMC Training group. This is the very first time we have run PCMC in Mexico, and today we are focusing on framing and pattern detection. Today the coaching sessions are focusing on these skills. We are doing that, in part, because these are the skills which we benchmark at the PCMC level and, in part, because this is what makes Meta-Coaching so dynamic. Now framing is not just the pre-framing that a coach sits at the beginning of the session, that's far too easy and obvious. The true skill of framing involves recognizing the operational frames which the client brings to the session and sets new frames that facilitates the coaching session. This is the skill of framing in real time, moment to moment, during the dialogue of the conversation.

And what is framing? It is create a class or category so that the items (the content) of the coaching conversation fits into that class or category as members. When you frame, you are creating or inviting a classification of the content. This means you have moved to a higher level than the content and you are now finding a class that can serve as the context of the content.

“When she rolls her eyes, you have always assumed that it meant she was dismissing your ideas and thinking you are stupid. But now that you know that people look up to make pictures in their minds, you know that it really means that she is visualizing what you are talking about.”

Everything that anybody considers as “meaningful” is in a frame. Anything that anyone “understands” understand that item precisely because it is in a frame. If you cannot frame something, that means you cannot identify what it is or where it belongs. You can't classify the item and so you don't know what it means. We interpret things precisely because we have a frame of reference for how to understand it. This is most obvious with language. Let anyone speak to you in a language that you don't know and are unfamiliar with and the sounds they make will mean nothing to you. You don't have the code. You do not have the interpretative schema or template for how to interpret and understand the sounds.

What we therefore call “frames” are our interpretative schema that we have developed in our minds for perceiving, understanding, interpreting, classifying, and categorizing things. These are not actual things, within the mind it is a process of understanding something through how we classify it and how we bring a mental context to it. So whatever your client says to you that your client finds significant either in a positive or negative way is in a frame. The question you have to answer is, “What frame?” “How has the person framed X in such a way that it is generating Y and Z behaviors and emotions?” Answer that question and you have a significant key to that person's structure of reality.

In framing, there are certain skills: Detecting frames, Playing with frames, Switching frames (reframing, deframing, outframing), Qualifying frames (running a quality control check on the frame), Setting a frame, Holding a frame (refreshing it), etc. And it is this skill with these sub-skills that we look for and benchmark in Meta-Coaching at the PCMC level. This also highlights one of the most powerful understandings in Meta-Coaching, if not *the* most important one. Namely, the person is never the problem, *the frame is the problem*.

When there is a problematic frame, it prevents a person from unleashing potentials, taking actions on important goals, being the person he or she wants to be, etc. So as a Meta-Coach, you search for the frame to expose it and present it such a way that the client will choose to change it. This is changing a person's mind-set, frame of mind, mental frame, or attitude. These are all synonyms of the same thing—the way a person sees and interprets something.

From frames come patterns. It makes sense. You develop a way of interpreting something and repeat it over and over and over and eventually it becomes a *patterned way of operating*. The frame has now become so thoroughly and deeply installed within a person that it is now unconscious and operates, as it were, like a program. It is regular, it is systematic, it is consistent, it describes the person's way of operating in the world—mentally, emotionally, behaviorally, relationally, financially, etc. Accordingly we have formalized patterns like the meta-program patterns, the cognitive distortion patterns, the meta-model linguistic patterns, etc.

And once a person has developed a patterned way of operating, say he is results oriented, then he will also have additional frames that support that pattern. He will have belief frames, decision frames, identity frames, permission frames, understanding frames, etc. All of these frames hold the patterned way of acting in place. It supports it. In this way framing creates some patterns and patterns maintain their consistency through the invisible frames that hold them in place.

For the Meta-Coach all of this is crucial for a thorough understanding of a client. After all, we coach to the person's frames. We coach to enable a person to frame things in such a way that it supports them being at their best and able to unleash their highest and best.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #31**  
**August 5, 2015**

## **PCMC COACHING IN MEXICO**

### **A Reflection**

This past Sunday we completed the first PCMC Coaching that we ever did in Mexico with a small group which we did at Ivan Robles' training center. Ivan is in the process of becoming a Meta-Coach Trainer and was the co-sponsor of the PCMC training with Emilia Bleck. It is with people like Ivan and Emilia who not only hold the Meta-Coach Vision, but translate it in action that enables the ongoing development of Meta-Coaching and the Meta-Coach Brand.

I had not realized it until Emilia mentioned it, but we have been running ACMC trainings in Mexico for ten years now. Ten years! Now I wish I could say that most of the group of Meta-Coaches from those first years (hundreds of people) are still around and, now that they have been coaching 8 or 9 or 10 years, they have become experts in the field, and are leading the field of Coaching in Mexico. But no. I cannot. And because of that, the Meta-Coach Brand is not well-established there. Why not? I did not pull them together and emphasize the importance of community. Also, the first sponsor at the beginning was more interested in running trainings than creating a community and he dropped out after the first three years. Ah, yes learnings!

By contrast, in the past four years, those leading the field of Meta-Coaching in Mexico have been creating a much greater sense of community and a strong and positive brand of Meta-Coaching. And precisely for this reason, we were now able to conduct the very first PCMC training there.

Now I also made a mistake regarding the training. I *assumed* that we would have a group of 40 or 50 ... with 6 or 7 ready for assessment. The rest would come for the purpose of deepening their skills and to get training in pattern detection, framing, tasking, and KPI. But somehow that message was not conveyed, and so we only had a very small group of a dozen— 7 ready for assessment, two there to deepen and expand their skills (which they did!) and a few more as clients.

So while we only had a dozen people, we had a very high quality group of Meta-Coaches with some of the very biggest hearts and openness in terms of learning and receiving feedback. I was and I am very impressed with their openness! And from what everyone said, we had an excellent experience. The sessions were very real, intense, and personal. I never said once, “come on get real, give your coach something to work with.” I never even entertained that thought. So soon (in two weeks) we will have our first group of PCMC Meta-Coaches in Latin America.

One of the great things which happened this time is that for the coaching sessions *they brought in “real” clients*. Our intimate group brought in friends, associates, and even family members for the coaching sessions. So as it turned out, some knew a little bit about coaching, some never heard of it(!), some knew a bit of NLP, some never heard of it(!). This again made the session real. And even

though they were coached on stage in front of a group and in front of a video-camera, all of them presented real stuff, significant stuff which was deeply personal. It was intimate, and they very quickly opened up and became vulnerable. That speaks about the ability of our coaches to create a context of safety and support. And almost every session the coach got to and elicited the “coachable moment” with the client.

What this did for the coaching was to make it really authentic—which is another theme of the PCMC level of coaching. At this level the coach gets real and challenges the client to come out from behind him or herself and get real. And that’s really what happened over and over during our PCMC training. So for these reasons, this was among the best of our PCMC trainings so far.

I really enjoyed the intense six days because of the quality of the people who were there— their openness, their commitment to learning, their helpfulness to each other. While we only had a dozen people, we have a real sense of community and collaboration. I also learned a lot. In presenting the subject of *the coachable moment*, I paid attention to how it emergence every time it did, noting the triggers, and how it was used. I paid attention to the skill of priming. I noted when and where empathy statements could be made. I learned a couple new ways to teach the WFO questions and how to get through them and use them effectively.

We now have a new updated and much better PCMC Training Manual and a new Benchmarking form for PCMC (Form 7). When PCMC training comes to your area — get there! Be sure to not miss it. You will learn *so much*. You will learn a lot of finer details about *framing* and how framing leads to and develops pattern awareness. You will learn how to *slow a session down* and as Fritz Perls used to say, “get ears” so that you can really hear what’s going on. If you have been out of the ACMC training for two years or more, this will deepen your understandings and give you an intense practice as well as see some truly effective coaches. Raise you glass and here’s a big Meta-High Five for our soon to be certified PCMC coaches in Mexico!



**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #32**  
**August 12, 2015**

## **COACHING EXPERIENCES**

When you ask a person, “What do you want?” you are activating two of that person’s matrices. You are activating the person’s intention matrix and time matrix. You are essentially asking:

“When you think about the future, whether it is tomorrow or next month or five years from now, what is one your intentions for yourself and your life? What would you like to set as an objective that will enrich the quality of your life?”

Now whatever the person then says is inevitably *an experience*. What else could it be? *The person wants to experience something that he is not now experiencing* or she is wanting to experience something that she is now experiencing but more fully. Does the person want to choose a career path, decide on a life partner, begin an exercise program, reach a level of fitness and well-being that would result in more aliveness and energy, attain a level of financial stability or freedom, or what?

I stopped many, many coaching sessions during our PCMC training in Mexico City two weeks ago to ask, “What does your client want?” “What experience does your client want to experience?” Of course, with those questions, another question immediately surfaces, a question implied in those. Namely, “What is your client currently experiencing?” Indecision, more physical weight than is appropriate, financial worries, stress, arguments with a loved one, confusion about one’s identity, what?” If that’s what your client is experiencing, *how much* is your client experiencing that? Gauge it. And how much is your client currently experiencing his desired experience? Gauge it as well. Now you have a measurement between P.S. (Present State) and D.S. (Desired State).

As a Meta-Coach, consider the power of asking these two questions back-to-back. “What experience do you want to have?” “What are you experiencing now?” In *the landscaping skill* that I wrote about previously, this gives you two landmarks that you can stake out: *Present State* and *Desired State*. And with that, you can ask questions about *this gap*.

What is the distance between current experience and the experience you want? How far apart are these? How long will it take to move from one to the other?

When you get the answer to these questions, you are just about ready to *coach to the gap*. If you ask, “What do you want?” and the person doesn’t know. Or the person is thinking about several things, translate it back to *experiences* and ask about each side of the *Now—Then* continuum.

“What are you experiencing now? Do you like it? Do you want it? What would you like to experience instead? And what else? And what else?”

If someone doesn’t know, then use these questions as awakening questions:

“If there were no constraints or problems or fears, what would you like to experience? Are you experiencing life to the fullest right now? How rich and fabulous and fantastic and ecstatic are your everyday experiences right now? Satisfied with them? Want more? Or different?”

As Meta-Coaches, you and I coach *experiences*. It is inevitable. People come to you in a state having certain experiences and these experiences may be life enhancing or life diminishing. They may be unleashing the person’s highest potentials or leashing them or even sabotaging them. Find out. Don’t be shy or hesitate, just ask.

“What are you experiencing? What’s the quality of your life experiences at work, with colleagues, in your health, at home, with children, with loved ones, in your spiritual life, in your hobbies, in your contributions, etc.? Are these the experiences you really want? What do you want?”

Try this out this week. Frame your thinking about coaching and your coaching itself in terms of *experiences*. Then calibrate to your client’s mental state, emotional state, etc. You could even begin to create a list of possible experiences which clients bring to coaching sessions. Then during the session, call for a Meta-Moment from time to time and ask about the client’s current experience:

What are you experiencing right now in this session?

Are you having a learning experience? A change experience? A discovery experience?

Is the experience you’re having what you want to have and intended to have?

What experience would you like to experience?

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #33**  
**August 26, 2015**

## **THE COACHING SKILL OF CHALLENGING**

*Coaching is all about challenge.* In therapy, you nurture and coddle. You make it safe and help a person to feel trusted and believed in. It's different in coaching. Here you have to challenge your client because people come to coaching to step up to become more of who they can be and achieve more of what's possible. This is about stretching, it's about pushing forward, it's about disturbing and shaking one's world, it's about holding one's feet to the fire of accountability, it's about asking for personal details to get specific. Coaching challenges in that it identifies and exposes cognitive distortions. It is to hold a question until your client answers it. It is asking the person to take responsibility for his or her life. It is holding the space so that your client can experience a "crucible of fire" for change. So challenge is inherent in coaching.

Given the innate nature of challenge to coaching, an effective coach *challenges*. Therefore developing your capacity for challenge and specific skills that enhance this ability is critical if you want to be increasingly more effective with your clients.

In Mexico last week I pointed this out repeatedly. I demonstrated it over and over and the PCMC group asked for some additional exercises for developing the ability to challenge. This was so pervasive in the group, that we talked about the cultural bias against it in the Latin American cultures and how that a person may have to reframe "challenge," or give oneself permission to challenge, or desensitize oneself to other frames that inhibit this ability. Here are three exercises or drills for pushing your own envelop as you expand your ability to challenge.

### ***The Challenge Me Drill***

Get with a small group of people and start a coaching conversation.

Coach: Ask WFO question #1, What do you want to achieve in this coaching conversation that would be highly valuable to you?

Client: The client will give a description of the desired outcome, the context, and the situation and then the client will provide the coach with the most challenging question that he could ask. Or the coach could ask, "What would be the most challenging question I could ask you?"

Then, whatever the client says, the coach is to ask that challenging question.

The client then is to give feedback regarding *how challenging* the question felt given the way the coach asked it and then coach the coach (!) for how to ask it more challengingly.

Continue for 5 or 10 minutes.

### ***The Challenge Drill***

Coach: Ask a client, "What would you like to be challenged about? What do you *need* to be challenged about?" And client presents his or her answers.

Then challenge the client with questions about this subject in order to explore the situation and to find how what the desired challenge is about as well as the feared-challenge. As the coach, engage in information gathering and framing to help with this.

Stop from time to time (every 4 or 5 minutes) and let the client then evaluations on a 0 to 10 scale about the level of the challenge for the client and its effectiveness.

### ***Challenging the Fear of Challenge Drill***

Coach: Ask a client, “What do you fear about challenge? What is the worse case scenario of what could happen if you challenge a client?” “What holds you back from challenging as a coach? What is your biggest interferences?”

Client: Present answers to these questions.

Coach: Explore the inner game of the client which is informing the fear of challenge. Ask meta-questions about understandings, beliefs, expectations, identity, etc. about the person’s inner game of fear of challenge.

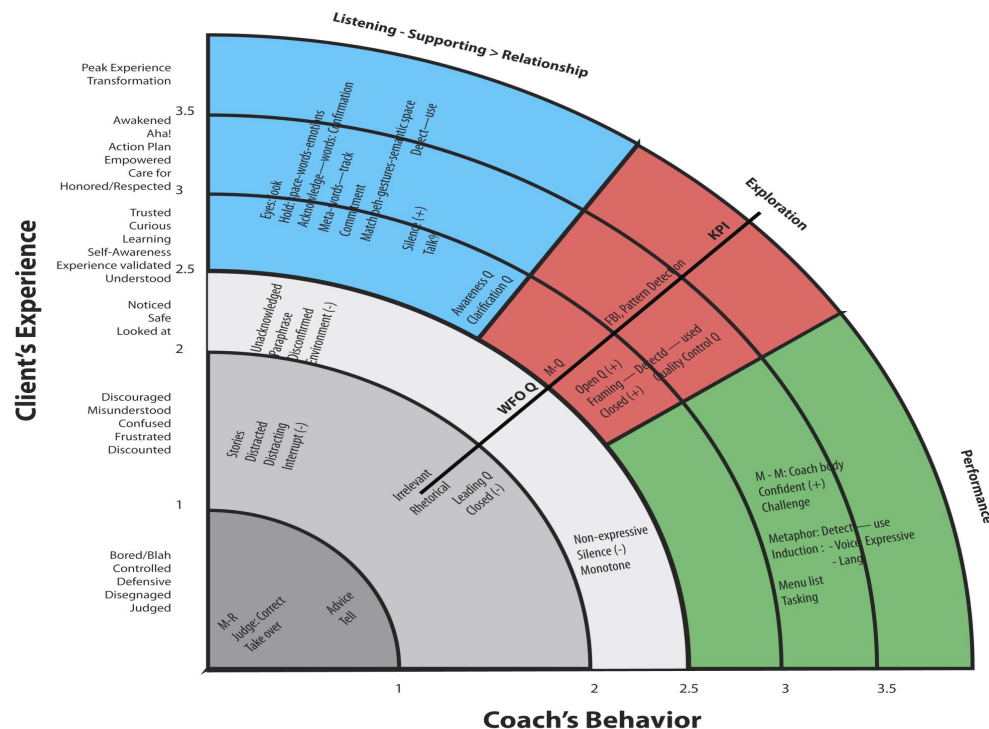
### **Reviewing the Challenge Drills**

After the exercises, debrief the experience in terms of what you learned about *challenging*. How did it feel to ask personal questions? How did it feel to touch on really “hot” subjects with the client? What voice, tone, facial expressions, etc. improve the challenge? What makes it less effective? Notice the relation of rapport to challenging. Notice the relation between the coach’s state and challenging.

From: L. Michael Hal  
 2015 Morpheus #34  
 September 2, 2015

## THE FORM & SPIRIT OF COACHING

In 2008 I put a new diagram in the *Coaching Mastery* manual (on page 41 in the 2015 manual). The diagram posits two axes, one for the *quality* of the coaching state and the other for the *quantity* of the coaching behaviors. On the vertical axis (the meaning axis) there is the coach's state (which is also the client's experience) and on the horizontal axis is the coach's activities (the coaching skills) by which the coaching experience is transferred and facilitated.



This diagram enables us to recognize the correspondence between what you *do* as a coach and the desired *effect* it has upon the client. Ideally, the more you as the coach are in the right state doing the right things, the more effective the coaching because the client is trusting, learning, discovering, getting empowered, and transforming.

### The Form of Coaching

In terms of form, since the client is the expert of him or herself, we always start by finding out what the client wants. That's why we start out with a well-formed outcome— so that we facilitate the client being able to know and articulate what he really wants and to do so in a way that makes it well structured and ecological. The WFO pattern is not a pattern that we do for the hell of it. There's rhyme and reason behind it, namely, the client is the expert of where the coaching is to go. The form of coaching also involves the theme or subject of the coaching which then gives you the *kind of conversation* that's required for the client to get full

benefit from the coaching. Are you having Clarity Conversation? Or one of the others: Decision, Planning, Resourcing and Experiencing, Change, etc.?

All of that is the form. So is the landscaping distinctions which we took from the NLP SCORE model. First, where is the client right now and what are the symptoms that she's experiencing? Second, where does your client want to be? When there, what effects (or new symptoms) will then occur? Third, what is the gap between these two landmarks? What is its size? What is its time-frame? What's in the way? Fourth, what are the meta-frames governing all of this? Into these landscape distinctions you can fit all of the eighteen questions as well as the eight Matrix Model distinctions.

All of these things make up the basic *form of the coaching conversation*. This is what you first have to learn and master in order to be an effective coach. Yet to do only these, to do these with perfect technique without having the right spirit, only makes you a technician and often an ineffective one at that. You also need the spirit of coaching.

### **The Spirit of Coaching**

By the term *spirit* I am speaking about the essence, the heart, the attitude, the character, the mind-and-emotional state. And while *form* is challenging enough to teach, it is easy compared to this. After all, how do you teach someone to have "the right spirit?" For years I have found myself saying the right words about this, but to almost no avail. "Don't worry about your score, how you do, the evaluation, whether you are doing it right or not, focus on your client." Technically, the words are right. But the words are empty and a waste of my breath when the person's focus, intentionality, and deep attitude is wanting to get the grade or show himself as skilled and competent.

Nor is it that the coaches themselves don't know these words and also know the importance of "letting the results go" and focusing on the client. Afterwards they tell me, person after person, "Yes I knew I need to let it go, but then I didn't."

So what does it take? How do we get *the right spirit into ourselves*? It is paradoxical. The more you want to be a world-class coach, fully competent, at the PCMC level, able to effectively enable a client to get her results—the more you want that—it *is about you*, not the client. Yet you have to be ambitious enough to want that to put in the effort and discipline. You have to hold yourself to a high standard to keep pushing the limits of your own skills and add more. You have to care about that. But in the moment of coaching, *that* cannot be your focus or intention. In that moment, you have to let it go. You have to be okay with *not* succeeding, with your client not getting his outcome.

The spirit of coaching is about relationship, about respect, about love, about getting real. Once you care more about your client than your expertise, once you give your client the right to not succeed, once you love that person with a benevolent good will so that you can respect her choices and maintain the relationship, and be authentic in yourself—that's when the magic of synergy occurs. That's when those coachable moments arise and when you can then *do* the right thing in the right spirit.

There's no secret formula for this. It is the synergy between *being* and *doing*. And these work systemically. Typically *being* comes first. *Be* the person you need to be in the coaching relationship—caring, compassionate, challenging, releasing, responsible to but not for, etc. Then with your learning and practice discipline, use the skills and form of coaching as precisely and exquisitely as possible. Then with your *doing*, always *be* authentic. Then as you are authentic, *do* what you know to do—all in service of your client.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #35**  
**September 9, 2015**

## **THE ART OF GOING DEEP**

As a Coach, and especially as a Meta-Coach—you *need to go deep with your clients*. This is not just something nice to do, *it is essential*. It is essential for the client if the coaching is to be authentic, real, personal, intimate, intense, and fierce. Otherwise, the coaching will be shallow and superficial. The coaching will merely coast along on the surface of things and never get sufficiently deep to be life-changing or transformative. Obviously when that happens, people will wonder what they are paying for and if the commitment of time, effort, and money invested in coaching is really worth it.

Today there is far too much “coaching” that is superficial and shallow. The sessions are more like chats and everyday conversations than anything else. Anyone could facilitate those kind of sessions; it requires no special skills or understanding. “What’s the problem with that?” someone may ask. The problem is that it degrades the quality and significance of coaching and leads some to consider the whole thing more of a hoax than a legitimate profession.

Now that we have raise the question, what’s the answer. How do you, as a Meta-Coach facilitate the coaching conversation so that you can go deep with your clients? And “deep,” what are we taking about? What is “deep” when it comes to having an authentic coaching conversation?

*Deep* means that we get *beyond* the outer game of actions, behaviors, performances, environmental factors and to inside to the inner game. This is where coaching makes the most difference. Lots and lots and lots of people know good and well what to do, even how to do it, but they still stop themselves from carrying out what they know. It’s the Knowing—Doing Gap. They procrastinate, they make excuses, they sabotage themselves with limiting beliefs, decisions, understandings, etc. *Deep* means that the coaching *goes meta to the meaning frames that construct the person’s model of the word*. Now for the *how* question.

- How do you facilitate the person going inside, going to his or her meta Matrix of frames, and “getting to the heart of the matter?”

1) *Start with the opening statement as you discover the hidden problem and/or desired outcome*. Wherever the client starts, use that the beginning point. Whether the client starts with a goal or a problem, embrace it and beginning mapping out the external landscape: PS—> Gap —> DS. What do you want? What do you really, really want? Where are you now? What’s going on now? How bad is it? How far away in time and space is your objective? What do you have to do to get what you want? Shallow conversations stay on the surface and focus on the external variables. Deeper coaching conversations take a person inside to the person’s code of representations and meaning frames.

2) *Go inside to the person's Matrix of meaning frames.* Once you have the basic external landscape, go inside. What do you understand or believe that is creating what's going on right now? What else? Is it ecological? What beliefs, identities, permissions, decisions, intentions, etc. are formulating your goals? What do you understand about reaching those goals? What beliefs are limiting you? Let's say that's true, what does that mean to you? Shallow conversations focus on external solutions— as if all solutions and resources are external. Deeper coaching conversations know that the true source of experiences and emotional states are products of each person's internal code. We seek to identify and understand that code because when the code changes, so does the person's experience.

3) *Detail the person's strategy for his or her various experiences.* The fundamental NLP principle from Korzybski and George Miller is that every experience has a structure—a process and it can be identified. So using a know-nothing frame, elicit from your client the processes whereby he creates his experience. Get the strategy process from how she invents her reality. For this you will need to use the basic NLP distinctions of representational systems, strategy analysis, and then the Meta-States structure of reflexive consciousness.

Shallow conversations superficially assume that experiences are mysterious and just happen, and that people can be held responsible for what they feel and sometimes even for what they do. Deeper coaching conversations hold people responsible for their mental maps—challenging and confronting them about the ecology of the maps that they are using. This makes the conversation intimate and sometimes fierce like a crucible.

4) *Detail the person's definitions, understandings, and assumptions.* To go deep with the person, inquire about the person's definitions of terms, how she understands what she's talking about, and what he is assuming without questioning. Surface conversations skim over a person's words assuming that the other person uses his words in exactly the same way you do. Deeper conversations don't make that assumption, but recognizes that each person operates from her linguistic definitions.

5) *Look for and talk about the deeper things.* If you are not getting the person to go inside and identify his belief frames, note that and give that back to the person as feedback. “Are you aware that all of your talk is about external things?” “What do you now realize when you notice that?” Many people have a difficult time going in and/or talking about internal things. It may be that they have not learned how to be self-aware. It may be that they don't have permission. It may be that going inside is framed as negative and therefore something to avoid. It may be that all of the cultural frames go against it. It may be that the person is too insecure inside and protects oneself against it.

Speak about the deeper things by framing the distinction between the outer game and the inner game. Frame your coaching as going beyond the surface activities to the inner game where the real game occurs. The coaching conversation is like none-other precisely because it is deep, intimate, and personal. Here's to your inner journey to becoming a Deep Meta-Coach!



**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #36**  
**September 16, 2015**

## **FEAR OF GOING DEEP WHEN COACHING**

After writing about *The Art of Going Deep* (#36) several Meta-Coaches wrote about their fear of going deep. Then this week here at ACMC in Mauritius, our team leaders reported several sessions in which they encouraged a coach to “go deeper” with the client and they *said explicitly* spoke about their fear. What stopped them from going there was their fear. One said he didn’t know how to handle it if the person got emotional. Another said that she was afraid to open something up and not be able to bring it to a conclusion. Yet another said that it was out of his comfort zone.

Now if *going deep* with a client speaks about enter into and opening up the person’s understandings, meanings, beliefs, identities, etc., then what we are talking about awakening the person’s awareness of his meaning matrix. That is, the person’s constructs of meaning—the actual thoughts and beliefs and the processes entailed (i.e., our thinking patterns, cognitive distortions, cognitive biases, etc.). What’s inside that’s *deep* is all of our meanings— memories, imaginations, hopes, fears, etc. All that is inside is just human stuff. None of it is alien.

Question: What then does it take in you, as a Meta-Coach, to be able to go in and go deep with a client? What understandings and skills?

1) *The first thing is your own solid sense of self.* When you assert and affirm your value and dignity because you are a human being and you do so unconditionally—you create a center core thereby creating an immunity against any psychological threat against self. Then with your own personal development of your mind, emotions, language, and skills, you build up your ego-strength so that you feel inwardly resourceful and able to figure things out.

2) Then with a solid sense of self, *you will be able to hold the space for the client.* What that person experiences will be safe in your presence. That’s because you know and they sense that whatever is discovered is just human stuff. Just thoughts, just memories, just ideas, just emotions. All of it is human experiences that result from the person’s mental maps about things— so if it is painful or hurtful or trauma, that is due to the maps from which it comes. Therefore it is just a map, and not the territory. And it can be changed.

3) Within that comes another skill for going deep: *we embrace emotions as symptoms that always make sense.* Then, embracing the emotions, we enter into them to explore them, understand them, and figure out how they work— how the person creates them. This ability to non-emotionally hold an emotion is absolutely critical. To treat an emotion in a matter-of-fact way, with a neutral voice and a concern for the person requires that you deeply know that an emotion is the *motion* that is going out (“ex”) from the person (e-motion) and that it has a structure.

The structure of an emotion is that it arises as a combination of mind and body— thoughts and sensations (kinesthetics). The physical part is the energy of the body as it moves: breathes, holds a posture, uses muscle tension and relaxation, etc. This puts out the vibrations of the state which enables others to pick up on the emotion and feel it. That’s why emotions are contagious. Given this, when the energy vibrations from the person’s metabolism moves his or her body and you sense it— just notice. Consider its intensity, its message, its context, how the person is creating it, etc.

The emotions that a person feel and creates inside and lets out are just symptoms. Emotions are not primary phenomena, but secondary. They result from a context in which a person understands, thinks, and beliefs something, utilizes his skills to do something, and gets some results which may or may not be wanted or valued. This means that there are many variable aspects of an emotion which means there are many ways to alter an emotion.

4) In addition to dealing with the emotions that arise, you have to *be mindful about the person’s presentation of time*. What often comes up when you go deep inside with a client are memories of the past that are painful and/or anticipations of the future. People can and do construct horrible movie scenarios in their minds about things of the past or the future and use them to torment themselves. Some people don’t know how to frame the past as “the past.” It’s done and over. For them it is not done and over. They keep it alive and usually amplify it. They don’t know how to bring closure, or accept, or learn from the past memories. Others take events and trends and project them into the future creating fear, dread, depression, and so on.

Yet all of the constructs of time are just that—constructs. They are representations and belief frames about things, and therefore just maps and not real. But people treat them as real. That the problem. So as you go deep with someone, keep this in mind so that you don’t get seduced into believing it. And as you do, listen to the language for cognitive distortions— exaggerations, personalizing, awfulizing, etc.

If you are safe in your self, if you are grounded, if you have good ego-strength, understand that emotions are just emotions, that time and all constructs are just inventions of meaning—then you will be ready and able to go deep with clients. And when you do, your coaching will be more meaningful and transformative. You will be a much better and more skilled Meta-Coach.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #37**  
**September 23, 2015**

## **META-COACHING IN MAURITIUS AFRICA**

From time to time, the APMC training of *Coaching Mastery* goes to a new country where we have never been before. This happened recently in Mauritius. As number 76 APMC since 2002, we have now passed the 2,300 number for people licensed as an Associate Certified Meta-Coach. Given that we only had two Meta-Coaches there, Sandra Viljoen had to bring in the entire team from outside of the country, so we had members of the Assist Team from South Africa, Egypt, Norway, Hong Kong, and New Zealand. And we had 5 people revisiting from Norway, Scotland, Nigeria, and Hong Kong.

It's not easy doing what Sandra Viljoen did as others who have first sponsored APMC in their countries. Generally, in terms of numbers, you first have to get 100 people through NLP or *Coaching Essentials*, then you have to get 50 to 60 through *APG or Coaching Genius*. And that's just to have enough for the bare minimum which is required of 21—that gives us 7 triads for the coaching sessions. It might sound easy, but to actually *do* that and *achieve* those numbers is anything but easy. Asking people to make a significant investment (\$3000 to \$4000) plus travel and other expenses is selling a “big ticket” item.

Then there are all of the preparations: printing, manuals, two-days of Assist Team Training, scheduling the venue, negotiating with the venue, getting people to the venue, sequencing when to have different papers ready to go, insuring the coffee and tea breaks, planning for video-taping the coaching session on Day 6 and having equipment for projecting it back that evening. Lots of stuff! Not the kind of thing that an options person will find easy to do.

Prior to the plans to go to Mauritius, I couldn't figure where it was. “Africa?” Where? Upon visiting Mauritius—it is a beautiful island in the Indian Ocean with white sand beaches, bright blue skies, deep green trees on the beach, with crystal clear waters and deep black volcanic rocks—all creating a very exotic paradise. I was told that the people of Mauritius were a very tolerant and gentle people and so I found them. Those working at the hotel had the very best manners and the very best customer service attitude of anyone I have ever encountered anywhere. The people of Mauritius who came to become Meta-Coaches were very kind and compassionate—and while this is their strength, they, of course, struggled to be challenging in the coaching.

I often find that *the people* who come to a training often reflect the spirit and heart of the person who trained them and prepared them. For those of us in Mauritius, Sandra Viljoen was a most gracious and thoughtful host—thinking about everything that had to be done and going out of her way to make it the very best. We were immerse in orange (her signature color)—orange notebooks, orange bags, orange pens, orange everything! It was a baptism in orange!

For me it was a delight to have four people *shadowing the process of training Coaching Mastery*, Dirk Nieuwoudt from South Africa is the person most ready to co-train and I had him in the front with me most often; after that Mohamed Tarek from Egypt, then two ladies—Rebecca Kjellhaug from Norway and, of course, Sandra Viljoen from Mauritius. Getting other people up and ready to train *Coaching Mastery* as Meta-Coach Trainers is one of my personal objectives. I am aiming at getting 20 to 30 in the next five years. We also had one of the very best teams every— with Tshepo Matlou and Lee Griessel from South Africa, Raquel Couto from Brazil, and two from Mauritius—Melania Destounis and Ehsan Abdool Rahman, and Cindia Wong from Hong Kong.

*Sponsoring* is not easy and much, much more complex than what one would think. That's one of the reasons that there are few who know how to do it well. Sandra is one who knows how to do it well which all of our international guests can really testify to. If you are going to sponsor a big training, I'd recommend that you contact Sandra and get her to consult with you! Let me give you some examples of what she did.

On the day I arrived, Sandra set up a *Press Conference*. With an hour of arriving, I was at a Press Conference, interviewed by many people and then we spent the day visiting Political Leaders— from the Deputy Prime Minister to the President. How about that for getting media attention? And you think you know about marketing? Can you beat that for creating good will and for getting Neuro-Semantics known in a country?

Then on th day I left, she hosted a 5 hour *Unleashing Leadership Workshop*. Her business, *New Beginnings* hosted me with 7 Top Leader Mentors of Mauritius ... each sharing success and challenges of Leadership. The "Leader Mentors" she invited included Honourable Xavier Luc Duval, the Deputy Prime Minister of Mauritius and also Minister of Tourism and external communications, Her Excellency Shari Villarosa, the ambassador of the United States of America, Mr. Philippe Espitalier, the CEO of Rogers group, Mr. Vidia Moonegan, the CEO of Ceridian, Sridhar Nagarajan, the CEO of Standard Chartered Bank, Mr. Louis Rivalland, the CEO of Swan group and Mr Afsar Ebrahim, the Deputy Managing Partner of BDO Mauritius, Sridah Nagarajan CEO of MOBank and former CEO of Standard Charter Bank

Then with all of these dignitaries at the 'Leader Mentor' table, I presented on Self-Actualization Leadership and then a debate / conversation occurred in which Sandra presented the following questions to them:

1. What are some of the biggest challenges you face as Business Mentor Leaders?
2. What are some of the obstacles preventing your employees from unleashing their potential?

She filled the room with 50 or more people and then hosted a lunch on the patio afterwards. So, like I say, if you want to know how to think about sponsoring and how to make it happen— she is one lady you need to interview!

Congratulations to the new 25 Licensed Meta-Coaches from Mauritius!

**From: L. Michael Hal**

2015 Morpheus #38

September 30, 2015

Update on *The Coaching Movie*

<https://www.facebook.com/coachingmovie/>

<https://twitter.com/coachingmovie>

## FILMING FOR THE COACHING MOVIE

This past weekend I flew out to Los Angeles, rented a car and eventually found my way to Malibu California where Patryk and his wife scheduled the filming for the Coaching Movie. They selected a house overlooking the Pacific Ocean, way up in the mountains, in a pretty inaccessible place. I had to park my rented car at the bottom of a canyon and then one of the staff came to fetch me. It was pretty and scenic and a gorgeous place, but really *not typical* for where coaching sessions occur. I registered my complaint two months ago when it was suggested, as did several of the other coaches, but we were out-voted. I thought a business suite in L.A. would have been more appropriate as reflective of Executive Coaching.

Arriving the night before, I got a hotel room in Woodlands Hill and had dinner with Julie Starr, one of the other coaches in the movie. Now *you know of Julie Starr* because I have been quoting her in *Coaching Mastery* since 2002. If you open your manual to the third Coaching Skill—*Questioning* you will see two or three quotes from her book, *The Coaching Manual*. That book will go into its fourth edition next year and I will be writing a quote for the cover of the book. Julie lives in the UK and works primarily in London working mostly with Executives and their teams.

When I first read her book I recognized that she quoted and referenced NLP, but when I asked she said she didn't do NLP. What I didn't know, and what I found out at dinner with her, was that she had done Practitioner and Master Practitioner with Frank Daniels (who brought me into the UK along with Denis Bridoux back in the late 1990s). She had also been on the assist team several times. "So why the disavowing of NLP?" I asked. Then she told stories of attending McKenna, Breen and Bandler trainings! That turned her off. And rightly so. Low-level quality of NLP along with a heavy dose of manipulation, mind-control (or at least they try that), and unethical practices *should turn people off to it!* For me, such people are jewels for the movement of recovering the ethics of NLP and for lifting up the professional status. That's why I go after them to get them to join us in Neuro-Semantics.

On Saturday September 26 I arrived at the house, got prepped for the filming and then met Soon, a CEO from Brunei who lives in Singapore. This young executive (42) had created several companies and had volunteered to be the Executive Coaching client, so he was there for three weeks to be coached by five coaches and followed-up in his everyday life for six months. He will be one of the "stories" told by the coaching movie. I found him to be like so many

executives— mentally sharp, quick, skillfully communicative, an optimistic positive attitude, a go-for it dreamer of big dreams. He was a delight to work with.

And also, like many executives, he didn't always answer the questions I posed, at least not directly. But he would talk his own internal bullet points. I asked "What do you want?" but he told me that he was struggling with how to get the information and answer the question regarding why a US company would invest one hundred million dollars in a project that he wanted to win. So I began interrupting him. I did that a lot! So it was good that I had framed that I would be interrupting him constantly [not *if*, but I *would be*] because coaching is a dialogue and because I don't need a lot of content information, but would be facilitating a challenge for him to come out from behind himself and get real.

I also framed that because "you are the expert of you, I have no agenda for you." "My expertise is in facilitating an intense, personal challenge so that we would get to the heart of the matter—your meanings." So after getting enough information to ground my questions, I kept returning to the subject: "What do you want to get out of this conversation that will make a transformative difference for you?"

Now in a situation where there are 3 cameramen in front of you, Betsy the director on a director's chair, and a dozen other people watching, I'm sure that *getting real* and talking about personal issues, would be a pretty significant challenge for anyone. I asked him what his answer was to the question that he posed. He said didn't know the answer. He said "it was hard, it would take a long time, it would take a lot of people." That's one of the times when I challenged him.

"You have one simple question to answer, you told me you know how to gather information from people and from data, and yet you now frame it as hard, long, and involved. What do you need about gathering that information that you don't have?"

This is the power of challenge. And I know that many of you are working on your challenging skills. Here I challenged incongruency. The two strands of information didn't fit. Big hard struggle—one simple question. Intelligent professional executive—one simple investment question. So what's so hard? He paused for a long time and said "That's a good question" as he would three more times.

Out of that came the theme of the session. "Well I have some doubts." "You doubt what?" He doubted his ability to win the 100 million dollar project. So a gauging question: "How confident are you?" 6. "Six?! So you are almost there!" I said framing his response. "What level do you need?" 10. "Okay, only 4 to go." So these doubts, how strong are your doubts that you can't do it? 5. "Five?! That's all? So you are already fifty-percent sure that you will." Again framing.

"So with the doubts, what are you aware of when you think about the doubts?" "I think I'll not be able to get the hundred-million dollar project." "Okay, and what then happens inside you?" I asked leading further into the inner game. "I feel tension ... here [pointing to his chest]..." I repeated his words and gestures to check and to slow things down. "Then what?" Then I start spinning around." "And spinning around means what?" Clarification. "I think about it over and

over and over.” “Okay, and then?” “Well, I distract myself and go do other things.” He pointed to his right and a little behind when he said that. When I then fed all of that strategy back to him, he added, “Oh then I come back to it again, I’m that kind of person.” I checked, he comes back to the thinking about it again. “Oh so you are persistent? That’s the ‘kind of person’ you are?” He agreed with my rephrasing and seemed to like the validation. “Well, yes, but indirectly.” I noted these words and knew I would use them later.

With that strategy process for how he ran his self-doubt program, I asked about when and how it gets started. He said when he “thinks hard.” “And ‘thinking hard’ means what?” Clarification. It was when he thought about how to get the project and close it. Now was time to take it up another level—deeper into the inner game with ecology questions. “Okay, so that’s how the self-doubt works, does this empower you? Do these self-doubts enhance your life?” I got lots of *Nos* from him. “Do you need them? Are they useful?” *No*.

Then for the leverage questions. I stated with a testing exploration question, “So how are you at letting go of the past and *moving on*?” Having seen where he put his past, I gestured there and said, “When you *just let something go* and not let it influence you anymore, how do you *move forward*?” I used my voice to embed the above as commands. Another long pause. He said that was another hard question.

“Okay, good. So what resources do you need to be able to do that?” Well there was a problem. Making mistakes. I offered a menu list of potential resources: courage to make mistakes, learning from mistakes, resilience, develop a direct persistence rather than indirect, etc. Here I used his identity statement, “I am that kind of person. I come back to it over and over, but indirectly.” So the resource would be to become *direct* in coming back, i.e., to be directly persistent. He grabbed onto “learning” and “directness.”

After we developed those resources some more, that led to exploring his frames: “Do you have the right to make mistakes? Do you have permission to make mistakes? No? “Then let’s test. Go inside and say these words and let’s see what happens.” That led to facilitating the permission frame, which cued me about perfectionism, and so the session went there.

At the end of the session I did a summary to wrap up and recommended some tasking steps. I asked what was the best thing he got from the session, he mentioned three things: his discovery of a pattern that he didn’t know about himself, his awareness of the old reference experiences that he didn’t know, and an “Aha” about mistakes. Then he said, “You are so fast! And I felt it!”

After the session, they filmed his reflections on the session in another room. Patryk took me aside for some additional filming about myself. Then afterwards Soon anted to talk! He asked, “Was that NLP?” I smiled and nodded and added, “And Meta-Coaching.” He said that was “so powerful and so quick and it made me feel a lot.” He then talked about the negative views, he and everyone he knew in Singapore, had about NLP and said that now he was re-thinking that. He wanted to know NLP books that I’d recommend which of course I did. We then spent some

time talking about Neuro-Semantics and how we are taking NLP to a higher level professionally and ethically.

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**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #39**  
**October 7, 2015**

## COACHING SELF-AWARENESS

*Self-awareness and coaching*—what is the relationship between these? Does a client need self-awareness to be coached? If so, how much self-awareness should a client have before entering coaching? How much self-awareness is required in order to get value from coaching? And while on the subject of self-awareness, how much self-awareness is required to be effective as a coach?

To begin with, it's really no secret that one of the great unintended effects of coaching is an increase in self-knowledge and self-awareness. This is inevitable where there is effective coaching. Why? Because Coaching, by its very nature, is a *step-back process for reflecting on the meaning of life*. So no wonder clients come away from Coaching with a deepened sense of understanding themselves—what makes them tick, how they work, the functioning of human nature, what they really want, their strengths, their weaknesses, etc. So even when the client does not ask for this, greater self-awareness and self-knowledge emerges from Coaching. Asking questions about these areas works in the long-term to facilitate an expanded awareness.

Yet, is this required of the client? Does a person need to have a high level of self-awareness to enter coaching? This question and its answer is a bit tricky. So we answer both yes and no. *No* because self-awareness will arise in the coaching process, but *yes* in the sense that self-awareness is also required for effective coaching.

Yesterday this was driven home for me during our *Coaching Mastery* here in Brazil. We had a gentleman who was really stressed-out. So when an opportunity arose, I invite him to come upfront in order to deal with his emotions. His comment that cued me was, “My emotions *have* me rather than I have my emotions.” But then, in working with him about his irritation and stress, it became obvious immediately that he had almost no self-awareness about his own processes. All of his awareness was on what his body was experiencing— his hands sweating, face sweating, etc. (he was at his stress threshold, in a fight-flight mode) and the outside triggers. He could easily point to what “caused” the situation—well, actually the external triggers that set it off. He could not identify a single thing going on in his head regarding his thoughts about it—the actual *cause* of his experience.

What can a coach do under such circumstances? Answer: *Begin the becoming aware process*. I noted that because stress is psychological, we have to the thoughts which are creating the stress. He agreed since he could not identify a single thought, belief, or meaning. In his case, his stress was so high he would from one moment to the next ask me to repeat what I said because he could not hear me. That's high level stress. That means blood has been withdrawn from the brain and

sent to the larger muscle-groups and that he is in the fight-flight-freeze state. I told him I would write out my instructions for developing awareness and would check with him from time to time.

Coaching a person with low-level *self-awareness* is a challenge. That person will not be able to answer many questions because their intra-psychological awareness has not been developed. Perhaps they have lived with their attention *on the outside for so long* that the journey inside is a strange and unfamiliar one. Or perhaps they do not have permission to go inside.

The ancient Greek wisdom that Socrates quoted, “*Know Thyself*” is one of the most difficult challenges any of us face. It is not easy. There are numerous problems along the way: cognitive biases that prevent us from truly knowing ourselves. That’s because we all have self-confirmation biases so that whatever idea that we start with about ourselves, we have the tendency to confirm it. But this can create lots of self-blindness.

Then there is our basic fear of ourselves. It is not unusual for us to *fear self-knowledge*. One fundamental fear is about what we will find, “What if I find something terrible about myself?” This goes to some of the ideas we’ve heard and picked up over the years about *human nature*. Some people have such negative ideas about people that they build up lots of defenses to avoid self-awareness. Many others have a deep sense of insecurity within, or unfinished business from years past that trigger guilt, shame, and anxiety so today they live in an unspecified fear of themselves— afraid that they will be exposed to be flawed, defective, unworthy, unlovable, etc.

On a lesser level, others don’t know themselves because their real selves have become lost to their external roles. They *are* what they *do*. Their consciousness is exclusively about the outside world—all of the superficial aspects of life. They busy themselves to be busy and stay busy, running here and there. The deeper reflective life is weird and strange to them, that’s something monks do way off out in some deserted area. So they have simply not developed the inner awareness about themselves.

Yet *the journey inward is the ultimate journey for any of us*. This journey lies at the heart of self-actualization— how you become the best you as you discover yourself: your strengths and weaknesses, your gifts and dispositions, how you function as a human being, etc. Going in deepens your experiences and enables you to be more than just a shallow person. You begin to be real and alive. Rollo May has written, “The more self-awareness a person has, the more *alive* he is.” (P. 82)

*Coaching, to a great extent, is this inward journey*. In Coaching a person takes the time and effort to go inside, to reflect on one’s values, beliefs, visions, and dreams. The client begins to experience not only the outside world, but the inner world and to give oneself to the inner experience of one’s thoughts and emotions. There’s more to say about the relationship of Coaching and self-awareness— we’ll do that next week.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #40**  
**October 14, 2015**

## **THE FOURTH ACMC IN BRAZIL**

**ACMC in Brazil:** David Murphy and I have just completed the fourth ACMC in Brazil which gives us 120 some Meta-Coaches in Brazil. Given that many Meta-Coaches there and some of them full time in Coaching, several are now beginning to talk about *the next level*—PCMC level. So we will probably do that in 2017. As a Co-Trainer, David did a brilliant job. David has become a truly excellent trainer, and no wonder, he took ACMC 7 times as a participant and has now trained it another 7 times. David is a great example of what persistence does! He also now is able to consistently coach at the PCMC level and to benchmark at the highest level.

This was the 77<sup>th</sup> ACMC since 2002 and, again, we had *an awesome team*. David asked me on the day after the Graduation if I was mentally or emotionally tired (which is typical), I said no, I'm not. I attribute that because the team was so enjoyable to work with; we laughed a lot in our meetings together. The team was great because of their attitude—really caring, intelligent, open for more learnings, and very open to feedback.

Team: Ronald, Rodrigo M., Tiago, Rodrigo S., Dayana, Emerson, Dinea, Gilberto, Helder, Juliana, Andrea, Jucelito.

We did have some problems with some who did a good bit of complaining in this particular event; probably more than any other one that I can remember, and for a variety of reasons. That gave us the opportunity to challenge the group, which we did. We noted, to those to whom it applied, that the coach's *character* is a critical piece—if you are a complainer, if you can't even reframe yourself and put a positive spend on the events of your life, how in the world do you think you have the eye or character to coach someone else? Complaining about every little thing that you don't like and that irritates you also indicates not living your life as the person responsible for the quality of your life. Not a good start for a coach! I wrote about that this past Monday in a Neuron's Post.

I will say that the work on *the business of coaching* went as well in Brazil as anywhere. I attribute that to the Team Leaders. The presentations on Day 7 were pretty good, global, but pretty good. The primary point of that 4-day exercise is to *live, think, and breath business*. It is to begin to create a business-brain—one that thinks in terms of value given, delivering to a specialized market (niche), one that sees the essence of coaching in market and selling (communicating your message), *being* the brand so that *who you are* sells what you do with a client in the fierce conversation.

The secondary point of that exercise is to *live, think, and breathe collaboration*. After all, business is *with and through people* so you better be able to create partnerships with clients, colleagues, competitors, etc. Business by its very nature is *collaborative* in nature and a win/lose

mentality, a scarcity–poverty mentality will not only interfere but will sabotage you. You can't go it alone. Try that and you will not create a thriving business. I wish we could really get that point across to everyone in Neuro-Semantics!

After all, Neuro-Semantics is all about collaboration and community. I keep meeting people infected with the disease of NLP scarcity and competition which was the spirit that ruined the original creators of NLP and continue to prevent the field from gaining truly positive public relations. Regarding Meta-Coaching and where we take the Modules of Meta-Coaching, *we require that it be done collaboratively*. Nobody can “own” a district or city or country. How ridiculous! Anyone who has “exclusive rights” for an area is thinking competitively and with a poverty mentality and needs a Meta-Coach!

**Maira Larangeira** did the sponsoring essentially by herself. Her father Dr. Jairo has been turning over more and more of the direction of the NLP Institute, which he created 20-plus years ago, to his daughter. So Maira both sponsored and shadowed—that's doing a lot and she did a good job holding it all together. It's so great to see the younger ones stepping up to this level of leadership. We were at a military venue and drove in a security gate with soldiers saluting us. I asked if it was okay to salute back, and when told yes, I did a good bit of saluting during the week(!). I liked it but was told that some felt it too much restricting because lights had to be out at midnight. Ah, those Brazilians!

### **Sydney Again!**

The last ACMC this year will take us back in Sydney Australia—where it all began. Jay Hedley along with Joseph Scott and James Hayes, of *The Coaching Room*, are the sponsors, and so it should be a really good one. Over the years we have lost track of so many of the Meta-Coaches in Australia, most need to re-visit in order to renew their license, so if that applies to you— come and revisit! We have put revisiting at only 1/4 of the cost so that you can use it as your yearly Professional Development Plan. But if not every year, at least every 4 years. There's no place where you can get such high quality training and benchmarking.

**From: L. Michael Hal**  
**2015 Morpheus #41**  
**October 21, 2015**

## **EXPANDING SELF-AWARENESS IN CLIENTS**

Given the importance of Coaching *as an inward journey of discovery* (Reflection #40), and given that the process of unleashing potentials requires and is based on self-awareness, then how do you, as a Meta-Coach, facilitate this? What are the models and tools that enable you to do that? Here then is a brief formula for *coaching for self-awareness*.

*First, make the invitation.*

On first glance, you might think that inviting your client to go inside might be so obvious and so inevitable that you could wonder, “Why do that?” “Won’t that just naturally happen?” Yet strange as it might seem, it is not. Clients can and do stay outside. They can stay on the surface and avoid going inside on the inner journey. This is especially true for those who are externally referenced. With them you not only have to invite them on the inner journey, you might even have to challenge them repeatedly. For them, it will not be natural.

The inner journey is about a particular kind of intelligence. Howard Gardner, in *Multiple Intelligences* calls it “intra-psychic intelligence.” It is the intelligence that arises as a person discovers oneself, and gets to “Know Thyself.” This is the psychological awareness of one’s strengths and weaknesses, ones talents, potentials, and style. It is awareness of what’s happening in the theater of the mind, what you’re thinking, feeling, and how you are framing and setting meta-levels of frames.

To invite self-awareness, begin with the *awareness questions*. “What are you aware right now as you say that?” Repeat back a person’s words and ask, “having said that, what do you now realize?” “What’s coming to mind that’s been in the back of your mind?” To invite self-awareness, invite the person to take a Meta-Moment. “Let’s step back from our conversation, how are things going? Is this direction right for what you want?”

*Second, release the prohibitions.*

Many people do not go in and develop self-awareness because they are afraid to. They fear what they will find inside. They have negative expectations and beliefs about human nature or about their nature. They may have old memories of hurts and traumas and they simply do not want to go there. Fear of self is a big barrier to self-awareness.

To release the prohibitions, begin by asking the person to give him or herself permission. “As you now go inside and say these words, ‘I give myself permission to become fully aware of myself...’ notice what happens.” To do the same thing with another methodology: access and apply acceptance to self, observation to self, appreciation of self.

With these first two steps you will often hear the client say, “I don’t know.” Expect it. In inviting them to go inside, they will often *not know* what they are thinking, feeling, believing, expecting, etc. Why? Because they have simply not spent much time noticing. So be patient and compassionate, “Yes, that’s to be expected, but it will come. Just give it some time.” With others, they say “I don’t know” because they are not allowed to know, hence the need for permission. In the first case the not-knowing may be due to confusion, lack of distinctions, uncertainty about what to pay attention to, etc. In the second case, the not-knowing could be due to what that kind of intelligence will mean or fear of what one might find inside. An inhibiting meaning could be, “I will be self-centered if I go inside.”

*Third, begin to learn the discipline of self-discovery.*

Because there is an art and a discipline to the process of discovering oneself, it is a learnable subject and one that you can become increasingly skilled at with practice. The first step in this art is to slow down and become mindful. “What am I doing?” “What is in the back of my mind that’s influencing my thinking and representation?” “What am I assuming?” “What kind of thinking am I doing that leads me to these conclusions?” “Am I using any cognitive distortions or falacious thinking patterns?”

The skill of being able to look at yourself with a clear perspective enables self-awareness. So does *mindfulness*—being conscious about what you are thinking, feeling, and doing. Opposite to mindfulness is living life unconscious to yourself, acting without awareness or understanding of yourself, reacting and acting automatically as if a robot. This requires time to slow down, think about what you are doing, your values and standards, and the results you are getting. It involves asking others for feedback— to mirror back to you how they are experiencing you.

*Fourth, enable the person to identify his or her strategy process.*

We often invite clients inside in order for them to discover how they are creating their experiences. This facilitates putting them at cause and deepening their sense of response-ability. So ask, “What are you experiencing inside as you do X?” “How are you *doing* this experience of persistence or resilience, etc.?”

This can be yet another trigger for the “I don’t know” response. Many clients still need to recognize that any and every experience is theirs. “You are the one creating this response and generating this feeling.” By underscoring this, you help them to heighten their awareness and aliveness. Be careful here to *not* ask, “What are you feeling?” Asked in that way can convey the idea that the feeling is doing something inside the person, instead of the person *doing* the feeling. But the person is *not* the victim of the emotion, the person is the creator of the emotion!

From: L. Michael Hal  
2015 Morpheus #42  
October 28, 2015

## THE DYNAMIC DIFFERENCE QUESTION IN META-COACHING

You know the 18 questions of the Well-Formed Outcome. Originally, this came from the basic NLP pattern by that name which began with 5 questions back in 1983 as Leslie Cameron Bandler presented them then. By 1988 there were 7 to 9 questions in various lists, and I put a list together in 1989 with 10 questions. We then used that list when Bob and I wrote in the books, *User's Manual of the Brain, Volumes I and II* (1997). Then with the development of Meta-Coaching, getting feedback from several people, I expanded the list to 18 sometime about 2007.

I thought that would be the end of it. But not so. Now we need more. And as much as I really do not want to keep expanding the list, the latest developments with this pattern requires it. There are two additional questions which I find myself using and which I have detected in a few expert coaches which have to be added to the list. If you have been following the writings about *Landscaping* this year, you may have already noted at least one of these questions. Now it is time to make these additional questions explicit and add them to the WFO model.

Let's start with Question One: *What do you want that will make your life fuller and richer? What do you want that will make a transformative difference?* As you know, this is question #1 of the WFO questions. When the client actually answers this question, you have *the desired state*. As you also know, clients do not always answer this question. There are two ways in which they will not answer it. First, they will tell you what they do *not* want and second, they will tell you the *effect* that they want, not the desired outcome itself. Sometimes a client will tell you both things which avoids question one: "I don't want conflict, I want peace." That statement doesn't tell you a thing. They want "peace" with whom, in what context, about what? Who are they now conflicting with and about what?

Question one implies another question. If "effective conflict resolution skills" is what you *want*, then the implication is that you *do not have that right now*. So, *What do you now have?* What is your current state? This gives us the first additional question, one that I've been referring to for the past two years.

#1: What do you want?	— Desired State
#2: What do you now have?	— Present State

So far, so good. Right? Okay, now for the second question that we're going to add to the WFO questions. Let's call this one *the difference question*. This question comes from Gregory Bateson's famous distinction about "what gets onto the map" when he spoke at the General Semantics Conference in 1950 about the relationship of the map and the territory. He later wrote

about “the difference that makes a difference” in his book, *Steps Toward an Ecology of Mind* (1972) in describing the importance of the critical details that enable a modeler to get the critical success factors of an experience. Here then is the difference question in several forms:

- #3: What’s the difference between your present state and the desired state?
- What’s the difference in what you are doing?
- What’s the difference in your skill level?
- What’s the difference in your understanding, beliefs, permission, decision, etc.?

Now the second question that we have had in the WFO questions has seemed to be a tough question for many coaches and a difficult one to get their heads around. “What will you see, hear, and/or feel when you get what you want?” We can now make it easier by taking the current Question #2 and integrating it into the difference question. Doing this provides more contrastive information between present state and desired state:

- #3: What’s the difference in what you are seeing and hear now and what you will be seeing and hearing?

To practice this in your coaching, get a blank sheet of paper when you are coaching and draw two large circles, one for “Present State” and one for “Desired State.” Put a line with an arrow pointing toward the future state between the two states. Let this line stand for “Difference.” Then ask a series of difference questions, What is different? What else will be different? How different? Different in what ways?

As you do this, you now have identified *what will change* in the coaching session. I recently noticed this in Brazil when working with the Assist Team. Then on Days 5 and 6 I noticed it again when benchmarking participants who were coaching someone for a change. “What change do you want to make?” The answer is *the difference* between Now (PS) and Then (DS). A habit will change, a belief will change, “I will change the way I react to his triggers,” the symptoms of the state will change, the state will change. Another way to ask this is, “What has to change from present state so that you can step into and experience your desired state?”

I should have recognized this a long time ago. From the beginning of Meta-Coaching, 2002, the ACMC manual has defined “change” as “difference.” Palm to forehead, “Duhhh! Of course!” And since 1998 when I did some of my first trainings on creativity and leadership, I have been defining a “*problem*” as “*the difference* between present state and desired state.” In Meta-Coaching we define a “problem” as that which is “in the way” interfering, blocking, and stopping us from getting what we want (desired state). So there’s a lot of redundancy in all of this as you can see.

What’s really valuable about this is that if you, as the coach, cannot help the client specify *the differences* between now and then, then the client doesn’t have sufficient clarity about what he or she truly wants. And when you do facilitate the precision of those differences—you are fully really to take that “what,” run the WFO questions and get your coaching contract.



**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #43**  
**Nov. 4, 2015**

## COACHING PRECISION

If you ask about *the grounding* of Meta-Coaching, think—the NLP Communication Model which is a model that is all about precision. That model is about how to communicate meaning in more precise ways so that message-sent and message-received can be brought together and made a consistent message. That’s why, in Meta-Coaching, we use The Meta-Model of Language which was originally introduced in *The Structure of Magic* and which Bandler asked me to write the 25-year update in 1997, *Communication Magic*.

Now the problem in communication is this—most people communicate in global, over-generalized, and vague ways and do so in such a way that their communications are not clear or precise either to themselves or to others. Sometimes this is so much true that their communications are worse than just too global, they are downright confusing—deleting too much and distorting too much. That’s why coaching begins by helping them *get clear* on what they are thinking and trying to say. That’s why you ask *clarification questions, checking questions, testing questions and even exploration questions*— all in an attempt to enable the speaker to be more precise.

Using global words (non-specific nouns and verbs, and nominalizations), fluffy ideas, and metaphors actually prevent clarity. They can even sabotage clarity. Then as a coach, we scratch our heads and we ask, “What are you talking about?” If you don’t do this, then you will be glossing over the person’s meanings in a state of delusion that you understand what the person is saying. Or you will be letting the words hypnotize you. If so, then the words will be taking you inside to your referents about those words (not the clients). Then you will be inventing and hallucinating and mind-reading all kinds of things that you then project onto the client. That’s not good for clarity or effectiveness in coaching.

I see this happen every day when we do the APMC training and it occurs all around the world. This is the big challenge for coaches who use the global meta-program. And worse of all—most of them do not have a clue about this. They do not even realize how general the words they are hearing, they actually *think* they are understanding, and so they don’t even check. We call this a blind-spot, and it is one of the biggest blind-spots that a coach can have. That’s why we emphasize in Meta-Coaching—*work for precision in the coaching conversation. Specify. Ask the clarity question to check the words.*

The big question then is *how*. How do you go from Global (general) to Specific (details)? How do you get more precision and clarity as a Coach? Here are some suggestions:

- *Ask the meta-model challenge questions for every vague word or nominalization.* If your client talks about criticism, ask, “Who is criticizing who? About what? What are the

words that he is using? When? Where? How are you deciding to call it ‘criticism?’ What else could you call it? Go back, keep refreshing the Meta-Model distinctions and use them until they become second-nature.

- *Ask the clarity question.* This explores the person’s unique *dictionary definition* of the word. “How are you using this term ‘motivation?’” “What does it mean in your personal dictionary?” “When you say ‘leadership,’ how are you using that word?” “I know how I use the word ‘secretive,’ how are you using it in this context?”
- *Take the words and representationally track the see-hear referents of the words onto a mental movie in your mind.* This is the skill that’s called “Representationally Tracking.” It means to track from the empirical words directly to your inner movie. I can’t see a “cute” dog. I can see dog. I can see a brown dog. Whatever I cannot see something, like “cute,” I then have to ask more questions, “What do you mean by ‘cute?’” “Cute in what way?” “What is your criteria for cute?”
- *Treat each word as a category.* Then begin asking, “What are the members of this class?” If your client talks about motivation, treat “motivation” as a classification. “What kinds of motivation are there? What are the factors of motivation? How many dimensions of motivation are there?” “What are you including in the class of motivating things?” Do this with vague nouns and verb and with nominalizations, and assuming it is a class or category, search for the members of the class. NLP use the phrase “chunking up and down.” To “chunk down” to more precise details, set the term aside and ask, “What are the members of the class?”
  - Leadership:* thought leaders, administrative leaders, managerial leaders, heroic leaders, charismatic leaders, visionary leaders, etc.
  - Visionary Leaders:* Creating a vision, inspiring a vision, languaging a vision, sustaining a vision, embodying a vision, etc.
  - Creating a vision:* Designing a vision, brainstorming a vision, deciding on a vision, etc.

Getting clear is not easy. That’s why you have a job as a coach— to coach for clarity. Only then can client make good decisions, create effective plans, access valued resources, and make generative changes. Of all the coaching conversations, clarity is the premier coaching conversation.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #44**  
**Nov. 11, 2015**

## **GROUP & TEAM COACHING UPDATE**

We have just completed the second training in *Group and Team Coaching Assessment* and graduating seven more with GTMC credentials. While I have run *the skills training* for the psychology and competencies of Group Coaching more than a dozen times around the world, this was only the second time for conducting part two—Assessing the skills of Group Coaches. Seven applied for it and seven reached the benchmark competencies. Mandy Chai co-trained the 7 days with me in Guangzhou China and together we did the benchmarking.

As a result, I have learned a tremendous amount and am excited about doing the full training four times this coming year. One learning is this—*Group and Team Coaching* is both easier and more difficult than one-to-one coaching. It requires all of the skills of individual coaching and more. That makes it more difficult. It requires an exponential increase in being able to calibrate all of the participants, track their responses, listen to them, support them, question them, etc. This also makes it more challenging.

Yet in another way it is easier to achieve—that's because instead of trying to help your client figure out what he or she wants, you generally know ahead of time what is needed and what kind of a conversation you'll be facilitating. And knowing *what kind* of group conversation enables you to have a good idea of what you'll be doing with the group. You may be clarifying, vision setting, decision-making, problem-defining, problem-solving, resolving a conflict in the group, mediating, giving feedback, aligning a group, grooming leadership, etc.

These are also the critical reasons why *Group and Team Coaching* has become the fastest growing niche in the field of Coaching and why so many organizations are turning to group coaching for enabling their people to learn faster and function more effectively. By its very nature, business is a collective experience. It is *with* and *through* people. This fact requires that people *learn* how to communicate, understand, coordinate, collaborate, etc. with each other. Trainers can train the models and skills for these things, but it is the Group Coach who can facilitate people to truly learn how to incorporate and practice this as a way of being.

The GTMC credentials were given to the 7 Meta-Coaches upon demonstrating competence with the 9 skills. These include the basic core skills as well as Framing, Governing or Managing the group processes, Opening & Closing, and Challenging. Several had to do shorter sessions than the 45 minute sessions because they did not show all of the skills sufficiently in the session. They may have needed to do 10 minutes of opening with more framing and state induction, for example. Several had to do an entire second session. Each session was done on the stage with

five members of a group and each was given a scenario description and then a task to accomplish. In that way they were told which one of the ten or more Group Coaching Conversation they were to lead.

Doing this in China offered some unique challenges. Not only did I hear everything through a translator, but many of the words I used in English and that they used in Chinese did not easily translate back and forth. This is always a delight and challenge and sometimes frustration and always a wonderful opportunity. Often what I know very well and take for granted and assume it's the same for others does not translate very well at all. Perhaps there are no available words to convey the meaning in. That's tough. But even tougher is when there's no such concept in the other language. And even tougher (!) when there are opposing concepts so that they preclude the new concept and even deny or eliminate that concept. When that happens, we really have a problem.

What do we then do? The Clarification Conversation. "What I mean by the word 'X' is this and this" and then I operationalize the term as best I can. *Operationalize* means I use see-hear-feel language and put it in a step-by-step form of actions that the word indicates. Then I check. "When you hear this, what are you hearing? What does that mean to you?" Often what was repeated back was *not* what I meant. So we'd go through that again, finding new and different words to try to get the significance of the message across. We did that with what may strike you as obvious words: problem, conversation, dialogue, outcome, solution, feedback, etc.

One of the new skills that I have put into the training involves *how to keep all of the people in the group focused on the given objective*. After all, focusing the attention of the group and maintaining that attention lies at the heart of group coaching and determines the quality of the group's experience. We now have the key distinctions for what to calibrate to and how to gain and regain attention.

This time we used the seventh edition of the Manual, I have now extensively updated it to make it the eighth, adding another 16 pages, several new exercises, and sorting out the themes of the days as we do in ACMC. Upon graduation, several talked about how proud they were to get either the Attendance Certificate or the GTMC Certificate. One person said he had received so many certificates over the years, but this one really mattered. "It stands for high quality and high standards. This one is special."

It took four days to get seven people through, an average of two a day. My intention and design is to frame the training and participants in such a way that in Jakarta and Sweden we will be able to get three persons through to certification each day and after that, four. Coming also this next year, I hope to get the other Meta-Coach Trainers up to speed so they can run and benchmark *Group & Team*, and after that, we will begin to use Assist Teams with the training.

From: L. Michael Hall  
2015 Morpheus #45  
Nov. 18, 2015

## THE TRICKIEST COACHING CONVERSATION

When you ask a client what he wants and he says, “Confidence,” you are in the presence of a situation that could be *the trickiest coaching conversation of all*. So, a warning—Beware! Your next words will be critical if you are to avoid getting trapped in a dead-end exchange that will go nowhere. You’ve probably fallen into this trap. Most of us have. You may get trapped in it during your next coaching conversation. Many who read this article will. The distinctions that follow are subtle and therefore require careful reading and implementation. So, if you’re ready, here we go.

It all begins with what sounds like a perfectly reasonable desired outcome. “I want to have more confidence.” That’s what they say. Yet is that always helpful? Think about it. It all depends, doesn’t it? Further the request for more confidence can mean so many things to different clients. So you have to ask what your client is really asking for. So *inquire* before you jump into coaching to it. Ask the clarity check question. Don’t assume that you know what the person means. So what are the range of things that *confidence* could mean to different clients?

1) “*Confidence*” as assurance of being able to do something. The person wants to be *sure* that she can actually *do* something. In other words, “confidence” to her is equal to “being sure.” The person is saying, “I will only feel confident when I have a guarantee that I will succeed in what I want to do. If I don’t feel sure, if I feel any slight twinges of doubt or frustration, then I’m not ‘confident.’” Now the more risk-averse a person is, then the more that person will be questioning his ability, doubting his skills, and not sure. Then, with being unsure, the person feels the lack of confidence. The focus for this person is on the feeling not being sure rather than on developing the competence for being able to do the skill.

*Confidence* literally refers to your *faith (fideo)* in or *with (con)* yourself. It speaks about your faith that you can *do* something. That’s why confidence requires evidence that you *have* done it and that means it is a thing of history— you have in the past demonstrated several or many times that you can do something. Now you can trust yourself. That evidence convinces you that you can do it, that you are *competent in that skill*. So confidence is based on competence. No competence—no confidence. Confidence without competence is a false and delusional trust in yourself. We call people who are confident when they can’t demonstrate competence, fools.

Given that, do you really want to help someone who wants to feel confidence to feel it if they are incompetent? Isn’t that undermining their skill development? If they feel confident, then why would they devote the energy and effort to learning or practicing?

2) *“Confidence” as comfortable in learning and doing.* Others will use the word “confidence” to essentially mean “comfort.” In other words, “confidence” is equal to a feeling, to *feeling* comfort, at ease, no stress, no strain, no discomfort, etc. For this person, any discomfort equates with the lack of confidence. She can therefore lose “confidence” very quickly whenever there are any feelings of discomfort. This will be true for almost everything new, different, and challenging. Yet because in taking on new things, we are inevitably required to get out of our “comfort zone,” all new learning and practicing will be uncomfortable, even unpleasant, disturbing, etc. If this automatically equates to not having confidence, then all new learnings and challenges equate with the lack of confidence.

3) *“Confidence” as self-efficacy for future unknown challenges.* Yet another uses the word “confidence” as a synonym for “trust in myself to be able to handle some future challenge.” This person is “confident” if he knows that he can trust himself to figure something out, handle any challenge that arises, and use his wits and relationship skills to create solutions. This is what the person means by the word “confidence.”

Actually, he is using “confidence” for a different concept, for self-efficacy, which refers to a future event. Most people develop this after numerous experiences of becoming competent in something. They then learn something about their learning experiences — “It’s just a matter of learning, practice, and eventually I will get it.” The more times they walk the pathway from incompetence to competence, the more likely they can jump a logical level and conclude, “I have done this many times; this is just another instance of moving from incompetence to competence. I know I will eventually get it.”

4) *“Confidence” as a sense of self-value and worth.* Others confuse self-esteem with self-confidence, so when they ask for confidence, they want to have a strong sense of personal value in some context. Yet because they frame their personal value and worth as conditional, then whenever they engage in something new, something they are not all that competent and skilled at, they then question their self-esteem and feel that their sense of self is fragile or shaking in a given role or activity. Now they want “confidence.” They want self-assurance that they are worthwhile.

The bottom line is that you just never know *how a person is using a word.* This is especially true when they say that *“I want to more confidence.”* So check it out. Find out what they are really talking about— assurance, comfort, trust in self, esteem of self. You’ll be glad you did; and they will be even more glad.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #46**  
**Nov. 25, 2015**

## **MORE ABOUT SLIPPERY CONVERSATIONS**

After the article last week, *The Trickiest Coaching Conversation* (#46), Kate Rafter [[4rafters@gmail.com](mailto:4rafters@gmail.com)], a Meta-Coach in Sydney Australia wrote and describes a coaching conversation that she recently had with a client that related to that article.

“When I began a coaching session the other night my client said she wanted 'a calm, knowing that she'll be okay when doing exams'. Argh! I knew straight away that was a slippery one! I questioned for clarity as I tried to get a more concrete outcome. Also asked about the 'differences', unable to get something down to earth to work with. She wanted belief in her ability, state management, beliefs about 'handling it' and the like. I thought we weren't getting a concrete, specific KPI and I didn't know how to direct my questions there.

“So, I started asking the, 'And when you get that, what does that get you?' question. We cycled through pride and accomplishment, self-worth ... and finally hit self-approval. Here she went deep inside. I reflected back to her it that sounded like she put herself on the line and not her knowledge.

“She said yes, that is what she was doing. The difference was that in other challenges in life she had self-approval, internal, self-efficacy, but in exams, she operated from external approval from teachers, examiners, employers, etc. It was a good outcome in the end because she had a breakthrough that got her new frame— she said she is now doing the exam for herself and not anybody else. It's not about what others think.”

“I also asked, ‘How do you do calmness? How do you do state management?’ I asked because she was already doing this in parenting her sons. She kept saying that she knows all that intellectually, but there was something else going on. We found that something else going on up higher in her exam matrix.”

I congratulated Kate here for recognizing the meta-program pattern of external reference and enabling her client to move to a more internal reference. In terms of effective Meta-Coaching, she reflected that back to her client, “It sounded like she was putting himself on the line” and she framed the difference between person and knowledge.

*It is asking for an “emotion” that makes a conversation slippery. And there’s a reason why. It is because emotions are symptoms. Therefore rather than trying to pursue it directly, it is much better to pursue it indirectly. Like happiness, pursue it directly and it vanishes or it morphs into something other than “happiness.” But pursue it indirectly by doing what is meaningful and valuable to you and then the joyful and happy feelings of accomplishment and significance come. So with emotions. Kate ended her email to me by asking a really great question:*

“My question is, when a client asks for a feeling or emotion, where to go next? What 'critical words' to use? I've studied this before. I just need to find this information again.”

So what to do? Here's what I wrote back to her. I wrote that since every emotion is a symptom of the mind-body system, I would immediately ask one of the following questions:

- You want X emotion? Okay, so what do you have to do in order to naturally experience that emotion?
- Since that emotion seems important for you, then it will arise from what skill or competence? What do you need to be able to do skillfully so that you can experience that emotion?
- What belief, understanding, self-definition or identity, etc. will generate that emotion? Do you believe that? Do you have that understanding? So what needs to change so that you do?

Now if that's jumping into things too quickly, and it may be, then you will probably want to set some frames about emotions. That's what I usually do. I will say something like the following to *set the frame* about emotions:

- That's great that you want to feel that. So what do you have to do or experience to get that as a result?
- Great! And if your emotions are symptoms of your meanings and your experiences in the world, what meanings and what experiences do you have to engage in to get that emotion?

In terms of *the conversation landscapes* in a Coaching Conversation— Present State (I) — journey over the gap (II) to Desired State (III) embedded within numerous meta-levels of beliefs and understandings (IV) ... emotions are *effects* from the Desired Outcome (III). If you can see this in your mind, or even sketch this out for yourself and/or your client, it will keep you focused about where *emotions* come into play. Then, knowing that, you can back up to the things the client has to do to get what he wants (WFO #7 and #11) so that he can get into his desired outcome state . . . at which time, then the resultant emotions will occur.

To your best Meta-Coaching ever!



**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #47**  
**Dec. 2, 2015**

## **LEARNING COACHING SKILLS AND ACMC AT HONG KONG**

I'm always learning at the ACMC trainings, in fact, I always set a goal of one or two facets of Coaching that I want to learn in more depth. Yet I am also always learning things that I did not set out to learn. One of them this time concerns how clients mis-diagnose their situation. That will be the subject next week in the next Meta-Coach Reflection. Just this past weekend we completed another *Coaching Mastery* in Hong Kong, this time with 24 new Meta-Coaches, and that takes us to over 2,400 Meta-Coaches worldwide in 51 countries.

### ***Learning the Skills***

Coaching requires skills. So we ask, "How does a person learn the coaching skills?" Answer: By hands-on experiential practice under supervision—that's how. This explains the *coaching labs* that we do in the ACMC training— *laboratories of experience for learning*. They are designed to enable coaches-in-training to see what they can do, where they are at, what they need to unlearn, what they need to learn, and what to implement in their coaching. The labs are for practice and for experimenting. In that sense, they are more for the coach than for the client. That's why we encourage the frame, "Because this is an experimental session, we may not get to your outcome in this session. If not, there are additional sessions to come."

No wonder then that the score does not matter. The score just let's you know at what skill level you are functioning in that session with that client. Further, it doesn't count anyway. Two years ago we changed the sessions from being coaching sessions that counted for assessment to experiments. That took off the pressure and enabled people to focus on learning. Although some people still pressure themselves about the score anyway. The coaching labs are for you to learn and experiment, to get feedback about what you next need to do or learn or unlearn in order to become more effective as a coach.

### ***Skill Assessment***

Then comes assessment. Assessment occurs *whenever* you are ready. It's a matter of learning and practice— how long depends on your commitment to yourself. To get yourself ready for assessment, and also to figure out when you are ready, attend the MCF chapter meetings for feedback and learning. Also get into the habit of video-taping your coaching sessions and benchmark yourself. The numbers give you an idea of where you are. *One* indicates that you are probably a month away from assessment. *One-and-a-half* indicates you are 2 to 3 weeks away; at *two* you are one or two weeks away. That is, *if* you are doing at least one coaching session every day.

The skill assessment is usually the last of the required provisions for the full certificate. When you finally demonstrate your coaching skills at the 2.5 level, *this is for your confidence*. It is not for the public. It primarily enables *you* to know and to say to yourself, “I have reached the 2.5 benchmarks and been signed off as having demonstrated the required skills in actual sessions.”

### **Coaching as Professional Communication**

Question: “Can Coaching be for people not interested in becoming a Professional Coach?”

Answer: Yes. In the training we just completed in Hong Kong, more than 50 percent of the participants were *not* there to become professional coaches, but rather to add coaching to their professional communication skills. As doctors and nurses they came to learn how to manage via the coaching skills having been trained by Paul Chan, M.D., in his courses of Modules I and II at the Hong Kong hospital.

Coaching is *communication*. And everything in the Meta-Coaching system is based on *the NLP Communication Model*. Whenever a person struggles with the seven basic skills, I always ask, “How well do you know the Meta-Model?” That’s almost always the problem. The person has not had a good training in the NLP Meta-Model of Language. They have not learned the art of *Representational Tracking* or asking the precision questions. If that’s you, then get the book *Communication Magic* (2001 Crown House Publications) and study it until you know the model inside-out. You’ll be glad that you did. If you are planning for PCMC level, consider this a prerequisite! But The Meta-Model isn’t just for Coaches, it’s for anyone who wants to understand how to be a professional communicator.

### **Advanced Learning and the Assist Team**

When you are on the Assist Team, you primarily learn the two core coaching skills of receiving and giving feedback. This time in Hong Kong we had a fresh, almost entirely brand new team, only three had been on a previous team somewhere. So the team members got a lot of intensive training in those coaching skills as well as group coaching and leading. That was a lot of challenge as well—the challenge of detailing 100+ sub-skills to get on the same page with the trainers. That’s a big challenge and it takes most people three to four times on the team to achieve it.

When you are up for a challenge like that, and want to review (not as a participant) but from a meta-level, contact the sponsor for an APMC. (See the 2016 schedule). Most of the places where we conduct the APMC training repeat it every 18 months although some sponsor it every year. In 2016 we will be in Shanghai in June/July and in Hong Kong in November.

### **Becoming a Meta-Coach Trainer**

Almost every *Coaching Mastery* training now includes people in the process of becoming a Meta-Coach Trainer. In Hong Kong, Dr. Paul Chan was that person. He shadowed the training with Mandy Chai and I and did a bit of co-training with us. He is in the process along with about 21 others and that list keeps growing. Many thanks to Mandy and APTI for being such influential sponsors of Meta-Coaching and Self-Actualization Psychology in China and Hong Kong!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #48**  
**Dec. 16, 2015**

## **WHEN CLIENT'S MIS-DIAGNOSE**

I made a new “learning” during the ACMC in Hong Kong this November. The “learning” arose one day when a similar pattern occurred during the three sessions we did one afternoon, it occurred three times in a row. Now I had seen it before, but always one session here and another there. Never back to back. It was that repeating of the pattern which really brought it to my attention. What repeated was that *the client mis-diagnosed his or her situation*.

Now that clients mis-diagnose is really not a new thing or that infrequent. It happens. And depending on the client, it can happen frequently. The flawed diagnosis, in fact, could be the problem that keeps interfering and blocking a person from unleashing his or her dream. The client “thinks” X is what he wants when it really is not. The client “thinks” Y is the solution or the resource needed when it is not. Often a person is just cognitively wrong. If you, as the coach, do not check and test the client’s statements from the beginning, the session can get off track from the start. When that happens, it’s very difficult to get the conversation back on track.

Here are some examples:

- I procrastinate — I need more discipline to practice (e.g., more perfectly).
- I have a problem with anger — I need to get rid of my anger.
- I think of my problem as a monster — I need to defeat the monster.
- I want to be without stress, I’d like to pretend I don’t have so many things to do.
- I need to relax and to be calm and without stress.”

In the first example, *procrastination* seems like a problem. To the question, “What do you want?” a client says, “I want to stop procrastinating.” Hopefully the coach will chase out some of the details before going further: What do you procrastinate doing? When do you procrastinate on that activity? Is the procrastinating appropriate or not? What criteria do you use for evaluating when you are ready to take action? How are you using the term ‘procrastination?’ Then after that intelligence gathering, one can check to see if the procrastinate is driven by perfectionism. It usually is. *Perfectionism* means, “I’m not ready yet, I need more knowledge, skill, practice, etc.” “It could have been better.” The mis-diagnosis is that the client does *not* need more discipline or more practice, the client simply *needs to step out and take action and learn from it*. Maybe he needs courage. Maybe she needs self-acceptance of fallibility.

In the second example, *anger* is sometimes defined as a problem. Of course, anger is just an emotion and as such is not a problem. Again, first gather intelligence from the client about the anger. When do you get angry? At what or who? Is it appropriate? Is its intensity appropriate? What do you do with the anger? How do you express it? Anger, as such, is a symptom. It results from expectations, standards, criteria, values in contrast with some experience— the map

as measures against some experience. The mis-diagnosis here is thinking that getting rid of an emotion is the solution. That is almost never the solution. The proper solution is to adjust one's thinking, expecting, exaggerated standards, etc. or updating one's skill set for handling strong emotions and communicating them effectively.

Along this line I have heard clients ask to "get rid of their temper," "to get rid of my impatience," "my need to control things," "my fears," etc.

In the third example *the problem is stated as a metaphor*. Recently a Meta-Coach told me about a client who framed her problem as a monster. "It's a monster" she said. But that's a mis-diagnosis. That's not the problem, that's a metaphor! So as with any nominalization, first do your necessary information gathering to determine what that metaphor *stands for* in the person's life.

*Relax and be without stress*. I can't tell you how many times (dozens and dozens) that I've heard clients present this as their diagnosis. Feeling stressed, they assume they need to be without stress. If I was the coach, I would ask, "You mean dead?"

In all of these examples of mis-diagnosis, if you don't check and test, and then challenge and run quality control questions right from the beginning, your session will probably go wrong right from the start. Then none of your WFO questions will work to bring out a well-formed outcome for the person.

- To do the *checking*, present what you hear, then check with the person to make sure you are hearing what he or she is saying correctly. People do mis-speak.
- To *test*, ask if the person really wants that? Do you really want to talk about X? Do you really want to achieve Y? These are yes/no questions that gain a commitment to the subject.
- To *quality control*, ask any question that explores the quality of the subject: This would be good for you? Enhance you as a person? Empower you? Does this represent your highest spiritual pathway?
- To *challenge*, ask the person if this is a stretch for them? If it calls for a higher response from them? If he is selling himself short? If she is making an excuse? If he is avoiding responsibility?

A final warning. You may be able to answer—"What *kind* of coaching conversation does your client want to have with you?" Yet even that could be wrong. That's why we check, test, and quality control. If you are there in the coaching session in service of the client, then it does not help to spend the session on exploring and solving the wrong subject.

Use *Landscape Awareness* to keep yourself focused. All benchmarkers are now trained to use the landscape format to track the coaching lab and to use it to give feedback to the coach.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #49**  
**Dec. 23, 2015**

## **META-COACHING IN SYDNEY**

We completed the last *Coaching Mastery* of 2015 this past weekend in Sydney Australia. That is where we began Meta-Coaching many years ago. We began *The Meta-Coaching System* in Sydney with the first one in 2002 and this past weekend we ended the 80<sup>th</sup> presentation of the ACMC training, Coaching Mastery in Sydney. Comparing where we were at the beginning to where we are now indicates how Meta-Coaching has grown:

- In 2002 we conducted one training, in 2015 we conducted 14 ACMCs.
- In 2002 we have 30 Meta-Coaches worldwide, in 2015 we have 2,450.
- In 2002 we were working with three models: NLP Communication, Meta-States, and Matrix. Today we have eight models. The other five are: Axes of Change, Meta-Programs, Benchmarking, Self-Actualization Quadrants, and Facilitation Model.
- In 2002 there were no benchmarks, today we have developed benchmarks on 50 coaching skills and have a book on how to create benchmarks for intangible experiences.
- Then there were no MCF or MCF chapters, today there are 70 some MCF chapters around the world.

With this post, **we welcome 34 new Meta-Coaches**. Altogether we had 36 participants and, including the Assist Team, we had people from Australia, Norway, South Africa, Singapore, United States, and Canada. Our two re-visitors was Tone from Norway and Annie from Canada. We did not have a single person re-visiting from Australia. Ideally, I would like to see 10 to 20 percent of the participants as re-visitors. By way of contrast, Annie Letourneau came all the way from Canada to re-visit as a participant. After having been on the Assist Team 5 times she came to re-experience the training. And that showed in her coaching as well as in her coaching business.

We had a really very good Assist Team even though it was a “new” one. For most of them, it was their first time on the team and so as always, we struggle to get the benchmarking coordinated so everyone was on the same page. I was impressed with the openness and supportiveness of the team and the learnings and insights shared in the team meetings.

I was even more impressed on how all of the team leaders worked on their “Moment of Inspiration” for the Graduation and without question, it was the very best ever. In terms of creating and delivering inspiration, it was truly inspirational and a great way to end the coaching boot camp. I began putting an emphasis on this during the past year because inspiration is at the heart of coaching. It’s one of the things that coaching clients want and need. For that matter, we all need inspiration for what we do. We need inspiration in order to keep our vision fresh, exciting, and compelling. We need inspiration so that we persist in pursuing high quality—so

that we are resilient and so that we keep hope.

This was the second time that *The Coaching Room* has sponsored Meta-Coaching in Sydney and they have decided to make it a regular event ... every December (which is summer in Australia) —possibly a great way to get away during the holiday season next year. James Hayes with the Coaching Room lead the Assist Team this year and will be co-training APMC with me next year.

This year also we (the Meta-Coach Trainers) have focused on getting the teams to study, learn, and present the business material for how to run a coaching business. The design is first to learn the business content of running a coaching business—how to think and operate as a business person. There is also another design, namely, to facilitate coaches to learn *business writing skills* (the Executive Summary), *business presenting skills* (the Presentation), and *business responding skills* (the Q & A section). In that way when you go in to make a presentation to HR or to a board, you will know what you are up against and be able to do it well.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2015 Morpheus #50**  
**Dec. 30, 2015**

## **COACHING FROM THE KNOW-NOTHING STATE**

If there is a state you should *know* about and abundantly use, it is one that is as difficult to access as it sounds ironic—the *know-nothing state*. Yet, what is this state really and why is it so important? And, where did it come from?

You might not know this, but *the Know-Nothing state* has actually been in the field of NLP from the beginning. In the early days around 1975 the early NLP developers described it as “stopping the world.” “The world” here refers to your construct of reality. So “stopping the world” is the process of where you stop using your constructs, and moving to an innocent and open state. They also used Perls’ statement, “Lose your mind and come to your senses” to describe it. So it has been around for a long time.

*What is it?* The know-nothing state is a state wherein you *release* the many things that can blind you from another’s reality and that can filter what *is* from getting through to your perception and understanding. By accessing a know-nothing state, you can start your coaching as cleanly and purely as possible. Of course, it is not possible to literally *know nothing*. There are many things that when you know them, you cannot even perceive or see without that knowledge influencing you. But you can try.

In the know-nothing state, you release your agendas, your assumptions, your expectations, your values, your meta-programs, etc. All of these factors in human thinking and processing color what you think and experience so that you do not see things as they are, but through your filters. Of course, when that happens, you are not in direct contact with your client.

1) *Agendas*. An “agenda” is what you are attempting to do. It is your goal, objective, outcome, design. When you listen to your client through your agenda—you use a very strong instrumental filter, so strong that you then “hear” things that fits your agenda. What’s your agenda? Is it to get results and demonstrate that you can solve problems, fix things, or heal wounded hearts? Is your agenda to demonstrate that you are a great coach and supremely gifted? Is your agenda to get a 2.5 from the benchmarker?

2) *Assumptions*. Perhaps the hardest thing to detect is when and how you are listening through your assumptions. Because your assumptions are all those premises that you simply accept as true without question, they are almost invisible to you. After all, by definition you are *assuming* that they are real and important. These unquestioned beliefs are your starting points for acting so, to you, there does not seem to be anything before them. Ah, but there’s where you are mistaken. The word presupposition tells the fuller story. A *pre-supposition* is a supposition,

what you are supposing is true that you use *pre-* or before you start.

3) *Expectations*. An expectation refers to what you anticipate will happen in the future. Unlike the presupposition which refers to a past belief or premise that you use, an expectation refers to your beliefs, hopes, desires, fears, worries, etc. about future occurrences. You can *expect* the best; you can *expect* the worst. You can expect in a tentative way or in an absolute way. When your expectation is absolute, it is like a foregone conclusion and you can predict it as if it is determined and nothing can prevent it. When you get to this point, mind-reading becomes truly toxic. At least if it is tentative, there's a little room for change. And expectations are especially powerful for other-referent people, the expectation sets up (consciously or unconsciously) a self-organizing attractor so that what we expect tends to invite the very expectation.

4) *Values*. Values are the things that you consider important. What you believe is important or valuable for attaining some goal is your value. So with every agenda there are values. And within assumptions are your assumptions about what's important. And *knowing* what is important or unimportant can blind you to your client's values.

5) *Meta-Programs*. These perceptual filters are *meta* to content information and reveal a "way of thinking" (thinking pattern) which generates your content. Learning to see in any particular way requires a corresponding "kind of thinking" and when you do anything repetitively, it habituates. Perceptual patterns become meta-programs and "give you eyes for" certain values, assumptions, agendas, etc.

Each of these—agendas, assumptions, and expectations—represents a *form of knowing* that you bring to your listening and that imposes a filter on your listening. Knowing these things then prevents you from really seeing, hearing, and sensing your client. So in *know-nothing* you release these—you give up your agendas, assumptions, and expectations, your willingness.

The willingness to give up and release your *knowings* is challenging because you have spent a life time developing them. And they usually serve you well. And now, give them up? Are you kidding? And even if I was willing to give them up ... for a time ... during the session, how am I supposed to do that? The *knowing* is so deep.

To *know-nothing* is your intentional choice to refuse to let your agendas, assumptions, and expectations get in the way and blind you. To do that, first get very well acquainted with yourself, with your presuppositions of these knowings so that you can detect them when you are tempted to use them. Once you identify these knowings you can then take them into account when you're listening so you can question yourself, "Am I detecting something out there, or am I imposing my way of seeing on something ambiguous?"

I use *know-nothing* by using the "as if" frame of innocence. "If I was an innocent and naive child— what would I ask? What would I see? What would I be curious about? If you have done the *Unleashing Vitality* workshop, this is "the Innocent Eye." "If you were three, what would you see?" Here's to your Know-Nothing coaching state!



