

MORPHEUS

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ONWARD TO COMPETENCY

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MORPHEUS — 2018

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From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #1
January 3, 2018
A New Year's Resolution

LEAN AND LEARN!

How about this for a New Year's Resolution: "I will make more learnable mistakes this year!" After all, success comes to those who are willing to make mistakes— they make mistakes that they can learn from. How about you? How open or bold are you about making mistakes and learning from them? Those who are most successful know this truth. They know that the more mistakes, and the quicker you make them, and the more you learn from them— the more successful you will be.

This is "trial and error" learning. You try something, you make errors along the way, you examine the errors, you get feedback, you make corrections, you try again. This is experiential learning and not the stale and stagnant form of academic learning where you fear making mistakes, fear looking foolish, fear getting an X-mark on your paper. Experiential learning is the learning of anyone with a true scientific mindset and who is willing to experiment in order to see what will happen. Then what others may call a mistake, you call an experiment. What others fear as lowering their sense of self-value, you look upon as an expression of being a practical scientist in the laboratory of life.

So as a new year's resolution, decide that you will *lean into mistakes so that you can learn from them and use them as the foundation of your developing success*. When Robert Sternberg wrote about his lifetime study of "intelligence" and discovered that what most so-called I.Q. tests actually measure is not intelligence, but past achievements (learning achievements), he began exploring intelligence and eventually wrote about many different kinds of intelligence, especially practical intelligence and creative intelligence. He noted this:

"Every once in a while, a great thinker comes along— a Freud, a Piaget, a Chomsky, or even an Einstein— and shows us a new way to think. That is not to say that great thinkers never make mistakes. On the contrary making mistakes is inevitable when you're exploring new territory. But they learn from their mistakes—or enable us to learn from them." (*Successful Intelligence*, 1996, p. 202)

How different all of this is from the way most of us were "educated" in school. The problem with most schools is that they are unforgiving of mistakes. Teachers are trained to mark errors with a large red X as they cross things out. In the earlier grades, if you color outside of the lines, each color that transgressed the line is first circled and then X-ed out. And once you were in the class were grades started, for every mistake your grade was marked down a notch. And what do we learn from all of that? One main and big point— **It is not okay to make mistakes!**

Mistakes are bad. Mistakes mean you are stupid. Mistakes means you are a dumb-dumb. So never, but never make a mistake.

With learnings like that, most children are conditioned to *not* experiment, *not* try out new skills or new ideas, to not take risks, to not go against conventional wisdom, to not speak up. To the contrary, we learn to play it safe, to please the teacher, to conform. So when the school and when teachers insist that we get the “right” answers and do so in the “right” way of doing things and of thinking, they train us and condition us for conformity, not creativity.

Yet at the heart of creativity is the willingness to take the risk and to make mistakes. It is to embrace mistakes and lean into them in order to learn from them. So, are you ready to learn and learn?

To *lean into a mistake* as a Meta-Coach— start with a good attitude. Begin by adopting an attitude of respect and care for your client, believing that every client has the resources to face life and that you are there to facilitate them discovering their potentials so they can create the quality of life they desire. Knowing that, then consider that whatever you do in the coaching conversation, whether it succeeds or not, is an experiment. You are simply testing things to see what will work best for your client. So also is your client.

In other words, you and your client cannot fail, you can only find out works, what doesn't work, and what only partially works. And with every experiment, both you and your client can be learning things— new things, new possibilities, new ways of facilitating. The feedback you receive about what works and what doesn't then gives you new distinctions which you can use to keep shaping your competencies as a coach.

Resolve then to *lean into the mistake* in order to harvest from it the very distinctions that will make you even more effective, even more professional. It will make you a great learner. Here's to your accelerated learning!

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #2
January 10, 2018

“IT’S NOT NORMAL!”

Whenever I lead the ACMC training, Coaching Mastery, one thing I say over and over is, “The Coaching Conversation is not a normal conversation!” There’s a reason for it. I want to drive home the point that as a Meta-Coach, *you need to shift your thinking, listening, and responding when you are in a Coaching Conversation from what you normally would do.*

This has actually been an ongoing theme since the beginning of Meta-Coaching in 2002. One of the things that have always stood out to me is that the coaching conversation is not a normal conversation. In fact, if it was a *normal conversation*, then it would be worth a whole lot less. If the coaching conversation is just another conversation, one that you could have at the morning breakfast table, at the pub after work, or with friends when you are at a sporting event— there would really be nothing special about *coaching as a profession*. But it is different. And part of that difference is that it is *not* a normal conversation.

Here’s the problem. If you, as a Meta-Coach, think that coaching is basically a *normal conversation*, then you will not be able to tap into the uniqueness and, shall I say, the weirdness of the coaching conversation. So what’s so different about coaching from a normal conversation? Over the years, the fact of the coaching conversation’s non-normalcy has grown in my understanding. At first I would only identify two items that made it different. Now I can identify five or six, or even nine.

1) *It is not normal in its direction.* The conversation of coaching is a one-way conversation, and not like the way normal conversations work wherein both persons equally share and talk about their lives. The coaching conversation is all about the client. This makes the “dialogue” unique in that it is not back-and-forth about each person, but only about the client’s outcome and experience. That is also why there is so little disclosure on the part of the coach.

2) *It is not normal in the use of acknowledgments.* When you repeat a sentence in a normal conversation, it calls attention to itself and so seems out-of-place. Yet when you repeat a sentence of your client, especially a semantically significant sentence, the effect is that they person actually feels heard.

3) *It is not normal in the use of the meta-comment for meta-awareness.* In coaching, you will probably say something like, “Let’s step back from this conversation for a moment—how are we doing?” “Let’s take a meta-moment— what are you aware that’s happening here?” If you do that in a normal conversation— that make bring the conversation to a screeching halt.

4) *It is not normal in its intensity.* The coaching conversation is a *very* personal one as it seeks to go to the heart of things. You quickly, and without apology, get personal with people as you ask for the person’s deepest beliefs about things. “And what do you believe about being insulted?”

5) *It is not normal in its challenging nature.* Now true enough, some conversations are challenging, but they are the exception, not the rule. Coaching, on the other hand, is all about challenge— inviting a person to stretch, to step up and be one's best self, about not selling oneself short, and even bringing up things that might be uncomfortable (confrontation).

6) *It is not normal in its call for experiential learning.* In fact, it is the very nature of coaching that you are facilitating a person's learning. This is not the purpose of most normal conversations. Yet this is the design of coaching— enabling learning. That's why in coaching, you sometimes “coach the body” and do other things to get the person to embody an idea or process.

7) *It is not normal in how intensely and actively you listen.* Normal conversations, in fact, are notorious for *not* involving high quality listening. This is one reason most people are not good listeners. Normal conversations are often plagued by people multi-tracking several things, answering their phone, interjecting comments to other people, etc. Not so with the coaching conversation. And this often stands out to the client as so incredible and appreciated— to be listened to with one's full presence and attention.

8) *It is not normal in giving feedback to the person while conversing.* This can happen in normal conversations, but again, it is the exception, not the norm. In coaching conversations this is one of the key skills that the coach learns— to pay attention to everything going on and to bring many of those things into the conversation. “I noticed that you have been looking up and to your left while you have been describing that event ... are you making pictures?”

9) *It is not normal that you set frames before and during the conversation.* Normally we do not start a conversation by saying, “Now if I interrupt you it is because I want to catch things that might indicate a limiting belief.” Nor do we, in normal conversation, say, “Thank you for those tears, it means we are getting close to something really significant to you.”

So, what's the point? Don't treat the conversation you have when you are coaching as if it is a normal conversation. Nor when you are in a normal conversation, let it slide into “coaching.” If coaching becomes a possibility, stop and punctuate what you're going to do as *very different from just a talk*. Prepare your clients for the very special and unique conversation called “coaching.” And finally, prepare yourself with your own unique and best style for coaching. It is special — so let it be special!

rom: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #3
January 17, 2018

A META-COACHING SESSION

Coaching an Overly Reactive to Conflict Manager

What does a Meta-Coaching session sound like? And what better way to comprehend a Meta-Coaching session than to see one, well, at least read one. Well, here is one example, consciously using the Well-Formed Questions, getting a contract, and then moving forward with an intervention. For seeing, I will have to refer you to some of the DVDs that we have. But for reading one, here is a transcript of a session, locking in on *the subject*, then gathering information about what the client truly wants, then moving the session forward.

MH: *What do you want?* [WFO Question #1.]

Carl: I am really frustrated with my board—we have a lot of complaints when we meet and we end up with a litany of complaints and it hardly seems that we ever decide on anything or achieve anything worthwhile. So there's a lot of stress and ineffectiveness with the board.

MH: *So I'm hearing that you're experiencing a lot of frustration, stress, and ineffectiveness with your board. So is that what you want—to deal with this? Or perhaps to reduce this?*

[Acknowledgment and repeating of Question #1.]

Carl: What I want is to eliminate it completely. It's a big problem and undermining our success.

MH: *So if you get the frustration, stress, and ineffectiveness eliminated— then what will you have? What do you want that will replace that experience?*

Carl: Well ... I ... don't know. I'll be peaceful. [the Symptom, Question not answered.]

MH: *Yes, you'll finally have peace from the frustration, stress, and ineffectiveness. And what do you want to have present when all of that is eliminated?* [The question asked again.]

Well an efficient board. We will have productive meetings, we will make decisions, we will support each other.

So you want your board to be effective and efficient and that means making decisions and supporting each other. Is that right? [Acknowledgment and testing question.]

Yes.

Anything else?

I want us to stay on target, to be focused, to not distract and not criticize each other.

So you want an effectively functioning board with effective communication skills. Am I understand you correctly? [Rephrasing, checking Q.]

Yes.

What will this look like or sound like when you get this? If I could see or hear the board being this way, what would I see and hear? [Q. #2 of WFO.]

We would set an agenda and then talk about each item, then come to a decision.

What will you be doing in this ideal future effective board meeting?

Me? Uhhh... I guess I will be leading the conversation, keeping all of us on target.

And this is important? [Yes.] Why? Why is it important? (WFO #3.)

To make decisions and achieve our objectives, that's why.

And making decisions so you can achieve your objectives, that's important? [Yes.] Why?

Then we will succeed in the company.

And that's important? Why is that important?

Well, for the money. Financially it will be important for us and the stockholders.

Is that what you mean by success? [Yes.] So this is financial success. And that's important? Why?

Well a sense of accomplishment. Having reached our goals.

So why is that important for you? What will that do for you when you get the sense of accomplishment?

I'll feel like a responsible person having achieved what's important.

How important, to you, is the sense of responsibility? [Very!] Okay, and when you get that in just the way you want it, what will that give you even more important?

A sense of completeness. A kind of oneness.

And that's important? [Shaking head yes.] How much?

It is a 10 on my scale. Very important.

Great so you have plenty of motivating values to drive you to create more effective meetings with your board? [Yes.] Okay, and where does the board meet? In a single place every time or in different places?

Almost always in the board room.

So when do you think it is realistic that you will develop the skills and be able to facilitate a high quality meeting with your board?

Well, I want to do that today.

Is that possible? Is that realistic? [No.] [#16 Ecology] So when would you legitimately expect that you will be able to do this?

In a week or two? I don't know.

What do you think? [Testing]

Maybe a month.

Who will you be doing this with? Anyone on the board or anyone else?

Well, you!

And?

There is one person on the board, my vice-president of sales, he is very good at handling things, handling people, and ... yes, he would be a good partner in this.

What do you have to do in order to achieve this?

I have to learn how to manage the meeting.

What do you already know and what is the next step for you in order to handle the meeting?

What will make the most difference?

I have been running meetings for years, some have been good, others just okay, then others are disastrous. What I don't know is how to stop things when they go off.

That's what you need to do? You need to stop things and what? Redirect?

Yes, redirect.

You don't know how to do that? [No.] You need to do that? [Yes.] Is this in your power? Is it in your power to stop things and redirect them? [Yes.]

Okay, good. Then this is what you need? [Yes.] Anything that could stop you? [WFO #13.]

I guess that I'm afraid of conflict.

You "guess?" [Testing, Challenging.]

Yes, that's it. I am afraid of conflict and it holds me back, I'm afraid of stirring things up and people will get made and stressed out and things will be a mess.

Oh, like what is happening right now with the board?

Yeah.

So you need to stop the conversation at times, redirect it, and if need be, handle whatever conflict that comes up— welcome it, not be stopped by the possibility of conflict?

Yes. That is what would make the most difference right now. If I could do that.

If you dealt with your fear of conflict and learned the skills you need to manage the conversation of the board, get them back on the subject when they get off, then you would have an effective board— one with effective communication skills, and then you wouldn't feel so frustrated?

[Summary]

Yes, then I would not feel the frustration I'm now feeling. Then I'd have the kind and quality of a board that I want. That would be great.

Currently then we have three steps identified. Anything else? [No.] So do you have a plan or

need a plan for this?

I think I can keep these steps in my mind. And if there is one or two more things to do, I can remember them. If more than two, then yes, I would need to write them down and create a plan.

Anything else that might stop you other than fear of conflict? [No.] So what about resources. Do you have all the resources you need to be able to learn how to stop a conversation going wrong, redirect it and develop the ability to handle the fear of conflict?

Well, courage. And patience, yes, definitely patience. That's about it for now.

And as you think about what you need to do to get what you want, is this still compelling and inspiring for you?

Yes, definitely. This would make a big difference.

Is it ecological? If you do this, would it cost you anything that would make it a worse choice than to do this? Would it ruin your finances, time, relationships, health, etc.? [No.] So, are you ready to make a decision—and commit yourself to doing this? [Yes.] So when you get what you want, how will you know? What will be your evidence that you can walk into the meetings— and manage them, stop them, redirect them, and do so with courage and patience?

Well I'll be able to do it.

Yes, that will be the behavior. If by the end of the session, without going into the board room and doing it, how could you ever know that you have the ability to do that? What would convince you? [Pause ... I don't know.] Can you do it right now? Can you imagine going in and handling it right now?

Well, no. I can't.

Great. How do you know that? What are you thinking that gives you evidence that you cannot do it right now?

Well, as I think about it, I just know.

So you are seeing it in your imagination and hearing the talk and hearing yourself, and right now you can't imagine doing it.

That's right.

Now we have a 'test.' So that at the end of the session if I ask you to imagine this scenario and you do and you can see and hear yourself handling the meeting in just the way you want to—then you'll know something has happened; something has changed. Would that be good? Would that be worth the effort of this session? [WFO #18 that generates a coaching contract.]

You have mentioned three things so far— 1) stopping the conversation so that it does not keep going and making things worse, 2) redirecting it so that you can get the meeting back on task and properly focused, and 3) not letting fear of conflict stop you but developing the courage and/or the persistence or something that will enable you to do that. [Right.] Okay, so of these where would you like to start?

I'd like to start with the fear and get that out of the way. If I can do that then most

everything else will fall in place.

Sounds like you are very sure about that and that you know yourself well enough to know that will give you the leverage for change.

Well, yes I suppose. [Smiling]

How much fear are we talking about? How strong would you gauge the fear of encountering the possibility of conflict?

Hmmm. Well it seems high before, but now as we talk, it doesn't seem so high. ... [pause]
... maybe a 7 out of 10.

Okay. And the fear is about what? What do you fear will happen if people conflict over differences? What are you afraid will happen?

That people will get really angry, yell and call names, and that there will be hurt feelings, and maybe the relationship will end.

So that's the worst of it. Right? [pause] That's the worst that will come of it?

Yeah I guess.

You guess?

Well when you say it like that it doesn't seem so bad.

That means what? You could handle that?

Yes, kind of. At least I think I could calm things down between them.

How would you do that?

I'd just say it. "Okay, enough of that, let's calm down!"

Have you ever done that Carl?

Well, actually yes. I've done that.

And did it work?

Yes, there were still some hard feelings, but they settled down and we worked it out.

So how much fear are we now talking about? [4 or 5 out of 10.] Great and how have you reduced it from 7 to 4 or 5? ... [pause...] What are you aware of now that takes the fear of conflict down so much?

It's hard to put in words. Just talking it out helps. ... And that's because I'm thinking about it and not running away from my thoughts about it. [Big smile.]

Your smile just now, what are you aware of that is triggering that?

That I already have the ability to handle this and I didn't know it. And that's actually amazing.

So talking it out and recognizing you can just say, 'Calm down,' and thinking this through — all

of that helps to reduce the fear. What else? What else do you need? Earlier you said something about courage and persistence.

Courage would definitely help.

And, for you, courage means what?

The guts to just face it.

For you is the guts to face the fear rather than avoiding it or running away from it?

Yes. I didn't realize it before, but yes. ... [pause] ... somehow I had thought I had to be ... I don't know ... more bossy or something.

And now?

I just need to accept the conflict and embrace it.

So do you? Do you just accept the conflict and embrace it?

No, not really.

Okay, so quiet yourself and go inside and say, I give myself permission to accept that people will conflict, that is just differences of opinion and understanding..." What happens?

Well, it does feel better. ... It doesn't seem as strong a prohibition as before. It seems easier now.

From: Waiman Ip Min Wan
waiman.ip@coaching.mu
2018 Morpheus #4
January 21, 2018

THE SKILL OF EMPATHY IN COACHING

One of the characteristics that distinguish a great coach from a good coach is the skill of empathy (Michael Hall, APMC Sydney Dec 2017). *And so, why is this?* Research from psychotherapy and coaching shows that the critical success factor that allows the client to get their outcome, is their relationship with the coach. This is over and above what methodology the coach uses. Wasylshyn (2003) concluded from his outcome study of executive coaching that the top three personal characteristics of an executive coach are:

1. Ability to form a strong connection with the executive (86%)
2. Professionalism (82%)
3. The use of a clear and sound methodology (35%).

Why is a strong connection so important? In coaching conversations, in order for clients to unleash the best in them, looking at what is holding them back is often the leverage point of change. Coachees would go to places within themselves where they may not want to go and/or go to places where they have never been before. They may share their upmost fears and may often speak about things that they have never spoken about to anyone else before. To facilitate this, a strong connection between the coach and coachee is imperative.

How can you make this connection? Rogers (1961) spoke about client-centred thinking and the characteristics in a successful coaching relationship. Rogers describes the conditions as:

- Unconditional positive regard and acceptance
- Accurate empathy
- Congruence/genuineness
- Non possessive warmth.

These are the characteristics within the coach that will facilitate connection in the coaching relationship. In this post, I will focus only on accurate empathy. *What is empathy?* Empathy comes from the Greek word *empathos* which means *em* –in and *pathos* feeling (feeling as in passion or suffering)

How do you distinguish between empathy and sympathy? The etiology of the word empathy and sympathy is the same. Literature distinguish them as:

- sympathy is “*suffering with*” the person
- empathy is “*being with*” the person. Michael Hall (Personal Communication Jan 2018)

Steve Covey states that sympathy as a form of agreement, a form of judgment. But people often feed on sympathy and it makes them dependent.

What is the structure of empathy? How do you do empathy? Theresa Wiseman (1996), a nursing scholar concluded, after 18 years of nursing experience, that the ability to empathise distinguishes an average nurse from an excellent nurse in the eyes of the patient, regardless of how care was delivered. She also concluded that there are 4 elements of empathy as follows:

- 1) Perceptive taking – recognising the other person’s perceptive, seeing other’s truth
- 2) Recognising emotion in other people
- 3) Staying out of judgment
- 4) Communicating

In order to be able to do perceptive taking and recognise the emotion in other people, you need to be vulnerable and connect with that part of yourself that knows that feeling. In this way, the empathy will be accurate and client centred.

Empathy is a vulnerable choice. In order for you to connect with that feeling, you need to connect to that feeling within yourself. You open yourself up to be influenced. You become vulnerable. It requires ego-strength to be able to do this accurately and effectively. This is all done in a non-judgement state; getting yourself out of the way. This is not about you. This is about the coachee. This is about not making evaluations from your own map but being truly present with the coachee in their map of the world. Again, this takes ego-strength.

Recognising the coachee’s perceptive from their truth, feeling their emotion, all in a non-judgment state then with all of that, communicating that accurately.

How would empathy look like in a coaching conversation? One of the Level 3 Supporting Skill in Meta-Coaching is empathy statements. What exactly are empathy statements and what would one sound like?

An empathy statement is a statement that

- indicates the coach is perceiving (thinking/ feeling) empathetically with the client. It shows that the coach takes the second perceptual position and speak what the client is most likely feeling.
- Is tentative, offer it as a possibility
"That must have been really disappointing." If it is about the person—then it is a validation of the Person.
“It’s hard, what you’re doing is hard. You are leaving everything, and going back to ...” (Graham Richardson to Adnan on video)
“You probably have asked yourself, ‘What else could I have done?’” Michael Hall (ACMC Sydney Dec 2017)

The empathy statement would be delivered in the tonality, gestures, facial expression, voice volume that would match the coachee.

How does empathy enable this strong connection with your coachee? Steve Covey describes the concept of empathic listening. This is listening with the intent to understand, seeking first to understand, to really understand. With empathic listening, you get inside another person’s frame of reference and look out through it and see the world as they see it, understand their paradigm and

understand how they feel. It involves listening with your ears and more importantly with your eyes and heart. You listen for feeling, for meaning, behaviour, you sense, you intuit, you feel.

The essence of empathic listening is not that you agree with someone; it's that you fully, deeply, understand that person, emotionally as well as intellectually. With the skill of empathy in listening, you are making deposits in Emotional Bank Accounts because nothing you do is a deposit unless the other person perceives it as such. This is the deep and meaningful connection to another human soul.

How do you demonstrate empathic listening in a coaching conversation? Do you have the ego-strength to connect within yourself to show empathy? Is the skill of empathy going to be your next coaching outcome?

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From: L. Michael Hall
2018 *Morpheus* #5
January 31, 2018

I wrote the following on July 13, 2016
I'm sending this out now in anticipation
of the June ACMC in Manila, the
Philippines: June 4-14.

THE 10-DAY ACMC

I have a vision— I envision a 10-day *Coaching Mastery Training* for the ACMC credentials. And before long we will be announcing the first 10-day ACMC. I don't know *when* we will do it or *where*, but we will. I began envisioning this as I talked with several of the Leadership Team about the difference in NSTT and ACMC. In NSTT we have 95 to 97 percent of participants reaching competency during the training. That contrasts with maybe, at best, only 3 to 5 percent at ACMC. Why? What's the difference?

I think I can identify several reasons. One of the key ones is that at NSTT people are doing a lot more practicing of the skills. There they are up and on their feet every single day making presentations. At first they are practicing various skills in the drills that we have been using since the beginning and which Colon took to a whole new level five years back. They are also up on their feet presenting all aspects of their final 30-minute presentation from Day 4 to 9, going over it again and again, and getting immediate feedback from multiple benchmarkers to shape their presentation skills.

Another key factor is that for the first nine nights, they get to see one of the Master Trainers or someone in that track, present and they then hear feedback and benchmarking at that higher level. They get to hear a group of us give feedback and talk about the structure of the presentation in addition to the live demonstration.

So suppose we extended the training and did more of these things at ACMC. Do you think that we could get the numbers up to 80 or 90 percent of participants reaching competency level? I do. That's my vision. Given the rigorous standards we have for the ACMC credentials and the complexity of being able to use so many of the Neuro-Semantic models, my sense is that the 8-day training is just not sufficient to fully create the new habits. After all, new habits take time to solidify. They require intense practice so to make the new behaviors automatic.

When the time comes that we're able to devote 10-days to ACMC and there's a sponsor willing to sell it— then the schedule on Days 8 to 10 will be as following.

- **Day 8:** We will replace the feedback sessions and the “test,” with Coaching Sessions, these will be 30 minutes long with 15 minutes feedback. Afternoon will deal with Licensing, a demonstration of Meta-Coaching, and Graduation for those leaving after 8-days. Evening session will be another set of Coaching Sessions.
- **Day 9:** We will begin with a special demonstration— one where the co-trainer and/or members of the Assist Team will be holding signs of the skills as they are demonstrated. We

will then have Coaching Sessions in the morning ... review and Skill Drills in the afternoon, and another set of Coaching Sessions in the evening.

- **Day 10:** We begin with another special demonstration — the Coach describing the skill that he or she *will be doing* in the next moment—and then doing it. Another set of Coaching sessions in the morning, descriptions on how to practice skills in the afternoon, and the final Coaching sessions. Evening will be for the Graduation.

The 10-Day ACMC is coming, I don't know when or where, but we will do it in 2017 or 2018 to test if we can get 80 to 90 percent of participants to competency level by adding 5 more feedback sessions, three or four more quality demonstrations, and with more focus on the coaching skills. Would you like to be a part of that one?

In the movie, *Groundhog Day*, Bill Murrey played a character who was self-centered, self-absorbed, arrogant, and dismissing of others. And at first, he dismissed others and their responses with a sarcastic humor that put them down. But the situation was always the same. The day kept repeating. Nothing changed. Only he could change. So he could dismiss the experience. The experience would occur again and again. When he couldn't take it any longer, he tried to kill himself. He tried in multiple ways to kill himself. Even that didn't work. He could not escape groundhog day. Eventually he began to adjust himself— his behavior, his thinking. And eventually his character began changing. Over time, he began using feedback to adjust his behavior to create new ways to relate to others and to develop himself as a decent human being.

So what if we do something similar with the Meta-Coach training? We could simply add a few extra days with lots and lots of practices, and encouraged people to keep working on the core skills, reliving them in session after session, over and over until they begin to learn what to do differently. We would be establishing a *Groundhog Day Coaching* experience as it were! And the design would be to enable a person to become much more competent in the Meta-Coaching conversations. What do you think?

Scheduling the 10-Day ACMC — New Schedule for Days 8 – 9 and 10

After recommended the 10-day ACMC, I put together following bullet-points for Days 8, 9 and 10. This will move the number of Coaching Sessions from 6 to 13 which is more than double them in just 2 extra days.

- ▶ **Day 8:** We will replace the feedback sessions and the “test,” with Coaching Sessions, these will be 30 minutes long with 15 minutes feedback. Afternoon will deal with Licensing, a demonstration of Meta-Coaching, and Graduation for those leaving after 8-days. Evening session will be another set of Coaching Sessions.
 - ▶ Time Matrix (9 to 10)
 - ▶ Coaching Demo (10-11)
 - ▶ #7: Coaching Sessions (11 – 1; 2 – 3)
 - ▶ Licensing (4 to 5)
 - ▶ Early Graduation (5 to 6): For those leaving early, only after 8 days.
 - ▶ #8: Coaching Sessions (7- 9:30)

- ▶ **Day 9:** We will begin with a special demonstration— one where the co-trainer and/or members of the Assist Team will be holding signs of the skills as they are demonstrated. We will then have Coaching Sessions in the morning ... review and Skill Drills in the afternoon, and another set of Coaching Sessions in the evening.
 - ▶ Coaching Demo (9 to 10)
 - ▶ #9: Coaching Sessions (10 to 1)
 - ▶ Debriefing (2 to 2:30)
 - ▶ #10: Coaching Sessions (2:30 to 6:00)
 - ▶ #11: Coaching Sessions (7 to 9:30)

- ▶ **Day 10:** We begin with another special demonstration — the Coach describing the skill that he or she *will be doing* in the next moment—and then doing it. Another set of Coaching sessions in the morning, descriptions on how to practice skills in the afternoon, and the final Coaching sessions. Evening will be for the Graduation.
 - ▶ Coaching Demo (9 to 10)
 - ▶ #12: Coaching Sessions (10 to 1)
 - ▶ #13: Coaching Sessions (2 to 5)
 - ▶ Where to From Here (5 to 6)
 - ▶ Graduation (7 to 8)
 - ▶ Party (8 to 9)

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #6
Feb. 7, 2018
A PCMC Level Skill

BEHIND “WHAT STOPS YOU?” ARE POWERFUL ASSUMPTIONS

When you coach, there are a few basics that you want to know. The starting point is always, “What do you want?” To make sure the answer is relevant and important, you want to know “Why is that important to you?” Then to make sure it is grounded in reality, you want to know when and where the person wants it. From there you will want to know if the person knows what to do. “Do you know what to do to get what you want?” If the person does not, that’s great! It means that *you, as a Meta-Coach, have a job!* Now you get to *earn your fee*. Let there now be a chorus of hallelujah!

Blocks to Success

Now along the way, you will be identifying blocks and interferences. “So what stops you? Could anything stop you from getting what you want?” There usually are blocks. If the person says “no, there’s nothing to stop me,” then look confused, scratch your head, shift around in your chair, pause ... Then look your client in the eye and ask:

“So if nothing stops you ... then why are you not out there doing what needs to be done to get what you want? Why are you sitting in my coaching chair?”

Usually the person will now start to get real with you. This makes, “What stops you?”, a truly great question. But you have to work it. Sometimes you have to repeat it several times. And when they tell you what stops them, don’t just buy it on first hearing. They are most likely to give you a list of superficial excuses. Question them. “That stops you?” “How does that stop you?” “How much does that stop you?”

At this point you are going to hear two kinds of things that your client asserts which stop him. You are going to hear *facts of the world* and you are going to hear *internal beliefs and assumptions*. The “facts” are actually the real life factors that will occur, or could occur, that you’ll have to deal with. These are actually *not* what’s stopping a person. A person may use them to excuse themselves from acting. Yet the fact that others act, and do not let these things stop them, show that these are not the actual interferences.

I don’t have enough money for this (or time, personnel, energy, etc.).

They will (or could) laugh, say no, reject me, think I’m stupid, etc.

The project could fail, be difficult, take longer than expected, etc.

The internal beliefs, assumptions and frames are what’s actually stopping, blocking, and interfering the realization of the goal.

Self: I’m not adequate, not skilled, stupid, unlovable, have low self-esteem, etc.

Ideas: My ideas don’t count, aren’t creative, never work, etc.

Others: People with power and money control things; managers never listen, bosses don't care, even the experts can't figure it out, or are divided, they are too competitive, etc.

Change: You can't change an organization, change is hard, only those at the top can create change, trying to change things means conflict which is bad, etc.

Back of the Mind Blocking Frames

Once you get the block or interference out on the table, you're ready to ask meta-questions and invite the person to step-back to find the *interfering block* and it will always be a *limiting* belief, decision, identity, understanding, etc. It will be some *frame* that creates the limiting or fallacious interpretation.

What are you assuming that stops you?

What limiting belief, decision, understanding, identity, etc. stops you?

These beliefs, decisions, understandings, identities, etc. almost always operate as *an assumption*. That is, they are just assumed and not questioned. Functionally that makes them unquestionable which explains why the person can't get beyond the block. She assumes "that's just the way it is" (e.g., they are, I am, etc.). Then, assuming this limitation, he just accepts it, resigns to it, and/or never even thinks that it could be otherwise. This, in turn, eliminates any critical thinking. In fact, it stops thinking.

Now you are in a place where you can *intervene* and there are many ways to do that. One way is to *reverse the assumption*. "What would be a positive opposite assumption?" Typically, just reverse it.

Limiting assumption: "I'm not able to handle conflict, so I can't be assertive at work."

Reverse assumption: "Because I am able to handle conflict, I can be assertive."

Turn into a question: "If you knew that you could handle conflict, what would you do to reach your goal?" Or, "what ideas would that generate in you?"

Limitation: "I can't stand failing, I need to get things right, being wrong means I'm stupid."

Reverse: "I don't have to get it right the first time, being wrong lets me learn."

Question: "If you knew that you can always learn even when things go wrong, what would you do, what ideas would that stimulate in you?"

As a Meta-Coach, as you flush out the hidden assumptions in the back of the mind, turn them around, and put them inside a meta-question, you are setting up a new hypothesis and giving your client a chance to try out a new way of thinking. It sets up an experiment for life (the tasking).

1) Detect limiting assumption.

2) Reverse it and turn into a liberating frame.

3) Attach to the person's goal (well-formed outcome).

4) Ask as a tentative hypothetical meta-question.

5) Ask the question repeatedly and in different words.

When you do this, you enable your client to think imaginatively *beyond* their old fears, limiting beliefs, excuses, and model of the world. Often what you are doing is designing a Torpedo Question for your client.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #7
Feb. 14, 2018

“IT’S THE QUESTION, STUPID!”

Years ago the political frame that sealed the election for George H. Bush was, “It’s the Economy, Stupid!” I don’t know who came up with it, but with just those few words, he was able to set a frame and keep his campaign focused on the economy. Perhaps we could do a similar thing with this one for the focus of coaching, “It’s the Question, Stupid!”

[Now there’s no need to take offense at the little meta-comment at the end—“stupid.” That was added, I think, not so much an insult as a way to grab attention and highlight the blinding obviousness of the statement.]

In Meta-Coach training you heard us say over and over, “You coach best by asking questions.” “If you don’t know that the heart of coaching is asking questions, you have missed the heart of coaching.” And on Day 2 of ACMC training, I always enjoy the first twenty minutes because we always read from the manual a half dozen very powerful quotations from coaching books on the power of questions. We then present whole sets of questions— primary questions and meta-questions; well-formed outcome questions, matrix questions, Meta-Model precision questions, and so on.

Asking questions is your primary tool as a coach. That’s because in coaching your job is *not to give answers*, it is to ask questions. And why? Here’s the magic—it is to get your client to *think*, to really and truly think, to think deeply and broadly. In other words, *your job as a coach is to enable people to think!* Recently I have been writing about this on Neurons; I started with the one that I titled, “Thinking is in Short Supply.” The point is that there is a natural human tendency to *not-think*. And there are many, many factors that encourage *not-thinking*. [If you don’t get Neurons, you can sign up for it—it’s free— on www.neurosemantics.com].

What benefits will your clients experience when they starts thinking? Ah, here is the real value of coaching. By really *thinking*, your client will start to take control of his mind and emotions, his power to respond to the world from his beliefs and values, and to determine his future. This is how you truly empower a coaching client. By asking questions you hand over the power (the ability) to construct a mental map that will effectively serve her and her desired goals. This facilitates her to become self-leading and self-managing.

Now given all of that— let me ask the questions that we ask in ACMC on Day 2.

- Do you have some great questions ready to go?
- Do you have some juicy questions that will tease and play with your client’s minds?
- How skilled are you at asking questions that can probe deeply into your client’s meaning matrix and flush out limiting thinking patterns and dysfunctional assumptions?
- How skillful are you in asking both primary and meta-questions?

In the last post, I recommended a way to deal with limiting assumptions. Once you detect the assumption that's limiting a client, you reverse it, then tying it to the person's outcome, you ask a question that invites the person to step out of the old thinking that holds the limitation in place. Now true enough, that's an advanced coaching skill. Yet it is the fundamental skill of questioning. If the real issue is that of *asking questions*, how rigorous are your questions? How tough? How challenging? How inspiring?

It does require courage. So, how about you? Do you have the courage to be bold enough to ask and to get to the heart of the issue? Or, are you still hesitant and fearful of challenging your clients? Do you still let them talk and talk and talk without interrupting and enabling their thinking capabilities? This is actually one of the big differences that I have noticed between those who are novices at coaching and those who have become truly skilled and fully competent. They have learned the art of asking questions that enable clients to think and experience things that they have never thought or experienced before.

To do this, set some frames at the beginning of your coaching conversation so that your client is prepared to understand that what she is going to experience is *real coaching*. This will enable her to understand what you are doing and why.

- In the coaching conversation that we're going to have today, my job will be to frequently interrupt you and ask you strange questions. This is to make the conversation a dialogue and one that gets to the heart of things— even the background beliefs and assumptions that you may not even be aware of. Are you ready for this depth of a conversation?
- When I interrupt you with some questions that may seem weird, I want you to know that this is to flush out any blind spots that may be limiting you so that you can have true choice about whether you want to keep those beliefs, understandings, or decisions. This is designed to enable you to take more control over your own self. Ready to go?

Are you brave enough to do this? Do you have sufficient courage? Do you fear that your client will get upset or quit the coaching? If so, this is one of the great values of having a buddy-coach. Present your fear or apprehension and let your buddy-coach work with you to get to the hidden frames in the back of your mind.

To be a coach is to courageously and boldly ask the questions that nobody else will ask. Do this with respect, rapport, compassion, and respect— but do it! Ask the audacious questions and take your client to the heart of the matter. Here's to you becoming a great questioner as a Meta-Coach!

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #8
February 21, 2018

SMART, BUT NOT INTELLIGENT

Here's an amazing and even shocking fact— A person can be smart but not intelligent. You can be smart about lots of facts and yet not able to intelligently use those facts. This is the problem with most schooling. Schools generally teach facts and test students on their ability to retrieve knowledge, but they do not generally teach people how to think. So, who does?

If you've ever watched the television show *Jeopardy!* You have seen people who are called "exceptionally smart" solely because they are like walking encyclopedias— they know lots of facts. They also know lots of facts that are not very useful. Actually these people actually are exceptionally *knowledgeable*, but not intelligent. They can impressively recite lots and lots of facts. But that is not intelligence. Similarly, you could know a lot about coaching, and not be able to coach effectively.

Intelligence refers to the ability to skillfully use a set of facts as information that then leads to insights and understandings which enable you to *do* things— achieve goals, create products, innovate new services, etc. An interesting fact is that almost none of the *Jeopardy!* winners ever go on to become pioneering creators, entrepreneurs, or CEOs. They can spurt facts, but not analyze them or think through the facts to insightful practical applications.

Knowledge is not the same as intelligence. In fact, you don't even have to actually *think* in order to know things. Amazing! Actually you can know a lot of things and have an impressive storehouse of knowledge about something by just hearing and reciting, by memorizing and then repeating what you've heard. Thinking, learning, and intelligence is something more than, and other than, knowledge. This is another reason for the knowing—doing gap, why you can "know" and not be able to do.

Now in Neuro-Semantics we emphasize *closing the knowing—doing gap* by getting your neurology involved. The Mind-to-Muscle pattern enables you to take information (knowledge, facts) and turn that information into other forms of knowing— believing, deciding, experiencing, etc. and then commission your body to "know" it in terms of what you can do with that information.

You learned it in APG and I hope that you have run through the 50 or so "principles" of coaching in the ACMC manual so that you have a program within you for integration and implementing knowledge into yourself. If you haven't, you can start to do that today. Do one principle per week and you'll finish the list in one year.

This is also a great process for coaching. After all, your clients come to you to learn new things and then to take those new learnings and fully integrate them into their lives so that they can achieve their goals and enhance the quality of their lives. That's why the format of coaching is not lecturing, but a dialogue. It is through conversation that you lead your client to *think through facts and information* and turn that data into an action program in their lives.

Recently I have discovered an incredible thing about the Assist Team Training Days that I actually did not know before. Originally my understanding was that we were training two skills—the receiving and the giving of feedback. And indeed, that is one thing that we are doing. Yet we are also doing some other things— things actually more important and more profound.

What we do in the two-days of preparation involves having a coach and a client conduct a 30-minute session while we are all recording as much information on the feedback forms as possible. This is the receiving of feedback—and it trains people to really listen, to calibrate, to notice all of the things that the coach is doing in terms of skills and presence. We use the feedback form of the coaching skills for the coach. It is also training people to simultaneously notice and record all that the client is saying and experiencing. We use the landscape form for the client. If you have not been on the team— this will take your *listening and calibrating skills* to a whole new level.

At the end of the session, we then step back and begin to reflect on what we picked up. That’s the first level of analysis. What did the coach do that successfully demonstrated any of the seven core skills? Those who are new to this are usually amazed at how much the more experienced ones pick up. “How did you see or hear all of that?” they ask.

Then comes the structural analysis. Here we go much deeper into coaching format. What was the subject of the session? What kind of conversation did they have? What kind of conversation did the client ask for? What misdiagnosis did the client offer? What misdiagnosis did the coach offer? What fallacies in thinking did you see or hear in either coach or client? Where were the coachable moments? Did the coach catch them? Did the coach manage them well? What frames-by-implication were presented during the session? And on and on.

What this reflective conversation about the session do? It enables *the coach to do critical thinking about the coaching process*. Actually, it is teaching *how to think critically*. It is using a real live case-study and enabling the team to learn how to *think clearly, precisely, and accurately* about the structure of the coaching conversation. This is the heart of coaching supervision.

Something I had not realized before— this is an ideal way to teach and facilitate *critical and executive thinking*. I knew that I had always learned lots of things, made finer distinctions about the coaching skills and the coaching conversations. I knew that almost with every single coaching session I would pick up one or more distinctions. What I had not known is that this is an excellence way to enable and empower *the highest kind of reflective and executive thinking in people*.

I have just completed my next book, *Executive Thinking* which is about critical thinking and the highest kind of reflective thinking (mindfulness, meta-thinking, etc.). The design is to enable us to be great thinkers, to actually engage in *real* thinking, and to use our higher executive brain functions. The design is to empower people to be both smart (knowledge-wide) and intelligent.

Interested in *coaching intelligence* that goes to the heart of the matter in how to coach at the PCMC level? Come and join the Assist Team!

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #9
Feb. 28, 2018

WHEN PATTERN DETECTION GOES WRONG

As you know from your studies in NLP and Neuro-Semantics, we are the framers and the pattern detectors. We do this intentionally and mindfully even though this is what the brain does naturally. Our brains are forever looking for and trying to recognize patterns all around us. It's a basic survival tendency. It began when you were a child. Your primitive form of thinking even then was on the lookout for patterns. Then if something happened twice or three times— Lo and Behold! A Pattern! You then “jumped to a conclusion,” made a learning, and created a generalization that then became part of your mental mapping about how the world works.

The problem is not about how to detect or create patterns. You naturally and inevitably do that. That's not the problem. The problem is how to do that with sufficient accuracy, validity, relevance, and sufficiency. And that's what critical thinking and effective learning is all about. The problem is that because you have this automatic and habitual tendency of seeing patterns— you see them and invent them *where they do not even exist!*

In fact, when you learned the Meta-Model, you actually learned that several of the ill-formed and flawed thinking patterns and linguistic patterns are the result of an over-active pattern-detection ability. You were inventing flawed and fallacious patterns where none exist.

Mind-Reading: In this Meta-Model distinction you assume and project onto someone else motives, intentions, emotions, agendas, purposes, etc. that they may or may not have. You think that the other person is upset, angry, fearful, hopeful, stressed, etc. based on some cues that you notice and so you assume that you know *the pattern that they are exhibiting*. When you assert it, however, you are using your own history about yourself or others and projecting it onto the person.

The Meta-Model question that challenges this is a simple one: “How do you know that this person is feeling or intention X?” “What information are you using to draw that conclusion?” The problem with this is that you may be using information that was an accurate pattern from your childhood home and that did indeed indicate what someone else was experiencing at that time. But you are now with another person and it may no longer fit. And, the more dysfunctional your childhood home— the less true the pattern will be for others. You are calibrated to some event in your history and are not in the here-and-now with this person.

Cause-Effect: In this Meta-Model distinction you link things together— “This X causes this Y.” Again, this may mostly indicate your learning history and your learning experiences than what is occurring on the outside. Associative thinking is the kind of “logic” that we typically use in constructing cause-effect relationships and which gets us into lots of trouble. That's because with it we can easily confuse correlation to causation and also because we overly rely on linear causation

when most of the world involves systems and systemic causation. That's why we often think we have detected a pattern when we have not.

Lost Performative: In this Meta-Model distinctions you use a pattern (mental map) that others have created and that have been communicated in such a way that whoever made the map is now lost. We don't know who created it. We don't know when. We don't know under what circumstances. And so the person who performed the creation of the pattern is now gone ... and all we have left is the pattern. "Boys shouldn't cry." "He who hesitates is lost." "It's not personal, it's just business." Now the pattern shows up in proverbs, "common sense" statements, truisms, street knowledge, urban legends, superstitions, etc. and we quote them and use them for our thinking template without even questioning them.

When you use these, and others, in an unthinking way and never question them, then this is a *pattern that has gone wrong*. It may be an inaccurate pattern—someone has jumped to a conclusion prematurely and the so-called pattern just is not so. Or it could be an old pattern that simply is no longer relevant. The times and places and contexts no longer exist. Or the pattern could speak of one's personal subjective history and does not apply to anyone else.

Therefore if you or someone else uses it today, the person using it is using a *pattern that does not exist*. Yet if you do not recognize this, the so-called pattern will actually operate as a way to shut down your thinking.

Detecting patterns is your heritage given the brain that you have. It's what you do. Learning to do it mindfully so that you are accurate and relevant in your pattern detection is one of the benefits of learning the Meta-Model. Your brain, as a "creature of habit," establishes neural pathways as it detects patterns and then uses them over and over, thereby creating habits. That's why some of the patterns you detect are left-over habits from previous experiences and no longer relevant. That's why they can go wrong.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #10
March 7, 2018

A “PRACTITIONER” PRACTICES HOW ABOUT YOU?

This past week I discovered something that I did not know. I discovered that there are some of our Meta-Coaches who *do not practice* and who look down on practicing. They go to the Chapter meetings and they want to talk, they want to explore the theories and understandings, but they walk out when the *practices* start. They also do coaching, but they do not let themselves be coached. And they never, but never video-tape themselves coaching and then benchmark themselves. They *think* that would mean that they are not experienced! Also, when they hear me or someone else talk about *practicing*, they think, “That is for others, not for me.” That’s because they have a semantic reaction to the word *practice*. They think that *practice* is for those who are newly learning something and they have been in the field for years.

Obviously (well, I hope *obviously*), this is a problem and needs to be corrected as quick as possible. If that is how you think of the idea of *practice*, then you are operating from a serious cognitive distortion and fallacy—one that is sure to undermine your effectiveness and prevent you from ever becoming an expert in anything. Think that way and I can guarantee that *you will never develop expertise!* That attitude is *that* big of a problem. Here’s why and how.

I have discovered and re-discovered this basic undermining problem every single time that I have conducted the PCMC trainings, and it showed up again this past week. One of the learnings that I’m taking away from it is to establish yet another prerequisite for PCMC. Here it is:

If you want to reach PCMC level—*you need to be able to do 3 to 4 coaching sessions and get a solid 2.5 on the five skills and do that in a row. If you cannot do that, you are not ready for PCMC and you will not make it.*

How? Do this. Before you sign up to sit for assessment, video-tape yourself doing a 30 minute coaching session and benchmark yourself. Are you getting 25 marks under supporting? How many things did you not hear? Did you ask the WFO questions sequentially and work each question with the refining questions? Did you ask 12 meta-questions? Did you induce the person to experience 2 or 3 states using your voice? If not, keep *practicing*.

I think of myself as a *practitioner*—and that’s one reason (among many) that *I practice*. And I do so all the time even though I now have years of experience. Not only that, but I’m always looking for feedback when I practice and especially on new distinctions that I am wanting to learn and incorporate. I really enjoy being video-taped when doing sessions because now I can catch things I missed and create plans or develop new skills so that I can handle those things that I missed. When I first entered NLP and got a certificate as a *practitioner* that cued me to *practice my trade* of neuro-linguistic programming.

I do the same in other areas of life. I *practice* running or jogging almost every single day. I *practice* working with weights at the gym daily. I *practice* writing every single day. It is *the practice of practicing* that keeps a person sharp, learning, on-the-cutting-edge, and moving step by step to the next level. In that you need feedback. Otherwise, you can practice wrong and lock in a wrong way of doing things. Actually, *that* has been the problem with several coaches— they have not been getting feedback and so they began practicing wrong. And the longer it when, the more ingrained the wrong practice has become. Now they have a significant unlearning to do.

In Meta-Coaching we are constantly urging ourselves and you to get a buddy coach, to attend the practice groups at the Chapters, and to video-tape yourself and then benchmark yourself and/or have others benchmark you. That is *coaching under supervision*. You need it. I need it. We all need it. If you think you don't need it— you are deceiving yourself and you will never become an expert in coaching.

Now I'm writing this because last week in Egypt we did not have anyone from Egypt reach the competency level of "3" on the benchmarks for the PCMC level. The only person who reached the competency level was **B.J. Radomski** from Thailand and he blew it out! In a session with a very "tough" client, B.J. got a 3.5 on Supporting, 3.2 on Listening (I did not catch a single thing that he did not hear and deal with), and 3.0 on questioning, meta-questioning, and state induction. He reached benchmark on framing and tasking as well. Later I asked BJ about his preparation and he did extensive preparation to get ready for the PCMC level. When I heard that, I asked if he could write about that preparation and share it with this group. He said he would so look for that in the coming days.

But he was the only one. Everybody else was struggling ... really struggling and it goes back to the prerequisites — 400 hours of paid professional coaching, buddy coaching, case studies, and lots and lots of *practicing*. My recommendation to them and to the MCF Chapters— *establish practice groups*, get supervision on your benchmarks, get detailed in the feedback that you give and receive. Especially watch out for being over-confident and over-optimistic! Tell the truth. If you are giving sensory-based feedback, it is **not** about hurting feelings, it is about telling the truth. Be a clean mirror and just mirror it back. Here's to being a growing and ever-developing practitioner of these arts!

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #11
March 14, 2018

THE NEW RE-DESIGN OF GROUP & TEAM COACHING

It wasn't my idea, but when I heard it, I immediately liked it. Several of those participating in the GTMC in Cairo Egypt, after the last day, gathered in the restaurant in the hotel for dinner together. Part of the discussion was the value of the feedback during the benchmarking process and part of the conversation was about how much everyone learned from it. It was there that the idea was put forward, "We ought to have benchmarking during the days of the training to prepare for the Assessment days." "Now why didn't I think of that?"

While I immediately liked the idea, I also immediately recognized many of the challenges and obstacles that would have to be dealt with. We would have to have a team of people to do the benchmarking, we would have to spend some time getting them ready to do that before the first day, we would have to design that into the training exercises and prepare those who would be selected as the coaches in the groups, we would have to schedule more time for the training. All of those thoughts dashed through my mind in a fast and furious way in the first few seconds. More came later.

The next day, as an experiment, I took the Training Manual and set out to see if I could recast it to extend it for a 4-day training and write into the 19 group coaching exercises a step where we would put someone into each group to provide feedback. There was also a request to put more of the *coaching skills* earlier in the training. Currently they are there, but they are assumed. Those in the training groups, and selected as the coach, practice the basic group coaching skills, only without being given explicit instructions. In the first exercises, the focus will be simply to listen, support, and guide (facilitate) the different conversations and designs. Day two will focus on listening and questioning as one begins to tap into the group dynamics. After that, the benchmarking will focus on the guiding or administrating of the group processes and troubleshooting group problems.

What will result from these changes? The Group and Team Meta-Coach (GTMC) training will seem and feel more like ACMC. There will be more explicit focus on the group coaching skills due to the feedback on the skills.

"Ah, Now I See it!"

After the training days, we sometimes add one to three days for assessment. Only an ACMC coach can sit for assessment. The focus now shifts to observing a coach handle a group of six-people on the stage. After the coach chooses one of the scenarios in the manual, the six group members are given their roles to play and then the psycho-drama begins. The coach has 45 minutes to manage the group processes and to focus the group on a specific outcome all the while demonstrating the group coaching skills.

Now for years I have been emphasizing that those who really want to learn group and team coaching, come to observe the psycho-drama and the feedback that is given to the coach afterwards. For the past five years, I've emphasized that most people will learn *more* on the assessment days when they see the psycho-drama on the stage and see how the coach handles (or doesn't handle) it. But this idea still seems to surprise many people.

This time, it was only after that we did the assessments that several people approached me and talked about how much they learned. "Actually I learned a lot more today than in the three days of the training." "Ah, now I see how the group coaching actually works!" Of course, that speaks about the power of giving sensory feedback and providing information about how someone meets (or doesn't meet) the benchmarks. That's because when feedback is done well, it can powerfully shape the skill development of the coach and offer corrections for mis-practices.

The Future of GTMC

Today several Neuro-Semantic Trainers who are also Meta-Coaches are now commissioned to train the training days of Group and Team. Yet only Mandy Chai has been through the Assessment days sufficient times and demonstrated the ability to certify. I anticipate that I will soon be able to sign off Emile Bleck to do the certifying, that will probably occur whenever we do the assessment days in Mexico. After that will be David Murphy, BJ Radomski, and others. The signing off to do the benchmarking also requires the PCMC level of Meta-Coaching.

The new design will mean that the basic learning will be four days instead of three. Actually, there is so much material, it can easily be extended to five days if a trainer wants to do that. From now on I will be doing the 4-day format and still using an 8-hour training day (9 to 6). The key value in this will be how it will provide much greater readiness for a Meta-Coach to sit and pass the assessment.

If interested, talk to one of the Neuro-Semantic Trainers in your area who might consider sponsoring GTMC.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #12
March 21, 2018

META-COACHING AND CRITICAL THINKING

To coach is to enable clients to think critically. To coach is to help people look at their own lives, their thinking, reasoning, and decision-making with a healthy skepticism so that they can be more objective about their choices. Given that, no wonder then that this is one of the chief reasons that the primary tool for coaching is *questioning*. We ask questions to help clients think things through, gain a larger level perspective, and run quality control checks on their lives.

Of course all of this presupposes that *you as a Meta-Coach* know how to engage in high quality critical thinking and can enable your clients to do the same. Do you? Here's one way to test yourself—how quickly do you jump into problem-solving? How much does a problem-statement from a client activate you into trying to figure out how to solve it? The quicker you go into problem-solving, the weaker your critical thinking skills.

Does that surprise you? Yes, while critical thinking skills will definitely help you to become more skilled and able to engage in effective problem-solving, jumping into solving a problem before you have clearly defined the problem undermines all of that. A critical thinker does not jump into solving things without first taking the time to define the problem, the context, and the system. Those who do that often end up “solving” the wrong problem or a pseudo-problem.

Want more about that? Then get the book *Creative Solutions* (2016). There I present four applications of the Neuro-Semantic Precision Template. You already know the Well-Formed Outcome and if you've been to the Creativity and Innovation Workshop, you know about the others—the well-formed problem, solution, and innovation. Each of these Precision Templates is designed to help you think more thoroughly and critically about these aspects of problem-solving and therefore to engage in critical thinking.

[By the way, this means that *Creative Solutions* is actually my second book on critical thinking, *Communication Magic* the first, and *Executive Thinking* will be the third. It's not available now, but will be in May.]

To think critically is to explore what a client presents from an open-minded, curious, and skeptical place. It involves the NLP know-nothing state and it also involves the “lose your mind and come to your senses” state (Perls). Then, given these states, it entails you being able to representationally track what is said to the theater of your mind without adding anything. Doing all of that keeps the information clean and uncontaminated.

Jumping to problem-solving is one indicator that you are not engaging in high quality critical thinking. There are other signs. Central to them is the inability to ask distinction questions. These are the questions that you ask given your understanding and expertise in the discipline of “coaching,” which thereby enables you to help clients make critical distinctions. These are the kinds of questions

that saves you from the trouble of needing to teach or consult with clients. Instead, you can ask these kinds of questions in a Socratic way so that they discover the distinctions. To do that reveals that you can think critically. To not be able to do that means that you are still at a beginner's level.

Another indicator, and a distinction question at the same time, is your ability to separate the *subject* of the coaching session from the *outcome*. These are not the same. The first one is a very general idea of the topic or subject of the coaching and the second is a much more detailed outcome or result that the client wants to achieve. The first questions of the well-formed outcome help you identify the subject (Questions 1-6). The next set of questions, when you work them well, enable you to help refine a more specific and well-formed outcome (Questions 7-15).

Ultimately, critical thinking is *high quality thinking* that enables people to make good use of their intelligence. It is thinking that aims for clarity, precision, and accuracy— key qualities of *good* thinking. Yet it is more. A healthy critical thinker is able to step back from her thinking in order to *think-about-one's thinking*. And it is via this meta-thinking that a person can gain enough perspective to alter one's way of thinking. Now a person no longer needs to remain stuck in the kind of thinking that's creating problems or inefficiency. Now a person can step back from one's thinking to choose better ways to think.

You learned the first part of this kind of thinking (thinking that's clear, precise, and accurate) when you learned the Meta-Model. You learned the second part of this kind of thinking (thinking-about your thinking) when you learned the Meta-States Model. No wonder then, that as a Meta-Coach you have the training that should enable you to be fully ready and able to help your clients engage in high quality critical thinking. Now while you've had the training but you may still not fully know how to do that. Yet if you are committed to yourself, your ongoing development, and to the Meta-Coaching system, then you will get there. It's just a matter of time.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #13
March 28, 2018

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE WFO QUESTIONS

Recently two different Meta-Coaches asked me about materials regarding *the psychology behind the well-formed outcome questions*. At first I thought that I had written about them somewhere, but as I contemplated where and when would I have done that, I realized that I had not. So, here goes!

While the questions themselves are all focused on a goal— an outcome of an individual or a group, there is a psychology behind each of the questions. To learn the 18 questions— here are 7 categories that help to classify the different questions and by which you can see how they work together to enable a client to create a well-designed goal. These seven categories inform *the psychology of goal-setting*. Namely:

To set a goal in an intelligent way— establish the subject, identify the context, identify the actions that have to be done, check that the goal is within the control of the person, if getting to the goal involves multiple actions, create a plan for reach it, identify anything that will interfere with that process by making sure you have the resources to succeed, then get a commitment to the goal.

Subject — The subject or theme for what's relevant about the goal.

- 1) What do you want? *Make sure that it is stated in the positive, not as a negation.*
- 2) What will you see or hear? *Identify the empirical variables of the goal if it is tangible.*
- 3) Why do you want that? *Identify the intentional and inspirational values of the goal.*

Context — The environment in terms of space, time, persons.

- 4) When do you want to achieve this? *Time frame for achieving the goal.*
- 5) Where will this goal occur? *The place, domain, or area of the goal.*
- 6) With whom will you do this, if anyone? *The social context and relationships required.*

Actions — The behaviors required to achieve the goal.

- 7) What do you have to *do* to get what you want? *The actions that have to be taken.*

Power – The capacity and competency for reaching the goal.

- 8) Is this goal within your area of control? *If the goal is intrinsic for initiating and sustaining.*
- 9) Can you? Do you have the skill? *The capability and skill for achieving the goal.*
- 10) Have you ever done this before? *A post event review of attempted solutions.*

Planning — The structure for how to make the goal real.

- 11) How many things do you have to do? *The number of steps and stages in the goal.*
- 12) Do you need or have a plan or strategy? *The organizational structure of the goal.*
- 13) How will you monitor your progress? *The feedback to look for and milestones to mark.*

Resourcing — The process for moving forward to the goal.

14) What, if anything, could stop you? *The interferences, obstacles, and blocks to the goal.*

15) Do you have the external resources? *The resources required.*

Do you have the internal resource you need?

16) Is it ecological, holistic, and realistic? *The quality control check regarding the values of the goal.*

Closure —

3) Is it still compelling and attractive? *Re-checking the inspirational level of the goal.*

17) Are you going to do this? *The decision for a commitment to the goal.*

18) How will you know you have achieved it? *The evidence procedure for feeling convinced regarding when you will achieve your goal.*

The Psychology Behind the Questions

An interesting factor about these questions is that on the surface they seem obvious and simple. Yet behind them there is actually a lot of premises and psychological assumptions which have been designed into them. Questions 1 through 3, the subject questions set the direction as they facilitate a client to identify the subject (or theme) and the intention driving the goal striving. “Why do you want that? Why is it important to you?” These questions elicit the intention and the values which energize the striving for the goal.

Ask *question one* three times, maybe even four or five, but no more. After that, if the client is still unsure and keeps answering, “I don’t know,” then begin guessing and feeding back what you’ve heard. Don’t keep asking it. It then becomes irritating. Use inferential listening to infer what’s implied in the statements, metaphors, etc. and make a proposal to the client about the subject.

When you get a subject, test it. “This is the most important thing for us to invest our time and effort into?” There’s nothing more important? Would it be worth your time and money to develop this goal? The why questions (#3) should be asked at least three times for three levels and possibly five or more. The reason for that is that this creates the motivational energy for achieving the goal. After all, if it is not important, then why invest in achieving it? This also elicits the person’s values and values is what creates motivation and inspiration.

Questions 4 through 6, the context questions ground the subject into real life. “When do you want to achieve this goal?” flushes out the person’s sense of time and also tests how realistic the person is in establishing a time-line. Many high achievers are also highly unrealistic regarding the time-frame of when they think they can accomplish a goal. This question establishes a time-line and gives you an idea of how long the person expects to take to achieve the goal. Questions 5 and 6 may or may not need to be asked. The answer may be implied via the previous and therefore redundant. If unsure, present what you think is the area of concern (“Where?”) and if anyone else is involved *in reaching the goal* (question 6). These questions establish the outcome. Most goals are context specific so you need to know when, where, and with who.

The Central Question— #7. Then with question 7 (supplemented by question 11), you enable the client to really begin identifying the session’s outcome. First a testing question: “Do you know what you have to do to get what you want?” That’s a yes or no question. If *yes*, then ask the open-ended

exploration question: “*What* do you have to *do* to get what you want?” If *no*, then say, “Great, I have a job! That’s what we will find out together.” From there you check with question eight: “This is in your power to do, whatever it is?” With the *no* to question 7, you can then quickly check-off of questions 9 through 15— typically do that by summarizing, “we don’t know the skill” (#9), we don’t know if you’ll need a plan (#12), etc. Without knowing *what* to do (question 7), skip #9, there’s no need to ask “Can you do it?” etc. Obviously, you now have an outcome— you are going to have a Clarity Conversation—to find out what you will need to do to reach your outcome.

Sometimes as you are checking off questions 9–15, your client will suddenly have an insight, “Oh, now I know what to do, it just came to me.” This means that you now have a *yes* to question 7. So go back there. Actually this happens often. Asking these questions facilitates a brainstorming mood and suddenly client’s have insights and ideas. This is great! These questions also begin refining the outcome. If the client *cannot do* and does not have the skill to do it (question 9), you have the outcome of *creating the resource* (Resource Conversation). If your client has several things to do (#11), she probably will need a plan or strategy (question 12), so now your outcome is to create a plan (Planning Conversation). If your client identifies interferences (question 14), then your outcome is a Problem Solving—Resource Conversation.

The process questions. All of the questions from #7 to 15 answer the *how question*. “How do you get what you want?” As you ask the questions, you find out *what kind of conversation* the client wants in order to achieve her goal: Clarity, Decision, Planning, Resourcing, Change. The checking questions (16–18) may refine things even more: if going for it violates ecology, then you may need to do a Decision Conversation or a Resource Conversation. If the client is not decisive and committed, again a Decision Conversation.

Questions 8-10 are questions about the client’s power— as in response-ability. Here you check if it is within the client’s control so that he can initiate the behavior and sustain it. If the behavior is not within the client’s ability to respond (“I want them to like me”), ask what the person could do that would raise the probability? “If you were friendly, asked about them, used their name, etc. would that raise the probability of them liking you?” Without direct influence to achieve a goal, a goal that mostly resides with others, we have to shift to *a degree of probability*. “What actions can you take that would raise the probability that the other person would make that response?” Once you identify those actions and the probability level, then the question becomes, “Would it be worth your time, effort, and energy to do these things?”

From theoretically being in someone’s control to actually being a developed competency is what question 9 explores. “Can you do that action?” “Do you have the skill, the capacity, the competence?” “If so, then to what degree?” This may become one of the small “whats” if the person needs to work on that skill.

What question 10 elicits is a *post event review*. “Have you ever done this before?” If so, what worked and what did not? What worked a little bit? If not, then, “Have you ever done something like this?” Sometimes changing the context or subject, one finds bits and pieces of the skill. That can be used to build up a new skill for a new context. You can now transfer a skill in one area to another area.

Questions 11 to 13 are the planning questions. Ask, “Do you need a plan?” If so, then “Do you have a plan?” If not, then “What kind of a plan do you need?” Do you need a checklist, a mind-map, a flow-chart, a business plan, etc.? How do you like to plan or how to create a strategy so that you can achieve what you want? All of this comes from question 11, “How many steps and/or stages are involved in getting what you want?” The more steps and the more stages of the process, the more likely one needs a plan.

Once there is the need for a plan, then *using the plan* to actually navigate the goal striving process becomes important. Hence question 13. “What do you need to monitor so that you get appropriate feedback on how you are doing and progressing? What feedback will you focus on getting that lets you know you are reaching your milestones and staying on target?” In this you are looking for *lead indicators of success* rather than result indicators. *Lead* indicators are those things that tell you how you are doing.

Questions 14-15 and 3 are resource questions. In actualizing the plan (or strategy) there is the potential of something stopping you, blocking you, or interfering with your progress. “Is there something like that?” “Could anything stop you? If so, what?” This is the problem questions— what obstacles could get in the way of reaching your goal? Then to this question, question 15 provides an immediate solution, “What resource do you need to deal with that obstacle?” Is it in internal resources (inspiration, courage, willingness, a particular belief, decision, permission, etc.)? Is it an external resource (money, personnel, time, partners, etc.)?

Question 3 reinforces this search for reaches as it checks once again, “Is this goal still compelling, inspirational, and realistic?” It takes energy and motivation to reach goals and the source of motivation is a person’s values.

Questions 16 to 18 are the closing the contract questions. At this point you will want to check that the goal and pursuing it is ecological— it is good for the person and will not mess up health, finances, relationship, ethics, etc. Is it holistic? Is it realistic? Question 17 invites a decision or commitment, “Are you ready to make a decision that you are going to go after this?” If the answer is yes, then you and your client are sealing the deal.

Question 18 looks for the evidence that will convince a person that he or she has reached the goal and can stop striving for it. “How will you know when you have reached your goal?” What will be the evidence or the indicator that you have succeeded? The answer to this question gives the person his or her KPI for the outcome. And for a Key Performance Indicator, each type of coaching conversation will have a different kind of KPI. This information is now detailed in the PCMC manual.

Conclusion

There is a psychology that governs what you do when you co-create with your client a well-formed outcome. This set of questions are so powerful that often when you ask the questions, the client finds answers and solutions and the subject is resolved. If so, start over, “What else do you want?” This set of questions not only operates as a way to create a coaching contract, it is a great way to do a *needs analysis* with your client.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #14
March 28, 2018

USE THE BRAND!

Today I was talking to one of our participants in ACMC here in Bali Indonesia. He came from another country. When he talked about how he got interested in Meta-Coaching, he said that he googled coaching, and because he had heard that Meta-Coaching was the most advanced Coach Training, when he googled Meta-Coaching in his country, he could find nothing. He found someone in another country not too far away, but no one in his country. *And that in spite of the fact that we have at least 15 or 20 Meta-Coaches in that country!*

So what went wrong? One thing—Meta-Coaches are *not* using the brand to its fullest potential. They are trying to brand themselves with their own title or business and while that is good and fine, they are *not* using the international brand that they could use—Meta-Coaching. And by not using it, they are failing to strengthen the brand in their city and country.

Recommendation: So here is my recommendation—*use the title of “Licensed Meta-Coach” and your credentials ACMC or PCMC.* Tell people that you are part of an internationally recognized coach training process that has the highest standards for competency in the world. And that’s true. There’s no other coach training system that has higher standards, or more thorough standards. This International brand is in 65 countries with 3,000 Licensed Meta-Coaches and there is a series of 16 books that specifically detail the Meta-Coaching System. Tell them it is based on Cognitive Psychology and Self-Actualization Psychology and that there is research for it on the Neuro-Semantic website (www.neurosemantics.com). Tell them it was originally modeled from three expert coaches and then supplemented over the past 15 years by modeling 34 expert coaches in 14 different countries.

Because brands are concepts, they are strengthened by use and they are weakened by dis-use. And every time a Meta-Coach succeeds with a client, accomplishes something, writes an article, or a book, or presents at a Conference— the brand that we all use gets stronger, richer, and more robust. If you want to highlight your speciality, do so. “I’m a Meta-Coach who specializes in Wellness.” “I’m an Executive Meta-Coach.” “I’m a Meta-Coach who also trains with a speciality in Self-Actualization Psychology.”

The Meta-Coach brand, as with the Neuro-Semantic brand, stands for quality, high standards, professional ethics, integrity, and collaboration. So, let people know! Take pride in knowing that you are part of something much bigger than yourself and also that your contribution is also forging the future.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #15
April 4, 2018

CONTENT VERSUS STRUCTURE

You have heard the argument— NLP doesn't deal with content, only structure or process. You may have said that as you start a coaching conversation. But is that true? Do we not deal with content *at all*? This is a misunderstanding and it can be a serious one. The misunderstanding comes from some of the first NLP books where John and Richard repeatedly focused on process or structure over content. A truer statement is that we *mostly* deal with structure rather than content. The misunderstanding is thinking that no content counts. It does! We just do not *solely or only* deal with content. In fact, we *mostly* deal with structure rather than content.

Actually, you and I *need content to ground a conversation and to understand a client!* Without content, we really don't know what they're talking about and without that we really cannot run an ecology check. If we turn everything into structure as John Grinder would have us do and use formulations like, "I want to *yellow*..." for example, or "I want to attain more X." then there's no way to know if what they are talking about is ecological or not. Sure, you can ask, "Is that ecological?" and they may say yes. But how do you know?

- What if *yellow* is sex with lots of women?
- What if *X* is people indebted to me so that I can get political favors from them?
- What if *yellow* is junk food, fatty meats, three-hours of sleep, extortion of money, etc.?

If you use a non-content term symbol like yellow or X for the content as you read in some of the early NLP books, there is no way for you to know whether the subject is truly ecological or not. Further, if the subject is not specific, you won't know. And without knowing, you won't know if it is sensory-based and therefore grounded in reality or not. These are significant problems.

What if someone is thinking about *confidence* when she says, "I want to be more X." You can certainly ask some process questions about that, "How much X do you feel now?" "How much more X do you want to feel?" "Is X good for you?" "Would it bring out your best?" "Would it enhance you as a person?" "When do you want to reach this goal of more X?" Yet without knowing *what* the confidence is about, you won't be able to help the person ground it and then develop it adequately.

We need content! Not a lot of it, but some. I would guess 20 to 30% of the information that we need is content and 70 to 80% is structure or process. I heard a coaching session once where a lady was having problems as a mother. She wanted her child to be "more responsible." My thoughts began picturing a teenager or a young adult. But the coach never asked. He never asked about what the responsibility was about. Later it turned out that the child was not one child, but two, two twin girls, age five who were very competitive and wanting mom's attention and when they didn't get it, they fought with each other. That's a very different picture and a very different coaching conversation.

‘So, okay,’ you say, ‘we need content, but how much? How much is enough and how much is too much?’ Well, those are not easy questions, but in Meta-Coaching and NLP we do have a general answer. *Get enough details so that you can representationally track from the person’s words to a movie in your mind.* Can you see and hear what the person is saying? I cannot see or hear “more responsibility” ... I need more information. So also with “confidence.” I need to have a picture of the object of the confidence and when I see that, then I can ask about competence. “Can you do that?” “To what degree?”

Now you don’t need every detail of the movie, but you do need enough so that you have a sense of what the person is talking about. “I want a better relationship with my teenage son.” Okay, I can see you and I can imagine a boy who is of teenage years, but “relationship” — hmmm. What would I see you doing and saying? What would I see your son doing or saying? I need that information. Is “relationship” (nominalization for relating) spending time together playing basketball? Is the relating talking about what’s happening at school? Is it talking through choice of friends, music, or activities?

Content makes things real. Structure gets to the processes by which we make things real. Someone procrastinating has a process for doing that—a process of thinking, feeling, speaking, acting, etc. and it is not about everything, it is about specific things in specific contexts. What does he put off? When and where does he put it off? What fears, hopes, apprehensions, understandings, etc. are influencing the putting off?

So the bottom line is this— get content to ground the conversation and make it real, then focus on structure to get to the processes that construct the experience. Then you will have the best of both worlds— a grounding in the everyday world and the leverage point in the person’s neuro-semantic world. To your best coaching!

**From : Bruneau Woomed
2018, Morpheus #16
April 5, 2018**

WITNESSING THE MAGIC OF COACHING

Coaching can be magic. As Meta-Coaches, you probably heard of and even used this phrase but have you experienced it first-hand?

I would like to share what I witnessed at the last ACMC in Bali which I attended as a Team Leader. Dr. Michael Hall did a demo of Coaching to the Matrix. The client— let's call him "X" had a situation of being stuck, especially when relating to authority figures. In particular, X said that he could not find the courage to ask questions when attending a seminar or to go and have a chat with his teacher. It was a total blank in his mind when he would be near the authority figure and it happened quite frequently— 2 or 3 times a week and with people that X looked up to (such as with a colleague that he admires). He even added that he had not dared speak to Michael since the beginning of the course and it was a real stretch for him to volunteer to do the demo.

This "Coaching to the Matrix" pattern has actually the same structure as the patterns "Meta-Stating Concepts" and "Meta-Stating Possibility" which uses the miracle question. It moves up the levels to see the entire "system" holding the primary state feelings and behaviors in place.

Michael quickly managed to flush out the current frames and beliefs moving up several levels:

- I feel silly asking questions which may not be appropriate.
- I will be judged as being stupid by that person.
- This would mean that I don't deserve talking to that person.
- If all that is true, then I would feel sad and feel very very bad.
- Because it would mean I am stupid, that people look down at me.
- And that I am not loved, not accepted and that my thoughts don't come through.

At that stage, Michael elicited from X a reference event: in school, it had happened that a teacher had judged him and made fun of him in front of the class. He then invited X to blow out the old frames which were not resourceful so as to create space for a new matrix, for more resourceful frames. This was done with the "ecology check" step in the pattern which enables a person to gain perspective on their own system. It puts them at "choice point."

When X was invited to come up with a new set of frames and a new belief system, his own inner intelligence came up with the following:

- Start with the state of calmly speaking and going straight.
- Believing I can speak with the person in authority and we can have a good conversation.
- Believing that my identity is greater than my speech.
- Believing I can ask good questions for good conversations.
- Believing that whatever happens, happens, and I can accept it and handle it.

- Instead of interpreting things in terms of my identity, whatever I don't know I can learn.
- Deciding that I can accept myself, "I am who I am."

Michael checked with X how he felt after all this and he replied that he felt a tightness in his chest and tension in his muscles. By teasing X and asking him if he wanted to keep the old frames, Michael helped X to fully relax and choose the new matrix.

We became aware of the "magic" the next morning at Celebrations time. X said:

"Did you notice that the previous days, I was wearing a blue coat despite the tropical heat of Bali? I always feel cold – especially at my extremities. I cannot sleep with the air conditioner on and even need socks and I know that my roommate was miserable as he felt the heat each night. But after the coaching, something changed in my body. Look at me: I am not wearing any coat and last night, I slept with the air conditioner on and wore no socks. Michael, I would like to know– is there any link with the coaching, with me becoming unstuck?"

Michael replied that one possible explanation is that X was living with his "feet on the brakes" as he was constantly in a state of fear— fear of being judged and hence he proved to be inadequate. Now being in a state of fear and/or anxiety sends danger signals to the brain and blood rushes to the brain and to the core muscles as danger is being perceived— hence depriving extremities of blood and causing the coldness sensation. And when X chose to lift his feet from the brakes, the message sent to the brain was that there was no danger hence leading to different results. This illustrates the mind-body connection— they are part of the same system.

I observed X during the next days and he was a different person. He became one of those who intervened the most at question time and he no longer wore his famous blue coat. As I reflect on the "magic" which I witnessed, I conclude that it arose out of the combination of the following variables:

- The instantaneous nature of the changes.
- The deep and lasting transformations in behavior.
- Changes affecting the body.

A word of caution here. I don't mean that all coaching sessions should lead to instantaneous, spectacular and "magical" results— transformations probably more often than not happen in a very gradual and quiet way. My main take-away from the demo is that the mind and the body are part of the same system and that what may seem surprising at our current level of knowledge makes full sense at a higher level of knowledge.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #17
April 11, 2018

AS A META-COACH YOU COACH STRUCTURE

In the last post (Morpheus #15) I wrote about the relationships between content and structure and focused on making sure you have grounded the coaching conversation in the everyday world that's real for the client. Now let's turn to the subject of *structure*. If we want to focus 70 to 80 percent of our attention to structure— what are we talking about and how do we do that?

Structure refers to the processes by which an experience is created and maintained. As a meaning-maker you construct your “experiences” using the representational systems. To make that explicit, we use the NLP Strategy Model and identify the representational steps in the person's strategy for creating procrastination, indecision, perfectionism, efficiency, accelerated learning, or any of ten-thousand human experiences.

But there's a trick in this. You have to shift your thinking to correctly understand *structure*. That's because *structure* is not static or stable. It is a mistake to think of structure in the human being as a you think of the structure of a building or of any other tangible “thing.” We are not talking about *things*, we are talking about *a human experience* which by its very nature as fluid and dynamic are constantly changing. In this instance, it maintains its identity, it's sense of consistency and stability by continual activity.

Here's a way to think about it. The stability of a human experience is like that of riding a bicycle. To ride a bicycle in keeping it upright, you have to be *continually pedaling* and/or *moving back and forth on the bike*. If you stop pedaling, the bike will not remain upright. It will fall over. And since you are on the bike, you will also fall over! To keep the bike stable and upright, you keep pedaling and balancing yourself on the bike. It is a *dynamic stability— an equilibrium that arises by constant motion*. So also the *dynamic stability of our experiences*— in order to keep having an experience (depression, joyfulness, seriousness, playfulness, learning, confusion, etc.) you have to *keep the strategy activated and operational*. And yes, this is a very different way of thinking.

Now, knowing that, any experience your coaching client is having, *that person is creating it in every moment*. Does that mean the person is doing it consciously or even conscious of it? No, it does not! In fact, it is more likely to be outside-of-conscious awareness than inside it. That's because strategies habitualize and drop out of awareness and so we say that they operate unconsciously. Yet even though you or your client do not know it, they are still *doing the strategy*. They are doing it outside-of-conscious awareness. The strategy now seems to have “a life of its own.”

Knowing that, your first task is to find out *how* your client is creating his or her experience. If he is feeling like a victim— that is what he is *doing*. In some way and in some process, he is creating the representations and commissioning his body to access that state. And the structure could involve just one thing or a great many. It could involve any of the following—

- Using a reference from his past that he steps in and re-experiences.
- Using a metaphor that summarizes his conclusion about being a victim.
- Using a belief about his incapacities or a belief about a dim future or a belief about a cruel world out there.
- Using an identity that locks in a misunderstanding from childhood.
- Using a decision that now blocks him from getting free from the victimhood.
- Using a prohibition that stops him; “Being proactive means being aggressive.”
- Using any one of a hundred *frames* that holds and keeps activating the experience in place.

That’s because, as you well know— *the person is not the problem; the frame is the problem!* So as a Meta-Coach, your job is to find the frame. Do that and you are working with the structure rather than the content. Regarding the cause of the problem, the content doesn’t matter. What matters is the frame that the person is using. That is the key to change and transformation.

As a Meta-Coach as you now coach *structure*, you look for the hidden processes of representing, framing, believing, deciding, etc. and how the person uses those processes to then embody, incorporate, or as we say *mind-to-muscle* what they know intelligently so it becomes neurological patterns in their body. All of this requires that you move from content to structure and then back to content again and again. That’s why you need a thorough (underline that, *a thorough*) understanding of two models — the Meta-Model and the Meta-States Model. The first one enables you to get the real-world referents so you can ground the coaching conversation. The second one enables you to get the meta-level framework that holds the dynamic structure of the person’s experience.

In Module I of Meta-Coaching you learned the Meta-Model. Yet to *really learn it* and know it in a thorough way, get *Communication Magic* (2001) so that you can make the Meta-Model your foundational model. Soon (June 2018) the new book, *Executive Thinking* (2018) will be available and it will give you more about both models as well as the essence of critical thinking skills.

In Module II of Meta-Coaching you learned the Meta-States Model and you applied it to your “genius coaching state.” Yet that is only the beginning. That is described in the book, *Secrets of Personal Mastery* (1997). You can read much more in *Meta-State Magic, Meta-States* (2012), *Dragon Slaying* (1997), *Winning the Inner Game* (2006), etc. It is the Meta-States model that enables you to think more systemically about the dynamic processes and to recognize that within every single meta-level (a belief or decision or identity, etc.) is every other meta-level. And that is the key to truly working with *structure*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #18
April 17, 2018

THE FILIPINO EXPERIMENT

I'm delighted that we will finally get to run the experiment that I proposed back in 2016. The hypothesis to be tested is this: If we double the number of coaching laboratories during Coaching Mastery, will that be sufficient to get all of the coaches-in-training up to the ACMC competency level? I believe it will. But I do not know. It is a guess, an educated guess, and one that I hope is true, but I could be wrong. And soon— very soon in fact— we will find out. Do you want to be a part of the experiment?

Here's the plan. We are planning a 10-day ACMC *Coaching Mastery* program just outside of Manila, the Philippines for *June 4 through the 14*. It just so happens to also be 100th ACMC since the first one in 2002.

As I've been preparing for this grand coaching experiment, I've realized that it means some changes in the regular ACMC schedule for most of the days and not only for Days 8, 9 and 10. In terms of the schedule, the first four days will be the same as always:

- Day 1: Relationships — focus on the Listening and Supporting skills.
- Day 2: Exploration — focus on the questioning and mirroring skills.
- Day 3: Performance — focus on the experiential skills.
- Day 4: Systems — focus on using the Matrix as a systems model.

In those four days, there will be three (3) *coaching labs* wherein participants will focus, as usual, on coaching to the Well-Formed Outcome questions. Then something *new*— this will continue on Days 5 and 6, thereby giving people 5 back-to-back sessions on the WFO pattern for getting the subject and creating the coaching contract. This means that instead of introducing the Axes of Change on Day 5, we will delay that until Day 7. Here are the differences:

- Day 5: Self-Actualization — focusing on the Psychology of Coaching.
- Day 6: Business — focusing on how to run a Coaching Practice.
- Day 7: Change — focusing on the Axes of Change and the Psychology of Transformation.

With the introduction of *the Axes of Change* on Day 7, the *coaching labs* will shift to the Change Conversation and participants will coach minimally the next four (4) sessions on the mechanisms of change: motivation, decision, creation, and integration. I say “minimally” because a coach could keep practicing the change conversation three more times (or do three more sessions using the WFO questions). Even more importantly, beginning on Day 8, participants will do *two coaching sessions each day*. That adds an additional six (6) coaching labs to the experience, thereby doubling the number of coaching labs. This will make Coaching Mastery even more of a coaching *boot camp*. There will be very little instruction on the last three days so that the participants will be actively coaching and being coached.

- Day 8: Profession — focusing on how Coaching is becoming a profession.
- Day 9: Competence — focusing on achieving competence in the coaching skills.

Day 10: Future Pacing — focusing on ongoing Professional Development.

What we will add that's new on the last three days (Days 8 through 10) will be repeated Coaching Demonstrations. While there is always one on Day 6 that we video-tape, we will do this 4 more times to provide a flow of examples of the required coaching competency. What I need to pull this off will be more people to be coached. We will need people to come for coaching sessions on the last three days as well as people for the coaching demonstrations. That could be *you*. That could be someone you know that you could send.

If you have not revisited *Coaching Mastery* in some time, this would be a great opportunity. Come to the Philippines to update your skills, reach competency again or for the first time. And then stay for a holiday— visit on of the 7,000 islands, the resorts, the white sand beaches and much more.

Almost everyone reaches competency level in the presentation skills of NSTT. One reason— 15 days of intense practice. I believe we can achieve similar results in ACMC by doubling the number of coaching labs. I also believe we have the format to achieve it. We have an excellent international team ready to go and I'm ready to give it all I have to see if we can make it happen.

Interested?

Contact Vanessa Salvana at brkthru.consulting@gmail.com
or Virna Villarosa metacoachvirna@gmail.com

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #19
April 18, 2018

IN CONTENT— KNOW NOTHING IN STRUCTURE— BE THE EXPERT

Last year I was at one of the ACMC trainings and strongly urging people to adopt the *know-nothing* frame of mind.

I quoted Fritz Perls, “Lose your mind and come to your senses.”

I quoted Milton H. Erickson, “When patients come into my office, *I greet them with a blank mind* and I look them over to see who and what and why they are, without taking anything for granted.” (Haley, 1985, p. 114).

Soon thereafter, at the morning break, one participant came up to me and from my calibrations, I would say that she was not in a very good state. She seemed stressed and nervous and upset. She said that she just did not get it. “Why am I here learning coaching an coaching skills and Neuro-Semantics if you want me to ‘lose my mind’ and to be ‘know-nothing?’” It wasn’t until I sorted out a distinction that I had not made in my public descriptions that she suddenly got it and experienced a delightful *Aha! moment of insight*.

What was the distinction that led to that *aha moment*? That as a Meta-Coach, you are to be *know-nothing* about the client— the client’s goals, values, beliefs, ethics, etc. and that you are to be *the expert in process*— in how to facilitate the psychological processes of learning, unlearning, meaning-making, meta-stating resources, embodying new beliefs, transformative change, etc.

What had been confusing was her idea that she was to know-nothing about everything in the coaching conversation! Nor was she the only person to suffer from that misunderstanding. In several recent ACMC trainings, I have met people mis-informed about NLP who had bought into the idea that the coach is not allowed to do *any leading*. Yet that is just another form of the same confusion.

With the client’s content, we do not lead. It is not our place to tell the client what to do, what to believe, what to value, who to marry, what job to take, etc. But it is our place, once we know what the client wants (his or her agenda) to *lead the processes so that the client achieves his or her outcome*. The client empowers us (as the coach) to *lead* him to his goal. The client hires us to use coaching to *lead* her to her goal. The content belongs to the client, the process belongs to you as the Meta-Coach.

Precisely because *the content belongs to the client*, as the Meta-Coach, you use the well-formed outcome questions to help the client get specific and clear about what he really wants. You use those questions for intelligence gathering so that your client then enters into a contractual agreement for her agenda in the coaching conversations. You get the contract.

Precisely because *the process belongs to the coach*, as the Meta-Coach you are thereby hired to *lead* the client to her goal. That's your job— to lead. That's the contract. You lead the process and because that's your job, you often have to interrupt, confront, challenge, and call meta-moments. And that's because your client sometimes finds it hard to follow your lead. They might think they know what you should do! (They want to be both client and coach!)

This is where their *mis-diagnosis* comes in. Clients often (perhaps even usually) mis-diagnose the solution that they think will resolve a problem — which they also mis-diagnose. This is where you have to take charge and be the coach-leader that you need to be. But remember, in Neuro-Semantics we do *not* think of leadership as “command and control.” We think of leadership as inspiring, enabling, empowering, etc. so that we “bring out the best in people.” We lead in such a way as to enable our clients to become self-leading.

The coach as leader means that there are times where you have to take charge of the coaching conversation. If you don't— the conversation will spin around, chase rabbits, and overall become unproductive. That's why you sometimes have to interrupt where the client is going— they are getting off the subject, they are not answering the question, they are experiencing thought-intrusions distracting themselves, etc. That's also why you have to confront them— they often say contradictory, incongruent things without being aware of it. Sometimes they operate from a blindspot that you can see and they cannot.

That's why you also need to constantly be challenging— inviting your client to see their situation and how they are settling for in a mediocre way and not believing more in themselves or may be selling themselves short. Will they feel uncomfortable? Probably. Will they feel shaken up and out of their comfort zone? Yes. Will they think you are asking them to stretch beyond what they think possible? Yes! And that's why they need you to do the leading at those moments!

You are not just a Meta-Coach, you are a coach-leader. So be one! Step up to leadership — facilitation leadership as a coach.

From: L. Michael Hall

2018 Morpheus #20

April 25, 2018

Written originally in Sept, 2015

INTENTION AND INTENTIONALITY

At the heart of Neuro-Semantics we train and coach *intentionality*. That's what the Intention Pattern in APG is all about. That's also why we ask a series of meta-questions about a person's "reason why" he or she does or wants what the person wants. Via this process, we enable a person to access a power within that can set a direction for life and control of one's attentions. Then from a highly energized intentional stance, a person can develop a laser-beam focus for her flow or "genius" state.

Yet *intention* and *intentionality* are not the same. They differ and they actually differ significantly. For years I confused the two to such an extent at times that I even identified them as the same thing. Yet they are not. What about you? Can you clearly articulate the difference between them? To fully understand this, let's back up to the idea of *wish*, then we will go to *will*, and after that to *intention*.

The following is an attempt to trace *the conceptual understanding* of intentionality from *wish* to *will* to *intention* and finally onto *intentionality*. I have taken this primarily from Rollo May's development of it in his classic work, *Love and Will* (1969). If the process seems deep or thick, just keep reading. Later, when you get the full picture, reread this article to pick up the more refined aspects of these distinctions. The distinctions here are specially important if you are a coach or a trainer and lead to some incredibly powerful states and experiences as you will discover.

Wish → Want

The first question in Coaching is, *What do you want?* Some people don't know what they want. They have not developed a "want." They are not at that stage yet. So we have to begin with something that's prior to a *want*, yet something which indicates that their *will* is engaged. Start with what *interests* them—their wishes. "What do you *wish* for?" In a chapter on "Wish and Will" (Chapter 8, *Love and Will*) Rollo May noted that *wish* comes first and that within *wish* is an element of meaning in it. What do you wish for? With the development of consciousness, *wishes* arise. A wish is not merely a push from behind or a need calling for satisfaction. Because a wish has some selectivity in it, it begins to orient you to the future.

"I am saying that there is no will without a prior wish. The wish, like all symbolic processes, has a *progressive* element, a reaching ahead, as well as a *regressive* pole, a propulsion from behind. The wish thus carries its *meaning* as well as its *force*. Its motive power lies in the conjunction of this meaning and force. We can now understand why William Lynch should hold that 'to wish is the most human act.'" (*Love and Will*, p. 209)

"*Will is the capacity to organize one's self* so that movement in a certain direction or toward a certain goal may take place. *Wish is the imaginative playing with the possibility* of some act or state occurring. ... Will requires self-consciousness; 'wish' does not. 'Will' implies some possibility of either/or choice; 'wish' does not. 'Wish' gives the warmth, the content, the

imagination, the child's play, the freshness, and the richness to 'will.' 'Will' gives the self-direction, the maturity, to 'wish.' 'Will' protects 'wish,' permits it to continue without running risks which are too great. But without 'wish,' 'will' loses its life-blood, its vitality, and tends to expire in self-contradiction." (215-6)

"Will enters the picture not as a denial of wish, but as an incorporation of wish on a higher level of consciousness." (265)

We start first with *wishes*, although even here many people cannot go. They suffer from a denial of wishes or a rationalization of wishes. For them *wishing* is unrealistic and sets them up for disillusionment. So they refuse it. If you have a client like that, then explore, "Do you allow yourself to wish? To dream? To wildly imagine possibilities?"

It is the childlike ability to wish that we build up *will*, from there we build up *intention* and from there, *decision and focus*. So it is at that point that Rollo May says that William James identified "the central problem of will, namely, *attention*." Then noting that this was a stroke of genius, he then quoted William James:

"When we analyze will with all the tools modern psychoanalysis brings us, we shall find ourselves pushed back to the level of *attention* or *intention* as the seat of will. The effort which goes into the exercise of will is really effort of attention; the strain in willing is the effort to keep the consciousness clear, i.e., the strain of keeping the attention focused." (*Love and Will*, p. 218)

For years I have been quoting and crediting this to Rollo May. Obviously I have been wrong. Apparently somewhere along the line I must have forgotten that Rollo May was quoting William James. Then one day in Guangzhou China during my early morning reading, I was re-reading *Love and Will* and discovered. Then to make his point, Rollo May quoted one of James' most earthy illustrative stories about will.

"We know what it is to get out of bed on a freezing morning in a room without a fire, and how the very vital principle within us protests against the ordeal. [The scene is New England before the advent of central heating.] Probably most persons have lain on certain mornings for an hour at a time unable to brace themselves to the resolve. We think how late we shall be, how the duties of the day will suffer; we say, 'I *must* get up, this is ignominious,' and so on. But still the warm couch feels too delicious, and the cold outside too cruel, and resolution faints away and postpones itself again and again just as it seemed on the verge of the decisive act.

Now how do we ever get up under such circumstances? If I may generalize from my own experience, we more often than not get up without any struggle or decision at all. We suddenly find that we *have* got up. A fortunate lapse of consciousness occurs; we forget both the warmth and the cold; *we fall into some reverie connected with the day's life*, in the course of which the idea flashes across us, 'Hollo! I must lie here no longer' —an idea which at that lucky instant awakens no contradictory or paralyzing suggestions, and consequently produces immediately its appropriate motor effects. It was our acute consciousness of both the warmth and the cold during the period of struggle which paralyzed our activity..." (pp. 218-219, original source: *Principles of Psychology*, 1890).

In analyzing this, Rollo May says William James jumped over the whole problem of *will* with his statement about the "fortunate lapse of consciousness" which enabled him to get out of bed and begin the activities of the day. So he asked, "What went on in that 'fortunate lapse of consciousness?'" He says that if our decision is based on "luck" or "happenstance" then our house is built upon the sand. Then we have no basis for *will* at all. What happened in that reverie? May suggestion—in that moment *the phenomenon of intentionality* occurred (p. 220).

Lying in bed and engaged in the reverie of the day's activities you mobilize your attentions and wishes so that you begin to imagine doing and experiencing those activities. Then without awareness of the change of your state, you suddenly find yourself up and moving and getting yourself ready. Here *wishes and imaginations* as emotional representations evoke a sense of experiencing. You are now *intending*—literally *turning* yourself toward your vision and images. You are *intending* an object.

Intention

When we go to an English dictionary, Webster says that the first meaning for *intention* is from the verb *intend* which means “to mean or to signify.” “I intend to do something.” It secondarily carries the meaning of purpose or design. Within “intention” is the root word *tend* which refers to “movement toward something, tend toward, tendency.” Here is a turning toward something.

Rollo May says that the more significant aspect of intention is its relation to meaning. When we ask, “What is the intent of the law?” we are asking about its meaning. He then added, “Meaning is an intention of the mind. Meaning has no meaning apart from intention.” So we can think that with each act of consciousness we are *tending toward* something, we are turning toward something. So *intention* has within it, no matter how latent, some turning/ tendency/ movement toward a direction.

This fits another definition from the dictionary and the primary way the term is used in Phenomenology. *Intent* is the “turning of the mind toward an object.” Edmund Husserl, father of modern Phenomenology, extended the concept of *intention* to the whole of our knowledge by emphasizing that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something. “Meaning is an intention of the mind.”

The person who first distinguished *intention* from *intentionality* was Husserl. He learned intentionality from Franz Brentano who believed that *consciousness* itself is defined by the fact that it *intends something*, that it points toward something outside itself, “it intends an object.” The *intention* is the *turning toward* something with one's consciousness (mind) and *intentionality* is what lies behind the intention and gives meaningful contents to consciousness.

Intentionality

That's intention—tending toward something. From intention, Rollo May then defined *intentionality* as “*the structure* which gives meaning to experience.” Don't confuse this with “intentions.” Intentionality is higher. It is the dimension which out-frames the intentions, it is the background framework. *Intentionality describes the higher-level capacity* which you have which enables you to create the context for intentions. Intentionality provides you a way to imaginatively participate in calling out your possibilities. This capacity comes out of your awareness by which you can form, mold, and change yourself and the future in relation to each other.

Intentionality lies at the heart of consciousness itself. At a preliminary stage of intentionality, intentions determine how you perceive the world. After all, the intention you bring to something governs how you will perceive it. Because when you have an intention you are “*turning your*

attention toward something,” your perception is directed by your intentionality— your capacity for intention.

Suppose you are going to see a house in the mountains. If your intention is to look for a place to rent for the summer months, you will view it to see if it is well built, gets enough sun, will work for your vacation time. If your intention is that of a real-estate investor, you will view it in terms of what needs to be fixed, how it can be priced attractively higher than the cost so you can make a profit. If you are visiting a friend, you will view it with the eyes of seeing it in terms of friendship and hospitality – open patio, easy chairs for afternoon talk.

When you cannot see an obvious thing, there is probably nothing wrong with your eyes or even your mind. You cannot see it because the intentionality in which you are trapped makes it impossible for you to see it. This is why, when you are learning NLP structures, you often cannot see the processes due to the story that you get caught up in. Until your intentionality changes, your perceptions will be stuck. Yet change your intentionality and a whole new vista of possibilities will open up.

Intention and Intentionality

If *intentionality* is used as a means for knowing reality, as an epistemology, then to intend an object, to turn your mind to it, is to know that object regarding its meaning (significance). Of course, by the meaning you bring to it. You *know* it in terms of the intentional concepts that you bring to the object. Your “knowledge” is informed by your intentions.

Thomas Aquinas said that *intentionality* is what “the intellect grasps about the thing understood.” Yet what your intellect grasps is also what your intellect seeks to find. It is not clean or objective—it cannot be. “What are you looking for? “What are you expecting?”

Intentionality as your capacity to set intentions is also your personal epistemology— your way of knowing your reality—knowing its objects and its meanings. From there you set intentions so you can then carry that the meaning of reality as you have come know it. (May, p. 223). In this, *the objects of your intention* conform to your way of understanding (intentionality). It fits! It always fits and that can be the problem. Here we see your mind as an active forming and creative participant in what you come to know.

Intentions can be conscious or unconscious. Psychoanalysis has demonstrated that we never have a purely conscious intention, but also unconscious intentions.

Intention is a psychological state. With an intention, you can get yourself to voluntarily do this or that. Your intentions formulate your purpose and agenda. Why are you doing this or that? Your purpose is what you get out of doing something.

Intentionality is a *being*-state rather than a psychological state. It is the framework for both conscious and unconscious intentions. It is the meaning frame from which intentions arise. It is a state of *being*, that is, it is the totality of your orientation to the world at a given time. Intentionality occurs in the back of the mind, as a level above your immediate awareness and is often outside conscious awareness. As a form of epistemology, intentionality establishes your *response*-style, which is not purpose per se. However, it is

the basis which makes your purposes possible.

You participate in forming the future by your capacity to respond to new possibilities and to make them actual. You do that by tending toward them and intending them— this activates your neurological energies—wishes, imaginations, emotions.

“Intentionality in human experience, is what underlies will and decision. It is not only prior to will and decision, but makes them possible.” (199)

Intentionality and the Human Powers

Intentionality then refers to your capacity to stretch forward which, in turn, creates *tendency* and even *tension*. As an this inner matrix of your meaning-making powers intentionality mobilizes many other critically important experiences, namely, vitality, courage, care, potentiality, identity, anxiety, and motivation. All of these are also derived from intentionality.

First, *vitality*. “Man’s vitality is as great as his intentionality; they are interdependent. ... Vitality is the power of creating beyond oneself without losing oneself.” (242).

Second, *care*. The root word “tend” which literally means “to take care of” establishes the close relationship between caring and intentionality. When you *care* about something or someone, then life matters! Heidegger, another Phenomenologist, says care is the source of will. If I care about *being*, I will shepherd it with attention to its welfare.

“Care is a particular type of intentionality ... ‘intentionality’ and ‘care’ lies in the literal term ‘tend,’ which is both the root of intentionality and the meaning of care. Tend means a tendency, in inclination, a throwing of one’s weight on a given side...” (289)

Third, *courage*. “The degree of one’s intentionality can be seen by the degree of one’s courage.” (243). Courage also arises from intentionality and, in fact, the stronger your intentionality, the more robust your courage to pursue your highest values and visions. Need more courage? Try more intentionality.

Fourth, *potentials*. The degree of intentionality defines your aliveness and the potential of your commitment to a cause, that is, your capacity to respond. The Latin stem is *intendeze* which literally means “to stretch.” From this we get our word “tension.” Intention then is a “stretching” toward something.

“*Imagine* is the house of intentionality and fantasy one of its languages. ... fantasy in its original meaning of ... ‘able to represent,’ ‘to make visible.’ Fantasy is the language of the total self, communicating, offering itself, trying on for size.” (278)

Fifth, *identity*. In intentionality you experience your identity. “I” is the “I” of “I can...” “I will...” “I choose...” You experience your identity in the action, or the possibility of making something actual that you intend. Consequently, to experience more of your identity and your sense of self in a more robust and grounded way, use more of your intentionality. Not only does it develop your courage, but also your very *self*.

Sixth, *Anxiety*. Kierkegaard says that the intermediate variable between potentiality and actuality is anxiety. Anxiety creates energy within you to act, to move, and to respond. It may have the feel of fear, but it lacks an object that it may be afraid of. It may have the

feel of excitement, yet again, without a specific object for the excitement.

“Normal, constructive anxiety goes with becoming aware of and assuming one’s potentialities. Intentionality is the constructive use of normal anxiety. If I can have some expectations and possibilities of acting on my powers, I move ahead. But if the anxiety becomes overwhelming, then the possibilities for action are blotted out.” (242)

Seven, *Motivation*. Intentionality is also related to the intensity of an experience, that is, to how you experience aliveness in the experience. We call this aliveness or vitality—motivation.

“The degree of intentionality can define the aliveness of the person, the potential degree of commitment, and his capacity...” (243)

Coaching the Clarification of Intentionality

Rollo May, as a Psychologist and Psychotherapist, says that in therapy the real battlefield lies “in clarifying the intentionality of the patient. ... it shifts the struggle to one between authentic fulfillment and non-fulfillment. ... my task is to be conscious of what the intentionality of the patient is in the particular session.”

Now isn’t that also true in Coaching? Yes! When you coach, you are facilitating *the authentic fulfillment* of a client by tapping into his or her deepest and highest intentionality. So you ask the series of meta-questions about intentions. This activates the person’s intentionality.

“What is your highest intention? Is it healthy? Are you fulfilling your best intentions? Is this your life’s center? If you don’t know what you want, what do you *think* you want? What would you like to want? Why did you come here today? Above and beyond your goals and objectives, what do you care about?”

Your consciousness is a consciousness *about* what you perceive and what you want. In this your *meanings* and your *intentionality* are complementary aspects of your “will to meaning.” And that is one thing that makes you uniquely human. So start with your *wishes* and let them become what you *will* and then empower them with the power of your *intentionality* as your daily *intentions* set the direction of your life.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #21
May 2, 2018
Examining the Art of Questioning #1

INQUIRY AND ADVOCACY

“The important thing is *not* to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the masteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. *Never lose a holy curiosity.*”

Albert Einstein

When you open your mouth and begin to talk, you either *advocate* a view, belief, understanding, knowledge, etc. or you *inquire* to gather information. Of these two, most people engage in far more advocacy than inquiry. In fact, some people hardly ever use inquiry. They talk and talk, they give advice, they lecture, they preach, they declare what is or should be, they make propositional statements, etc. They almost never question. Test this in your own experience—run an experiment this week by noticing the relationship between inquiry and advocacy among the people around you.

Now as a coach, and especially as a Meta-Coach, you know that you *coach best by asking questions* rather than making statements. That’s one reason we emphasize the skill of questioning and have put “telling,” “judging,” “storytelling,” and “giving advice” at level 0 on the benchmarks.

When you *inquire*, you activate the meaning-making processes in both yourself and in your client. The very fact of asking engages your client’s *thinking* so that your client start to discover for himself. You are also mobilizing the learning process because, as you ask questions and your client *answer* the questions, they are *thinking for themselves*. We call this *learning*. The simplicist form of learning is the kind of learning that we share with the animals. In Stimulus—Response learning, when a stimulus comes to evoke a new and regular response, we say that the animal has learned a way of responding. We still rely on this kind learning in school when we give out standardized question which call for a standardize answer. No real thinking is required, just the right response.

The NLP Communication Model says that by asking questions, you “directionalize” the other person’s brain. Your questions enable your client to establish a “focus” and perspective unique to your question.

As you think about that position, how much more resourceful would you like to be as you interact with your boss?

Coming from the NLP model, Anthony Robbins says, “... the difference between people is the difference in the questions they ask consistently.” That’s because it is the quality of one’s questions that determine the quality of one’s life. This calls upon us as coaches to take our questioning to a higher level. George Bernard Shaw did this in the following famous quotation:

“Some men see things as they are and say, ‘Why?’
I dream of things that never were and say, ‘Why not?’”

Now if we *think by questioning*, then one way to access the deepest thinking of your client is to ask about her questions. (For more about *thinking by questioning*, see Neurons #19, April or May 00, 2018). We encourage this in Meta-Coaching by urging that you listen for and ask about the questions that your client is asking himself.

Here are some additional questions that you can ask as you do information gathering with your clients:

- What questions do you have about this subject? (The client’s outcome)
- What questions are you asking yourself as you think about this goal?
- What questions are in the back of your mind as we talk but you haven’t mentioned?
- What questions would be good for you to be asking yourself?
- What limiting questions are you asking yourself which is sabotaging your best?
- What questions do you have about this that you have never asked yourself?

Then, with whatever your client says, you can always ask the *refining questions*. Remember the refining questions—two are open-ended and two are positive closed-ended questions:

- *Exploration questions*: How do you think about X? I hear that you discounted X as being significant. If you did feel proud about that, how would that change things for you?
- *Clarification questions*: How are you using the term X specifically? You say you want to be joyful and happy about X, how are you using these terms ‘joyful’ and ‘happy’?
- *Checking questions*: I’m not sure if I understand, do you mean that you are wanting to commit yourself in this relationship?
- *Testing questions*: So X is what you want? Are you sure?

Wendell Johnson says that “there are questions that tend to make us learn rapidly and well” (*People in Quandaries*, p. 282). Do you know such questions? Johnson wrote:

“If ever there may be a truly significant reform of education, no small part of it will lie in teaching children not how to give old answers, but how to formulate new questions. It is indeed likely that nothing else is more basic in the educative process than the relative emphasis given to the techniques of inquiry.”

“The fact of the matter is that our beliefs *automatically become questions* the moment we realize that they are beliefs instead of facts.” If we say, ‘Criminal behavior is hereditary’ we assume it is a first-order fact. Once you realize it is a belief, it becomes a question, ‘Is criminal behavior hereditary?’”

Here is a way to check out your beliefs and quality control them. Turn your beliefs into questions. Your inquiry then will lead to new conclusions and explorations. Then also you will not only ask questions, you will be asking meaningful, answerable questions.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus # 21
May 9, 2018
Examining the Art of Questioning #2

THE PROBLEM WITH ANSWERS

“The stupidity of people comes from *having an answer for everything*. The wisdom of the novel comes from having a question for everything. The novelist teaches the reader to *comprehend the world as a question*. There is wisdom and tolerance in that attitude.” Milan Kundera (italics added)

While questions are powerful, and the right question at the right time can actually unleash potentials and enable them to become actual in a person’s life, yet not all questions are useful, effective, or life-supporting. This is especially true of questions that are vaguely phrased and/or questions with vague terms. Such questions in them can actually either encourage limitations or create limitation.

How bad do you feel now that you know that you really do lack X competency?

Some questions are unanswerable. Wendell Johnson in *People in Quandries* (1946) gives these examples: “Why was I born? “Should I get married? Is it right to make a lot of money? What is the meaning of life? Am I a failure. (p. 289)

There’s an interesting thing about *answers*. Answers that are inaccurate, false, and even crazy, can non-the-less be comforting. Now imagine that! How is that possible? It’s possible because answers operate as the end-game of questions in that they stop the inner mental search!

“People in quandaries are peculiar not only because they persist in asking themselves ... vague and unanswerable questions, but also because they don’t realize that their questions are unanswerable. In fact, they don’t seem to realize that their maladjustment is in any way related to their persistence in asking, and in trying to answer, such questions. They seem quite puzzled by the suggestion that their questions need rewording. ... they want answers, absolute, now-and-forever, correct answers. ... Answers can be very relaxing.” (Johnson, p. 290)

From this realization we need to put out a warning: *Beware of Answers— They can be Dangerous to your Curiosity, Learning, and Development!* With an answer, we can feel that we have settled an inquiry and there’s nothing else to explore. With an answer, we can feel that “I now know” there’s nothing else to be said. There’s nothing else to be added to it and no additional richness to be contributed.

Now involved in the kind of thinking that leads to these conclusions is an assumption, namely, “There is one answer to a question.” Consequently, when we come upon an answer, which may be legitimate and valid for what it offers, we are generally quick to conclude that the search is over, let’s move on to the next problem to solve. Yet when it comes to answers, a question can have multiple answers and the answers can ranch from satisfying to very satisfying to very

resourceful, and on to brilliant. So being satisfied with one answer and especially with “the first answer” is dangerous and blinding. It can shut down your search for truly great answers.

It’s paradoxical. We ask questions to get answers and yet if we settle for the first answer or for one answers, we often can end up in a position that’s worse than where we began. What then shall we do?

Heeding the warning that answers can be dangerous, we can hold our celebrations when we get an answer to see if there are additional answers as well. Then we can “quality control” the answers to check if they are good answers, resourceful answers, relevant answers, and the best quality answers. We can ask additional questions to check for cognitive biases or fallacies in the answers. We can ask the question-after-the-last-question. For example, “If that is the answer to the question, what is the question I can or should now be asking?”

When I do “Q-and-A” sessions at trainings and seminars and places— sometimes a question asked does not really allow me to follow-up with the kind of response that adds additional value to the person asking. The question may be mis-formed in some way, may have too many presuppositions in it, may be too convoluted, etc. The challenge I’ve experienced is— “How do I answer the *real* question, the question behind the question and provide ideas or “answers” that will enhance the person?”

Sometimes a biased question, or one limited by the way it is phrased, essentially prevents me from directly answering it. First I either have to explore with the person what they are really wanting to know or rephrase the question. Otherwise a technically “true” answer can become untrue or at least unuseful. Answers, just like questions, are not always as simple or straightforward as they may seem or we may wish. They can be biased in all sorts of ways.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus # 23
May 16, 2018

50 HOURS TO COMPETENCE

Do you know that you are only 50 hours away from being competent? Isn't that amazing? And given that there are 168 hours in a week, potentially at least— you could become competent in this next week.

This was one of the discoveries that Ericsson and colleagues found in their longitudinal study on expertise. In their 2006 book, *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*, they discovered the relationship between the amount of hours of practice to becoming an expert in a given field. As you might suspect, they found that there is indeed a correlation between the number of hours a person devotes to learning and practice and one's level of expertise. One thing that distinguishes novices from experts, and then from masters, is *the amount of time devoted to practicing one's skills*.

As the researchers began exploring this relationship, they noted that for *most everyday activities* such as typing, playing tennis, driving a car, etc., there's a common number of hours required to get a person up to an acceptable level. What did they find? They found that it generally takes about 50 hours to reach a level where one has the basic skills for performing at an acceptable level of competence. Just 50 hours! After that, people then adapt to the domain and their performance skills become automated. At this point they can execute the skills smoothly and with minimal effort.

Fifty hours! Imagine that. In only 50 hours a great many skills can be learned, developed, and acquired. If you give yourself to *one intensive week* of study, practice, and feedback regarding a skill that you want to make your own and to be able to perform it at an acceptable level of competence, you can. Isn't that amazing?! Given that, the first conclusion most of us make from that is, "The more you practice, the better you get." Yet actually that is not what they found and that is not true. It requires a special kind of practice. After all, if you practice wrong— you will not get better. Instead you will create a block within your behavioral repertoire that will interfere with you getting good at the task.

Yet 50 hours does not apply to everything. There are many skills that do not fall into this category of "everyday skills." For those more advanced skills, more hours will be required, perhaps 200 or even 500 hours will be required to get you to a basic level of competence. These more advanced skills require more domain knowledge and perhaps more practice due to the uniqueness of the skill— surgery, dentistry, piloting a plane, etc. come to mind.

What is that *special kind of practice* that's required? Anders Ericsson wrote this:

"The core assumption of deliberate practice is that expert performance is acquired gradually and that effective improvement of performance requires the opportunity to find suitable training tasks that the performer can master sequentially—typically the design of training tasks and monitoring

of the attained performance is done by a teacher or a coach. *Deliberate practice* presents performers with tasks that are initially outside their current realm of reliable performance, yet can be mastered within hours of practice by concentrating on critical aspects and gradually refining performance through repetition after feedback. Hence the requirement for concentration sets deliberate practice apart from both mindless, routine performance and playful engagement, as the latter two types of activities would, if anything, merely strengthen the current mediating cognitive mechanisms, rather than modify them to allow increases in the level of performance.” (2006, p. 692, italics added)

Deliberate meta-practice, as defined by Ericsson, has five factors that make it very special.

1) Structured set of activities for improving performance.

Deliberate practice first involves a highly structured set of activities with the explicit goal of improving performance. This is the central factor in the determination of acquired performance.

“The specific tasks rated very high on relevance for performance, high on effort and comparatively low on inherent enjoyment.” (p. 306)

You have to plan for these high effort and high relevance activities. Target them specifically, then focus on them exclusively. If you do not use these expertise abilities, they will decline. That’s why regular quality practice is required. Focus on *the stages of practice* so your practice is systematic.

2) An effortful stretch.

Deliberate practice involves an effortful stretch beyond your skills. It involves pushing, struggling, straining. As you intentionally set a goal, you isolate some activity to practice with a focused concentration that will add to the performance.

“Elite performers search continually for optimal training activities, with the most effective duration and intensity, that will appropriately strain the targeted physiological system to induce further adaptation without causing overuse or injury.” (696)

Deliberate practice is a set of structured activities that are important for improving performance. Typically it is so strenuous that it can only be maintained for limited amounts of time a day without danger of burnout. This requires mindfulness in practicing the effortful activity and conscious monitoring of the skill.

3) Self-Monitoring and Measuring of progress.

Because *deliberate* practice involves mindful self-monitoring, it requires your meta-consciousness—self-observation to monitor so you mentally track and record of your performances. Research shows that meta-cognitive self-monitoring is difficult for novices because the amount of information involved in complex performances. The large amount of information easily overwhelms them leading to inconsistent or tracking. Experts are selective in their cognitive self-monitoring during practice because of the specificity of their learning, practice, and performance goals.

Consciously guide your attention, evaluate your current level of expertise, identify your errors, and set up procedures for eliminating the errors. Seek objective feedback to refine your awareness, internalize how to correct errors, set new goals, focus on over-coming weaknesses, and monitor progress. We set not only outcome goals, but process goals which enable us to improve our strategy or technique.

4) A focused concentration.

The central technique in deliberate practice involves accessing your full mental engagement as you oriented yourself to a goal so you overcome your current performance boundaries. The intense focus thereby activates your powers of concentration. This intense concentration and effort separates deliberate practice from what we usually call “practice.”

By contrast, Ericsson noted that amateur singers practice for the enjoyment or for the release of tension. Expert musicians practice to increase their concentration on improving their performance. The research discovered the role of the “flow” state in deliberate practice:

“Writers as with surgeons, musicians, and athletes, perform best in a flow state of consciousness. They all try to shape their surroundings, work schedules, and rituals in ways that foster flow.
(399)

5) Mindful practice

Deliberate practice requires fighting against what naturally happens with competence—you *slip into unconsciousness*. While skill development entails automaticity, it is a necessary foundation, this does not ensure an expert’s level of performance will be attained.

“Deliberate practice is designed to improve specific aspects of performance in a manner that assures that attained changes can be successfully measured and integrated into representative performance.”

“Practice aimed at improving integrated performance cannot be performed mindlessly, nor independently of the representative context for the target performance.”

Why is this important? To handle the natural plateaus that occur in skill development. Reaching a plateau allows you to feel comfortable and confident. Yet to acquire expertise, and to avoid experiencing an arrest in your development, you have to avoid automatization. To deliberately refine a skill demands maintaining *conscious effort*.

Typically, “practice” substantially reduces the amount of attention and effort you devote to the performance. That’s why we typically go unconscious as our skills become neurologically conditioned and automatic. Yet regardless of the explanation, *practice that is not mindfully deliberate* involves a shift from attention-demanding control processing to a much more automatic mode.

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

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus # 24
May 23, 2018

THE PROBLEM WITH “GIVING IT YOUR ALL!”

You hear it all the time— “Give it your all!” “Go for the gold.” “Second place is for losers.” “You’ve got to be a 110% person.” Even book titles argue for this. For example, in spite of some statements to the contrary within the books, Anthony Robbins’ books “Unlimited Power,” and “Awaken the Giant Within.” Tony actually tempers this emphasis in the second book as he there argues that when exercising, doing 70% of your best is actually more optimal.

To get through some of *the mythology of “Giving it your all” or your best*, let’s begin with the most obvious non-sense— the statistic itself. Statistically it is impossible to give 110 percent of effort. At the very most, could you actually even give 100 percent? This may surprise you, but the answer is “No!” And why not? Because it is impossible to “give 100% to any one thing.” After all you also at the same time have to maintain your body, your health, your consciousness, etc. That will take up some percentage of “your all.” So when a person speaks about giving more than 100, that person is using *extreme language* to make a point. Understanding it in that way makes it poetic, and it is understandable only metaphorically. To even think for a moment that the person is being literal is a great way to create stress and overwhelm.

The problem with “giving it your all” is that if you did— you would become *a highly out-of-balanced person*. And that is definitely not good! Once you exhaust your *all*, and there is nothing left to give— you will not be in a very good place physically, mentally, emotionally, or in any other way. You will certainly not be resourceful. Being in a state of exhaustion, you be in a state of deficiency and we know that deficiency does not bring the best out in people. People in deficiency feel threaten and needy which is why they then become desperate. Think of a person deficient of air under the water. Think of someone deficit of food, water, sleep, etc.

Hidden behind these ideas of “giving it your all” is the cognitive distortion of all-or-nothing thinking and over-generalization. And thinking in those ways then leads to the toxic state that we call “perfectionism.” Now who would be attracted to this? Who would be seduced by this? Ah, Type-A personalities! First-borns. High achievers. Those richly rewarded for pushing themselves. Also those with meta-programs of optimism, or “aggressive” stress response.

“Giving it your all” seduces these people and makes sense to them because it doesn’t sound extreme. It sounds reasonable. It sound like an obvious way to live your life. But as a person becomes unbalanced by “giving 100 percent,” and then needing days (or even weeks) of recovery, they are building an on-and-then-off motivation pattern. And, when they begin suffering from a manic-depressive oscillation, they try to “solve” things by pushing themselves further and harder. And if they hear anyone say nearly anything that sounds like a new solution, they jump on that bandwagon — Yes, I need some time management skills. Yes, I need another adrenalin jump by

attending “Date with Destiny” again. Yes I need X or Y of some new age or alternative medicine.

The real solution? *Ecology*. This is one reason that we in Neuro-Semantics use the ecology questions to run a “quality check” on our activities, our beliefs, decisions, etc.

- Does this enhance your life and bring out a healthy balance?
- Does it empower you as a person?
- Does this reflect your highest spiritual path?
- Would you want this for your loved ones?
- Would this ruin anything in your life— finances, relationship, health, etc.?

In NLP and Neuro-Semantics we also speak a lot about resources. We ask if you have certain resources — capacities, beliefs, decisions, understandings, etc. And while some of these resources are “unlimited” in that they can be constantly replenishing, some resources have numerous limitations— constraints.

For those that are replenishable— *we do have to take time and effort to replenish them*. Take inspiration for example. Here is an abundance, not-scarce, and unlimited resource. But you could run out of inspiration. It happens. The solution is to constantly keep renewing yourself in the ideas and experiences that put fresh inspiration into you. This means that while it is potentially an unlimited resources, it is not automatic. It’s like working out at the gym. You can’t stay there 8 or 12 hours a day. You have to go home and rest, you have to get good sleep. Otherwise, if you “give it your all” and fail to calibrate to your body, you can severely damage yourself.

Other resources require that we understand their constraints. I may be able to access my courage, but if I don’t know the constraints of when and where and with whom I express my courage, I could be taking risks that endanger limb and life. So with acceptance, and appreciation, and learning, and many other personal resource states— going at something 100% can be very destructive.

If you are one of those “giving it your all,” “going 110 percent,” and never giving yourself a break persons— *take a breath, slowdown, enjoy the moment, come into sensory awareness, reflect on what’s really important*. It will enable you to be more resourceful at being the best you.

More about myths and cognitive distortions, fallacies and biases? Get the new book, *Executive Thinking* (2018). Now available on www.neurosemantics.com

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus # 25
May 30, 2018

ALL OF THE THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH SCALING

As a Meta-Coach, you scale things with clients. You ask, “From 0 to 10, how much courage do you have right now and how much would you like to have?” We even have *scaling* as a skill and activity on the feedback form. If you look on the form, *scaling* is one of the sub-skills under *state induction*. Why? Because when you ask someone to gauge the degree to which they are or that they want to experience something, they generally have to try it on and experience it to some degree in order to be able to answer. That’s one use of scaling, there are many, many more uses. Here are some more.

1) Use scaling to help a client identify the subject of the session and an outcome.

Steve de Shazer used scaling to establish a desired outcome and demonstrated it many times as part of his “consulting session” with clients. “If 10 is where you want to be when you achieve your goal, and 0 is where you started when you began thinking about setting this goal and reaching it, where are you now?”

There’s an absolutely fascinating thing with regard to this question— people will almost never say 0, they will give some number above 0. When they do, you can then ask, “How did you do that?” “How did you move from 0 to 2 (or 5 or 7)?” And, of course, when you ask that, you are asking the resource question (WFO #15)— what resource did you use to move to this level? It is a great way to flush out hidden resources that a client may not have counted, and validate the person’s strengths.

2) Use scaling to identify the degree of an experience.

Suppose your client wants to have more productive days with regard to a project, more effective relationships with a loved one or friend, more loving connection with family member, etc. Set up a scale.

“If 10 is the relationship (or productivity, or effectiveness, or whatever) at its best and 0 is when it is at its worse, where are you now?”

When the person talks about being fairly successful, ask, “Where were you when that happened?” Suppose they say 8. Well, we know that subjective experiences are not constant, they fluctuate. They oscillate. So now you can find out the range, “That’s great, it was at 8. How much did it go up and down? Were there times when you were at 7 or 6 or 5 or maybe 8 ½?”

After you get the range, you can then ask a few additional interesting questions that can develop the process: “How did you do that?” “What did you do that allowed you to stay within that range of 6 to 8?” Asking this gives you more answers to the action question (“What do you have to do to get what you want?” WFO #7) as well as the resource question. As such you are thereby developing more of a strategy with your client. Now ask, “How confident are you that you can

stay within that range, from 6 to 8?” “Are you confident?” “If you are not, what do you need as a resource, a belief, a frame of mind, etc. to be confident?”

3) *Use scaling to help a client identify tasking actions that will continue the learnings of the coaching conversation.*

While we do not focus on tasking during ACMC, not as we do during PCMC, tasking is important and as a Meta-Coach, be sure to end every session with co-creating a task with your client. To prime this, set up a scale:

“If 10 is *I will do anything to get my outcome*, and 0 is *I will pray, cross my fingers, and hope*, where are you in terms of taking actions this week to get what you want?”

The psychology behind these questions is that of preparing for developing the response potential for implementation. And as we know in Neuro-Semantics, many people come to coaching precisely because they are *not executing* what they know, they are not engaging in some mind-to-muscle process. They are good at talking, thinking, planning, dreaming ... but not at taking effective action. So gauge their “taking action” scale. By making this explicit with them, you help to raise awareness of this critical feature of success.

4) *Use scaling to induce a state or experience.*

Among the many uses for the skill of scaling, surprisingly it can enable a person to access a state and/or try on an experience. That’s due to the fact that in order to give a number, a person has to enter into the state. “How joyful are you right now, from 0 to 10?” “How much of a learning state are you in right now?” Induction is presupposed.

5) *Use scaling to benchmark an experience.*

Here’s another major way we use scaling in Neuro-Semantics. By putting an intangible skill, we can now look for degrees in the quality of an experience— was it done poorly, mediocre, at an acceptable level, at an expert level? If an experience or state is real than it will show up in actions, speech, physiological movements, etc. so we can now scale the quality of it. This was fully developed in the book, *Benchmarking Intangibles*.

6) *Use scaling to expose cognitive distortions of over-generalization.*

You can even use scaling as an intervention for the disease of perfectionism. “It needs to be done perfectly!” the perfectionist says. “Okay, so you want it at 100%. What about 99.9%, would that be okay?” “What about 99, 98, 97...?” “If you make a mistake, would you be sure to make a perfect mistake so that you can perfectly learn from it?”

Scaling— a skill that you can use in many ways in your coaching or training. Here’s to your ongoing development in Meta-Coaching. May you get getter one-percent every week!

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus # 26
June 6, 2018

BEYOND PRO/CON DECISION-MAKING

In Meta-Coaching we use the *Axes of Change* as our first and primary model for enabling people to make intelligent, robust, and ecological decisions. Specifically, we use the second axis, The Decision Axis which is based on the meta-program of *reflective—active*. To that end, we invite a client to *reflect* on the pros and cons of a choice. What are the advantages if you make that choice? What are the disadvantages? Typically this leads to a whole list of *reasons why* a choice would be beneficial and *reasons why* a person has to be cautious because it will have another set of things that will cost the person.

This pro-and-con orientation in decision-making is what we all use. To a great extent it is how we naturally and inevitably think. That is, we default to thinking in terms of choices and contrasts, values and dis-values, this or that. Simultaneously, we also think in terms of the *reasons why* I am for or against something. For this reason, it makes perfect sense to start by asking for the advantages and disadvantages. But the Pro/Con list is just the beginning. There's much more to do if you are to generate *great* decisions and especially if you want to create *highly intelligent or smart* decisions.

What potential problems could there be here? Ah, yes, human reasoning! And why? Because when we reason—even if you have been highly trained in effective, clear, rational, systemic reasoning—you still are liable to the cognitive biases and also to the cognitive distortions and fallacies. If you are not aware of that, check out the newest book from Neuro-Semantics, *Executive Thinking: Activating Your Highest Executive Thinking Potentials* (2018).

A Well-Formed Decision

NLP introduced the idea of a *well-formed* outcome some 40 years ago, and from that I developed a Neuro-Semantic Precision Template and from that created a well-formed problem, a well-formed solution, a well-formed innovation (all are now in the book, *Creative Solutions*, 2017) as well as other well-formed patterns. So how about a **Well-Formed Decision**? Doesn't that make sense if we want to make great and intelligent decisions? Given that, here is a list of questions—questions within certain categories — that enable a person to construct a well-formed decision.

The Well-Formed Decision Questions

The Subject of the Decision: First identify the subject of the decision.

- 1) What is the decision you want or need to make? What are your choices?
- 2) What will the decision look like or sound like? When you make it, you will say what?
- 3) Why is it important to make this decision? (Repeat several times with each answer.)

The Contextual Situation of the Decision: Decisions, like every other experience occurs in some

context. Identify the specific context for the decision under consideration.

- 4) When do you need to make the decision? What time factors are involved?
- 5) In what area of life is this decision relevant? (Where) How does it (or could it) influence other areas of your life?
- 6) Is anyone else involved in making the decision? Are you the sole decider? (Who)

The Required Actions of the Decision: As an experience, you have to *do* something to *make* a decision, identify these actions even if they are the micro-actions of thinking and feeling.

- 7) What do you need to know to make the decision? What information do you need to gather and from who or where? How much information do you need? What else do you need to *do* to make or take the decision?

The Inner Power (Capacity) for Making the Decision: Given that *action* is required for a decision, then inner ability is also required.

- 8) Is the information available now? How much information is currently available? If you don't know, what probably would you estimate? Is that information within your control to access? If not, then who has access to it?
- 9) Do you have the capacity to get the required information? To process it?
- 10) Have you ever made a similar decision in the past? What did you do that enabled your decision-making?

The Planning Process of Decision-Making: With big decisions and decisions that will forge a new or long-term direction for life, you will probably want to plan it in order to manage it over time. Identify how you will do this.

- 11) How do you plan to gather the information and order it so you can make a decision? If others are involved in the planning, information-gathering, or deciding, what is your plan for integrating them into the process?
- 12) What cognitive biases, distortions, and fallacies may be in the information you gather? Do you know how to question, check, and clean out the biases, distortions, and fallacies? Do you have someone on the team who can do that?
- 13) How will you monitor a long-term decision that requires ongoing observation and action? What feedback will you want and/or need to stay on plan?

The Supportive Resources for Deciding: As an experience, it can be supplied with sufficient resources or it can lack them. Identify the resources that you want to round-out your deciding.

- 14) Is there anything that can or will stop or interfere with you getting the information, formulating it, and making a decision from it? What potential risks are there? What risk management skills do you need? How much risk is there involved? What contingency plans have you set up?
- 15) What resources do you need so that you can do this effectively and intelligently? What external resources? What internal resources?
- 16) How will you test the final decision to make sure it is ecological for you? How will you determine if it will create any long-term unintended consequences?

Concluding and Deciding: How will you bring closure to the process of decision?

17) How will you know when you are ready to make a decision? When you make the decision, what will be the convincer for you? In what representational system?

18) What will be the evidence that you have made a decision and ready to move forward? Will it be written, stated aloud, confirmed with someone else, or what?

Want more? Check out the books—

Coaching Change: The Axes of Change (2004/ 2015)

Creative Solutions: Creativity and Innovation (2017)

Executive Thinking: Activating Your Highest Executive Thinking Potentials (2018).

From: L. Michael Hall

2018 Morpheus # 27

June 13, 2018

*Exciting Discovery for a New
Format for Benchmarking*

A NEW WAY TO BENCHMARK

We have found a new way to benchmark! After introducing benchmarking into coaching in 2003, we spent the next 15 years refining the specific benchmarks for ACMC level, for PCMC level, and for Group and Team Coaching (GTMC). We also have extended and invented benchmarks for 100 other different skills— skills for leadership, selling, managing, training, public speaking, etc. And for 15 years in coach training we have given feedback primarily at the end of the coaching session and only a little bit during the session. Now there is a brand new benchmarking format.

When I say “we,” I am primarily referring to the *team leaders at the 10-day ACMC experiment* in the Philippines. A few days into the experiment, Bruneau Woomed and Anthony Pinto and some others were talking about how we do benchmarking in NSTT. One of them noted that “What makes the benchmarking in NSTT so powerful is that after the feedback, we give the speaker a chance to do a ‘Take 2’ so that the person immediately does it again.” That brought up the question, “Why don’t we do that in coaching?” I said because I don’t know how. So that gave us a new question: “*How would we do that in coaching?*”

Others on the team Aldem and Vanessa Salvana, Virna Villarosa, Sheila Tan, Geraldine Samson, Jay Yogawin, Myya Rosales, Tisha Rosales.

A couple days, we came up with a new drill. Prior to blowing the whistle for the triune coaching labs, we had each coach and client identify each other and we then went around having each coach ask the client, “What do you want in this session?” As the client then spoke, the coach was to step in at the end of each sentence or thought and repeat the full sentence (an acknowledgment). After 7 acknowledgments, they were to ask 4 Clarify of terms they had heard that were semantically loaded. All of the participants said that this really helped them. As the benchmarker counted off the 7 acknowledgments and 4 clarity checks, it helped the coach recognize them. The next day we did the same thing with a small adjustment: Ask your client about what he wants and then make 5 acknowledgments and when a word needs more clarity, ask the clarity question at that moment. The benchmarker again numbered them off.

The boot-camp of the Boot-Camp began on Day 8. That’s when we *doubled* the amount of Coaching Labs and we extended the coaching to 30 minutes. That’s also when we figured out how to integrate *the idea of “Take 2”* into the coaching process. To do that we based it on the concept of deliberate practice—to improve a performance, identify a sharply defined behavior which is beyond your level of consistent practice, and provide continuous feedback for how the person is performing. This requires concentrated (focused) effort and so will not be easy or fun. Stay focused on the precise behavior until, through sufficient repetition and feedback, you can produce the skill.

To achieve that we decided to establish the practice of *Rewinding the Coaching Behavior*. This means that at any given moment, the person receiving and giving feedback (the benchmarker) will interrupt, then identify where a skill could have been used or where the response by the coach was not very effective. The benchmarker then will ask a question. It could be any of the following:

“What are you aware of?” “How well did that go?” “Did you see a place to use X (clarity question, acknowledgment, testing, empathy, inferential listening, etc.)” “Let’s replace that acknowledgment, this time say it slowly and emphatically, and end it with a moment of silence.”

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

In this way we have introduced the practice of *re-doing a performance*, running a Take 2, Take 3, or Take 4 until the coach actually does the skill and thereby “gets it.” In doing that we take time — *in real time— in a real coaching conversation* — to identify what’s happening, what’s working, what is not, and give the coach a chance to practice it right.

We began doing this kind of high quality feedback Day 8 and continued through Days 9 and 10 so that we did it for the last 6 coaching sessions that all of the coaches did and compared to the first six coaching sessions, everybody thought that they were much, much better, that they learned more, and that they got to practice it right *in the critical moment*.

In all of the future APMC, I’ll be teaching this way of doing feedback to the team leaders and to the other Meta-Coach Trainers. While benchmarking has been *the key to the high quality in the Meta-Coaching System*, *this will take it to yet another higher level*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus # 28
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LEARNINGS FROM THE 10-DAY COACHING EXPERIMENT

During the first two week of June we ran an experiment to test a hypothesis. The hypothesis was this: If people receive double the amount of time practicing the coaching labs, they are very likely to reach competency level in coaching (2.5). So we extended the training by two days, shifted some of the days around, put some of the pieces at different places, and left two sections out, and added six more coaching labs along with three demonstrations. This made Days 8, 9, and 10 very intensive—with two rounds of the coaching labs each day so that participants coached two times each day, were coached two times, and gave feedback two times.

Now I really thought and expected that we would have at least some people reach the competency level. We did not. I thought that because even with 8 days and only six coaching labs, we usually have at least two or three who are right on the verge of reaching competency. But not this time. One reason is that everybody had taken the *fast track* by only have three days of *Coaching Essentials* and three days of *Coaching Genius* and so they basically lacked a really solid foundation in the Meta-Model and the NLP Communication Model. So, what did I learn?

Lesson #1: My first learning from this experiment— *We need to put more emphasis on people having the NLP Practitioner training with a deeper understanding and integration of the Meta-Model.* Originally we set up the “fast track” so that people undecided about NLP could begin the journey, and finish Practitioner later. A solid training in Prac. should both enable and motivate people to keep studying and applying the Meta-Model as well as the intricacies of the NLP Communication Model. When that happens, they will be able to reach competency in connecting, getting rapport, supporting, listening without any problem.

Training in the *Meta-States Model* is designed to enable and motivate one to understand and apply the unique kind of human thinking—emoting— self-reflexivity. In that process a person should be able to reach competency on framing, recognizing the structure of an experience, and get to it via meta-questions. *Integration in both of these models (NLP and Meta-States) is the key.* People have to practice using the models and patterns. They have to apply to self and begin to live both models.

So to all of the Neuro-Semantic and Meta-Coach Modular **Trainers**— this is my request to you. Aim to both enable and inspire those you teach and train to gain a deep appreciation for the NLP Communication Model and the Meta-States Model. Actually, this is one of the reasons that I wrote *Executive Thinking* as well as *Communication Magic*.

Lesson #2: The second learning is that *Competency requires normal back-home time.* I now think that with the experiment, while we were attempting to get more time in—it really is not the *kind*

of time that participants need. They need to *get back into their own environment and work with their clients* and integrate coaching there. This is the question of how to transfer learnings back to the work place or home. It is also the question of how to integrate the new skills by sufficient repetition over enough time (21 days, 40 days) so that the learning becomes an intimate part of a person's way of being.

Lesson #3: The third learning is the one I wrote about to the Coaches egroup last week— we discovered a new way to do benchmarking. By trial and error we found a way to integrate the “Take 2” – “Take 3” process into the coaching labs. We did that by describing seven characteristics of “deliberate practice” and by drilling acknowledgments and clarity checks with the coaches prior to the coaching. Then during the coaching, the benchmarkers were told to identify a place for a more effective response, or a response that just didn't work, to stop the process, explore it, offer ideas, and have the coach do it again more effectively. We sometimes did as many as three or four takes on a particular exchange. As a result the coach-in-training would learn *the moment for such a response and how to pull it off.*

From the feedback, it was a big hit for everyone. The participants liked it and wanted more of it. Each day we demonstrated the *deliberate practice feedback* process with two of the team leaders so everyone could see it again. For many it was the point where they began to actually “see” what the verbal descriptions were pointing at.

From the perspective of making significant learnings from an experiment— it was a big success. I learned a lot. Immediately results are these: There will be no more 10-day ACMC trainings planned, at least not in the immediate future. Ten days do provide a lot more practice, integration, and learnings, but it is hard to sell, ask Virna at Breakthrough Consulting! Immediately also we will be integrating *Deliberate Practice Feedback* on Day 2 of ACMC trainings —which will also train the team to be able to do more high quality coaching supervision.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus # 29
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CONSTRUCTING A CUSTOMIZED MATRIX

In *Coaching Mastery* on days 1 and 2 you learned how to construct a customized matrix for yourself. On the first day, you constructed a *best listening and supporting state matrix*. Then on day two, you constructed a *best receiving feedback matrix*. In both experiences, you started with a desired state and then you built (minimally) a set of seven empowering beliefs using the distinctions of the Matrix Model. Typically, when I facilitate that process I do a bit of teasing afterwards. It goes like this:

“Now isn’t that fantastic? You have created your own customized *matrix* for listening and supporting. And I would not say to you that if a client asks for a particular state, especially a state that would make all the difference in the world to him, that you ask them what he needs to believe that would put him in that state, or his highest intention, or his best identity ... I would not say that you could do that and enable him to then install that matrix of frames ...”

The point in this is this— You actually can do this as a coaching intervention with your clients. You can construct a matrix of frames around a subject. How? Simply ask about an outcome that your client wants and once you make sure it is a well-designed outcome, one that is ecological, then you are ready to co-create with that client a matrix of frames that will enable, empower, and facilitate her for that experience. How do you do this?

1) Begin with *the World matrix*:

Ask, “What is the context? What is the trigger that you want a new matrix so that you can respond more effectively?” “When and where do you want this highly resourceful state for yourself?”“

2) Go to *the State matrix*:

“Now in that context you want to be in what state? What state do you want to be in and operate from? What would be the most effective state? What would be the most appropriate and resourceful?” Elicit it, get the person to describe it as fully as possible and begin to step into it.

3) Go to *the Meaning matrix*:

“In order to be in that state, what meaning would you need to give to that context? What would you need to believe which, in turn, would trigger you to go into that state?” “What else could you believe? What belief would hold that first one in place?”

4) Go to *the Intention matrix*:

“Why? What would be your highest intention for doing this? Is that intention big enough

of an intention to induce that state? What other values would that provide for you?"

5) Go to *the Self matrix*:

"To be in that state and experience it fully, who do you need to be? What identity would you want for yourself so that you can become fully able to do this? How else might that state positively influence your identity?"

6) Go to *the Power matrix*:

"To be in that state what are the skills, resources, and competencies that you need? What do you need to be able to do with skill and confidence so that you can operate effectively from that state? What assets do you have to tap into, what liabilities to manage so that nothing is lost?"

7) Go to *the Others matrix*:

"To be in that state and operate at your best, what do you need to think about others? What beliefs and understandings about others do you need? Who are others to you in this context? What social intelligence or social skills do you need?"

8) Go to *the Time matrix*:

"When you are optimally at your best in this state, how do you think about this moment? Or about the future or the past? What is your experience of time in this state?"

When you build a customized set of states as your personal matrix of frames for a particular experience, whether it is for listening, or supporting, questioning, or receiving feedback, you design what you need and what it means to you. That's the construction part. You design and invent it; you put it together and imagine what it would be like. After that comes installation—getting it to move from the creative part of your mind so that you innovate it into your neurology so that you have it embodied and available for use whenever you need it.

This is one way to use the Matrix Model as a Meta-Coach. There are many other ways, there are systemic ways, but this offers you a simple and direct way to tap into the eight key factors about human beings.

From: L. Michael Hall
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WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER AN EMOTION

As a coach, and especially as a Meta-Coach, you frequently (like just about every time) encounter strong emotions in your clients. It's inevitable. They are humans! The only exception is if you are coaching some other species. But it is a human being sitting in your coaching chair, then you can anticipate and expect that you will have to deal with *emotions* on a regular basis.

To that end, we devote the morning of Day 3 in ACMC training to “state” — and especially to emotions. We define an emotion using the two NLP definitions and then using the two Neuro-Semantic definitions. Remember? We then spend some time on how to approach an emotion in your clients, especially tabooed emotions— those which have been prohibited. To that end, we use the permission frame and typically, we do a demonstration on the morning of Day 3 to show the power of the permission frame and how to use it. Why? Because when you know that, you have the key to *emotional intelligence* and how to coach for E.Q. with individuals and/or groups.

How does a Meta-Coach address, handle, and coach emotions, including “strong” emotions, even strong negative emotions? Given that emotions are *just emotions— just signals about your thinking and your body, signals about the relationship between your meanings (maps) and the territory, and expressions of your meaning-constructions—* just accept them for what they are. They are not bad. They are not demons. They are not commands from heaven. They are not actions. They are just emotions— *motions* that are designed to *move* you out from where you are.

Acceptance is first. Let that be your first response— just acknowledge the emotion. Notice it, observe it, and seek to understand it on its terms. Acceptance is the state that allows you to then explore it for the information it contains. And how do you do that? What do you ask?

- *About what?* First ask, “What is the emotion about?” Emotions are always *about* something. If it is fear— you are afraid of what? Joy— what are you joyful about? Anger— What are you angry about? Don't assume. The emotion may be entirely off-base and wrong. This is where *content* does count. People can get into a strong negative emotional state *about* things and that emotional state not only does *not* help them, but makes their lives much, much worse. “Thank you for sharing your anger. Now for me to more fully understand you, it is about what?”
- *How much?* Next ask, “How much are you feeling that emotion?” “How strong is it?” “If you were to gauge it from 0 to 10, what is its intensity?” Emotions are not only *about* some specific context and action, every emotion has a degree of intensity and that intensity oscillates over time. It will come and go. It will oscillate in terms of degree of power. So ask about the intensity and scale it.

- *Appropriate or inappropriate?* Once you know the context and content (about what) and its intensity, ask the ecology question: “Is the emotion you’re experiencing appropriate or not?” An emotion could be the right emotion to feel given your mental map and skills, but inappropriate in the context that you’re experiencing it. It could be that it is just not the right time or place and so inappropriate.
- *What is its quality?* Emotions come in logical levels, just as do intentions, beliefs, decisions, etc. This is the insight of the Meta-States Model which enables you to check a person’s reflexive self-consciousness. So ask, “What is the quality of your *emotion*?” If it is anger, “What is the quality of your anger?” “What is the quality of your love?” This question will help you identify the meaning-frame/s that you have embedded your understanding about your emotion. Do you like your emotion? Fear it? Shame yourself for it? More important than the emotion is the emotion-about-the-emotion. Fear-of-fear is much worse than fear. Angering-at-your-fear turns your emotional energies against you, your mind, your body, your very self.
- *How will you express it?* Finally, given the energy of an e-motion, how will you express it? Since an emotion is *not* an action, but only an action-tendency, you do *act from your emotions*. How you decide to use an emotion is yet another aspect of emotional intelligence? Will you express the emotion behaviorally and act it out? Will you speak it out? Will you think and write it out? What effect will the expressions then have on your health, your relationships, and even on the emotion itself?

You can now use this basic format when you encounter an emotion. The emotion indicates that something is significant or meaningful within the person’s matrix and, as such, offers you a door into that person’s inner world. Here’s to your excellence in meta-coaching.

From: L. Michael Hall
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SUPER-CHARGE YOUR EGO-STRENGTH

What we call *ego-strength* is the strength that a person has in his or her sense of self to look reality in the face without blinking. It is the strength that enables a person to face a challenge in life or an upsetting circumstance and not cave in. With ego-strength you are able to stand up to the negative circumstances, stand up against what you might be tempted to do (give up, quit, etc.), and demonstrates an inner strength of determination, patience, persistence, and resilience. That's what we mean by the term *ego-strength*. It has nothing to do with pride, arrogance, selfishness, etc.

If that's ego-strength, do you have that kind of internal strength? How much of it do you have today? How much of it would you like to have? Without ego-strength people *react*. They may passively shrink away or they may aggressively over-react with unthinking actions. Both the fight and flight responses, however, are the opposite of ego-strength. Now all of this becomes critical when it comes to knowing if your client is truly a *coaching client* or someone who needs therapy. Therapy is designed to heal traumas and hurts and enable one to build up a new and strong sense of self. Coaching requires ego-strength from the start— ego-strength to be able to handle the challenges that are inherent in coaching.

Clarity about “Ego”

We are all born without any ego-strength because we are all born without a sense of ego or self. There is no “I” at first, there is enmeshment. Baby does not distinguish self from mother. For the infant, it is all one and the same. The word “ego” is Greek for “I” or “me.” Open up a version of the Greek New Testament and every time someone says, “I am...” it is the Greek word *ego*. Sigmund Freud designated *ego* as the sense of self, the “I” that deals with and relates to reality.

Normally our ego-strength grows and develops as we grow and develop as persons. It's part of our psycho-cognitive-social development. We develop more and more of a sense of self as we face reality. As that “I” develops the ability to see and accept reality for whatever it is, without the magical thinking of wishing and confusing our wishing with reality, we have more strength to cope and master the facts and constraints before us.

Weak ego-strength means a sense of self that does not easily face, take in, or cope with life's challenges. A weak sense of self fights reality, hates it, and wishes it to be otherwise. Expectations are unrealistic and based on inadequate understanding. Reality seems too big, too frightening, too overwhelming ... and so we avoid the encounter. Weak ego-strength means that the person doesn't feel up to the task and so unresourceful, weak, fragile, unable to cope, etc.

Strong ego-strength describes the person who first accepts whatever *is* as existing, then it looks at

it and explores it with a view of dealing with it, coping and mastering it. With strong ego-strength you do *not* personalize the things out there in the world or what others say or do. You notice and you access the necessary resources to deal with it. The stronger your ego-strength grows, the more of a sense of self we develop, a sense of your skills and resources, of your ability to handle whatever comes.

This use of “ego” differs from how we sometimes use the word, as when we say, “He has his ego involved” in this or that. Then we are speaking about his self-definition, his pride, and his reputation. Typically this indicates a weak ego strength and the need to booster it up by fighting and defending and being defensive. The stronger our ego, the less our “ego” is involved, or on the line. Strengthening our ego-strength enables us to sit our “ego” aside and to engage the world in a straightforward way.

Strengthening Our Ego-Strength

Suppose you want to strengthening your ego, what do you do? What patterns enables you to do that? What frames, beliefs, values, expectations, etc. would support you doing that? Start with the following four.

Acceptance

First, *meta-stating yourself with acceptance*. Access the state of acceptance and apply that feeling to your “self.” Think of something small and simple that you just accept. You could get yourself worked up about it, even furious and frustrated, but you have learned to just go along and accept it. The rain, the traffic, changing the baby’s diaper, taking out the garbage, etc. What is that like? Feel that and reflexively turn that feeling back onto yourself— your sense of self, life, the cards that life has dealt you, when and where you were born, your aptitudes and lack of aptitudes, etc. Acceptance is not necessarily a positive feeling. It’s not resignation or condoning, it is welcoming something into your world without any negative fanfare.

Adjusting Expectancies

Second, look at your self-expectancies and expectancies of others, the world, work, etc. and adjust them so that you have a fairly accurate map about what is, how things work, and what you can legitimately expect. What have you mapped about yourself, people, relationships, fairness, life, etc.? Every unrealistic expectation sets us up for a cognitive and semantic jar. If it is unrealistic, then you are trying to navigate and work in a world that is an illusion and that will knock you down. This is where and why *learning* and developing greater understandings about things increases your ego-strength. Knowing what is, how things work, the rules and principles of people, relationships, careers, etc. gives you the ability to adjust your thinking-and-emoting which increases ego-strength. It takes the surprise and shock out of being caught up short.

Stepping into Your Power Zone

Weak and strong ego-strength is related to your sense of personal power or the lack thereof. You increase it when you accept your personal responses of thinking, emoting, speaking, and behaving, meta-state them with a frame of ownership and then by welcoming and practicing the use of your powers, step more and more into your power zone. This increase self-efficacy, activity, proactivity, etc.

Meta-Stating Flexibility

A fourth process for strengthening ego-strength is replace rigidity and closeness of mind with flexibility, willingness to accept change, and an openness to the flux and flow of life. The sense of insecurity predominates when you have a weak ego-strength. It is then that you don't want things to change and we want things to stay the same. As you develop more personal security, you are more open to change and to adapting and to using your resources.

From: L. Michael Hall
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IT'S THE CONVERSATION

What is Neuro-Semantics about? What is the essence and heart of Meta-Coaching? The answer is simple yet profound. In fact, for many people the answer will be quite unsatisfying and for others it will seem to be no answer at all. And there's a reason for that.

The reason involves a cognitive fallacy, namely, that we assume that there's nothing to a "conversation." Since everyone can open his or her mouth and start talking, we easily fall into the faulty thinking that there are no skills involved in holding a conversation, that everyone can do it, and that it is just what it is— talk. Yet in dismissing *conversation* in this way, people fail to understand the complexity that's within a conversation or how someone could get paid for holding a conversation.

Yet to raise appreciation for conversation, think about this. What a leader or manager does all day is *hold conversations*. They get paid, and sometimes handsomely paid, for the conversations that they initiate. The same can be said for political leaders, for those in Congress— ultimately what they do is *talk*. And while it is all too true that some are just talkers who flap their jaws and say nothing(!), it is through specialized conversations that they sway minds and hearts, create alliances, collaborations, negotiations, pass legislation, establish funding for agencies, and much much more. Such conversations are impactful and can radically affect the lives of millions.

In Coaching, we have identified the 7 core conversations, and then added dozens and dozens more. There are specialized conversations for groups; there are specialized conversations for those in the executive suites. There are conversations for achieving a great number of specific outcomes from goal setting, problem defining, problem solving, innovating, holding accountability, establishing responsibilities, inspiring, resolving conflicts, and that list goes on and on.

So what is Neuro-Semantics, and for that matter, what is NLP and Meta-Coaching but *the study of the structure of precise and focused conversations*. Whether those conversations occur within a person's mind (what we call "thinking") or externally between persons— *human experience is experiences within conversations*. Your life is a conversation. By your conversations you create your sense of reality (make mental maps about things), generate your internal world and experiences, even create your skills and competencies, your relationships, etc. You are a conversation.

It is by *conversations* that you develop as persons, that you create the quality of your relationships, and that you do business. It is even by conversations that you create your wealth and health, And in all of these ways, Neuro-Semantic NLP and its application in Meta-Coaching offers models for how to be more conscious (mindful) and skilled (competent) in using conversations effectively to

achieve your goals.

We do that by exploring and understanding how the languages of the mind work as tools for understanding things— how pictures, sounds, sensations, and words come together to create mental models (maps). We do that by discovering how words and images can take a person somewhere and whether you are aware of what your words and images are doing in the mind of another.

“Where are you taking that person with that question or statement or frame? Is that really where you want him to go?”

People need Neuro-Semantics because most people are not even conscious of the conversations that they carry on constantly in their heads. And without that mindfulness, they are not able to control their experiences (their emotions and behaviors). It is only with becoming conscious of your consciousness and what you are doing that you are able to move to the choice point where you can effectively make intentional choices. So you first wake them up! Then, because all conversations are not the same, we then begin to make many kinds of distinctions between conversations.

Neuro-Semantics is the art of effective conversations. It is the study of conversations *inside-out* in order to unleash potentials, step up to responsibilities, and begin to lead and manage oneself. Are you ready for the conversation?

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #33
July 25, 2018

FROM A PSEUDO-SKILL TO EXCELLENCE IN COACHING

What if you *think* you have a skill, what if you actually do know all about that skill, what if you can describe it and even teach it to others—what is the likelihood that you can *do* that skill? Most of us would say that it is very likely that you can do that skill. And while that is often true, it is not always true. All of that certainly does not guarantee it. In fact, this may be yet another way of describing the *knowing—doing gap*. You know but cannot do.

In that case you have a pseudo-skill. You have a pseudo-skill when you know enough about a skill to know about it, understand it, and yet you cannot pull it off. The skill is therefore *false*. *Pseudo*. This was a discovery I made in the last few days here in Hong Kong working with Mandy Chai and our team here as we are conducting the 102 ACMC. Now what has brought this to the forefront of my thinking is the use of the *deliberate practice feedback*.

This training and assist team is the first team that I've worked with since ACMC in Manilla where we discovered how to do that the deliberate practice kind of feedback. So when we began to practice coaching sessions, suddenly almost everyone on the team became aware that there were numerous skills that various ones thought they had, or that a particular person thought he had—but which he could not actually demonstrate. In that case, the skill is not real, but false.

For example, as one of the members of the assist team would attempt to do *framing* (or acknowledging, validating, clarity check, etc.) and fully thinking and believing that he was doing it, I would stop him and ask him to do "*Take Two*." What was demonstrated was not exactly a good representation of the skill.

"Okay, it looks like you have the basic idea, yet to really master this skill so that you absolutely *have it*, I want you to do it again. This time, be sure to distinguish *the activity* that you are saying you will do or that the client will experience and then *what it means*."

The person would then do a *Take Two* on the framing. Recognizing that it was still not done as fully as it could, I would interrupt again.

"Okay, you are getting it. As you did that, however, you stumbled upon your words several times, repeated yourself several times, and had a good bit of hesitation in your voice. This time smooth out your words so there's less hesitation."

The person would give it another go and almost always, do a bit better. Listening for the accuracy of the content, the smoothness of the language, the congruency of sounding like what the person was speaking about, and numerous other distinctions, I would interrupt again.

"Good. Much better—much smoother. Now be sure to emphasize X as you do it one more time. As you now put it all together, do it elegantly."

As the person would now do *Take Three* and achieve the criteria, I would call out, “There you go! Good. You’ve got it!” Then sometimes we’d take another break and check, “Okay what have you learned? Do you now have it?” “Do you believe that you can now do this piece anytime anywhere?”

This feedback enables a person to deliberately practice a particular piece of a coaching skill— a sub-skill and to do so repeatedly until she would get it. In that way, the person would quickly develop her capacity for the skill as well as her confidence that she can now do it. In this way the skill comes under her conscious control. Doing this repeatedly with the team and then within the ACMC training, when you facilitate this, you step into the role of a Movie Director or a Play Producer.

This makes the feedback much more *real time feedback*— one of the key components of the seven qualities of high quality feedback. Waiting even 25 minutes to the end of a coaching session is really far, far too long. Giving the feedback in real time—in the moment when the client says something—and not moving on until the coach can do that piece incredibly accelerates the person’s learning. In this way, the coach-supervisor helps shape the coach’s behavior for that particular piece of coaching excellence.

Last night here in Hong Kong we had our first Coaching Labs and after I had the first two persons go over and over and over their framing, the third person (having seen and heard and learned) presented two frames that were just about as good as anyone could do. It was amazing! Now the only requirement for this truly *high quality feedback format* is a willingness to repeatedly practice, an openness to this process, and a commitment to oneself.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #34
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FRAMING AS AN ART

We all frame. We frame because to understand anything requires *a way to interpret things*. To even hear the familiar everyday words, “How are you?” requires a frame. Normally, we use the *greeting frame* to understand those words. It is actually not a request for a health report, only an acknowledge of your presence. It is a longer version of “hi.” You would, however, give a health report if your medical doctor asked, “How are you?” And you’d give a much more personal report about yourself if a therapist asked that question.

We frame also in order that we are not mis-understood. Normally in conversation if someone interrupts us, we are likely to *interpret* that person as being rude, impolite, impatient, or lacking social skills. In the coaching conversation, however, we need to interrupt to catch a frame or a key structural code of a client, so we have to *set the frame about interruption*.

“Because coaching is designed to detect and identify the structural frames that may be creating your experience, I will be interrupting you whenever I hear a word, phrase, or question that may indicate such.”

Here we are actually reframing. That is, we are replacing one frame for another frame— a better way to *think about* something. How a person *thinks* about something refers to the *meaning* that a person gives to a word, phrase, or action. Ultimately, a frame as a frame-of-meaning offers your way to present a higher quality meaning for something.

“Interruption does not mean rudeness, it means that we are engaged in a *dialogue*, and my job is to detect the invisible structural assumptions that may be creating limitations for you.”

Because our most recent ACMC training in Hong Kong was our *first time* to introduce the moment-by-moment replay of an expression of a skill, the team and myself turned up the amount of interrupting that we did. This led to a new frame for interruptions.

“In order to deliberately practice a skill until you get it and know that you can do it, I will be interrupting you repeatedly and asking you do Take 2, Take 3, etc.”

I did this from the first day to day seven of ACMC. A coach-in-training would present a frame and whenever it did *not* provide an understandable *meaning*, I would interrupt.

“You just said that you were going to interrupt because you don’t need much information and you want to help me reach my outcome. As devil’s advocate I would say, ‘Well just don’t interrupt me and we’ll get to the outcome faster.’ I could misunderstand that. So, why are you interrupting?”

As the person would tell me about why he is interrupting, I would either say, “Okay, say that!” or I would help the person find the words to convey a more appropriate meaning. Then I’d give the

cue, “Okay, Take 2 from the start.” And we would sometimes do this as many as seven times. With each replay, the person would refine his expression and the way he would present it. I would check with the person hearing it— asking him if it now makes sense and he understands why the coaching is interrupting. By the seventh time, the coach would “get it.” He would not just get by with doing it, he would understand the structure of setting a frame. How do I know? Because I would then say, set another frame. Set one about emotions, about dialogue, about challenge, etc. He would then do that and demonstrate that he gets the skill of *how* to set a frame— which is the whole point.

Deliberately practicing a critical piece of a skill means practicing under supervision and doing it repeatedly until you get it. In this way, you accelerate learning and development. In this way you run your neuro-pathways in a particular way until it habituates so that it truly becomes yours. Does this cause people in the coaching laboratories to get less done and not go as far in the session? Yes. Yet where the coach and client go in the session is of much higher quality. They are practicing the coaching more accurately and correctly.

Deliberate practice feedback is a moment-by-moment supervision that lets you know *in real time* how you are doing, what to do better, what to refine, and how to truly “get” the skill. If you haven’t revisited ACMC in a couple years— plan to do that as soon as you can. You’ll be tremendously glad that you did. It’s a whole new level of training and development. To your excellence and expertise!

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #35
August 8, 2018

YOU CAN'T SEE IT FROM HERE

I run mountain trails. Well, I run them when I'm home in Colorado and when I am home my schedule is to run the trails every other day for an hour or an hour-and-a-half. Now recently in July, on our day off during NSTT, I had the privilege of taking five of the guys up on the mountain trails here in Western Colorado. After about an hour of running we arrived at a peak that we could see from the trail head at the parking lot. That's when we got off the trail and hiked to the peak of that peak. The panoramic view was pretty incredible.

Back on the trail, Ricard from Sweden asked about the trail that continued going up. We were at the foot of another steep climb and I said that it would take us another hour to continue if we wanted to get to the top.

"But you can't see it from here. In fact, when you get to that next rise," I said pointing to the steep before us, "you can't even see it from there. In fact, at the top of the next three peaks, you still can't see it."

It's all about perspective. Typically you have to get a long, long way away from the peak to see it. You can't see it as you are moving toward it because the next smaller peak is in the way. *Skill development* of training skills, coaching skills, and every other kind of skill is like that. When you first encounter a new skill—you think you get it. "I see it!" But you don't. You are only beginning to see. When you first learn about the seven core skills of coaching—you think, "Piece of cake! No problem. I'll hit 2.5 on my first go." But the truth is more like the Bible verse that says—

"Eyes they have, but they see not.
Ears they have, but they do not hear."

Why is that? It is because there's more to seeing than recognition or even understanding. There's experiencing. Now in Gestalt Therapy, this was one of Fritz Perls' primary emphasis:

"Lose your mind and come to your senses..."

"Be here now..."

"Gestalt is the art of seeing the obvious."

Now it does begin by learning to see the obvious. Most people do not do that. The obvious is right in front of them and they can't see it. It's invisible to them. And why? Because instead of seeing, they are "in their mind" hallucinating, filtering through their beliefs and experiences, mind-reading, judging, etc. And that's because they are *not truly in the here and now*. All of this brings me to the quote by Marcel Proust:

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

Ah, yes, *having new eyes*. That's because we do not see best with our eyes, but with our mind. The best seeing is with the eyes of the mind and then with those *new eyes* you can begin to see things that you have never before been able to see. You can begin to see the Matrix. Recall when you did your first coaching laboratories and the person giving you feedback showed you the benchmark paper and all of the things that you did not hear or see. You probably recognized nearly all of those things. "Yes, I heard that." "Yes, I saw that." Yet your recognition and even understanding was not enough. You did not truly *see deep enough to know what to do with what you were seeing and hearing*. And that is the challenge of Meta-Coaching— to learn how to truly see the invisible and respond accordingly.

At first you did not and could not see what you are now beginning to see— the invisible structures in a client's conversation. At first you probably saw and heard nothing. Then as you began to see and hear, you became confused and maybe even overwhelmed. You began to see and hear all kinds of things that had been invisible to you—

- Representational systems, predicates, eye accessing cues.

- Semantic space being used for time, persons, places, orientations, etc.

- The three processes of the Matrix— meaning, intention, and state.

- The five content dimension of the Matrix — self, power, others, time, and world.

- Attractions and aversions.

- Etc.

Truly *seeing and hearing* all that your client is offering you is not natural and it is not easy. But with learning, and supervised practice, and feedback, and ongoing training— it is a skill that you can learn. And then is fulfilled the prophesy, "The blind shall see and the deaf shall hear." Then you begin to see and hear what has been outside of your awareness (unconscious) and invisible. And then, with that high quality of seeing, you will be able to intervene in ways that to the uninitiated look magical. Are you ready for that level of coaching competence? Practice under supervision, go to your local MCF chapter, start a chapter, revisit!

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #36
August 14, 2018
An Oldie but Goodie from 2010

GETTING BEYOND LAME AND WIMPY COACHING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

coaching?”

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

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

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

And that leads to the next set of questions:

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

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

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

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #37
August 21, 2018
Beyond Wimpy Coaching #2

MAKING THE CONVERSATION COUNT

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

Susan Scott, Fierce Conversations

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

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

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

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

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

Now, what if, just *what if*, you adopt this premise as one of your basic frames in coaching? Suppose you entered into every coaching conversation with this idea as your governing and dominating frame? *This very conversation may very well change the course of this person’s life!* Would it make a difference in your coaching approach, attitude, and state? What difference

would it make in how you coach?

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

I think it would first motivate you to recognize the coaching conversation as a real leverage for transformational change. And that would more fully engage you so that you truly *show up* and show up more fully *to be present* to and for your client. And if you are more present, you would listen to truly understand the client on the client’s terms, not yours. If you did that, your listening would be more sacred— truly holding the place for your client to discover and change, truly listening to understand the person’s heart and intention.

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

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

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

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

**From: B.J. Radomski
and L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #38
August 29, 2018**

HOW TO REACH PCMC

Michael:

Earlier this year, B.J. Radomski reached PCMC competency on his first attempt. That was in March in Cairo Egypt. How did he do that? And given that no one else reached that level, that especially separates *what he did to prepare* which others did not do. Saying this speaks about the preparation, not the persons. So this article is not about any person, it is about *how to prepare to take your coaching skills to the next level*. It is about learning and reaching a competency level.

To that end, I asked B.J. during one of our breaks what he did to prepare. I was interested in his strategy and I was interested on behalf of all Meta-Coaches. As he described his preparation, I immediately realized that many others could use this and needed to hear this— in fact, anyone and everyone who wants to reach PCMC should hear this. Then after a little nudge at the Master Practitioner in Manila, B.J. wrote enough of the following to reveal *his secret*. I have adjusted it a bit but have left it to keep his *voice* in the writing.

B.J.:

After receiving very positive scores in my PCMC coaching demonstration, Michael asked that I share my strategy for preparation. I took these as kind words recognizing my effort and left it at that. Then, in the months since the PCMC, several ACMC coaches asked me for video, audio, or coaching to help them in their preparation to achieve PCMC benchmarks. So with all of that in mind, I decided to respond to the invitation to share my preparation strategy. My intention here is not to provide a definite model for you to adopt as your own. Instead, it is to share a little about how my meta-programs work and the strategy I developed for myself.

The first step I did was collect the twelve articles Michael had written on PCMC through the Coaches egroup (the articles are attached). Secondly, I read each article until I could summarize the key messages in a single sentence. Sometimes I thought some were poorly crafted, but it was a sentence just the same.

Now, third, armed with these single-line statements, I sketched out the 18-question well-formed outcome and started to experiment with where my understanding of each of these new concepts would flow most naturally for me. Then, while keeping in mind that no two coaching sessions are ever the same, I trusted the methodology and highlighted where each idea best fit in.

My fourth step was to replay recent coaching conversations in my mind and test where I could have enriched those sessions with these PCMC learnings. Then for some real fun, I imagined future coaching conversations. For this I selected a client I knew quite well through previous coaching sessions and identified one of the future goals we would be tackling. Then I scripted an ideal scenario as if for two actors. I could replay this scene over, editing it to see where these new

skills would work, and smooth out some of the clumsy language. After all of that I felt prepared to board the flight to Egypt and join my colleagues in the program.

Armed with this robustly enhanced WFO, I would add the daily lessons from the PCMC Training by plugging them in where I best see fit. It was sort of like the children's game of "Pin the tail on the donkey." For example, when we learned "Priming," I realized that I could pin that into the frame setting at beginning of the coaching conversation. I could also before the brainstorming of steps and plan creation. This is just where it most easily fit for learning which I could visualize. This took the lesson from concept to a real-life (and fictional) coaching application.

Since the PCMC, and bit of practice, I am no longer limited to where I introduce the learnings and bring an increased level of confidence to clients. Unfortunately, the video of my PCMC benchmarking session was corrupted so the final display is not available. That leaves the responsibility to you to fully integrate the learnings and create your own video teaching tool. For me, the lesson in this is less about "the steps I prepared with," and more about the concept that you need to learn and to use your meta-programs in such a way that they truly serve you. As a post scribe, if you have any questions, please feel free to send me an email. I will happy to support you.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #39
September 5, 2018
Beyond Wimpy Coaching #3

ASKING THE EMOTION QUESTION

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

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

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

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

During the last year, when I hear the question at the beginning of coaching sessions— even before a well-formed specific outcome has been identified— I step in, interrupt the process, and ask, "What are you seeking to discover by asking that question? And how is that going to serve this client identifying her desired outcome?"³³³

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

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

You coach from state to state, so you need to always be calibrating to your client's state. If you don't know the state your client is in, ask. "What are you feeling as you say that?" "How much are in you that feeling state?" "Is that helping or hindering you?" "Is this

state the problem or the solution or neither?” The key here is to make sure your client is in the best state for the coaching. The quality of your coaching will be governed to a great extent by your client’s state.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #40
September 12, 2018
Beyond Wimpy Coaching #4

DARING TO *NOT* WORSHIP THE GOD OF COMFORT

“Your confusion is an asset; in fact, your search for clarity may blaze a path for others. In working to express what you do not understand— but long to understand— you invite the kind of conversations for which others are searching. ... The experience of being understood, versus interpreted, is so compelling you can charge admission.” Joseph Pine *The Experience Economy*, (p. 185)

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

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

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

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

Do they know that you're there as "Disturber of their Peace?"

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

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

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

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

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #41
September 19, 2018
Beyond Wimpy Coaching #5

ASKING THE CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

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

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

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

“In what way specifically did she do Y?”

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

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

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

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

“I don't know” is just another hiding place that clients go when they feel “uncomfortable” and if

you let them get by with that, you reinforce that as a habit and a way of avoiding themselves. This is precisely when they need your challenge. So begin with the basic NLP response, “If you did know, what would you say?” After that, use the other responses that we use in Meta-Coaching.

[You’ve memorized those 15 responses to “I don’t know,” haven’t you? They were sent to you when you graduated.]

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

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

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

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

Here’s to you developing the courage to ask the bold questions, the personal questions, the clarification questions. After all, *the clarification conversation is the first conversation in any coaching session.*

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #42
September 26, 2018

FACILITATING AUTHENTIC THINKING

When you coach, the conversation you engage your client in is designed to get him or her to *authentically think* and to think about oneself— one’s innermost thoughts, hopes, fears, wants, needs, etc. Simultaneously this evokes several other things in your client. At the very same time that your client is discovering his or her internal world— your client is learning how to “think.” Now most people *think that they are thinking* when actually they are not. What they are calling “thinking” is mostly self-criticism. What passes for thinking is a litany of problems, pseudo-solutions, a jumble of options, etc. True *thinking* is rare. Hence the need for a Coach!

True thinking involves actually listening to oneself so that you can hear not only *the content* of your thoughts, but your thinking *structures, frames, and contexts*. That’s really difficult. To learn to do that we have to first learn how to have dialogue conversations with ourselves. To truly *think*, Jordan Peterson says that you have to “be at least two people at the same time.” You have to take two or more roles to yourself so that instead of self-judgment, you let those two roles that you are playing disagree and talk out the disagreement.

“Thinking is an internal dialogue between two or more different views of the world. ... True thinking is complex and demanding. It requires you to be articulate speaker and careful, judicious listener, at the same time. You have to learn to give and take and to modify your premises and adjust your thoughts. In consequence, thinking is emotionally painful as well as physiologically demanding. You have to be very articulate and sophisticated to have all of this occur inside your own head. What are you to do if you aren’t very good at thinking, at being two people at one time? That’s easy. You talk. But you need someone to listen. *A listening person is your collaborator and your opponent.* A listening person tests your talking (and your thinking) without having to say anything.” (2018, *12 Rules for Life*, pp. 241-242, italics added)

Ah, “*A listening person is your collaborator and your opponent.*” That fits the Meta-Coach description of “compassionately challenging.” As a coach, your job is in part to get your clients to *talk—to talk aloud without censoring* what they are saying. Then you get them to hear what they are saying. The “collaboration part” is making it safe for them to speak up whereas the “opponent part” is getting them to truly hear what they are saying. For that, you challenge and confront. Do this and you are really earning your fee as a professional coach!

The reason your clients need to *talk* and talk out-loud is because that’s how people think. *People think by talking.* Now while this is generally true of all of us, for some people— *talking is their primary way of thinking.* They have to think aloud. For them, they are *not able* to think quietly in their mind. When they try to think quietly in their mind, they immediately are overwhelmed by a rush of thoughts— memories, representations, ideas, etc. And whatever they choose to focus on, they do not stay focused for long. That’s because they are constantly interrupting themselves with other thoughts racing around in their heads. That’s why they have to talk aloud.

This constant *intrusion of thoughts* creates a constant and ongoing set of self-interruptions and prevents them from working things out in their mind. They do not have an internally quiet mind, but a mind full of noise. In their mind, there is constant noise, interruptions, and rush of thoughts. If only they could retreat within the mind to a quiet contemplation of their concerns! But no. For many people that is simply not possible.

They need to talk out-loud— and they need someone to first listen and then to guide their talk. The listening allows them to say things out-loud so that they can figure out what they are thinking. Strange as that sounds, that’s actually common to all of us when there are lots of things going on in the mind—we can’t know or figure out *what we are thinking until we say it out-loud*.

That’s why we need someone who will listen— and better, someone who will *not* try to solve things, but *just listen* with empathy, compassion, and who can summarize what we are saying. When you do that as a coach— you offer a tremendous gift to your client. In helping them *hear themselves*— so they discover what they are actually thinking, caring about, valuing, etc. and then they can set a goal for what to do about the discoveries.

When people “think”—they are simulating the world. They are creating a mental model about the world (NLP). They are constructing a map about what things are, what’s happening, how it operates, what it means, and what to do about it. Yet as you also know from your NLP and Neuro-Semantic studies, when people simulate the world— their mental mapping of things are subject to all sorts of problems— over-generalizations, deletions, and distortions. That’s because they are mapping things with various cognitive distortions, cognitive biases, and cognitive fallacies. This is another reason they need to talk out-loud in the presence of a non-judging coach who can skillfully hear and identify these mapping problems.

When we talk out-loud, we express and reveal our thoughts and *how we are thinking*, namely, our *thinking style*. Most of the time, our thinking style is completely outside-of-consciousness. We are not aware of it. But when we speak out-loud, we often begin to become aware of *the way we are thinking*. When that happens, a client is likely to say, “You know, it sounds silly when I say that out-loud.” And so it is. The client is making manifest what’s typically unconscious and is now at a place where he or she has a new choice.

Talking and thinking about our mental simulations leads to plans— the plans that we construct about what to do and how to act. If you do a good job of simulating the world, you can figure out what both the intelligent things to do and the stupid things to not do — another benefit of coaching. Next time you set with a client— aim to stimulate his or her *thinking by talking out-loud as you compassionately challenge*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #43
Oct. 4, 2018

LISTENING IS DANGEROUS

“The great majority of us cannot listen; we find ourselves compelled to evaluate, because listening is too dangerous. The first requirement is courage, and we do not always have it.” Carl Rogers

In the above quote Carl Rogers makes a pretty incredible assertion. He says that *listening is too dangerous*. In his context, listening is *too dangerous* to ourselves, that is, we are not courageous enough to really listen. So what is the danger? The danger is that *you will be changed*. You might change your mind— your understanding, your belief, your value, etc. As a coach even when you have no agenda except to be as helpful as the client allows you to be, you may be changed. Your ideas about the client may change. Your understandings of what you can do or need to do may change. And even deeper, the client’s presentation and struggle may affect you deeply— it may relate to things in your own life.

Listening is dangerous because to truly listen, you have to take into yourself the ideas, understandings, premises, etc. of your client— and the mere fact of taking on the client’s model of the world— will affect you. You will be different. It is inevitable.

Carl Rogers also described the power of making a *summary* of a person’s understanding. In moderating a conflict or helping two people to come to an understanding of each other this is what he recommended. This is also one of the key processes we use in Group and Team Coaching as a way to facilitate persons within a group to come to truly understand each other.

“Each person can speak up for himself only after he has first restated the ideas and feelings of the previous speaker accurately, and to that speaker’s satisfaction.”

This speaks to listening in that it takes a lot of active *listening* and effort to summarize what another person has said and to keep check if you now understand them to their satisfaction. In contexts of disagreement and conflict, this process has to be repeated several times to just get one person to adequately indicate that they have heard another person. And here the courage to listen and then to articulate the other person’s point of view becomes even more challenging. That’s because to *accurately repeat the other’s point of view to his or her satisfaction* requires taking on that perspective. And in conflict situations, that is the last thing most people want to do.

What makes listening dangerous to yourself, to a change that you might need to make, is that by listening you have to *enter into another person’s private world, into that person’s way of thinking, model of the world, and see the world the way that person sees things*. In Meta-Coaching we describe this as entering into the client’s matrix of meaning to understand the client *on the client’s terms*, not ours. So this process will feel dangerous to any person who does not have a solid sense of their own self and a strong sense of ego-strength to know oneself.

Given that, now you know why we emphasize ego-strength in APG and in Coaching Mastery. That's why we make ego-strength one of the requirements for even being at Meta-Coaching. Without ego-strength it is essentially impossible to listen to another person without personalizing, being induced into an unresourceful state, etc. Ego-strength not only means that you can face unsettling and disturbing facets of reality without caving in, it means that you are strong enough in yourself to be available for someone else. That's also why we do the Releasing Judgment Pattern in Meta-Coaching and the De-Contamination Chamber. Those patterns are designed to enable a Meta-Coach to be able to *try on someone else's model of the world without losing his or her own sense of self and model of the world.*

The courage that's needed to fully, accurately, actively, and compassionately *listen* is the courage to get yourself out of the way as you listen. It is to release any and every agenda that you might have. It is the courage to go with what you're hearing to understand it more deeply rather than judge it or fix it. It is the realization that whatever is being said it is not about you and you do not have to personalize it.

How courageous are you? Given all of this about *real* listening, how easily can you set yourself aside and *just listening in order to understand your client on his or her terms?* That's the question that begins to evaluate your effectiveness as a coach.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #44
Oct. 11, 2018

EXPLAIN WHAT YOU KNOW

How do you learn? How can you learn the ACMC level of Meta-Coaching or the PCMC level? What would be some excellent learning processes? Since I began teaching NLP and then Meta-States I have always encouraged people to *go out and teach someone*. Anyone! “The best way to learn this material, teach it!”

More recently in re-reading Korzybski (for the 9th time), I came across the following quotation—his way of encouraging people to learn the General Semantic method of his Non-Aristotelian system for neuro-semantic and neuro-linguistic development.

“One of the best ways for grown-up persons to train themselves in the present theory of sanity *is to try to explain it to others*, repeatedly pointing to the Structural Differential. In my experience, those who have disregarded this advice have always made very slow progress, and have never got the full semantic benefit of their efforts. As regards the verbal side of the training, it is as important to use exclusively the terms given...” (*Science and Sanity*, 1933/ 1995, p. 13 Italics added)

“Explain it to others!” That’s the key. Try it. Go out and find someone interested in Coaching or Professional Communication or any aspect of Meta-Coaching (Matrix Model, Benchmarking, NLP, Meta-States, etc.) and *explain it to others*. When you do that— *you* will learn so much! You will discover what you actually do know and can effectively communicate *and* you will discover what you think you understand, but cannot effectively communicate it. And that will drive you back to your ACMC manual and the 16 books in the Meta-Coaching series to refresh your understandings.

Learning in the sense of passively receiving and thinking about things *in your mind* is deceptive. If things make sense to you and you feel comfortable with what you know, you can falsely draw the conclusion that you know it. But then try to *explain it to others*. Ah, now you have a very different experience. Now you have to be active and talk about things *out-loud* in an interaction. That’s very different from just inwardly thinking about it. And more than likely, you will say (or think) several times— “Let’s see, I know what I’m trying to say, but I just can’t quite get it out.”

Explaining something out-loud in a conversation is a great *training process* for you to deepen your knowledge and make it available when you need it. It taps into the process that Aristotle described when he wrote, “That which is expressed is impressed.” That is, when you express something (explain something) you are simultaneously getting it impressed at a much deeper level in yourself.

Many years ago I wrote about this in *Emotions: Sometimes I Have Them/ Sometimes They Have Me* (1985) when I quoted the Proverb: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is

old he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6). Now the Hebrew text of this verse actually says, "Instruct a boy *on the mouth* ('al piy) his way..." What does that mean?

A boy's way (his temperament, talents, meta-programs, etc.) must be put "on his mouth." That is, he needs to be *able to articulate his "way,"* the way that is uniquely his. If he doesn't learn how to express his identity, his temperament, talent, etc., he will not know "the way he should go," what best fits for him. This creates staying power. The staying power of being true to yourself and your personality comes from being able to articulate (explain) his way. As parents enable a child to speak about his way this process enables them to impress that awareness deep inside. Hence, "That which is expressed is impressed." If you can put what you have learned into your own words—you deeply impress that truth into yourself. Now it is *yours*.

Want to learn and learn so thoroughly that it becomes yours and you have it as an inward knowing that is readily available to you? Go teach someone. Go explain it to someone! It will bless both you and them.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #45
Oct. 17, 2018

WHEN YOU INTERVENE

When you coach, what you do first is get a definition and description of the coaching conversation as the client wishes for the session and/or for the coaching program. That is, first you spend quality time engaging him or her in a very special kind of conversation—one that most people would love to have, but do not because they do not have a well-trained coach who can facilitate it. First you lead a person through *a well-formed outcome* to make sure that the transformative conversation will deliver what the person both wants and needs. By the end of the outcome conversation, your client will have a clear idea of what would be worth his time, effort, and money to achieve. And you have a contract!

Now you are ready to do *an intervention*. You will intervene to facilitate *what* your client wants. If you had been doing interventions *while* gathering information, you would probably “jumping the gun” out of your own impatience. But are you ready? Do you know how to intervene in just the right way and deliver what you have promised?

We say repeatedly in *Meta-Coaching*, *do not do an intervention until you have completed the 18-well-formed outcome questions and before you have a clearly defined objective that the client has owned*. Do not do it before the client gives you the “green light” regarding what he wants because to do so is highly likely that you will work on the wrong thing. But once you have the green light, once the outcome has been clarified, do you know how to think about and formulate the right intervention? Here are some general guidelines.

First, *get crystal clear about the kind of conversation that your client has indicated*. If your client needs clarity— then your intervention will be about enabling your client to become clear about something. Therefore any pattern that enables clear thinking, learning, understanding, gaining knowledge, unlearning, releasing cognitive distortions, etc. could be an appropriate intervention. Also, think strategy. What is your unique client’s strategy for getting clear? Is it visual, auditory, kinesthetic, language, or some mixture of these?

Do the same if your client wants a decision conversation, planning, experiencing, change, or any of the two dozen other *kinds* of coaching conversations. You will find extensive descriptions of these in a number of the *Meta-Coaching* books. There are also previous *Morpheus* that have summarized those kinds of conversations.

Second, think and rethink strategy. Each of the kinds of coaching conversations is an *experience* and, given that every experience has a strategy, what is the strategy for deciding, planning, experiencing, changing, etc. of your client? What is the strategy of the client for creating his or her current experience? Do you know? If the client wants to deal with whatever is blocking or interfering, what is the strategy by which the client has created that? Find out. Make that your first intervention.

There are several interventions that occur when you find a strategy. You can streamline it to make it better. You can alter various features of it to make it more robust or to cause it to break down and not work. You can push the variables of the strategy to an extreme and, depending on what you're trying to achieve, you can blow out the strategy or take it to new levels of achievement. Because every experience has a strategy, when you find the leverage point in the strategy, that is the very point where it is made or it breaks.

Third, go meta. Thinking “strategy” takes you *into* the experience— that the person wants or doesn't want. Going meta takes you *out* of the experience and from there you can take the client *out* as well. You can transcend the experience and thereby facilitate a larger-level perspective of things and then *outframe*. When you do that, you can generate all sorts of new responses— in your Meta-States APG manual you have 16-interface responses that you can create when you meta-state an experience. Do you remember those? Do you need to go revisit that manual? You can solidify or loosen an experience, you can create humor or paradox, you can texture and qualify a state. There's many, many things that you can do! And each one is an intervention.

Fourth, think stability / instability. Is the experience that your client wants (or doesn't want) stable or unstable? For change, if it is stable— induce instability. Confuse, overwhelm, misdirect, etc. By taking the experience out of the stable category, the system of that experience will then go to work (be activated) as it seeks homeostasis. And when it does, you will be able to catch *how that experience works*.

For stabilizing things, if it is unstable— induce stabilization. Set boundaries, confirm, validate, elicit a hierarchy of values, etc. This will take a weak and perhaps off-and-on system and make it more firm, robust, and energized. Do the same thing with the distinctions of simple and complex. For a fuller discussion of that, see *Sourcebook of Magic Volume I*. There is an entire chapter on this.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #46
Oct. 24, 2018

PROFILING YOUR CLIENT AS YOU COACH

I learned a lot last week in presenting PCMC and in doing the assessments. As always we had *real* clients come in to sit with the coaches. Most seemed to be in the middle of a career change and wanted to get clear or figure out a process or understand whatever is blocking them from taking action, etc. And in spite of the fact that many of them had no NLP at all and never had been coached before, all of them (as far as I could tell) walked away with significant insights, things to do, and a very positive experience from the coaching. It made a difference in their lives. Among the things that I learned and that stood out was the need for the coach *to effectively profile the client during the coaching*. This is one of the skills in the PCMC manual— Profiling the client. In other words, get a “reading” on the person sitting in front of you in terms of meta-programs, thinking and learning strategies (representation systems), strengths, etc. At the end of sessions, I found myself several times asking the coach— “Tell me about your client’s meta-programs. What were the ones that seemed present in the conversation between you?” And usually, the coach could *at that point* correctly identify a few of them.

Yet as we all know— *knowing* a meta-program filter and recognizing it differs from being able to *pace it and use it* in the coaching conversation. For some of the coaches this was an insight, “Of course, I could have” When I then mention some others— ones that were *in that conversation* that were more dominating, that was yet another level of awareness and discovery. In review, what was then obvious had been a hidden factor during the session— yet a central one and one that if the coach had picked up on the mismatching or the global processing or the strong-will filter, they would have had a very different conversation.

One area for profiling a client that I had not put in the page on *Profiling a Client* in the manual came up a couple times when I mentioned that the client had said something about his or her profession which had been a strength of personality and a source of success that was now the person’s problem. One man who had been a project manager for 25 years in a major cooperation was now wanting to be an entrepreneur, start his own company, take advantage of opportunities, etc.

From the outside where it is so easy to see the situation. So I immediately wondered, “Could his thorough and detailed way of doing things as a project manager be the problem blocking him from accepting opportunities now?” He kept saying that he wanted a conversation to plan out all of the details for starting his new career choice and becoming an entrepreneur. It certainly struck me as a mis-diagnosis. He was wanting to forge a future as an entrepreneur in a way that entrepreneurs do not operate but project managers do!

When I mention it, it was a case of the blinding obvious. Yes, of course. He wanted details, plans, risk management ... and didn’t know how to try something, run a small experiment, grab an

opportunity and learn from it, etc. His towering strength, at the same time in this new situation, was operating as a shadow side.

What are your client's strengths? Look for them, notice them, call attention to them, and validate them ... and sometimes question whether the person's gifts, strengths, skills, capacities may be the very thing getting in their way. "Blocks" do not have to be traditional problems —limiting beliefs, restraining memories, weaknesses, etc. Strengths can also sometimes block us especially when we are launching out into a new arena of life.

Look for a person's over-used strategies. What is the person's strategy for learning, connecting, planning, problem-solving, innovating, or anything else? How many other ways does the person have for getting that same objective accomplished? Does the person only use one primary strategy? Does the person tend to use a strategy that works fine in one area in other areas— where it may not be that effective?

Observe the person's ways of talking, her language patterns. Are they over-used? What about the person's cognitive biases or distortions? We are a patterned people— when we find something that works, we tend to repeat it over and over and it is not uncommon to apply it (or at least attempt to apply it) in places where it does not fit. Profile that.

All of this is asking a lot when you are coaching. What is a coach to do? Keep a clip-board for notes with you at all times. When you get a sense of something in your client, jot down a word or two, draw a box around it — and let that be your Profiling box that you can test and update as you go. *Knowing your client* is a facet of the coaching conversation and relationship that comes from listening and supporting. So the more you do this, the deeper you can connect with your client and from that — get to the heart of things!

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #47
Oct. 26, 2018

THE GROUP & TEAM COACHING CREDENTIALS

It seems that in Meta-Coaching, the ACMC certificate gets most of the attention with more attention in recent time to PCMC. Yet the GTMC— *Group and Team Meta-Coach Credentials* — seems to get the least. And yet this is the fastest growing area of Coaching and I would predict that it will continue to be the fastest growing area given the basic dysfunctions and problems that “groups” have and suffer from. More and more companies are now asking for help with their groups and they are also wanting truly competent people who know what they are doing.

Even more important— *most coaches are totally unprepared to coach a group effectively*. After all, coaching a single individual is challenging enough! Coaching a group is exponentially even more challenging. Well, it is if a person wants to be truly effective at it and be able to bring a group around to becoming a truly effective work group or even higher, a team.

What the individual coach has to learn when facing a group are all of the many *group dynamics* that are occurring in the group. Then, after the learning comes learning how to manage those dynamics. That is, learning how to manage the information exchange and processing, managing the learning, the decision making, the connecting and rapport between members, and much more.

Unlike the situation when you are coaching an individual, when you are coaching a group— there are multiple meta-programs, multiple models of the world, multiple talents and competence, multiple representational systems, multiple uses and coding of time, and many other multiples of variables. Coaching a group involves not only getting the clients to trust you, it also involves you facilitating them trusting each other. Often they don't. In those instances, that means helping the members come to terms with old conflicts so that they can put them behind them and move forward.

And if communication is problematic enough between two people (coach and client), it can become extremely problematic with a group. Now you have to check with each person regarding what they have heard from your communications and/or the communications of other group members. And with a group, you have to repeat yourself a lot— generally to get a single message across to everyone, you have to repeat it five to seven times.

There's no way around it — *Coaching a group is a different beast*. And learning to effectively coach a group requires various administrative skills in addition to framing, confronting, managing conflict, and much more. These are the kinds of things that we address in the training and then, with the assessment, the GTMC credentials— which provides evidence that you have successfully demonstrated competence in handling a group.

In the Meta-Coaching System, GTMC is a top-of-the-line coach training— it is the only one in the world with benchmarks, the only one in the world that involves assessments, and so the only one with the highest credible quality.

The next Group & Team Coach Training begins November 15 in Jakarta, Indonesia.
The sponsor is *Meta-Mind* — led by Mariani Ng and Basian.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #48
Oct. 31, 2018

PROFILING AS A COACHING SKILL

After the last post on **Profiling Your Client as you Coach** (#45), a couple of questions arose. One of the Meta-Coaches asked:

When profiling a client and getting a read, how do we not end up "mind-reading" or "putting the person in a box by "labeling or judging"? What are the distinctions?

The short answer is to *always do your profiling based on sensory-based evidence*. Then you are not mind-reading or judging at all. Now for the long answer. One of the best tools for profiling is the model of Meta-Programs so accordingly Bob and I titled the book, *Figuring Out People*. And in the back of that book, you will find lists for how to recognize meta-programs in language and in sensory-based behavior. That gives you two primary and fundamental ways to detect a meta-program in sensory-based terms.

The same can be said for other formal patterns such as the Meta-Model distinctions which also show up in definite language expressions. For other patterns, watch for the behaviors or the speech behaviors. When you see one occurring repeatedly, then you can inquire about the person's state or intention. In that way you can connect the person's state and intentions with his or her own unique external expressions. And of course, with all use of NLP and Neuro-Semantics, when in doubt— *check with the person*. Only the person that you are profiling can give the final answer about whether something fits a particular pattern (and sometimes even they do not know!).

The matter about “putting a person in a box,” that mostly goes to the coach's or the trainer's attitude. How does he or she think about the process of identifying a pattern? Is it putting a person “in a box?” Is it profiling in the sense of determining someone's “typology?” This would be a mis-use of the NLP Communication Model. And while that is a *mis-use*, it occurs frequently by people who are *poorly trained* in NLP or those who have only *superficially studied* NLP. They end up “putting people into boxes”— *not* because that's part of NLP— but because they are thinking in terms of typology. You can tell a not-very-well-trained person because they say things like, “He is a visual.” “She is a mismatcher.”

NLP is not a typology. Instead of thinking that people come in “types” and whatever their type, that's what they are and always will be, NLP views people in much more fluid terms— as operating from states. If you want to read deeply into that, see my book, *The Structure of Personality: Ordering and Disordering with NLP and Neuro-Semantics* (2001, Crown House Book). From the NLP perspective, personality is *not* what people *are*, personality is what people *do*. It is a set of actions— mental, emotional, verbal, behavioral.

About the matter of *judging* or *labeling*— it all depends on what you mean by those words. Ah,

the clarity check! Judging is what the human brain does. We make evaluations as we judge what something is (identification), how it works (cause-effect), its significance in our lives (values), and what we should do about it (intention). These are four of the most basic meaning-making processes that each of us go through in trying to determine what something is. In this sense, we cannot *not* “judge” or evaluate.

This also explains why we use the “Releasing Judgment” Pattern in Meta-Coach training. It is not to release all of your judgments or your capacity to make evaluations. It is designed to replace evaluation thinking *when you are coaching* and replace it with observation, acceptance, and curiosity. You need your judgments to function effectively in the world and you have spent your entire life learning to develop accurate, precise, and human judgments (at least we hope you have).

The brain also is wired to label. That’s the most fundamental function of language— to come up with names of things. When you have a name for a thing or action, you have an “anchor” so that you have a short-hand for talking about it and working with it.

Now obviously, these words are also used in other ways— as in the cognitive distortions— judging the person— blaming, attacking, insulting, etc. Labeling a person— treating a person as just a category and thereby acting in a more impersonal and uncaring way. That’s *not* what we want to do when we are profiling. We are seeking to understand the person on his or her terms and so we use formal patterns (Meta-Programs, Meta-Model, etc.) and informal patterns. Then we check with the person. By presenting the patterns we think we are detecting as “feedback” to the person in a tentative way and asking if it fits for them— you are using the mirroring skills of Meta-Coaching.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #49
Nov. 7, 2018

DIAGNOSING MIS-DIAGNOSES

It is no secret that we humans often get it wrong. We offer a diagnosis about what we think is the situation and what we think should be done about the situation. About two years ago I began noticing clients mis-diagnosing their situation and later I added *mis-diagnosing* to the Meta-Coaching skill as one of the benchmarks for listening. This is usually an advance listening skill—one that we would expect at the PCMC level.

Mis-diagnosing is common and mostly because of *uncritical thinking* and because of the prevalence of cognitive distortions, fallacies, and biases. We can get things wrong, can misunderstand, and we do. These errors in understanding then lead us to mis-identify what a situation is which then snowballs into misunderstanding what we should do about it.

What it is: Mis-Identification

People mis-identify things by mis-defining things. Ask, How are you using that word? People also over-simplify via reductionism.

Confuse a word or name with reality.
“*Stuttering is dysfunctional speech.*”

“*I am an adult child of alcoholics.*”

Confuse words with the territory.
“*I suffer from depression.*”

Confuse symptoms with causation.

Confuse emotion with the problem.
“*My problem is anger.*”
“*If I feel controlled, told what to do, etc.*”

“*I feel anxious and over-whelmed—*

“*Emotions always tell the truth.*”

“It is only X.”
Over-simply using linear thinking or Either/Or thinking which leaves out important variables.

What to do: Wrong Actions

People get mis-directed and mis-oriented in one’s response.

Try to remove the word, deny the reality.
“*It is a complicated problem that takes years to get over.*”

“*That’s just a fact I have to resign to.*”

Act on words as if “real.”
“*I need to find out who caused my depression.*”

Focus on and work on the symptom.

Fight the emotion as if it is the problem.
“*How can I get rid of my anger?*”

“*I should create my own business, be an entrepreneur.*”
“*therefore I need to relax.*”

“*I need to tell Jill how I’m angry at her.*”

Over-focus on one element in an experience.
Act exclusively on a single variable while neglecting other variables.

“My boss frustrates me.”

“I need to figure out a way around my boss.”

Defining X as outside one’s scope of response.
“My income is limited due to the recession.”

Try to fix someone else, accuse, blame.
“It is President’s X fault.”

Assume memory is always accurate.
“I remember that Joe insulted me at the meeting.”

Use past as “factual” evidence.
“That proves that Joe is crude and rude.”

A person’s strength is always a resource.
“I’m good at planning, project management—

Play to one’s strength.
therefore I should plan more thoroughly.”

Something that is permanent always remains so.
*“Conflict is bad; means bad feelings, hatred.
“Saying ‘no’ hurts people’s feelings—
“A person can be the problem, be bad, no good.*

Treat things as permanent and unchanging.”
*Always avoid conflict; don’t deal with it.
“I should never say ‘no.’”
If I did wrong, I am wrong— bad, no good.”*

There’s a major problem with mis-diagnosing a situation: *When you get it wrong, you end up doing it wrong.* The wrong-headed error, misunderstanding, mistake, etc. disorients you so that you then choose options and responses that are also wrong and will not help you be effective. Mis-diagnosis typically arises from a cognitive bias or distortion which then leads to a misunderstanding of *what something is* and *how it works*. Worse still, once you assume that X is like Y, you will seek out evidence that proves it (Confirmation Bias)! Now you are in a self-reinforcing loop.

Sometimes, however, the mis-diagnosis arise from meta-programs. The active responder will perceive things *in terms of actions to be taken* while the reflective responder will see the same things *in terms of things to consider*. The matcher sees things that are similar and the mismatcher things that differ. Each will make a diagnosis appropriate to his powers of perception, namely his or her meta-programs. Ask yourself:

- “Could my meta-program filter be influencing my diagnosis so that I am seeing things through a limited lens?”
- “If that is the case, what am I not seeing?”
- “What am I missing or not taking into consideration?”

What are you mis-diagnosing? What mis-diagnoses have led you astray in the past?

“Those who are most passionate must be the best leaders.”

“Those who are doing the most are the best leaders.”

Competitive for self or for the group?

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #50
Nov. 14, 2018

THE BASICS GIVE YOU DEPTH

During October when doing both ACMC and PCMC back to back — I was impressed all over again about the crucial role of *the coaching basics*. Over and over I found myself emphasizing—listening and supporting, questioning and meta-questioning, state induction and framing and so on. Nor are these the only *basics in Meta-Coaching*. Even with the Assist Team and the training we did prior to ACMC I found myself reminding people—

“... think representational system, which system is the client offering his information in?”

“What predicates did you just hear from your client?”

“Did you calibrate to the shift of state that your client just experienced? Did you notice the change of breathing, and flushing of the face...?”

The *basics* that are taught in Modules I and II of the Meta-Coaching System are not to be learned about and then forgotten. They are there to learn and then to *over-learn so that they become part and parcel of the way you think, the way you perceive, and the way you respond*. They are to be deepened by continual use of them. In fact, when you regularly and consistently refresh your knowledge of these basics and over-learn them, you begin to commission them to drop out of conscious awareness so that you have them as unconsciously present all the time.

If that is not the case with you, then you probably have not sufficiently over-learned them. If you have to recall them or if someone recalls them to your awareness, you probably need to go back to the basics and refresh them.

I no longer remember the specific event, but many years ago I found myself in a “beginning level NLP” workshop at a conference. I didn’t know it was for beginners. I entered because of the trainer, I wanted to hear her. She was well known and I had never heard her present. Upon finding out it was for beginners, I immediately felt disappointed and considered leaving. But I didn’t. And I’m really, really glad that I did not. Within the first minutes when she was presenting the most basic information and definitions— I heard something about representational systems that I had never heard or thought of before.

The speaker presented it as if it was obvious and common knowledge. Meanwhile I was writing furious trying to get it all down! For me it was wonderful— fantastic — worth the whole price of the Conference! And that changed my way of thinking about “beginning level NLP.” It blew out any assumption that “I know it all about the basics.” I realized that not only do *I not know it all*— but there are depths that I have not even started to plummet. And, I can learn new things from anyone!

The basics give you depth. So, go back to them. Read another basic book on NLP every year. Just when you think, “I know all about that” you will find— if you have an open mind and heart

that there are many, many things yet to be discovered and that what you may think of as simple has layers of depths.

When you first study NLP, you study the different models. What happens when you deepen your knowledge of the basics—you begin to find connections between them. That’s how I happened to discover the redundancy between the Meta-Model, the Sub-Modalities (Meta-Modalities), Meta-Programs, and Meta-States. And that lead to the Four Meta-Domains of NLP.

Next time you are tempted to say or to dismiss something as “It’s just the basic,” do a second take. Remind yourself that it is not “just the basics.” It’s not that simple. It is the foundation upon which the whole edifice of your work is built. And within those basics are depths that can give you insights which are not obvious, yet hidden with those basics are often leverage points of change.

Recently we concluded a triad of coach, client, and meta-person. I was the person giving feedback and benchmarking. I asked the coach, did you see him look up to his right and then to the left? “Yes, but I did not know what to do with that.” “Okay,” I suggested, “watch this.” “Joe, what were you looking at when you looked up right and then left.”

“I was comparing the two choices.”

“Were you seeing something when you look here (point to his right) and then here (pointing to his left)?”

“Yes, the choices.”

“And what did those choices look like?”

“Lists. There were two lists.”

“Was there writing on them?”

“Yes.”

“Were both black-and-white print or any words in color?”

“Oh, the right one was written in color, the left in black-and-white. That’s interesting.”

“Interesting ... because ...”

“Because when I see something in color, that’s my choice.”

“Is that the case here?”

“Yes ... I guess so. I didn’t realize that...”

Ah, so much in the basics. By just exploring a bit about a visual access cue, much deeper insights were probed.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #51
Nov. 21, 2018

COACHING THE COACH TO COACH

When we train the Assist Team at ACMC to provide feedback and benchmarking, we are developing people for *high quality supervision in Meta-Coaching*. That's because the whole point is to enable the person giving feedback and managing the coaching lab to *coach the coach in his or her coaching session*. For years now we have been devoting two full days to the Assist Team in terms of their supervision skills so that they can give quality feedback to the coach-in-training. We do that by conducting 8 to 10 coaching sessions and by practicing giving feedback.

It is *coaching under supervision* that makes all the difference in the world. Coaching and practicing coaching *without* supervision misses the very value and purpose of feedback. Almost every who attempts to reach competency level at ACMC level, PCMC level, and GTMC level who has been practicing but not under supervision has not succeeded. Conversely, those who have practiced with supervision have succeeded.

What is this supervision? While it can be done by instructing and informing, it is best done by coaching. That is, it is best performed by asking questions and facilitating an awareness of what person has done well and what the person has done that does not work. Here are some sets of questions by which you can *supervise* another coach's experience.

Basic Orientation Questions

Use these questions as the regular questions. From time to time stop the session and inquire where the person is, what he or she is trying to do, the kind of coaching conversation, etc.

What WFO question are you on?

What kind of a conversation does your client want to have? If you don't know, guess.

Where are you taking the client with these questions or these statements?

Did that question work? Do you know why it did not?

Did your client answer your question? If so, what was the answer?

What state would you guess your client is in? Is that the best state for coaching?

Validations

Use these questions to support the coach, to enable the coach to count what he or she is doing well and to inspire them in continuing.

What you did really well is —

I want to commend you on the question you just asked— that was really well done.

The acknowledge you did a moment ago was well done due to the timing (or do to the emphasis in your words, etc.).

I see that your strength is your compassion, so that means your challenge is to provide more testing and challenging.

Distractions:

Here are some questions to help the coach deal with distractions — whether from the client or elsewhere or from oneself.

Are you staying with the WFO questions?

Are you being distracted? If so, how is that working? What do you need to do?

Did you just get off the subject? If so, how? What do you need so that you don't let that distract you again?

Are you chasing a word? Is that question or statement relevant?

You are on the right track— just how you are bringing that up is not working.

Patterns

The following questions are designed to facilitate an awareness of patterns in the coaching session.

What meta-program are you hearing?

Are you noticing any patterns in your client?

If you do inferential listening right now about X — what?

Do you hear any frames or assumptions in your client? What?

Take a moment and do some inferential listening— what pattern could possibly be there?

Specific skills orientation

Here are some questions that address some specific skills and orienting the coach to them.

Did you give a meaning for the frame you just set? I heard about the action, but not the meaning.

What is the “because” or the “meaning” in that frame?

I heard the beginning of an acknowledge, but I didn't hear a pause.

I think there was a “coachable moment” when she started talking about her father, would you like to revisit that?

For the MCF Chapters — learning to coach the coach to coach more effectively is the very heart of supervision. And you supervise best by asking questions. And while we have incorporated this into the training of Module III, we also need to develop it more fully in the chapters. Here's to all of the MCF Chapters and to deepening the supervision that can deepen the Meta-Coaching Brand in your country.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #52
November 22, 2018

UPDATES ABOUT GROUP & TEAM COACHING

We have just completed the first four-day training of Group & Team Coaching. After the same training in Egypt in March, I made the decision to extend it to four days due to the amount of information as well as the need to drill the group coaching skills. I'm glad I did. Further, with the new learnings about *deliberation practice feedback*, we were able to integrate numerous group coaching skills into the training to further enable and facilitate the group coaches to develop the required skills to be effective.

After the first days of training come the **Integration of the Skills**. This is when various Meta-Coaches go onto the stage to handle a group of six people and to complete a particular scenario and group coaching conversation. Doing this taps into the psycho-drama of a common group coaching situation and the amazing thing to me is that within just a few minutes of sitting up the situation, people "lose frame," and begin talking, feeling, and acting *as if* the scenario is real. And, of course, that always makes the experience more dramatic for those of us watching.

Perhaps the most important and crucial skill that distinguished group coaching from individual coaching is the *management of the group processes*. This falls under the competence that we have called *governance*. Whereas in individual coaching, all the processes are within a single entity— in group coaching, the multiple processes are scattered throughout the room in many entities (to wit, persons).

- The thoughts and ideas of the client (i.e., the group) are now in many brains and minds.
- The emotions and states of the client is scattered in many bodies.
- The focus and attention of the client is distributed throughout the different persons.
- So also the objective, outcome, intentionality.
- So also the energy and motivation (or lack thereof).
- And so on.

The fact of the dispersion of all of these elements of the coaching situation requires that the group coach *pull them together so that "the client" operates in a unified way*. And to do that, the group coach has to direct every person's attention, energy, intentionality, focus, conversation, etc. into a mutually shared one. This is not easy.

Yet when a group does learn to *think together, learn together, decide together, create together, and innovate or act together*— the power and effectiveness of the group goes far beyond what any one individual can achieve. We can be smarter together than alone; we can accomplish more together than alone; we can create more together than individually. This is the whole purpose and value of

a group of people in the first place— it is why organizations organize people to work together to achieve something that individually we could not achieve.

If in individual coaching we always start with the well-formed outcome questions, what do we do in group coaching? Is there a similar starting point that provides a sense of stability and control? Yes, the well-formed outcome questions! The very same process for individuals works perfectly well with groups—

What do we want? Why is it important for us to achieve that?

When do we want to achieve that? What do we have to do to achieve our goal?

Is this objective within our control? Do we need a plan?

What could stop us from achieving the goal? Etc.

Once you establish the objective of the group meeting —long term and short term, then you will know *what kind of conversation that is required*. And similar to individual coaching, the first five *kinds* of conversations applies to groups. Then in addition, there are others— Round Conversation, the Meta-Conversation, Problem-solving, Collective Learning, Conflict Resolution, Mediation, Creativity, etc.

There will be several Group & Team Coaching Trainings in 2019 and I'm hoping to get many of our Meta-Coach Trainers signed off on running it. Below is a copy of those who sat for Assessment during the Integration days--- a big thank you to the sponsors at Meta-Mind.

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #53
Nov. 28, 2018

WHY DO SOME HAVE A HARD TIME REACHING COMPETENCY LEVEL?

Yes, the standards of the Meta-Coaching system are the highest anywhere in the world. No one even comes close to the standards that we have set. ICF coaches who are at the PCC and MCC level have come and when they begin, they cannot even get close to the 2.5 level. Most get to 1.0 to 1.5 when they begin and none at the 2.5 level at the end of the eight-days.

The reason for this goes back to the original frames that so many Coach Training organizations have set for their criteria and standards. They fail to think of Coaching as a profession. Now what profession can you learn in a weekend course? Most professions demands years of study and training at a college or university. A Bachelor degree requires four years! And you think you can learn the profession of Coaching in 14 days?

Think about and treat Coaching as a Profession. What we have squeezed into 14 days as the “fast track” in Meta-Coaching—you will need at least 2 years and probably more to unpack. That’s why all of the Meta-Coach Trainers recommend revisiting at least 4 or 5 times. *At least.* You did not and cannot get all that is packed into the 6 days of Coaching Essentials and Coaching Genius or the 8 days of Coaching Mastery one or two times. Today the ones who are most successful are those who have regularly revisited as participants.

So if you are serious about coaching and specially about becoming a Professional Coach— set your goal to revisit at least every other year. In that way you will slowly unpack the information and you will keep stretching and enriching your skill set. Now for the question— *Why do some have such a hard time reaching the competency level of 2.5?*

1) They are not listening.

This is the *big one* when it comes to coaching and to being a professional communicator—if you do not listen— really listen— you will not actually hear the client. You will not hear when the client tells you the real problem. You will not hear when the client tells you the answer. Clients will tell you those things. But they will not do it explicitly. You have to listen to pull them out of the ongoing conversation.

When I give feedback and benchmarks, I typically catch 4 to 7 *major things not heard*. This includes most coaches who are on the Assist Team. They still are not listening. They do not as of yet “have ears” (to quote Fritz Perls). And without listening, they miss the critical information when it comes.

2) They do not clarify.

A basic NLP premise— to get rapport, to understand another person, *go to their model of the world*. Use their words. Find out how they are using their words. That's what the clarity check is all about— “How are you using that word?” It is as simple as that. And yet — most coaches still do not ask a single clarity questions, and if they do, they do not chase it down. That is, they may ask it once, but because they are not listening, they assume that the person answered the question and answered it specifically. That rarely happens. Usually you have to chase after the word and the clarity— ask it 3 or 4 times until you can make a picture of it.

3) They go too fast.

Most coaches are in far too much of a hurry. Where are they going? That's the next reason. And what I most often hear are complaints— “The client is giving too much and I get overwhelmed and don't know where to go from here.” Well, the client isn't going too fast— the coach is. And the if you are the coach, you are *not slowing things down* with acknowledgments, clarity questions, silence, meta-moments, etc.

Slow down. Think about what the person is giving you as you are engaged in *the conversation that is like non-other*. Consider the fact that much of what is said is the surface of something that goes much deeper, so ask. Find out what is *behind* the person's words, emotions, understandings. Use meta-questions for that. Use inferential listening.

4) They are trying too hard.

Specifically they are trying to hard to fulfill their own agenda— get an outcome, succeed, solve the client's problems, etc. As coaches they have forgotten that people have all the resources, and that their job is to facilitate, not to do the work. The person has to do that. I find that most coaches need to use the Releasing Judgment pattern and the Decontamination pattern— half a dozen times before they really start to get themselves out of the way of the process.

If you're serious about reaching competency as a coach so you are skillful and therefore able to effectively coach— you now have a strategy. It will take time and effort. You have to practice— and practice under supervision. Are you up to this challenge?

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #54
December 4, 2018

WHY DO SOME HAVE A HARD TIME GETTING A SUBJECT?

Another things that seems “hard” for most coaches in coaching is *getting the subject*. For years I have watched and listened to coaches trying and trying to get the subject. When I could stand it no longer, I asked several team leaders to make that the skill they focused on in the *Drills for Skills Project*. And they did. And we came up with some practice drills for getting the subject (see end of article). In spite of that, with every new APMC training, I go through it again and again with new coaches in training. At first some of them would spend the entire 25 minutes trying to get the subject.

So, what’s a coach to do? Go ahead and ask question number one. “What do you really want out of this session that will make a transformative difference in your life?” Don’t just ask, “What do you want?” that’s too vague. Be more specific. “In this coaching session, you have the opportunity to have a conversation like none-other and to achieve something that will make a positive change in your life, what would be?”

Obvious when you ask, put yourself in the right state— curious, fascinated, caring, and committed to your client. You may also have to set some frames about coaching—coaching is not for little things that you can do on your own. It is for life-changing alterations that is worth your investment of time and money, so don’t sell yourself short.

If you have gone five minutes and you and your client have not specified the outcome, then guess. That’s right, *guess!* Take some stabs at it. Now in guessing, the good thing is that you don’t have to be right. “So this session is about getting you ready for a confrontation with your boss, right?” If you are not right, your client will correct you. “So you want to quit your job and become an entrepreneur and this session is about making plans?” As you make your guess, your client will give you feedback and you can use that to adjust to the next guess. By all means *do not ask Question #1 more than five times*. That will only torment the client unnecessarily and transfer your responsibility as the facilitator.

In the meantime you can also ask the “kind of conversation” questions. “Do you need clarity? Is that what this session should be devoted to explore?” “Do you need to make a decision? Should we make that the goal of this session?” Do the same with planning, resourcing (or experiencing) and changing. In this way, you give a menu list of possibilities.

If after five more minutes and your client still has not decided, *it is time to challenge him*. Now remember, *challenge is asking the client to step up and be more*. It is a positive invitation to take on a more challenging goal.

“You seem indecisive [feedback], or it could be that you are too oriented to options, are you

courageous enough to choose one thing so that we can make the most of this session?”
“You have altered between a number of things, are you willing to step up to choose one so that we can start?”

From challenge, *you may have to confront*. That’s the negative side of challenging as it is bringing up something that potentially could be unpleasant. In the following, I start from a challenge and move to confrontation (as indicated by italics).

“You seem indecisive [feedback], or it could be that you are too oriented to options, are you courageous enough to choose one thing so that we can make the most of this session?”

[Pause] *You are delaying, I’m now wondering if you are coachable or if you need another methodology like training or therapy?”*

“You have altered between a number of things, are you willing to step up to choose one so that we can start? [Pause] *With you not committing yourself, I wonder if this is one of your patterns— maybe perfectionism, maybe procrastination, maybe path of least resistance ... what do you think?”*

Just because someone is sitting in your coaching chair does not mean that your so-called client is ready for coaching or even capable of receiving coaching. So find out. Challenge, give feedback, and then if necessary confront. If coaching is unique, special, and unlike a regular conversation, then treat it as such and invite your potential client to do the same.

By the way, if your client is constantly saying, “I don’t know,” use the “15 ways to respond to ‘I don’t know.’”

Getting the Subject— A Drill for the Skill

Description: In coaching, the first challenge is to clearly identify the subject. It would seem like a simple task, it is not. The skill of *getting the subject* is the skill of co-creating with the client the *theme* of the coaching session. Many clients do not really know what they want; others *think* that they know, but what they really want is in the back of their mind and perhaps even unconscious. So this skill facilitates a client to bring out what he or she really wants and lock down that subject. Consequently, the subject may change several times in the opening minutes of the coaching conversation as the *real* subject is identified.

Definition: Identifying with the client *the subject* for the coaching session.

Process of the steps for demonstrating the skill of *Getting the Subject*.

- 1) *Directly ask.* “What do you want in this session?”
- 2) *Acknowledging the subject and checking.* “So you want X in this session?”
- 3) *Acknowledging and testing.* “So X is the most important thing that you want to work on in this session? There’s nothing more important than X?”
- 4) *Inquire about the kind of conversation.* “So this is a Clarification conversation?”
Menu list: Clarity, Decision, Plan, Resourcing for experience, Change, Mediation, Confrontation.
- 5) *Runs Clarity Checks along the way.* No every word, term, and phrase needs to be checked, but sufficient clarity needs to be gained so that the Coach can identify the subject.
- 5) *Meets the Criteria of this skill.*

- a) *Rapport*: Matches client in voice, kinesthetics, visual, gestures.
- b) *Dialogue*: The conversation goes back and forth in short sentences from both client and coach.
- c) *Concluding and locking down*: Summarizing to conclude in a bullet point what the client is wanting. One or two sentences that pull together all that's said, check to make sure it is what the person is saying. "So what you want is X, do I have that right?"
- d) *Balance the questioning skills*: Exploration ("What do you want?"), checking ("I think you said..."), testing ("That's what you want?"), concluding ("So what you want is...").

From: L. Michael Hall
2018 Morpheus #55
December 12, 2018

WHY DO SOME HAVE A HARD TIME ACKNOWLEDGING THE CLIENT

Acknowledging what the client says is such a simple and obvious skill— and yet one that many, many coaches, and even Meta-Coaches, sometimes have a hard time learning and integrating into their coaching. Why? All you have to do to *acknowledge* is to listen to a sentence or statement which the person says and repeat it back. How hard could that be? Well, *very hard* if you are not listening!

Ah, listening again! We keep emphasizing the paramount importance of listening in coaching and that the quality of every coaching skill is dependent upon listening— but are you listening? Are you hearing that? Apparently many do not. And so as Meta-Coaches, months after ACMC— they are still not able to get 7 acknowledgments recorded under the skill of Supporting. They repeat some key words here and there. They even repeat fragments of sentences. But they do not take the whole of a person's words, a complete sentence, and repeat it back.

Why not? Another reason, and one that goes along with not listening, is that they are on an agenda pathway. They are set to “fix the client,” to “get an outcome,” to “solve the person's problems,” to “complete the 18-questions,” etc. And because they are *agenda driven to achieve their own goal*, they are subsequently also not listening. Both work together to create a very low level quality of listening and with low level quality of listening— there is a low level of “acknowledging.”

Now if you want to be able to effectively perform the skill of providing “acknowledgments,” you have to do the following:

1) *Quiet yourself on your insides.* Release any need or drive to *do* anything other than listen and be present to your client. Release your evaluations and judgments. Decontaminate yourself from any investment that *you* have that serves *you* and your reputation and/or image. Give up your need to succeed. Quiet your mind, quiet your heart and focus on *being present to your client*.

2) *Just listen.* Don't listen to *do* anything. Don't' even listen to try to catch a sentence to acknowledge. Just listen. And as you are just listening, care. Care for the person as a person sitting in your coaching chair wanting to improve his life, wanting to be more of who she could be, and wanting to unleash potentials clamoring inside and to become “fully alive/ fully human.” Give up any and every agenda except *just being*.

3) *Acknowledge so the person can hear himself.* The reason to repeat a sentence or a statement is also simple— to let the person really hear what he or she is saying. It is not to do anything other than that. Most people do not hear themselves. They would not say many of the things that they say if they were actually *hearing* themselves— what they are actually saying. That's why if you ask the question, “Do you *hear* what you just said?” many are stopped cold in their tracks. They

say, “What?” The magic of letting someone hear herself is that it gives her a chance to now respond to herself at a deeper level. If the first statement is significant enough to feed-back and let the person hear herself, then when that person does truly *hear* herself, she will then respond to *that*. And that will typically take the person inside a bit deeper to her matrix of meanings.

4) *Listen to how as well as what.* In giving an “acknowledgment,” do not *just* repeat the words that the person said, also listen for *how* the person said them. Then match. Ah yes, the rapport thing again! Match the person’s tone, tempo, emphasis, etc. That then gives them a chance of hearing two things— *what* was said (the content) and *how* it was said—the implicit, covert and implied frames. Often that will create coaching magic. But you as the coach— *you have to really, really listen to do that.*

5) *Listen for the semantically loaded and implied.* To now go even deeper in your listening, with the statements that your client makes— put this question in your mind, “What is the person *implying*? What frames is the person coming from to say that? What is the person assuming to be true?” These questions will help to keep you fully engaged in the process. Then you can take your “acknowledgment” skill to an even higher level as you repeat it with a tempo and tone that highlights the possibility of the person’s hidden semantics. Here you repeat the words that could be semantically loaded slowly and emphatically— and wait for a response. Are you ready to take your coaching skill of giving an “acknowledgment” to a higher level of development? Then do some deliberate practice with this sub-skill.

Drill for Skills — Acknowledgments

Definition: Repeat a full sentence of your client’s words to enable your client to feel heard. Clearly distinguish acknowledgments from questions or mere repeating of words.

- 1) Groups of 6.
- 2) Team Leader read or make a statement of two or three sentences length.
 - a) I want to get back to exercising, but it’s hard and I really don’t have time, and besides, I’m getting older and I could hurt myself if I’m not careful.
 - b) I need to take a relaxing break as soon as possible because I’m getting nervous about my performance and I might freak out if I don’t get a break.
 - c) We’re a good team, in fact an amazing team, but there is an elephant in the room that we’re not dealing with, so I wonder if that influences the quality of the team.
 - d) My problem is focusing, I seem to get distracted when I’m trying to concentrate, but I do concentrate at times, so maybe it’s not about focusing, but I really don’t know.
- 3) Go around the team and have members make *acknowledgments*. When a person makes a statement, members put their thumbs up (yes) or down (no) to indicate whether they think the person *acknowledged*. Stop and discuss the pros and cons of the response. Why did it or why did it not fit as an acknowledgment?
- 4) *Criteria:*
 - a) A full sentence. Not just words as in a phrase.
 - b) Content: Semantically significant to the person— something important for the person. If not that important, “I had a coffee before I came to work today.” Does not qualify.
 - c) Precise: no paraphrasing or changing the client’s words.
 - d) Tone and tempo matched.

From: L. Michael Hall
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WHY DO SOME HAVE A HARD TIME INDUCING STATES

Ah, the induction of state! While for some this skill comes naturally and easily, for a great many coaches, this is one of the most challenging aspects of coaching. Why? What explains the difficulty? Here are some things I've learned over the years that make it difficult for various people.

Things that make State Induction Difficult:

1) *Assuming that the coaching conversation is just a conversation.* If you make this assumption, then when you “coach,” you just talk. You think of it as just the exchange of information. That is the mistake. Coaching is *not* a normal conversation. It is a not-so-normal conversation, even an abnormal conversation. What you are doing with your words and your voice and your use of semantic space is very unique and focused in the coaching conversation. You are *not* just having a conversation, you are facilitating the unleashing of potentials.

2) *Assuming that your voice is irrelevant.* It isn't. It never is, and in coaching, it is especially important as one of your two primary tools— *what you say and how you say it*. First you need to project your voice with enough strength and focus so that it engages your client's attention. Far too many coaches need voice training! Their voice is weak, fragile, and “thin.” And when your voice has these qualities— what you are doing will be compelling, attention-getting, and sustaining. Think of using your voice to “bathe your client” in the ideas that you are engaged in.

3) *Assuming that you do not need to be dramatic.* You do! The “drama” is the drama of your client's life and destiny— the story they will live because of the conversation. The drama is the difference that the coaching is going to make in her life. You are *not* having “just a talk,” you are collaborating (working together) to change your client's life for the better. That means that the conversation matters! When you subsequently realize this, you know that *what you say and how you use your voice* will make a significant difference. Do you have permission to be dramatic? To sit on the edge of your chair in anticipation of what is happening and will be happening inside your client?

4) *Assuming that you don't need to use your hands.* You do! Now you do *not* copy or mimic your hands *when* your client is speaking. Of course not! But when it is your turn in the dialogue to speak, speak with your hands. Using what you have seen as “semantic gestures” indicating “semantic space,” speak to your client in his or her words and gestures. Every gesture is *not* a semantic gesture— only those that are connected to words that link meaning to the movement. That's why you have to pay a lot of attention when your client is speaking— when and where and how is she externalizing into the space around him as his internal semantic world?

5) *Assuming that you can do one without the other.* Having mentioned voice, hands, gestures, drama, etc. to induce state— you need to integrate all together so that your client gets the sense that you understand and “get” him or her. Using only one or two of these components of their communication presence is not sufficient. Think holistically. Then put them together to induce the kinds of state or states that will be in service of your client’s desired outcome.

6) *Assuming that state is not that important,* It is! First, what is your client’s current state? Is he in the right state for the conversation? What state do you need to induce so that she will be in the very best state possible? Then there is your state— are you going first? Are you alert, focused, caring, interested, curious, learning, open, receptive, etc.? By going first, you put off signals that can help your client to get into the right state.

7) *Assuming that coaching is not experiential.* It is! Part of what makes the coaching conversation unique and not-normal is that the conversation is designed to facilitate the client to have *an experience*. What that experience is depends on what the client needs in terms of state or resource. The different kinds of coaching conversations speaks about different experiences— clarity, decision, planning, resourcing, changing, confrontation, etc.

8) *Assume you don’t need to match the client’s voice.* You do. Start by matching her volume and tempo. These auditory components of communication are mostly unconscious in most people— which is why they will not notice. For you as the coach, this requires flexibility as you adjust yourself to the client. Next match intonation and inflection. Of course, you have to really pay attention to these factors to be able to do this.

9) *Assuming you don’t need to be congruent.* You do! Sounds like what you are speaking about (being congruent) helps to induce whatever state that you are seeking to induce. To speak in a matter-of-fact voice will not do.

Assuming any of these things inevitably will make your state induction skills more difficult. Knowing that, you can now use them as a checklist ... and integrate them into your fuller understanding of what is required to give your client a full mind-body-emotional experience.

From: L. Michael Hall
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WHY DO SOME HAVE A HARD TIME USING META-QUESTIONS

When it comes to Coaching, *questioning* is your primary tool for exploration, for discovery, for unleashing potentials, for developing new resources, for facilitating meta-level learning, and much, much more. And the good news is that everybody can ask questions. Of course, not everyone can ask *good* questions, not *high quality* questions, nor even *precision* questions. That's why Module I of Meta-Coaching focuses on the precision questions of the Meta-Model.

But what's the story about Meta-Questions? Module II of Meta-Coaching focuses on the meta-questions that are inherent in the Meta-States Model. Meta-Coaches attend APG and experience 14 Meta-State patterns and 21 meta-stating processes and you would think (at least I think) that you would learn the art of asking meta-questions. But no. Most Meta-Coaches at Module III do not know how to ask meta-questions in the coaching conversation. So, what gives?

1) The first thing that gives is the natural tendency (bias) of your consciousness to focus on things external. You are wired for the outer game, not the inner game. There seems to be a working bias that the solution to problems and challenges are external. The cause of problems and situations are external. So asking exploration questions is what comes most naturally and easily. This bias for the *outer game* is probably what prevents many people from asking meta-questions.

2) A second factor seems to be our inherent blindness to the layers of meta-levels that we live within. Yes, we ask about what a person thinks and feels—but most people and most Meta-Coaches do not go any deeper than that. It is as if we have a blind-spot to the multiple levels of thoughts layered upon our thoughts. So, after asking about the internal thoughts about something, we ask no further. That keeps us at the primary level of experience and the immediate state.

3) There is a lack of skill in digging deep into a person's beliefs and belief-systems. Now if a person does become aware of the layers-of-thoughts-about-thoughts, the meta-levels, there is the question of whether he knows how to distinguish the levels. If a person feels stuck about selling and says that he doesn't like to sell because "it's like forcing someone to buy" — what do you think ask? First confirm whether that thought is a mere thought or a belief. "Do you believe that or is that just a thought passing through your mind?"

If you get a belief statement ("Oh, I believe that!") then hold that frame-of-mind and see what's holding it in place. This elegantly enables you to pull one layer of thought *about* another layer apart.

“Let’s say it is true— ‘selling is forcing someone to buy what they don’t want’ — *if that is true*, what do you believe about that?”

This question does *not* validate the thought or commit a person to it. The statement is subjunctive: *if* it is true, *let’s say* it is true. You are inviting the person to explore deeper into what’s behind the thought. This enables both of you to co-explore the structure of a belief. When you do this, do not expect the person has the answer “on the tip of his tongue.” He probably does not. The information is *not* in consciousness. So you may have to pose this meta-question several times.

“I’m not saying that you believe this, but *if you did*, what would it mean?”

4) *A fourth factor is our lack of patience and persistence in gaining information from meta-questions.* When you ask meta-questions you can expect that people will still be directed outward to the outer game rather than the inner game. That means that they often will not answer the meta-question, but a primary question that they substituted. Usually, this is not a conscious decision on their part. They, like most humans, are oriented and biased to the external world, so it is up to you, as the Meta-Coach, to notice and repeat the question with patience and persistence. My observation is that most coaches-in-train give up far too soon. The client answers as if they were asked a primary question and the coach follows.

5) *A fifth factor is the need to make sure the meta-question is grounded.* If you ask the meta-question without keeping it grounded to a primary state experience, your client will have even more difficulty in following. Hundreds of times I have heard a coach ask, “What do you believe about that?” and the client answers, “About what?” Or, the client answers about something else that was in his mind.

Asking meta-questions is powerful for the Meta-Coach because now you can *coach the inner game with your client*. But asking them can be challenging. You need to understand the meta-levels of the mind and then how to ask the meta-question so it does the work of distinguishing what is fused together in the client.