

NEURONS

VOLUME VIII

2014

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From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #1
January 6, 2014

WILL THIS YEAR BE THE *NEXT* YEAR OR TRULY BE A HAPPY *NEW* YEAR?

Will this new year of 2014 be a *new* year for you? Or will it just be the *next* year? The only way it will be *new* is if you make it new, otherwise it will just be the “next” year, 2014. *New* implies “different from what has been occurring.” So if your experiences in 2013, your emotions, your activities, behaviors, skills, responses, relationships, etc. were not exactly what you just want more of, then to make them *different* you will have to create some *different frames* in your mind.

For the year of 2014 to be *new*, there’s something that you have to do. You have to create some new frames, new meanings, new movies in your mind, and new outcomes to go for. Have you done that? Will you do that? And while you do have the power to do this (all humans do), you only will actually do this by *taking control of your meaning-making powers*. That’s the real secret to how to have a happy *New Year*.

Yet what does that mean? And how do you actually do that? In Neuro-Semantics we have identified many, many dimensions and levels of meaning-making. You have come across many of these if you have read *Frame Games* (1999) (*Winning the Inner Game*, 2007) or *Neuro-Semantics: Actualizing Meaning and Performance* (2012). You may have also come across it if you have attended trainings in Meta-States (APG), Unleashing Potentials, or Meta-Masters (NLP Master Practitioner). The fact is— there are many dimensions and levels of meaning-making and it can be overwhelming. In fact, it can be so overwhelming that a person may have learned it and still not be able to truly be in charge of their meaning-making powers.

I discovered this a couple years ago and since then have reduced *the core of meaning-making to four distinctions: identity, causation, significance, and intention*. In Meta-Coaching we use four primary questions to coach someone regarding these Four Components of Meaning. With these four core distinctions, you can get yours or another person’s central *meanings* about anything.

Core Meaning-Making Distinctions:

1) What is it?	Identity
2) What does it do? How does it work?	Causation
3) Is it important? What significance does it have?	Significance
4) What is your intention, purpose?	Intention

These core meaning-making distinctions come from the extended Meta-Model (*Communication Magic*, 2001)

1) <i>Identification</i>	What is it?	Identification; Nominalization; Labels
2) <i>Understanding</i>	How does it work?	Cause-Effect (causation), Mind-Reading
3) <i>Significance</i>	What is its value?	Complex Equivalence., Nominalization
4) <i>Intention</i>	What is its purpose?	Multi-Ordinality of intention

How can you use these *core meaning-making distinctions* for creating truly *new* meanings so that you can have a *new* year and a *happy* one? Here's how. Take your goal or objective, whatever it is, and ask these four questions.

Examples:

I want to exercise more regularly in 2014 and improve my health and fitness. That will make me feel better (more vitality, energy, focus) and enable me to look younger and more fit.

1) *What is it?* Exercise: exerting myself by jogging, or dancing, or taking the stairs, or going to the gym, or doing push-ups, sit-ups, etc. It is getting my body to move, to use my internal and external muscles so that my bones, movement, and flexibility operate at an optimal level for my age, so that my cardio-vascular and skeleton strength enable me to breath fully and easily.

2) *How does it work?* Moving my body in a way that's cardio-vascular for 30 minutes four times a week cleanses my body of toxins, develops breathing fullness, fights heart disease and arthritis, and keeps me younger. Challenging my skeleton strength keeps the muscles in good shape, the skin tighter, etc. Stretching keeps me more flexible.

3) *What is the significance?* Exercise increases energy and vitality, it enables me to be healthier in body and mind, more resilience, flexible, adaptable. It keeps me younger and more alive in my physiology.

4) *What is your intention?* I will give myself to exercising at least thirty-minutes 3 to 5 times a week.

I want to develop my personal and relational skills in 2014 so that my ability to connect with others, influence others, manage my own states and emotions, and have richer relationships will increase.

1) *What is it?* Personal and relational skills are my skills of connecting to self and others by listening, calibrating, and matching so I connect and empathize. It is my skills of inquiring and advocating so I explore with myself and others in a balanced way. It includes the skills of receiving and giving feedback.

2) *How does it work?* These personal and interpersonal skills create connection, closeness, care, love, support, understanding, and enable cooperation, collaboration, and loyal commitment.

3) *What is the significance?* As social beings, it enables us to feel loved and appreciated, to love and appreciate, to feel the richness of life and relationships, both personal and business.

4) *What is your intention?* To make all of my relationships richer and deeper.

May 2014 be much more than a *next* year, may it be a *new year* for you!

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #2
January 13, 2014

MOTIVATION AND YOUR NEW YEAR

Here we go again! A new year. And has someone already asked you *that* question? You know the question: “What are your New Year Resolutions?” Well, it’s that time of the year when tradition requires that we think about our goals and about what will be different this year, and about what New Year Resolutions you will make and set ... and probably break ... this year. We do this every year. So here we go again.

As you now consider this, how motivated are you this year to set your goals for this *new* year so it will not just be the *next* year and just more of the same? Motivated? Now really. Yes, I know that this will irritate a lot of people. It will annoy others. And it will also invite many others to roll their eyes. If that includes you, well, welcome to the club!

So what’s the problem? Truth be told, I don’t think it is motivation or that it has anything to do with motivation. Instead, here’s how I think about the problem:

- 1) Either people do not know how to set goals in a way that’s *well-designed* and therefore actually achievable goals.
- 2) Or once people set goals they do not know how to *actualize* those goals and *translate* them from mind to neurology. They lack the mind-to-muscle process for closing the knowing—doing gap.
- 3) Or, once actualized, they do not know how to *sustain their long-term goals* and so, turning their attention elsewhere, let them go.

In Neuro-Semantics we use an advanced form of the Well-Formed Outcome pattern. It is a Precision Funnel with 18 Well-Formed Outcome Questions along with four-sets of Refining questions. This handles the first problem. If you need a Meta-Coach to facilitate that, there are now 1900 Meta-Coaches in 42 countries who can do that. Call on one of them.

For the second problem, this is solved by the Mind-to-Muscle pattern— a pattern specifically designed to take what you *know* and translate it into what you *feel*. And by doing that, you can actualize your well-designed goals. The book, *Achieving Peak Performance* (2009) is a whole book on that subject.

The third problem is solved by the “Genius” or Flow state that we train in APG as part of the way we teach the Meta-States Model and how to create highly focused states of absolute engagement. For that you might need your initial state that corresponds to your immediate goal, and then a genius state of persistence, one of resilience, one of patience, and one of perseverance.

Yet in all of this, none of it is actually the lack of motivation. Yes, I know that people world-wide complain about this all the time. “I have a motivation problem,” they say. They think

about a goal or a New Years resolution and they confuse that with a feeling, or rather the lack of a feeling. Then they designate it as “lack of motivation.” We all hear that complaint and you may have been given to making it yourself. The problem is that you might then actually believe it. You might actually think that your problem is the lack of motivation.

“I just do not feel motivated ...” “I want to be motivated to exercise or lose weight or study or go for that job, but I just don’t have the motivation.”

Not only does this misdirect a person’s attention and seemingly gives one a “legitimate” excuse, but it also sets up a false premise about human nature. The truth is that you are motivated. Everyone is. *You and I were born motivated and are, by nature, motivated beings.* That’s because our life is dependent. It is conditional. The very nature of our life is such that we have driving needs and they are forever operational, even when you may not be aware of them. If you are a human being, *motivation* is included.

The question is not whether you are or are not motivated. The question goes to *how* you are handling your driving needs that are influencing and affecting your innate motivational nature. As an inherently motivated being, both your lower needs (survival, safety, social love and affection, self) and your higher needs (meaning, knowledge, justice, beauty, order, excellence, contribution, legacy, etc.) drive you. The lower needs drive you by *deficiency*. The higher needs drive you by *abundance*. The lower needs drive when there is lack and emptiness and go away when you satisfy them. The higher needs driven when there is desire, vision, and hope and the more you satisfy them, the more you are driven.

Further, all of these *driving needs* that create your sense of motivation is powerfully influenced by your frames of mind. And because of that— you and I have the power to strongly influence our motivational life. We can dampen it; we can amplify it. We can distort our needs so that they devastate us and become addictions and compulsions. Similarly we can also frame our needs so that they give us a lasting motivation that brings out our highest and best.

All of this is possible because “The meaning you give (to your driving needs) is the ‘instinct’ that you live.” Obviously, that’s why your neuro-semantic skills are so critical. These are your inherent human skills of meaning-making and these are the skills that we focus on in every Neuro-Semantic training to enable people to discover and develop. After all, you are a meaning-maker. It’s what you do. It’s what you have done since you were born and what you will do until the day of your death. You cannot do otherwise. That is not optional.

What is optional is *the quality and character of the meanings that you make*. That depends on your skills. That depends on your ability to learn how to make great meanings, to eliminate toxic meanings, and take control of all of your meaning-making processes. Do that and the future is yours! The New Year is yours.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #3
January 20, 2014

GROOMING LEADERS AND TRAINERS IN NEURO-SEMANTICS

Could NSTT be Right for You?

Six months from now we will conduct this year's Neuro-Semantic Trainers' Training (NSTT) — NSTT—2014. This year we go to Rio de Janeiro Brazil for this intense, powerful, profound, and life-changing training. Would you like to join us?

Now on the surface NSTT sounds like it is just a training of trainers. But it is not *just* that. It is so much more than just the training of trainers. Here I want to tell you what it is that is *so much more*. I'm writing this for those of you who have been considering NSTT and for those of you still asking yourselves if NSTT is right for you.

First and foremost, NSTT is trainers' training and it so happens to be *the premier NLP Trainers' Training* in the world. Is that an audacious statement? Yes, of course it is. Is it accurate? Yes, I think so. So how can I make such an audacious statement when there are high quality NLP Trainers also doing Trainers' Training? Here are some of the reasons why.

This trainers' training focuses on the *core competencies* required for excellent public speaking and presenting. These came from the process of having modeled them from world-class presenters. And after we modeled the specific skills we then used the Benchmarking Model and we *benchmarked the specific behaviors and sub-skills which make up these presenting skills*. No other trainers' training in the world does that. As a result, in your first presentations you will find out where you are in terms of your presentation skills. Then, discovering where you are will enable you to know specifically and precisely your next steps to achieve full competence. This makes the development of the expert skills strategic and precise.

It is premier training also because in Neuro-Semantics we do not just deliver a training, *we are creating a community*. And again, no other training in the world is doing that. We do not train you and then send you out without ongoing support. Our focus is on welcoming you into the community and providing ongoing support. This includes being on an exclusive egroup of trainers. It includes having access to the VIP area on the Neuro-Semantic website. It includes providing you training manuals and publicity pieces for your promotions. Further, our aim is to spend quality time with each participant in the two week training so that we mutually create a connection and bonding. Recently we have commissioned the Master Trainers to not only spend time, but engage in one-on-one coaching to unleash the very best potentials in the participants.

Next, NSTT does not just focus on public speaking and presenting skills, we also focus on training skills: training design, structure, formatting, framing, preframing, etc. Along with this we provide three days indepth understanding on the Psychology in APG and NLP. No other

trainers' training that I know in the world does that. Doing this creates a solid foundation for understanding what one is doing in one's training. Without that psychological and philosophical background a trainer could actually be pretty ignorant of what he or she is doing and that could lead to misusing some very powerful concepts.

Next, NSTT incorporates from beginning to ending the principles of *leadership*. Why? Because our aim is to groom leaders for the ever-growing community of Neuro-Semantics. So this is part of our plan of grooming leaders for the next two or three or four decades. After all, we have a pretty big vision that we aim to achieve and to achieve it we need highly trained and qualified leaders to take us into the middle of the twenty-first century. Our view is that to be a trainer is to be in a *leadership position* and we want to groom high quality leaders among the trainers.

Along the way, we are using NSTT as a way to keep developing Master Trainers. Those who have achieved Master Trainer status and those in the process are present as Team leaders. We ask them to present in the first 7 evenings where they are benchmarked at the level of Master Trainer. Why? To show of our brightest and best! And to show what it takes to develop that level of expertise. And to inspire others to step up to mastery. In doing this, the Master Trainer status cannot be bought. It is not for sale. There are benchmarks to reach to demonstrate actual competence.

This differs from every other "Master" Trainer around the NLP world. It is not about having run so many courses— one could do that and not be actually refining skills. Tenure is not enough. Actual skill is. Also leadership is. Master Trainers have to demonstrate the leadership competencies of communication, contribution, etc.

So NSTT is rich, full, and life changing. Is it for you? I don't know. You decide.

- Are you looking for an indepth understanding of presenting and training rather than a "get smart quick" approach that may leave your understanding level superficial and ineffective?
- Are you looking to be a part of something bigger than yourself? To be a part of an international community that stands for high ethical standards and that holds members accountable to those standards?
- Are you looking for a training that will first change you so that you can be the change that you then facilitate and present?

If your answers are *yes*, then NSTT is probably for you. Check it out — go to www.neurosemantics.com click Trainings / How to become a Neuro-Semantic NLP Trainer. There are lots of articles there about NSTT.

NSTT— 2014: Rio de Janeiro — July 19 through August 2

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From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #4
January 27, 2014
Modeling Great Leaders #1

MODELING GREAT LEADERS

Years ago when I first began traveling to South Africa, the idea was shared among many of us about getting an interview with Nelson Mandela for the purpose of modeling, not his actions, but his spirit. Many of us in the Neuro-Semantic community brainstormed about that and Anne Renew spent lots of time actually making inquiries to see what could be done. As it turned out, there was so many requests for audience with him that Mandela's family began protecting his time and energy and so all of our requests for even two hours were turned down.

Having read the biography, *The Long Road to Freedom* by Richard Stengel and some other books on the history of South Africa and the background of the fight against apartheid, I felt that while many of the leadership actions and activities —what Mandela did—were well established but not the spirit behind those performances. And after he left his term of being President, it became especially clear that those who followed were not following in his footsteps at all. They had a different spirit and their leadership was quite inferior to his.

Now the special genius of NLP Modeling and even more so of Neuro-Semantic Modeling is that while we start with behaviors and what is done, and how it is performed, and being able to transfer that expertise, we do not stop there. We go inside and we get the state of mind, the representations, the beliefs, the meta-states as the texturing and qualifying frames for one's beliefs, the meta-programs as the perceptual filters, etc. With the Matrix Model we are especially able to model the system of a person's experience as Bob Bodenhamer and I demonstrated in model the experience of stuttering and of fluency.

That was my thought about Nelson Mandela. What's needed is a description of his mind and heart and spirit. I had guesses about it, but it would have been so powerful if we could have talked with him and interviewed him and if he would have allowed us to enter into that sacred space of his inner consciousness that made him the transformative leader that he was.

Recently when one of our Meta-Coaches and Trainers and her husband (Sandra Avelaia Viljoen and Andre N. Viljoen) was at the *Group & Team Coaching* in Hong Kong and we got word of Mandela's death. So I spoke about him and then wrote about him in the *Meta Reflections* 2013 #52 (Dec. 9, 2013) "*Mandela: A Leader Like None Other.*" Afterwards Andre and Sandra asked if I had read the follow-up book, *Mandela's Way* by Richard Stengel. "No, I had not." So they gave that book to me as a gift. [I also discovered that Andre had been a friend of Mandela and has numerous stories and pictures of them being together.] And Wow! What a book. This is very much like the book I would have wanted to write. It reveals so much of the inner mind and heart and spirit of the man.

A Transformative Leader Because he was a Collaborative Leader

Here is a quotation from the chapter “Leading from the Back” that speaks about his understanding that the best leadership is *collaborative leadership*:

“Mandela genuinely believed in the virtues of the team, and he knew that to get the best out of his people, he had to make sure that they partook of the glory and, even more important, that they felt they were influencing his decisions.” (p. 75)

If leadership is at its most fundamental about moving people in a certain direction through changing the direction of their thinking and acting, then it is about *empowering people*. “It is through empowering others that we impart our own leadership or ideas.” (p. 77). And how do you do that? Richard Stengel describes the African model of leadership of the tribe that Mandela came from:

“Chieftaincy was treated as a privilege, not just a right. The chiefly style of leadership was *not* about vaulting oneself to the front but about listening and achieving consensus. The meeting of the royal court, which were like democratic town hall meetings, were the locus of leadership. All of the men from the village came, and anyone who wanted to speak could do so. It was the custom for the chief to listen to the views of his counselors and the community before uttering his own opinion.”

At the end, “he would summarize the views ... but he did not let his own will supersede that of the community. This is what Mandela means by leading from behind. A good chief does not grandly state his opinion and command others to follow him. He listens, he summarizes, and then he seeks to mold opinion and steer people toward an action ...” (pp. 80-81)

The heart of leadership for him— listening, welcoming, summarizing (all excellent coaching skills!) and then molding the views and mind of the community to steer to action. Okay, so we know the external actions. What about the inner mind, heart, and spirit?

“The African model of leadership is expressed as *ubuntu*, the idea that people are empowered by other people, that we become our best selves through unselfish interaction with others.” (p. 81)

That’s an excellent description of what we call Self-Actualizing Leadership in Neuro-Semantics: “We become our best selves through unselfish interaction with others.” And *ubuntu* is that special understanding— “the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others” (ix). So no wonder leadership for Mandela was essentially collaborative. It could be none other. The word means “A person is a person through other people” that who we are is less as individuals than as part of an infinitely complex web of other humans because “we are all bound up with one another” (p. 231).

And if we believe that, then along with Mandela we would believe in *the greater wisdom of the group*. We are more intelligent together than alone or apart — as we say in Neuro-Semantics.

“Collective leadership ... about two things: the greater wisdom of the group compared to the individual and the greater investment of the group in any result achieved by consensus.” (p. 84)

Great leadership. What is it? It is collaborative leadership. And Mandela lived that kind of leadership. But there’s more ... and that will be the subject next week.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #5
February 3, 2014
Modeling Great Leaders #2

MODELING MANDELA'S LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Are leaders born or made? It's an old question. In Mandela's case, his leadership and his style was entirely created by him through his life experiences. In fact, this is so much true, that in the story of his inner life by Edward Stengel, *Mandela's Way*, over the period of his imprisonment, *he changed his character and personality*. How about that! Many people don't believe "personality" can be changed, and yet Mandela's story is one of about that depth and quality of that kind of change.

Stengel says that the years he spent in prison "became a crucible that both hardened him and burned away all that was extraneous." Prison taught him the very qualities and traits that he later considered essential to leadership— self-control, discipline, and focus. "It taught him how to be a full human being." (p. 14). Prior to all of that, young Nelson Mandela was "passionate, emotional, sensitive, quickly stung to bitterness and retaliation by insult and patronage." So said his law partner, Oliver Tambo, who later became the head of the ANC.

Yet, "The Nelson Mandela who emerged from prison is *none* of those things." (p. 15). The man who came out and that we all came to know was balanced, measured, and controlled. How did that transformation take place? Stengel writes that in prison as a prisoner:

"The one thing you could control—that you had to control—was yourself. There was no room for outbursts or self-indulgence or lack of discipline."

Of course, not every prisoner then or now develops self-control from that experience. Many become bitter, hateful, resentful, and still unable to control their reactions. Not so Mandela, he learned. He learned and changed and through his experience, matured. "I came out mature" was his own self-description (p. 17). He did that by taking the time that he had in prison—

"... to think and plan and refine, and then refine some more. For twenty-seven years, he pondered not only policy, but how to behave, how to be a leader, how to be a man." (p. 16)

So while prison breaks many, Mandela used prison as *a crucible* to steel himself, develop himself, and to become mature. In modeling Mandela as a leader —this gives us an inside look at what a great leader does. A great leader never stops growing as a person. And when tragedy occurs, a great leader uses it as a crucible.

In the chapter Be Measured, Stengel describes many incidents of *calm control* in Mandela. One story that demonstrated it was the murder of Mandela's own rival for leadership in the ANC, Chris Hani. This happened after his release and while he was preparing to run for president.

One day Hani was assassinated and that event could have very easily have tipped the nation into a civil war. That evening, F.W. de Klerk, the state president was not the person who went on national television to calm the nation. Mandela did that. And in his speech he paced, paced, paced the thinking– feeling of the nation and then called he for calmness by putting forth his vision for the nation.

“Tonight I am reaching out to every single South African, black and white, from the very depths of my being. A white man, full of prejudice and hate, came to our country and committed a deed so foul that our whole nation now teeters on the brink of disaster. A white woman, of Afrikaner origin, risked her life so that we may know, and bring to justice, this assassin. The cold-blooded murder of Chris Hani has sent shock waves throughout the country and the world. Our grief and anger is tearing us apart. What has happened is a national tragedy that has touched millions of people across the political and colour divide.”

He ended his speech with a call for a higher vision:

“This is a watershed moment for all of us. Our decisions and actions will determine whether we use our pain, our grief, and our outrage to move forward to what is the only lasting solution for our country— an elected government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” (p. 49)

Stengel says that Mandela used the word *discipline* repeatedly in the speech and that “His measured response to this crisis was a large part of the reason that South Africa did not plunge into civil war.” In my readings of biographies of great leaders *the discipline of self-control* shows up repeatedly and consistently. And no wonder, if a leader cannot lead him or herself, how could the leader lead others? *Self-leadership* comes first. It has to. And at the heart of self-leadership is the quality of *discipline*. Like other qualities of one’s person— this too can be developed and learned.

Generally we think of a person’s *temperament* and *personality* as a stable quality that we are born with, our “type” of personality that doesn’t change. Of course, we do not view things this way in NLP and Neuro-Semantics (see *The Structure of Personality: Personality Ordering and Disorder* 2001). In Mandela’s case, he changed his very personality as he formed and tempered his temperament. He qualified it through his experiences and so came out of prison a very different man.

What can we model from Mandela’s leadership? What inner qualities did he demonstrate that would make for greater and higher leadership today?

- His continuous learning and developing. He kept learning and adjusting and did not settle into a hard or rigid approach to things.
- He worked on himself. He demonstrated what we call *self-leadership* in Neuro-Semantics and engaged in so much personal change that he changed his very personality.
- He became highly reflective as he used the time he had to become more measured and disciplined so that he leadership was much more “on purpose” as a leader.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #6
February 10, 2014
Modeling Great Leaders #3

IDENTIFYING ADDITIONAL LEADERSHIP QUALITIES IN MANDELA

In the last *Neuron's* post, I wrote about several of Mandela's leadership qualities. Here I want to mention two additional ones. I'll begin with Mandela's relationship to *time* as a concept and as a mechanism of leadership. I find this a fascinating aspect of his leadership and one so needed today. In the book, *Mandela's Way* (2012), Stengel says that Mandela was "disciplined about time." Knowing that history was not made overnight and that today's racism and repression had been incubated over centuries if not longer, with that awareness he knew that it would take time to undo it. In conclusion Stengel wrote this:

"Mandela is a long-distance runner, a long-distance *thinker*." (p. 173)

"Mandela thought in terms of history. And of course, history *is* the long run."

How different this is today from so many of our current leaders especially those who have been infected by the short-term thinking bug. "I want it now!" In business this is actually epidemic. Business leaders can hardly get their nose above the "this quarter returns" to think a year or two into the future, let alone long-term. If something doesn't immediately get results or turn around a disappointing ROI, they impatiently drop it and introduce the next big thing. The result of this is that so many of our leaders are not disciplined about time and they suffer from a myopic vision of the future.

Yet leaders have to think about the future and especially in terms of creating a visionary future that excites and inspires people. What happens if leaders do not do this? Ah, without a vision of hope and enthusiasm, work becomes drudgery. It loses its ability to attract and excite. The work itself ceases to be valued as meaningful, so people need to have extra rewards and entertainments to keep interest in what they are doing. Then organizations have "motivation problems" among the workers.

Thinking about the future in a visionary way so that it attracts the best of people and so that it brings out the best in people also requires having *a meaning that excites people*. It means that the business involves more than just making money. Making more money and giving out more money will only go so far. And after that, it has diminishing returns. There has to be meaning—a message worth giving one's best for. And that certainly described Mandela. Stengel's book highlighted this. He wrote that Mandela was very conscious of the messages that he sent by word and behavior.

The first was a message of transcending prejudice. "I do not play favorites." I'm above prejudice (94). And as an attorney, he pursued his original training in law because he believed

that “Justice has to be blind” (109). And in thinking about apartheid, he view the frame of prejudice as the problem. “We are all victims of the apartheid system” (122). In saying that, he meant even the people who have been trained to support the system are victims of it as well as those who suffer from it. “I am a man of the people.” He said that he never wanted to come across as an elitist (95). “He told black voters that he would be their champion and white voters that he would be their protector.” (97).

His visionary dream was to create a new democracy in Africa. His over- arching goal: to create a new nation. (173). “My great goal is bringing constitutional democracy to South Africa” (113). “I am the father of a rainbow nation.” (98). “Africans can govern themselves; Africa can be a continent of constitutional democracies.” (202).

Perhaps one of his most shocking beliefs and messages to his followers was when he said: “I believe in seeing the good in others, that it might actually make them better.” (118). And, “It’s best to err on the side of generosity.” (124). He said that at the time when he was a prisoner and he used that message to relate to his jailors. In NLP we operate from the premise that “behind every behavior is a positive intention.” That is, people don’t do evil things for the sake of being evil. They do things that hurt others because they are trying to survive, protect themselves, get approval, etc. they are just meeting their legitimate needs. The problem is that they are meeting those needs in ways that are not ecological for them long-term or to others. The result of t his way of thinking and perceiving is that he was able to keep himself from getting bitter, hateful, or revengeful. “I am a man without bitterness.”

What does all of this suggest? It suggests that *true leaders lead people in terms of meaningful messages*. Not only is there an exciting future, there is also (and perhaps more important) rich meanings in their proposal. It can be meaningful for a wide-range of reasons. If you take the self-actualization *being*-needs that Maslow identified as the truly human needs and drives—the meaning could be about any one or more of those:

Knowledge, meaning, excellence, order, giving love, justice, fairness, equality, music, beauty, contribution, making a difference, etc.

Why is this important? Because we live by *meaning*. Without meaning, there’s no inner life or joy in anything. So leaders— take notice. Think long-term, be a long-distance thinker. Think about meaning and meaningfulness. Find your message that’s full of meaning that bathes everyday life in more sacred meanings.

From: L. Michael Hall

2014 Neurons #7

Feb. 17, 2014

Creating a Self-Actualizing Company #1

ON THE PIONEERING A SELF-ACTUALIZING COMPANY

Is it possible to write a whole book about seeking to create a whole new kind of organization, a self-actualization company, and never use those phrase *self-actualization*? Is it possible to read such a book and not even realize that it is a book seeking to create an organization that is so new and radical that it meets all of the criteria of what we call “self-actualization?” My sad answer to these questions is that “Yes, it is possible.” That’s because Dee Hock wrote the book without using the terminology and that’s because I read his book without realizing what it is truly about. Here’s the story and the amazing discovery that I made.

Dee Hock was the founder and CEO of VISA international and when he retired, he became the CEO Emeritus. Then in 1991 he became one of thirty living Laureates of the Business Hall of Fame. “In 1992 he was recognized as one of the eight individuals who most changed the way people live in the past quarter century.” Pretty impressive, right? Well, that’s just the beginning. There’s a lot more.

If there was ever an unconventional CEO, a CEO who didn’t fit the image or title, a CEO who wrote *against* the whole way organizations are structured and run—it was Dee Hock. In this book which is both his autobiography and his description of the birth of VISA, he describes himself as a “lamb” in his early decades of his career—a lamb in the midst of the wolves of business. He describes himself as a country boy, raised with very little and for most of his career making very little and all along observing and hating all of the worst features of modern corporations.

He also describes himself as a thinker and philosopher at heart— someone who kept thinking that there had to be a better way to organize organizations. Now what I found amazing— even to the point of being *incredible*— is that in the process Dee Hock, long before NLP, denominalized many of the facets of organizations and got to “the essences” of organizational life and then identified most of the features of a self-actualizing company. He did that without NLP training. He did that, apparently, without reading anything from Maslow, Rogers, or the early Human Potential Movement leaders.

Consider his de-nominalizing activities. Without knowing that a set of actions (which should be described by a verb) can be nounified (nominalized) to create a false noun which sounds like a real “thing,” but is not, Dee Hock in his book, *Birth of the Chaordic Age* (1999) de-nominalized numerous false nouns: Leadership, organization, money, corporations, accounting, banking, governance.

Now, of course, he doesn't call this de-nominalizing. How could he? He was no linguist. He apparently knew nothing about Transformational Grammar (TG). In fact, he was doing his work while Noam Chomsky was developing TG. He called this process *peeling the onion*. And he went about "peeling the onion with questions" (p. 266), questions that challenged the specifics of the word, indexing questions about what, when, where, how, which, in what way, etc. About "corporations" he wrote that:

"If it [the new organization] was to be different, we must peel the corporate onion to its essence. We began with the dry skeletons one finds in the dusty closets of dictionary and encyclopedia." (167)

Now in the process he discovered something that we know in philosophy, in NLP, in Neuro-Semantics—an organization and what we call a "corporation" is a "mental abstraction."

"Organizations exist only in the mind; they are no more than conceptual embodiments of the ancient idea of community." (11).

"Institutions are not a law of nature ... institutions are the creations of people. ... The problem arises from the pervasive habit of perceiving an institution as a tangible, physical reality, such as a building or a machine. So , when anyone began to talk or act as though a company had such reality; I would assure them that it was a fiction, that it did not exist. Most would argue vociferously that it certainly did. I would test their convictions with a simple exercise . . .

"Surely you have seen it. What color is it? No? Well, then, you must have smelled it from time to time. Describe its odor. No? Then surely you've tasted it. So it sweet or sour, tart or bland? You don't know? Well, you must have touched it often. Is it hot or cold, hard or soft? No? Then, without doubt you have heard it. Make its sound. No? Can you perceive the company you work for , or any other organization, whether political, social, or commercial, with any of your senses? Obviously not. . . perhaps it's a fiction. "The truth is that a commercial company, or for that matter, any organization, is nothing but an idea. All institutions are no more than a mental construct to which people are drawn in pursuit of common purpose; a conceptual embodiment of a very old, very powerful idea called *community*. All organizations can be no more and no less than the moving force of the mind, heart, and spirit of people, without which all assets are just so much inert mineral, chemical, or vegetable mater..." (119)

If I didn't know the source of that quotation, I would bet the author knew NLP. But no. By recognizing that the language of company, organization, corporation, etc. is at the level of *abstraction* and not at the level of empirical sensory-based information, Hock was able to get to the essence of this concept and begin to re-conceptualize it.

He did the same thing with term "money." "I continued to peel our onion of understanding looking for the essence of money." (122). He did that because he was in the banking industry and of course, banking has to do with money—saving, loaning, investing, etc.

"Peeling this onion of understanding was enough to make us cry. The essence of money seemed to be everywhere, yet nowhere. But we had to understand. More research, more digging, more connections. ... [then]... Our perceptions began to change. It was as though we could now see with different eyes. Even more, with a different mind. Even

beyond that: with a different consciousness, and it was incredibly exciting. ... We continued to peel the onion. Just what was the nature of the business [banking] in which we were engaged?" (123)

Dee Hock discovered back in the early 1960s what I discovered much, much later and wrote in the book *Inside-Out Wealth*—something I discovered through the key thinkers in the field of wealth creation. Money isn't wealth. And wealth is certainly not limited to money (financial wealth), it is much more holistic than that.

"What was money? ... Money was not coin, currency, or credit card. That was the form, not function. Money was *anything* customarily used as a measure of equivalent value and medium of exchange." (121)

"The realization slowly dawned that money had become alphanumeric symbols recorded and transported on valueless metal and paper ... a gap in understanding, for symbols themselves have no value. Anyone could write down letters and numbers..."

Then the discovery came:

"Money had become guaranteed alphanumeric data expressed in the currency symbol of one country or another. Thus, a bank was no more than an institution for the custody, loan, and exchange of guaranteed alphanumeric data." (122)

Now he had to figure out what data or information was. And for that he turned to Gregory Bateson: "information is a difference that makes a difference." And that led him to understand that unlike the world of tangible things— things that you can handle and manipulate, that you can count and weigh—the world of intangible things like ideas, data, information work by an entirely different principle. They work not by the principle of scarcity but by the principle of abundance.

"Unlike finite physical resources, information multiplies by transfer and is not depleted by use. Information transferred is not lost to the source yet is a gain to the recipient. Information can be utilized by everyone without loss to anyone. ... It obeys only concepts and principles of infinite abundance..." (199)

And in this way, while never using the language of D-needs (deficiency) or B-needs (*being* and abundance), Hock was re-imagining one of the most staid and dry and tangible institutions of them all— Banking. And out of that eventually came a whole new type of organization—what I call a Self-Actualizing Company, but which he called a Chaordic organization.

There's a lot more to this story. So until next time— if you don't know how to de-nominalize, at least use precision questions to peel back the onion of abstraction in the vague words that we all swim in everyday! And if tears come from peeling the onion— know they are tears of joy and discovery of the real world.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #8
February 25, 2014
Creating a Self-Actualizing Company #2

UNCONSCIOUSLY PIONEERING A SELF-ACTUALIZING COMPANY

“The lifelong dream of pioneering a new concept of organization had been realized. There was pride and gratification in knowing what it had been, what it now was, and what it might become, but there was a deep sense of failure about what it ought to be.” (*Birth of the Chaordic Age*, p. 285)

Last week I began the story of Dee Hock, founder of VISA International and CEO Emeritus and his incredible journey to envisioning and then creating a whole new kind of organization. So go back ... way back to the 1960s when he was doing this, when businesses were just beginning to wake up to the typhoon of change that was just then beginning to blow over this planet. Douglas McGregor had just translated Maslow’s Self-Actualization Psychology into workplace language. He did that by inventing the language of *Theory X and Theory Y* to explain the old mindset of command-and-control leadership and bureaucracy and the new mindset of tapping into and release human intelligence and creativity. He did that in the book, *The Human Enterprise* (1960).

As far as I can tell Dee Hock was not aware of Maslow or McGregor and yet he was on the same track. He described the problem with business, with leadership, and with organizations as one created by the “machine” metaphor that began “the age of managers” and “the Industrial Age.” The 400 year old Industrial Age and its paradigm of predictability and control was the problem. And people were begin “victimized by a false metaphor” (p. 171). That’s because a new age of information had arise and was upon business and Dee Hock argued that business needed a more natural metaphor— an organic one, a systemic one, and one human one. So he wrote about self-organizing, self-governing, adaptive complex organisms and used that as a more natural metaphor for an organization or community.

I mentioned last week that I had read his book many years ago and didn’t realize that he was actually writing about Self-Actualizing Companies and Organizations. How could I have missed it? In part, because he never used that language. He had another name. He called the new kind of organization that he envisioned *chaordic*. This was his invented word, created by combining chaos and order. He defined a chaordic organization in this way:

“The behavior of any self-governing organism, organization or system which harmoniously blends characteristics of order and chaos; patterned in a way dominated by neither chaos or order.”

Dreaming the Radically New

“If anything imaginable was possible, if there were no constraints whatever, what would be the nature of an ideal organization to create the world’s premier system for the exchange of value?”

In this way he stumbled upon the qualities of a whole new kind of organization— one that would be friendly to the human spirit, that would accord with human beings and the biosphere. As I re-read the book, *The Birth of the Chaordic Organization*, I took notes. The following notes are those that describe a Self-Actualizing Company. It this sounds very similar to the descriptions which I put in the book, *Unleashing Leadership— Self-Actualizing Leaders and Companies*, they are. What did CEO Dee Hock conceptualize the new chaordic organization to be like? Here are a few hints:

- *A becoming organization.* “Life is not about getting, having, controlling, it’s not even about being. Life is eternal, perpetual *becoming*. Becoming is not a thing to be known or controlled. It is a magnificent, mysterious odyssey to be experienced.” (24).
- *Systemic.* We are irrevocably interconnected, defining one another. (22).
- *A Principled Community.* “People everywhere are growing desperate for renewed sense of community.” (91). “Healthy organizations are a mental concept of relationships to which people are drawn by hope, vision, values, and meaning, and liberty to cooperatively pursue them.” (120)
- *Leaders who induce rather than impose.* “There is no way to give people purpose and principles, nor can there be self-governance without them. The only possibility is to evoke the gift of self-governance from the people themselves.” (90).
- *A place of ingenuity and creativity.* “Without question, the most abundant, least expensive, most under-utilized, and constantly abused resource in the world is human ingenuity.” (72).
- *Empowerment.* “If you’re going to form a committee to do anything, give it responsibility for creating some way to examine all problems in a systematic, continuous way.” (108).
- *Self-Organizing cohesive group.* “We know that ‘together’ [we] must transcend all present boundaries and allow self-organization at every scale...” “Chaordic organizations self-organize and evolve, creating and governing diversity and complexity beyond any possibility of central design, engineering, or control.” (296).
- *Ecological.* “If the purpose of each corporation is not primarily the health of the earth and well-being of all life thereon, if its principles are not based on equitable distribution of power and wealth, if it avoids responsibility for the sustenance of family, community, and place, if it has no belief system, or one devoid of ethical and moral content, it is difficult to see why it should have the sanction and protection of society through government.” (171).
- *Open discussion and debate.* “Deliberation and debate will be open to all and controlled by none, particularly management.” (185). “[VISA] was chaordic and open to surprise.” (269). “The promise of open meetings and candor was often put to the test by skeptical employees.” (283).
- *Mature responsible people.* “In chaordic organizations of the future, it will be necessary at every level to have people capable of discernment, of making fine judgments, and acting sensibly upon them.” (264)
- *Vigilant least the old mindset re turns.* “On t he whole, we had poor methods and techniques and far too little of them to bring about the cultural change that a chaordic

organization requires.” (277). “Bit by bit, the old patterns reasserted themselves...” (278). “I missed completely the need for an institutional immune system to thwart the viruses of old ways.” (281).

Now in the process of creating a new kind of organization Dee Hock ran into numerous problems, problems which are relevant to what we are doing today. More about that next week.

From: L. Michael Hall

2014 Neurons #9

March 3, 2014

Creating a Self-Actualizing Company #3

CHALLENGES IN CREATING A SELF-ACTUALIZING COMPANY

From extensive reading and thinking about the changes that the 20th century was bringing to business, Dee Hock set out to create an entirely new kind of organization. By de-nominalizing (“peeling the onion”) of many words such as “organization,” “money,” “value,” “information,” etc. he came to understand the underlying processes that actually defined what “banking” was about, what “organizations” were designed to do, etc. And apparently without any influence from Humanistic Psychology (Self-Actualization Psychology) or Maslow’s and McGregor’s work, he set out to create an organization that would be much more human, humane, responsive to change, adaptable, effective, etc.— what in Neuro-Semantics we call a Self-Actualization Company.

His lifelong dream was to pioneer “a new concept of organization.” And that’s exactly what he did. Yet while it began well, it did not continue well. Even before he left as CEO, the vision by which he launched VISA was not being transmitted to the new people coming into the company.

“In spite of its successes, VISA was badly flawed. So was its leader. It is painful to think and write about failure and weakness, but it is an essential part of the story. As an archetype of chaordic organizations, we never got VISA more than a third right.” (p. 274)

Now it was not that Dee Hock expected perfection. He did not. For him the question was not “whether either institute or individuals reach their ultimate potential, but whether they are constantly rising in the scale.” Yet there were problems. *Power* was one of them. In seeing the hunger for power in his executive team, he sadly commented: “Power may be the ultimate addiction.”

“Perhaps the greatest mistake was to completely under-estimate *the degree of individual cultural change* such an organization required, both in self and others. Nor did I anticipate how pervasively and persistently old concepts would reassert themselves, or the covert, tenacious resistance new methods would evoke.” (p. 276, italics added)

“Consciously and unconsciously they brought their old mental baggage and installed it in the new organization. I did not realize the immense cultural change required of each person if they were to fully understand, develop, and implement the concept.” (p. 193)

VISA’s growth was explosive, so many of the newly hired people came in “full of the techniques, culture, and habits of the world from which they emerged.” They came in with the same old command-and-control practices and Hock later discovered departments where people were subjected to “intolerable rules and regulations.” And new members on the board “brought to the table all the old assumptions about management.”

“Without deep cultural change, they would naturally see my efforts to restrain their conduct as command and control. ... And I used command-and-control techniques to prevent command and

control. Plain stupid!” (277)

In times of stress, impatience led him and others to fall back on using “power” to plow through difficulties. “Each such act put the lie to what I believed and tried to persuade others to accept. All too often, I was simply unable to *be the change* I wanted to see.”

“On the whole, *we had poor methods and techniques and far too little of them to bring about the cultural change* that a chaotic organization requires, nor did we have a leader who was fully alert to the need for it.” (p. 277, italics added)

Cultural change is what was required, yet they lacked the methods and techniques to achieve that. Hock noted that in the beginning, there were no titles or even job descriptions. But then “bit by bit, the old patterns reasserted themselves until a host of ‘vices’ arose.” (278).

“It was not then apparent how difficult it was to sustain new beliefs and concepts or how long it would take for them to sink to the bone and become habitual conduct. Although VISA arose from thinking about organizations as living, biological systems, I missed completely the need for *an institutional immune system to thwart the viruses of old ways.*” (p. 281, italics added)

“I do not believe that VISA is a model to emulate. It is no more than an archetype to study, learn from, and improve upon.” (p. 282)

“An institutional immune system to thwart the viruses of old ways.” Ah! Hindsight is so insightful! In the beginning, there were open staff meetings. Every decision of the board was fully disclosed. Every employee was free to ask any question about the decisions (p. 282). The promise of open meetings and candor was often put to the test by skeptical employees. But that also did not last. Part of the problem—the old attitudes and the lack of personal development:

“I never ceased to try but failed to keep properly at bay the Four Beasts that inevitably devour their keeper: Ego, Envy, Avarice, and Ambition.” (p. 193)

That was actually just the beginning. What undermined the effectiveness of the new kind of organization, a self-actualizing company, were *deficiency-needs* that were out of control: “archaic notions of scarcity, ownership, and finite physical quantity” (p. 200), assumptions from the mechanized, Industrial Age of magazine crafting, managing things, etc. (201), “wealth, fame, and power become deities to worship. It is a desperately sick society that does so” (289).

“If we were to set out to design an efficient system for the methodical destruction of community, we could do no better than our present efforts to monetize all value and reduce life to the tyranny of measurement.” (p. 43)

Ah yes, he needs “an institutional immune system” against the viruses of old ways! What surprised him ought to warn us—the challenge of change that will last and be sustainable has to be “deep cultural change.” The change has to go so deep that it changes the very culture of the organization. It has to transform the values, beliefs, identities, intentions, and attitudes that are embedded in the very framework of “how we do things around here.” Nor can the change initiatives be a one-time event. It must be a continuous program that works on the deep attitudes of people. And that kind of ongoing systemic change doesn’t happen quickly, not without sustained effort, and not without intentional leadership.

Today we are much more aware of the need for deep pervasive cultural change than CEO Dee Hock was in the 1970s and 1980s. Today we know all the more about the power of old habits to

undermine going development. Today we know that we have to initiate a coaching culture (or a self-actualization culture) as an essential part of a corporate change. And today we have many of those “methods and techniques.”

From: L. Michael Hall

2014 Neurons #10

March 10, 2014

Creating a Self-Actualizing Company #4

CREATING AGAINST ALL ODDS

I've been writing about former CEO of VISA, Dee Hock and his wild and crazy ideas about creating "a new kind of organization"—one that today we in Neuro-Semantics would call a Self-Actualizing Company. Yet back in the early 1970s he didn't know what to call the new kind of organization, so he came up with a term that he derived from combining the two critical dynamics for companies: chaos and order. From those two words he created the term *chaordic* and a chaordic organization. Never heard of that? No wonder! The term never really caught on. Thank God.

In last week's post I pulled from the book *Birth of the Chaordic Age* quotations from him in which he wrote about the mistakes he made along the way. In seeking to create an entirely new kind of organization, his genius was in business structure, not in psychology. So years later he recognized that the "deep cultural change" required much more attention and methodology than he had. Yet what he lacked in terms of understanding Self-Actualization Psychology, he made up with his courageous willingness to experiment with the ideas that he had been entertaining.

"There was a problem" he said after he had discovered that he had both the permission and authority the National Bank of Commerce to pursue the idea of creating a new kind of organization that could handle the challenges of a worldwide credit card. What was the problem? In his own words:

"No bank could do it. No hierarchal stock corporation could do it. No nation-state could do it. In fact, no existing form of organization we could think of could do it. On a hunch I made an estimate of the financial resources of all the banks in the world. It dwarfed the resources of most nations. Jointly, they could do it, but how? It would require a transcendental organization linking together in wholly new ways an unimaginable complex of diverse institutions and individuals.

"At the time, did I think it could be done? No! It was impossible! Did I think the Bank of American would give up ownership of the program? No! Did I think banks worldwide could be brought together in such an effort? No! Did I think laws would allow it? No! Did I think anyone would seriously listen to such notions or allow them the light of day if they did? No! *But did I believe it was what ought to be?* Ah, that was another question indeed! Powerful enough to draw me on.

"Absurd as it seemed, might this be an undreamed-of opportunity to experiment with my beliefs about organizations and management? It seemed beyond imagining. But what could be lost by the attempt?" (pp. 125-126)

What an ideal context for collaboration! The impossibility of something being created and coming into existence by all of the separate resources of what's currently possible and the far-off impossibility of everybody coming together to create it. If only those who had invested in him and the years of preparation were willing to not claim ownership, if only every other key

individual and group be willing to equally share, if only all would set aside all of the old ways and old paradigms— then it could work. Such was that state of things. What were the probabilities? One percent? Less than that? Whatever it was, against all odds, he plowed ahead inspired by a vision of collaboration and what that collaboration could potentially do.

Pretty incredible, right? So how does one just plow ahead? Dee Hock began by gathering his executive team, asking for a commitment to set aside a week, isolate themselves, and see what they could create. To facilitate the group *thinking and learning together* he put forth an evocative question and a distinction of four ways to look at things:

“If anything imaginable was possible, if there were no constraints whatever, what would be the nature of an ideal organization to create the world’s premier system for the exchange of value?” (p. 132)

“As they were, as they are, as they might become, and as they ought to be. Let’s synthesize these and hold them in mind as a single perspective.”

That elicited storming in the executive group: “we argued, frustration increased, tempers flared.” From what I can tell he essentially “coached” the group by using his insights which he presented as process instructions. In that way the group was enabled to think together, learn together, and finally decide together. Here are some of those insights:

“Since the past can never be more than preparatory and the present no more than a point of departure, it is *the future that should have our best thoughts and energy...*” (p. 134)

“The problem is never to get new ideas in, the problem is to get old ideas out. Every mind is filled with old furniture.” (p. 135)

“What if we quit arguing about the structure of a new institution and tried to think of it as having some sort of genetic code? How does genetic code in individual cells create recognizable patterns? ... If institutions have no reality save in the mind, might their genetic code have something to do with purpose and principles?” (p. 136)

In the end they succeeded. In hindsight, VISA was brought into being through the power of relying on *the power of ideas* (p. 140). Yet these ideas didn’t fit well with others who were required to make the whole plan succeed. And it especially didn’t fit as the team approached success, then “bitter opposition emerged.” Then others in places of influence decided against the new organization, instead they wanted the power of command-and-control. Hock even said that there were dozens of times when he longed to quit. So what kept him going?

“All that is clear was stubborn conviction that the ideas ... were sound. They had to be tried. ... Attempting the impossible is not rational ... It is a matter of hope, faith, and determination.” (p. 142)

This is often the way with creating something against all odds. It has often seemed this way with Neuro-Semantics— creating a voluntary Association of highly qualified, professional, ethical, and collaborative people all working to a single end as if they were a single company. It’s not rational. Reason alone would say that people will not give of their time, effort, intelligence, intellectual property, and money to promote a shared value. And like VISA, it has been certain *ideas* that have kept us going— the realization that we can do so much more together than alone or apart. The realization that self-actualizing people live at the *Being*-level and have a need to contribute, give back, and make a difference in the world.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #11
March 17, 2014
Creating a Self-Actualizing Company #5

UNPEALING THE ONION OF ABSTRACTIONS

When I first arrived in Egypt, I was talking with some of the Neuro-Semantic Trainers and we got talking about the articles which I posted here on “Neurons” about former CEO of VISA, Dee Hock and the way he went about inventing what he wanted— “a brand new kind of organization.” One of them asked me several very pointed questions:

What do you think was the core skill that enabled him to do what he did?

What set him apart in being able to think through all the web of abstractions and get to the heart of things which others were not able to do?

I had not thought of that question before, and so I didn’t have an immediate answer. Yet because all of us were “thinking aloud together” and engaged in collective learning, as I talked out my thoughts, I discovered the answer.

“What Dee Hock did was an essential and basic NLP procedure— he de-nominalized the abstractions that defined the banking industry until he got to the heart of the matter, and finding that enabled him to understand ‘the real business’ that he was in and from that create new processes. What did he actually do in the process of de-nominalizing? He pulled the abstraction apart, got to the underlying processes (or verbs) and he described this as “peeling the onion.”

When I was then asked what that meant in his case and how he did that, I went took out the book and read some passages. And doing that made me realize two things: first the power of de-nominalizing and second the advantage of calling it “peeling the onion.” Now if you have read the Meta-Model of Language (*The Structure of Magic*, 1976, 1977) or my book (*Communication Magic*, 2001), you know that when we *de-nominalize an abstract term* we are finding the hidden verb inside of a word that sounds like a “thing.” This means we move a term from sounding static, unmoving, fixed, frozen, etc. back to a dynamic process of actions and activities.

“Relationship” becomes *relating* and now we can ask question to index who, when, where, how, in what way, etc. “Leadership” becomes *leading* and we can now find the specifics of who is leading who to what and in what way. “Self-esteem” becomes *esteeming* one’s “self” with value and worth based on some value-system or criteria. What de-nominalizing does linguistically is to return to our perception the energy, dynamics, and aliveness to the world that had become frozen. And doing that puts return change and choice into the picture. It empowers us to be able to *do something* rather than just suffer the predetermination of a frozen, staid world.

If that’s the power of de-nominalizing, then giving it a name that’s more dynamic and descriptive. And that’s what the metaphor “peeling the onion” does. Thinking about words and ideas that are “thick,” “abstract,” and “complicated” as the layers of an onion suggests that we

can get to the “core” of the idea and make it more simple and direct as we do the “UNPEALING.”

Hock did that first with “money.” He asked himself,

“What is money? Money is not coin, currency, or credit card. That was form, not function. Money is *anything* customarily used as a measure of equivalent value and medium of exchange. But what had that *anything* become?” (p. 121)

“Money” began to be represented as coins, then centuries later by paper as “currency” then as checks. But what is the essence of “money?” “I continued to peel our onion of understanding looking for the essence of money.” Slowly it dawned on him that money had come to be represented as alphanumeric symbols (numbers, letters) recorded and transported on valueless metal and paper. But still— a gap in understanding.

Why? Because “symbols themselves have no value.” Further, anyone could write down letters and numbers! Then an awareness:

“Money had become guaranteed alphanumeric data expressed in the currency symbol of one country or another. Thus, a bank was no more than an institution for the custody; loan, and exchange of guaranteed alphanumeric data.” (p. 122)

Now while that was technically correct, Hock was still not satisfied with it. He still needed to know: What was the essence of what happened when we use a telephone to authorize a credit card transaction? Data was being transferred. Yet nothing was passing through the telephone. All that was happening — actually— was “a disturbance of electronic particles— waves of energy.”

“Peeling this onion of understanding was enough to make us cry. The essence of money seemed to be everywhere, yet nowhere. We had to understand.”

With alphanumeric data moving around the world in the form of energy waves via telephone, computers exchanging information, what is money? What is a bank? Wouldn’t that make any institution which could move and guarantee alphanumeric data as people would expect— a bank? The next peeling of the onion asked, What is the nature of the banking business? The answer to that came as three functions:

- 1) Identify buyers to sellers and sellers to buyers so that an exchange could be made.
- 2) Guarantee and warrant to buyer and seller their system of exchange.
- 3) Originate and transfer value data as messages in the form of alphanumeric data.

The conclusion? “We were really in the business of the exchange of monetary value.” (p. 125). So “credit card” is a misnomer based on banking jargon.

“The card was no more than a device bearing symbols for the exchange of monetary value. The fact that it took the form of a piece of plastic was no more than an accident of time and circumstance.”

In the end, the peeling the onion of the conceptual terms that had long defined that industry enabled him and others to completely rethink their business and that led to designing new structures and inventing many of the pieces of “an entirely new organization.” NLP introduced this in the Meta-Model of Language as the *de-nominalizing process* and it is an incredibly powerful process as it opens up new perspectives and facilitates creativity.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #12
March 24, 2014
Cleaning up Language Series #1

LIFE IN THE REALM OF LANGUAGE

We live our lives *in* language. At a most fundamental level, *we are linguistic beings*. We inevitably create mental maps using our native language and whatever additional languages that we have learned. We cannot do otherwise. And if we don't, we don't become human. Is that shocking? It ought to be. And if you ask for the evidence, you have to go no further than the phenomenon of "feral children."

There used to be feral children—the children who in some way got lost from home, from mother and father, and left in the wild, they were "adopted" and raised by animals— dogs, wolves, etc. Once upon a time feral children were not that uncommon, but fortunately the last ones reported were in the nineteenth century. What we discovered about such children is that if they missed the imprint period of language, that period in which a child enters into the semantic world that's navigated by symbols— later when the child was discovered and brought into society, it was never able to enter into, and live in, the symbolic world of human culture and language. The feral child would not wear clothes, eat without utilizes (gobble food like an animal), would be unable to talk and use language, etc. He or she would never really enter into the human condition.

We are so inevitably *linguistic* in nature that without language we cannot be human. If all we could do would be to create visual images, auditory sounds, kinesthetic sensations, olfactory smells, and gustatory tastes and we could not name any of these or relate one to a conceptual idea of meaning, our consciousness would be extremely limited. In NLP we call these sensory experiences our *representational systems*, our VAK languages of mind. These enable us to detect and work with the movies that we play in our minds.

In NLP we call the domain of language—the *meta-representational system*. And while there's lots of problems with it, it is this system by which we can use develop our meta-consciousness (consciousness-of-consciousness). It is the language system that allows us to detect our thinking, adjust it, refine it, and improve it. It is our self-reflexive consciousness that takes fullest use of this higher and more abstract thinking and that enables us, as humans, to create science and art so we can keep improving upon our knowledge over the ages (e.g., time-binding).

Yet language itself is a challenge and a problem. That's mostly because our languages are not very precise. Both the structure of our language and hundreds, if not thousands, of words are very poor "maps" for using to navigate the sea of experience. And no wonder. Our words and language and ideas have developed over thousands of years and grew up from more primitive times. And growing up during more primitive times, we still have many primitive pre-scientific, unscientific, and erroneous ideas incorporated in our language.

For these reasons (and others), one of the tasks before all of us, if we are to live a sanely and effectively, is to *clean up our language*. With so much contamination in our words, our sentences, our ideas, our philosophies, and our assumptions— when we use words without consciousness of what we are saying, the premises we are operating from, what we are presupposing without evidence, etc., we thereby contaminate our responses, our relationships, our emotions, and more.

Another factor enters into this consideration. We are not only *linguistic beings*, we are *Neuro-linguistic beings*. What does that mean? First, it means that the very creation and generation of our words and language arise in our neurology from how we use our neurology. Korzybski described this in terms of how our nervous systems *abstract* from the world “out there,” the energy-manifestations that impact our sense-receptors, and then transform those impacts along the neuro-pathways of our body and sent then to the various sensory cortexes where that information is processed. The NLP founders described this as how our nervous systems *model* the see-hear-feel world of experiences that we encounter by deleting, generalizing, and distorting that information. This enables each of us to create a unique mental model or map of the world and use it in our responses.

[Read more about that in Korzybski’s classic book, *Science and Sanity* (1933, 1994) and Bandler and Grinder’s *The Structure of Magic* (1975, 1976).]

As *neuro-linguistic* beings, using language enables us to send signals to our body and our body (neurology, physiology) responds to that information. When those signals are coded as “beliefs” then the signals operate as “commands” to our nervous systems which they then seek to “actualize” (make real). In Neuro-Semantics we highlight this structure and use it to guide the thought-signals and the belief-commands we want to be commissioning our body to feel and actualize. That’s because we know that “as we believe, so we are” and “so be it unto you.” In this way beliefs become self-fulfilling prophecies (or self-organizing attractors).

Is it any wonder then that we need to clean up our language? Do you know what you are doing to yourself with your language? Would you like to? In this and the next articles, I’ll be addressing some of the ways that you can clean up your language and give reasons for how it will improve the quality of your life. There are so many ways in which language can misdirect you and send you off in unproductive directions. Yet the amazing thing is that you can use such language and never suspect this. You can use the most dis-empowering language and not even realize it. That’s why Meta-Coaches learn to listen for that kind of language and then invite awareness, “Do you hear what you just said? Do you really *hear* what’s implied in what you just said?” That’s step on for cleaning up your language. More are to come.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #13
March 31, 2014
Cleaning up Language Series #2

CLEANING UP IMPRECISION

Living life in language as we do is simultaneously a tremendous benefit and value and a challenge and a problem. The central problem that mostly challenges us is *the lack of precision*. And so many aspects of our language creates and encourages this lack of precision. Further, the problem is deeper than just our words. Not only are our languages not precise, but so also the way we think and reason—that also is not precise. Living in vague and fluffy language, we start to take on those traits in our reasoning and thinking. Consequently, the linguistic maps we construct for moving through life provides us some very poor and inadequate “maps” when navigating the seas of experience.

How then do we clean up our language? There are two models in NLP that work wonders for this: The Meta-Model of Language and the Representation Model. While this is true, there are many, many NLP trainers who don’t know this. That’s why many simply do not even teach the Meta-Model. They don’t present it and they don’t use it in their own communications.

The Meta-Model. The genius of NLP’s Meta-Model of Language is that it enables us to question to challenge a person’s linguistic structures to get inside the person’s mental model of the world to get more precise information. As such it provides a powerful tool for cleaning up our language. What was discovered from the extraordinary conversation skills of Fritz Perls and Virginia Satir in the early days of NLP became the original eleven distinctions and then in 1997 at Richard Bandler’s bidding, I added more from Korzybski, Ellis, and Erickson. Today the extended Meta-Model has 22 linguistic distinctions and corresponding questions for creating clarity and precision. These are in the book, *Communication Magic* (2001).

Recently a young lady said the following when I asked her about her specific wealth creation plan. What is your plan?

“I just want to be a success in my career and help people, because contributing in that way really fulfills my purpose.”

Well, that’s imprecise—to say the least! I commented: “So you want to be successful in helping people, and can you tell me what you will be doing to help people that will be a contribution?”

“My contribution will change their lives, that’s what I’ll be doing.”

Now I’m guessing that her answered sounded specific to her *in her head*, but what was said on the outside was fluffy, vague, and imprecise. So I tried again. “Okay, so changing lives is the contribution that you’ll be making. And what kind of change will you be facilitating—remedial change or generative? Will it be change of behavior and performance, of person for developmental change or will it be transformation change of a new direction or paradigm?”

“Yes, that’s what I want to do and then I’ll be successful in my wealth creation.”

Obviously I was not getting through. Using the Meta-Model to diagnose this conversation, she was using unspecified verbs and nouns and lots of nominalizations (success, contribution, purpose, change, help). And apparently she was not even aware of her over-generalized language. “What will be your speciality in working with change, what will your clients change? What will they change from? What will they change to?”

“The changes that they need to make so that they can be more successful, that’s the kind.”

Having gotten no where with her, I commended to her. “In spite of all of your answers I still do not have a clue as to what you are talking about. If you want to communicate your thoughts so that I understand you or others understand you, you will need to change your imprecise language. You’ll have to make your verbs more specific and detail what your nominalizations mean. Right now your language strikes me as so vague, indefinite; it is sloppy and fluffy.”

Speaking generally or in a global fashion at best can present the big idea and create inspiration for it, but because the language is vague, it lacks precision. The Meta-Model enables us to clean up our fluffy imprecise language by directing us to question for specificity: who specifically are you talking about? What do you mean specifically by the X? When did that happen specifically?

Yes you can drive people crazy with this. And some people can get really frustrated because making what they’re talking about specific may be a skill they have not yet learned. In that case, the “specifically what do you mean?” can keep underscoring an incompetency and they will say the questions make them feel dumb! Of course, they are creating that state to the stimulus of the questions, yet without the ability to detail things, they will genuinely not know that. Be careful.

The Representational Model. In addition to the Meta-Model of Language, the Representational Model of specific sights, sounds, sensations, smells, and tastes also helps with the clarity of specificity. These *sensory representations* give more specificity. They are often called the VAK which is shorthand for vision, auditory, and kinesthetic. The skill of using these distinctions begins with the ability to *representationally track* a person’s words to a movie that you play in your mind. When a word or idea is presented and I cannot represent it in my mind, that’s when to get more specific information. Ask for details that will enable you to complete the mental movie. Doing this fills in the mental movie much like a screenplay writer fills in the details of a video-shot so that the producer and director knows when the set is set up and ready to go.

To speak in this way is to speak *descriptively* rather than *evaluatively*. That is the foundation for being a professional communicator. To not be able to recognize that distinction or make that distinction is to not be able to be professional as a communicator, but sloppy speaker. Ready to begin to clean up your fluffy and/or sloppy language habits? Try these foundational NLP models. If you want to become a professional communicator, get NLP practitioner training. You can find the content of it in the books, *User’s Manual of the Brain* – Volume I the Practitioner level; Volume II the Master Practitioner level. For the highest quality of training – use a Neuro-Semantic Trainer!

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #14
April 7, 2014
Cleaning up Language Series #3

CLEANING UP FLUFF

You can clean up your language and get over a lot of precision by using the Meta-Model of Language and the Representational Model (#13). These precision models inform you how to become more precise and specific in the way you think and then talk. Now within the Meta-Model is a particular distinction that's especially critical—*nominalizations and the skill of de-nominalizing*.

This is actually a subject that I speak and write about a lot. And even though I do, I find that most of us, including myself, can so easily get seduced by the hypnotic power of nominalizations. And if you really don't know how to recognize these great big fluffy words (a nominalization) and deal with it, your language is going to be sloppy—very sloppy. And that means you will not be precise in communicating even though you probably will think you are. That's one of the seductions of nominalizations. The speaker has details in mind when speaking, but the language form does not convey them. So the speaker will feel as if he or she is being precise even though what comes out of the mouth is vague, indefinite, and fluffy.

So, what is a nominalization? A *nominalization* refers to an action or a process which has been *named*, or nominalized. The problem is that when we give a name to an action, it tricks our mind. The “name” (noun) makes the action sound like and seem like as if it were a thing.

One person *relating* to another person is *doing* something: talking, requesting, kissing, holding, hitting, smiling, laughing, crying, helping, listening, etc. By *relating* they now have a *relationship*. Sounds like a thing. It is not.

When you think and value yourself as valuable as a person, you *esteem* yourself as significant. When you name this action, you create the nominalization, *self-esteem*. It sounds like a thing. It is not.

When a person is *leading* a group with a vision, he or she is said to have *leadership* qualities.

Prior to Transformational Grammar which came up with the term, “nominalization,” Abraham Maslow called this process—*reification*. Others have called it *thingification*. Nominalizing is the concretizing of a dynamic moving process (which is best described by verbs) as if it is a noun (“a person, place, or thing”). Yet it is not.

As a result of this, it makes the nominalization false-to-fact. What the nominalization presents is not just an over-generalization, not just a idea that's very fluffy and vague. The nominalization is actually a lie, a deception. The so-called *thing* is not a “thing” at all!

“My *self-esteem* these days is really because of the *problems* in my *relationship* which makes me feel *stressed-out* and it's going to lead to a *depression*.”

All of the italicized words in the above sentence are nominalizations and they are connected by fallacious cause-effect structures (indicated by the words “because” and “going to lead”). Here is one single sentence and it is full of fluff and vagueness. The person’s languaging here is really sloppy. And the person probably doesn’t have a clue as to how this single sentence is semantically loaded with toxic ideas and how it works as a post-hypnotic suggestion to make life more and more miserable in the future.

If you want to create imprecision, just take some action words, nominalize them, connect them to some cause-effect statements and you can semantically pack a sentence so that it is full of abstract concepts. What you say will seem meaningful to you. And I’m sure you are trying to communicate something. But when you do that you will not be communicating with precision and so those of us listening will typically experience confusion ... or we will hallucinate our own meanings onto the other’s words.

Okay, now for cleaning up our language. The solution is simple: *de-nominalize the nominalizations*. That is, turn the false-nouns back into verbs and then specify the verbs. If you hear “relationship,” ask “Who’s relating to whom?” “What is X doing in relating to Y?” If you hear the nominalization “self-esteem,” ask “How are you esteeming yourself? By what criteria? In what way?”

Now to turn a false noun back into a verb, you first have to be able to *recognize* a false noun or nominalization. When I first learned NLP, I was introduced to two tests for a nominalization:

- 1) The Wheelbarrow Test. Can you put the nominalization in a wheelbarrow? Can you put “relationship” in a wheelbarrow? No. Can you put “self-esteem” in a wheelbarrow? No.
- 2) The Ongoing Test. If you say, “it is an ongoing ...” and fill in the blank with the word, does it make sense? “An ongoing relationship...” Yes, makes sense.
- 3) Here’s another test: See if you can make a picture of the word. You can make pictures of real nouns of “persons, places, and things.” It doesn’t work with a false noun. Can see a “relationship” or “motivation.” So ask some more questions until you can *see* what they are talking about.

Nominalizations have their place especially in doing trance inductions, but not for communicating with clarity and precision. Use them sparingly, if you use them too much your language will be fluffy and sloppy. That’s why we need to clean up our language of them.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #15
April 14, 2014

META-COACHING

A Transformative Gift That Keeps Giving

If there's any consistent testimony during the past few years that I hear almost from every single person who graduates from the Coaching Boot Camp of *Coaching Mastery* it is this: *The Meta-Coaching System is an incredibly transformative experience.* While I have always known that, I have been discovering that it is transformative in so many ways and dimensions of life than I ever expected. It is also transformative to a degree that I've been discovering as most surprising.

In my own experiences last year and this year in a wide range of places, from Brazil to China, from Kenya to Egypt, from Colorado to Brussels, the common theme is that *the transformations are accumulative.* Sure there were many *Aha!* moments, but mostly the transformation snuck up on them. It wasn't until afterwards, sometimes weeks, even months, that most began to realize the extent and degree of the changes that they and experienced.

- What explains this?
- How does the changes in thinking, feeling, languaging, acting, and relating operate and how does it build up in an accumulative way?

New Insightful Ideas

There's obviously lots of new information that creates change. We promise people from day one to do an information overload as we introduce lots of new models and patterns. And because "mastery is in the details" it is often the case that one or more particular *distinction* will strike a person in a particular way and he or she will experience it as completely life changing.

Coaching and Being Coached

However, even more central than that is the socio-emotional experience of coaching and being coached. We do this every day, and usually several times every day, often coaching through a patterned process for a particular objective as well as the "coaching sessions" that are supervised and benchmarked. There's something about actually practicing "the conversation like none other" (the coaching conversation) in a context of challenge in which you never know when a single conversation might be the conversation in which you discover a critical distinction that becomes a life-changing experience.

The Joy of Authenticity

Many have told me at the graduation or weeks or even months later that it was the coaching experiences in *Coaching Mastery* that was so real, so authentic, and so personal that made the transformational difference. Almost all start off saying that they thought the sessions would be more like role playing. Then they discovered that even when they were being coached by someone new to it all and inexperienced, still the power of the listening, supporting, questioning,

and feedback was incredibly more profound than they ever thought possible.

“I really don’t think that I have ever been listened to so actively and deeply and caringly.”

“The listening was seductive, I found myself talking about things I had never said aloud before. And in speaking aloud, it was like it freed me. I can’t explain it.”

The factor of Challenge

We have designed the *Coaching Mastery* boot camp to be intense and challenging. We have built into it lots of difference things that challenge and stretch a person. Why? Primarily in order that participants can test their resources to see what they can and cannot handle and then learn to access and develop a set of new resources for keeping presence of mind under pressure and handling stress in a much more resourceful way. The intensity has to do with the time pressures, the demandingness of acting on and practicing new understandings immediately, of working with others in a context of supervision which entails performing when still in the consciously incompetence stage and while being benchmarked!

The Joy of Challenge

At first, many really hate and resist the experience. Yet by the end of the course, just as many are bemoaning that it will end! They are really missing the challenge. What began as a context of performance anxiety became transformed into an experience of loving how challenge calls forth the best and how stepping up to the unknown or the ambiguous has become a real turn on. Of course, that’s why we have set up MCF chapters everywhere— so that Coaches can continue the experience. This is accelerated adult learning and many report that, for the first time in their lives, they have rediscovered the absolute joy of learning. They leave the boot camp with an intense childlike wonder and curiosity.

The Joy of Learning and Experimentation

Getting over the performance anxiety also involves getting over the perfectionistic frame of having to do something “right the first time.” They experience learning as a way of experimenting, playing around with possibilities, and taking informed risks as a way of life. I am constantly hearing people talk about this as the birth of a true spirit of entrepreneurship.

“I used to be so afraid of failure, of rejection, of making mistakes. I can’t believe that I used to feel that way. Now it just seems so natural, I feel like a scientist experimenting the laboratory of life!”

“What was I thinking? I had to be perfect? It seems so silly now. Now whatever I do, I know that whatever response I get, it is just that, a response ... and one that I can learn from. This changes everything.”

The Joy of Being a Team Player

In *Coaching Mastery* we create and use groups (usually 6 in a group) to first be a supportive learning team and then to be a high performance team. This is required because of the group projects we give them. They learn “group and team coaching” *from inside the experience*. And that’s where the Team Leaders on the Assist team come in. Here people begin to learn the skills for being good team members and how to be inter-dependent in a healthy way. We also try our best to get the teams to “storm”(!) so that they also learn conflict resolution skills— how to respectfully, caringly, and assertively work through the differences of opinion and experience

themselves as a high performance team.

For many this is incredibly transformative. Those who come in and are highly individualistic, and prefer to do things alone, discover how they put people off and prevent true collaboration. Others come in with exaggerated needs for peace and harmony that “conflict” seems to be an inhuman thing to them.

“The change that I’m taking away from *Meta-Coaching* is that I am not so ‘sensitive’ to differences or conflict and I now know that I can handle conflict in an entirely new way.”
“I thought I was a great leader and then discovered that I could only lead to being in charge and controlling. What’s been transformative is that I now know I can lead from the back as well as the front and I can do so by being a great team player. My wife is going to be so surprised!”

Are you ready for a *life-changing transformation* this year? If so, plan to join us for the Coaching Boot Camp on Independence Day (July 4) in Colorado:

Module II: July 1-3

Module III: July 4-11

At the Countries Inns of America Hotel and Conference Center
Grand Junction Colorado

Sponsored by Neuro-Semantics Ltd. Colorado
(970) 523-7877 — meta@acsol.net

And there are More!

If that doesn’t work, then here are lots of other places around the world where you can attend *Coaching Mastery* boot camp:

June 5-8: Mexico City — *Coaching Mastery, Part I*

Ivan Robbles, David Murphy, and Emilia Bleck

June 3-4: Team leaders

June 5-8: Part I of ACMC the Coaching Bootcamp

Iván Robbles: irobles@cglobalmexico.com ivan@coachingontologico.com
david@neurosemantica-latam.com; mecbleck@hotmail.com

June 15-22: Hong Kong — ACMC *Coaching Mastery*

June 13-14: Team leaders

June 15-22: Coaching Mastery – Coaching Boot Camp

Mandy Chai mandy@apti.com.hk

September 13-20: Shanghai China — *Coaching Mastery*

Team Leaders: Sept. 11-12

Coaching Boot Camp: Sept. 13-20

Mandy Chai mandy@apti.com.hk

Sept. 29– Oct. 7: *Coaching Mastery (AMCM) Brussels Belgium*

Sept. 27-28: *Team Leaders*

Sept. 28 – Oct. 7 Module III Coaching Mastery— The Coaching Boot Camp
Germaine Rediger — germaine@indialogue.eu

Oct. 5: Modeling an Expert Coach: Graham Richardson

Open to everyone

Sydney Australia – Coaching Room

Oct. 22-23: Team Leaders

Oct. 24-31: *Coaching Mastery – Module III, Coaching Boot Camp*

Jay Hedley and Joseph Scott

Jay@thecoachingroom.com.au Joseph@thecoachingroom.com.au

Nov. 21– Nov. 28 – Rio de Janeiro — *Coaching Mastery*

Team leaders: Nov. 19-20

Contact info: Jairo Mancilha — jairo@pnl.med.br

Maira— maira@pnl.med.br

There will also be Coaching Mastery in:

Auckland New Zealand

Manila Philippines, Jan. 2015

Cairo, Egypt, Feb. 2015

Bali, Indonesia, March, 2015

and so on

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #16
April 21, 2014

WORLD-CLASS COACHING & SELF-ACTUALIZATION PREMISES

Do you have more potential to be unleashed? I bet you do, I bet that everyone you know also has more potential to be unleashed? So, let's start from that idea.

Suppose we begin from the proposition that all men (and women) are created with a higher nature, a self-actualizing need, that drives them to be all that they can be. *If we start* with this premise which lies at the heart of Self-Actualizing Psychology, namely, that there is within human beings an inner nature to actualize their highest values and visions so that they produce their best performances, what then follows? *If we assume* that people everywhere are created with a whole host of potentials within and which clamor to be developed, that all people are made for truth, authenticity, responsibility, and love— then what will be the consequences of this in homes, businesses, organizations, and governments?

If we start from the proposition that human beings are far more than advanced animals, that they have an inexplicable higher nature, that they are motivated by higher level needs that drive them to think about others and to want to give back— then how do we activate these higher qualities in people and bring them out?

- How do we enable people to step up to their full potentials?
- How do we identify and develop what's higher in people?
- How do we actualize the best in people and make it real in everyday life?

If the Self-Actualization Psychology tells the untold story of human nature—if there's good in all people, and the potential for both greatness and transformation, what does this demand of us if we are to find a way to tap into this bright side of our nature?

In Neuro-Semantics, these questions have guided us in how we design our trainings and govern the way we coach and consult. By making our larger frame-of-reference is Self-Actualization Psychology, our primary focus shifts to identifying, developing, and unleashing that which is highest and best in human nature. As we traveled this path we discovered something surprising, namely, that NLP arose from this very focus. We discovered that the people originally modeled by Bandler, Grinder, and Pucelik were the second generation of leaders in the first Human Potential Movement. We discovered that the NLP Presuppositions originally came from Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers and Rollo May and many others of the founders of the psychology of Self-Actualization as the premises of that new psychology.

All of this explains *the most distinctive factor* that sets apart the Meta-Coaching System. Now it is true that most of the field of Coaching claim to be something other than psychotherapy and

something other than Consulting and Training. Most in the field of Coaching also claim to be based on some form of humanistic, positive, and/or strength-based psychology, none that we know have fully articulated the relationship between Self-Actualization Psychology and Coaching as we have.

When you sign up for the Meta-Coaching System, and especially when you attend *Coaching Mastery* which is Module III and leads to the APMC credentials (Associate Certified Meta-Coach), you will experience a coaching based entirely upon Self-Actualization Psychology. As a result, you will learn skills that you can learn nowhere else—how to identify and unleash human potentials.

The most striking conclusion that results from *starting* from Self-Actualization is the premise that your clients do *not* need your advice, fixing, or solutions. That's *not* what they need and it is not what you do. When you *begin from the proposition* that your coaching clients are not broken and that they have the internal resources for unleashing all of their potentials— then you *coach* in a very different way.

How? First you connect with them by listening and supporting so that you create the space whereby *they can begin to hear themselves*, hear their inner voice. This kind of in-depth and intense *listening* is not natural and no one does it intuitively. You have to learn to do that!

When you learn that quality of listening in the training, you begin learning that your clients are trying to express but cannot. You begin hearing in their stories what's *really blocking them* and what *really solves* those problems. As a professional communicator you realize that more often than not people get lost and confused by a series of pseudo-problems. Sometimes symptoms of the problem. Sometimes misunderstandings. Through intense, in-depth listening and probing, you hear the real problems. You see and hear the Matrix in code.

Then, by mirroring-back and facilitating through awareness questions, you enable the person to hear him or herself. Doing is incredibly transformative. And because you imposed nothing, there's no resistance. You've listened—supported in a way that is so unique that they start awakening to their own inner potentials, creativity, authenticity, and responsibility. And when that happens, lives change in incredible ways.

That's also when you hear something else—the person's solutions. On the surface, it seems so strange, so paradoxical. Yet just as people don't seem to be able to discern the real problem, they also don't see to consciously know the real solution. This occurs even while they are trying different solutions and believing that they finally have the solution. But in the end, no. Yet if only they could hear themselves— really hear themselves— which is what you do. When you do— and present it back to them and help them see how it is the solution, a solution that they have known and yet not known, not realized, not articulated.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #17
April 28, 2014

COACHING— THE NEW LEADERSHIP

At the end of the 20th century and now into the 21st century, *a brand new leadership* has been developing. Actually, it has been in the works for thousands of years, but usually the voices calling for it were faint and easily ignored. Why? Because over the centuries, the idea of leadership was entirely dominated by the idea of “the leader is the strong man.” This understanding of leadership grew out of the times when human culture was primitive and when “might made right.” In those times the rule of the jungle was also the rule of human affairs and human government. The person in charge was the person who was the strongest, and at first, this was strictly physical and as groups gathered, it was the strongest in the sense of who was the most ruthless, who could and would use fear, threat, and might to get his way. That’s when the military idea of leadership prevailed— that’s when leadership was bossing, ordering, commanding, controlling.

But the times they have been changing. Command-and-control management and leadership has been giving way to an entirely new way to think about leading and leadership. It began when it became obvious that while a forceful, controlling “leader” might get compliance of behavior, command-and-control methods can never truly win *the minds* of people, let alone *the hearts*, and even less so *their spirits*. To move beyond winning compliance with control and threats to winning the hearts and minds of people, then to winning their allegiance, and finally to winning their loyalty requires a lot more. It requires an entirely new and different paradigm. In Neuro-Semantics, we call that new paradigm: Self-Actualization.

This new way of leading requires using a force that goes beyond fear and threat. It requires *being* the kind of person that people pay attention to, learn from, understand, feel connected to, believe in what he or she presents, wants to be a part of something bigger than themselves. This kind of leader calls forth the best in people, inspire them, taps into their human capital of intelligence and creativity, treats them as colleagues, relates to them as equals, as colleagues, and creates a winning team with them. This is the *self-actualizing leader*.

Now, where do you learn these kinds of skills? The amazing and surprising answer is in the *core coaching skills*. That is, today and into the coming centuries, the great leaders will be those who *lead* people by enabling them and doing that through what today we know are the core competencies of coaching. This is *Coaching Leadership*.

That explains one of the central reasons why you find lots of leaders attending the Meta-Coach Trainings. They know that they will lead best when they are skilled at connecting with people, actively and deeply listening and supporting people, and when they can explore with people for their ideas and contributions. They know that they will lead best when they are competent in receiving and giving high quality feedback, when they can frame situations, induce people to

feel, inspire, awaken, align, collaborate, etc. The surprise is that these are the skills of coaching.

The powerful flexibility of these skills is that you can use them one person at a time as you influence people or with a group and transform a collection of individuals into a high performance team. This also reveals something else about leadership— leadership occurs at all levels and dimensions of human experience. Not merely at the top; but all the way up the levels and in every domain. And if there's anything that's really missing today it is *good leadership. It is healthy, self-actualizing leadership that brings out the best in people.*

So if you want to improve, enhance, and empower your leadership skills, a great beginning place is with the core coaching skills. Start there. Experience coaching and how it can create clarity and decisiveness for you as you identify and unleash more of your leadership potentials. Then you'll be in a great place to begin to groom leaders around you. Because, as Warren Bennis noted many times, the purpose of leadership is not to create followers, it is to create more leaders and the next generation leaders.

This is one of reasons we regularly have business owners, senior managers, and CEOs at *Coaching Mastery*. Are they planning to become coaches? No, of course not. They are there to become better leaders and they will become more excellent as leaders by the coaching process and methodology. And if you are ready to unleash your core leadership competencies, I'd recommend learning the coaching skills as the fundamentals of effective leadership.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #18
May 5, 2014

EXECUTIVE COACHING

The Content of the New Book

I recently sent out a description of the new book, *Executive Coaching* and also the table of contents. In spite of the table of content, several people have written and asked, “So what’s in the book?” I thought the table of contents sufficiently answered that, and when I said that to someone, they said, “Well, yes, of course you would. You wrote the book. You know what those titles refer to and what’s in those chapters.” That’s when I put my palm to forehead and decided to write the following.

The World of Executive Coaching.

After a brief introduction to coaching and executive coaching (chs. 1-2), there’s a chapter on “Life in the C-Suite.” The design is to provide a picture of the nature of what work-life is like for those at the senior management levels—what executives face on a daily basis, the stresses and pressures, the challenges and concerns. Today I’m enroute back from Moscow where I delivered the training on Executive Coaching, my translator asked “What is C-suite?” “Well, you know, CEO, CFO, COO, etc.” Oh yes, now she understood. Chapter 4 follows that up by connecting the value of living a self-actualizing life as an executive. Is that possible? If so, how? How does an Executive Coach think about enabling the person to actualize his or her whole self and in that context still be a full and caring human being.

Executive Challenges

This second section has eight chapters. Each of the eight chapters addresses the key and critical challenges of an executive’s life: emotional well-being, vision, feedback, change, leadership, politics, creating culture, and derailment. Well-being is important because not only do others have to live in the organizational or corporate culture, so do the executives. Is it a healthy place to live? Does the stress and pressure in the company overwhelm people? Or is there support there? *Vision* is a critical challenge because it is the job of those in the executive roles to inspire people. If they do that, then people in the organization will find their work meaningful and significant. If not, then their work lacks meaningfulness and therefore their engagement will be nil.

Feedback is key because of the tendency to avoid giving bad news to people over you. Not infrequently the bearer of bad news has been connected to the bad news and then shot! Whistle-blowers, who are so important in organizations, know that if the person over you can retaliate, then giving accurate sensory-based feedback can be dangerous to your career. So executives are oftentimes the last person to know what’s really going on. Then there are the challenges of *change in an organization*, how to lead that change; *politics* and how to deal with the political agendas in the office, and *culture* and how to create a culture where people can be open,

transparent, honest, etc.

Then there is *derailment*— a person going off his or her career track and messing it all up. And given all of the critical factors just listed, there's lots of ways that an executive can mess things up and wreck his or her career. Many do. In fact, lots do. And that's one of the big values of having an Executive Coach. In all of these challenges, at the heart of executive coaching is *relationship*. After all, that's what the top managers and executives do— they work with and through others to create a collaborative enterprise and to achieve together what an individual or a few individuals cannot do alone or apart.

Executive Coaching Conversations

In the third section there's an introduction into a Coaching Conversation—"the conversation like none other" which describes the heart and soul of Meta-Coaching. After all, coaching is a fierce conversation that enables an executive to face critical issues in a safe context. And as with personal coaching and group and team coaching, there are a number of specialized coaching conversations that are unique to executive coaching.

The *Sounding Board Conversation* is a special gift to senior managers—because so often they have no one to talk out-loud to. Now they do. The *Outcome Conversation* is one for clarity and focused and once complete gives one a relevant direction for vision and inspiration. The *Feedback Conversation* distinguishes *real* feedback from judgment and evaluation. The *Confrontation Conversation* is another gift— given that others in the organization have political agendas and can't afford to bring up hot or sensitive subjects. The *Meta Conversation* is one for gaining perspective as well as for exposing the kind of thinking by which we create our interpretations and conclusions.

The *Unleashing Potentials Conversation* returns to the subject of self-actualization and keeps an executive alive, vital, and curious. That's because with the unleashing of one potential, other potentials begin to emerge as a person's next level of development and challenge. The *Integrating and Integrity Conversations* address how to execute what one knows, how to implement new learnings in order to close the Knowing—Doing gap. This is a matter of integrity. There's nothing that can derail an executive quicker than incongruency, talking but not walking the talk, promising but never coming through. Integrity, however, goes further and addresses the moral and ethical factors in organizations.

The *Systems Conversation* invites an executive to move beyond simple and linear cause-effect relationships to the dynamic complexity that occurs in systems. And executives are leading and/or managing a system. That means there are never just one cause or factor, there are multiple factors and often in cultural change is dealing with it at the systems level. The *Paradoxical Conversation* flushes out pseudo-problems, especially those that have been created by a false dichotomy that polarizes factors that are actually a part of the same system.

Launching your Executive Coaching Career is the final section and has a single chapter which focuses on the business part of Executive Coaching, how to think about it as a business, how to get started, how to get in, how to frame and sell oneself, and much more.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #19
May 12, 2014

RETHINKING BIG-ASS GIANTS

When we face giants, most of us are overwhelmed with fear, dread, depression, anger, and other strong negative emotions. After all, “Who am I to face a giant? My God, he’s a giant!” And some people seem to have an incredible ability to see and imagine giants everywhere. Some of the things that they have to do at work are giants. Their mate is a giant! So are their children! These powerful opponents oppress them, torment them, and overwhelm them.

Now when the shepherd boy David faced the Philistine giant who was at least 6 foot 9 inches, from all account, he was facing overwhelming odds that were not in his favor. He was a boy, the giant was a seasoned warrior. All he had was a slingshot, the giant had armor, a long sword, heavy metal helmet bronze plates, and short-range spear as “thick as a weaver’s beam.” The giant was also intimidating: “Choose you a man and let him come down to me!” No one moved. “Come to me that I may give your flesh to the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field.” Everyone froze.

Everyone, that is, but a young boy. David was enraged that no one would stand up to the insults and so he volunteered. King Saul, to his credit, did try to give David more of a fighting chance by offering his own sword and armor. But David refused. “I cannot walk in these for I am unused to it.” So he goes out to fight the giant with five smooth stones.

At his sight the giant Goliath is insulted. “Am I a dog that you should come to me with sticks?” Of course, that’s what giants do—intimidate and bully, verbally as well as physically. David takes no offense, he just gets busy with the task at hand. Putting one of the stones in the leather pouch of the sling, he fires it off at Goliath’s exposed forehead. Bulls eye! The giant falls, stunned. David runs to him, seizes his sword and cuts off his head. “The Philistines saw that their warrior was dead, and they fled.” Suddenly, against all expectations and predictions, the underdog won.

Malcolm Gladwell in his latest book, *David and Goliath* (2014), says that while on the surface this may look like a big surprise, it is not. The danger that we face here is the inadequacy of a superficial judgment. On the surface Goliath is large, gigantic and David is small. On the surface, all the power seems to favor the big guy. But there’s more. Gladwell writes:

“Goliath’s behavior is puzzling. He is supposed to be a mighty warrior. But he’s not acting like one. He comes down to the valley floor accompanied by an attendant— a servant walking before him, carrying a shield ... But why does Goliath, a man calling for sword-on-sword single combat, need to be assisted by a third party carrying an archer’s shield?

What’s more, why does he say to David, ‘Come to me’? Why can’t Goliath go to David? The biblical account emphasizes how slowly Goliath moves, which is an odd thing to say about someone who is alleged to be a battle hero of infinite strength. In any case, why doesn’t Goliath respond much sooner to the sight of David coming down the hillside without any sword or shield

or armor? ... He seems oblivious of what's happening around him." (p. 13)

The answer that Gladwell presents is that Goliath had a serious medical condition.

"He looks and sounds like someone suffering from what is called *acromegaly*— a disease caused by a benign tumor of the pituitary gland. The tumor causes an over-production of human growth hormone, which would explain Goliath's extraordinary size."

That would explain why he was led to the valley floor by an attendant. The attendant was his visual guide.

"Why does he move so slowly? Because the world around him is a blur. Why does it take him so long to understand that David has changed the rules? Because he doesn't see David until David is up close." (p. 14)

Gladwell highlights that the paradox is that the giant's very size was also the source of his weakness. As a heavy infantry-man, Goliath assumed that the other side would send him a heavy-infantry-man and that he would engage the other on his terms and from his strength. That's what he *assumed*. And his *assumptions* about the rules of the game which normally worked was precisely his downfall.

David did not make the same assumptions about "power" and "success" and what's needed to succeed. In this, David essentially changed the rules of the game. David was a projectile warrior, skilled in using the sling with speed and accuracy. So he "ran" toward the giant which changed the game because heavy infantry-men were so weighted down with armor they could not run, but David could. He had speed, maneuverability, and agility which must have been like a blur of images to Goliath. Gladwell writes:

"The very thing that gave the giant his size was also the source of his greatest weakness ... The powerful and strong are not always what they seem" (p. 15).

Accordingly, his book is filled with many other stories about our assumptions of power, success, advantages, and disadvantages. For example, he asks, What really is a *disadvantage*? Are setbacks, handicaps, etc. always a disadvantage? Then quoting the statistics that two-thirds of all successful entrepreneurs were diagnosed with dyslexia.

"An extraordinarily high number of successful entrepreneurs are dyslexic." (p. 106). "What does it take to be the person who doesn't accept the conventional order of things?" (p. 25).

To have a disadvantage, it is *not* enough to merely have a problem, a challenge, a situation that one has to deal with, or step up to. *To have a disadvantage, you have to think of it as a disadvantage, believe it is, and set that as your frame-of-reference.* It's about your interpretations! Your meanings. Gladwell says that there are *desirable* difficulties (p. 102), desirable because it enables you to unleash possibilities that would never have arisen without the difficulty to challenge you.

So the next time you're up against a big-ass Giant and feel overwhelmed, it might be a good idea to check your assumptions. How are you thinking about the giant's advantages and your disadvantages? How could your disadvantages be used to your advantage?

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #20
May 19, 2014

THE STILL SHOCKING TRUTHS ABOUT SUB-MODALITIES

While presenting APG in Israel, several NLP Trainers constantly asked me about my view of Sub-Modalities. “How can you say that they are not *sub*-modalities, but *meta*-modalities?” With two of them, I went over the arguments over and over before they got it. The thing that finally convinced one of them was the very description of sub-modalities in the NLP books. I asked him to bring me some NLP books that he had which would have a passage or a chapter on sub-modalities, then we could look at how sub-modalities are described. To his surprise, the so-called *sub*-modalities are described using the *meta*-language so that the so-called sub-modalities were described as “nominalizations,” “concepts,” “categories,” and “generalizations.” He was stunned.

What is a so-called *sub*-modality? Typical statements that we found were these:

If a visual image or picture is *close or far* then that is the distance sub-modality.

When you have a sound, it can be *loud or quiet*, so the *volume* of the sound is a sub-modality.

A sub-modality may be digital, either you are in the picture or out of it, or it may be analogue like fuzzy or clear to varying degrees. In the first case, associated or disassociated, in the second clarity of the image.

“...the degree of pleasure you have in that memory is a direct consequence of *the color, size, brightness, and distance* of the visual image you hold in your mind’s eye.” (*An Insider’s Guide to Sub-Modalities*, p. 2)

“Learning to manipulate the sub-modalities (like *color, focus, size, distance movement, pitch, volume, location*) is the first step in developing the flexibility to control your internal states” (*Insider’s Guide*, p. 18)

Given these statements, what can we conclude? The authors are constantly confusing a detail like “close” with the category that it is a member of, “distance.” *Distance* is not sub-distinction of anything, *distance* is a generalization. You can’t see “distance,” it is a concept. You cannot put *distance* in a wheelbarrow (the nominalization test of NLP), so *distance* is a nominalization. So with *volume*. It also is a nominalization, a concept, and a generalization. You can record *volume*. You can record a sound at a particular decibel, but not *volume*. And the same thing applies to the concept of association and clarity. None of these so-called sub-modalities are “sub” to anything.

Funny, isn’t it? NLP people talk about sub-modalities using *meta-level concepts*. You will find this everywhere in NLP literature. Why? Because we are actually *not* dealing with smaller components of a movie, we are actually operating at an *editorial level*. This is the level at which you consider the movie that you are representing and then start *noticing* how you have automatically coded the movie. *Noticing* gives you an *awareness* of your representational code

and with that awareness now comes *choice*. How would you like to code (i.e., choose the sub-modality distinction) for your movie?

In an excellent book, *Introducing Neuro-Linguistic Programming* (1990) by O'Connor and Seymour the list of sub-modalities are listed as follows. Can you put any of these distinctions in a wheelbarrow? If not, then we are really talking about a meta-level distinction. What has been called sub-modalities are nominalizations and if so, then we know that we're not dealing with sensory-based descriptions, but generalizations and categories.

Associated	Stereo	Location
Color	Volume	Intensity
Depth	Tone	Pressure
Location	Timbre	Extent
Distance	Location	Texture
Brightness	Distance	Weight
Contrast	Duration	Temperature
Clarity	Continuous	Duration
Movement	Speed	Shape
Speed	Clarity	

Amazing! The so-called “sub-modalities” are described by words that are nominalizations and generalizations all. This is why we (Bob Bodenhamer and I) wrote in the book, *Sub-Modalities Going Meta* (1999, 2005) that you have to “go meta,” you step back and notice your code. You have to do that just to become aware of sub-modalities. The code of your representational system comes with some cinematic distinctions— first notice them, then choose the ones that will be enhance your life.

Now whatever cinematic distinction you choose to use in your movie code, that distinction in itself means nothing. It only means whatever meaning you give it. Again, that's why we noted back in 1997 that the so-called *sub-modalities work semantically*. They work *symbolically* by the semantics that you give them. If you treat *distance* as meaning “less real” and “less compelling” then when you code a picture with distance, you experience it in that way. If you didn't construct that meaning, the coding would not be felt in that way.

When you take a “sub-modality” distinction and notice that it is a nominalization which indicates a category or classification, then you have to follow up by asking, “What is the standard? What is the measurement code and/or units that you are using?”

The category of *duration* is said to be *short* or *long*. But *short* and *long* are also nominalizations! How are you measuring “short” or “long” by minutes, days, years, centuries? Is 30 days “short?” By what benchmarks? May 30 minutes is “long?”

The category of *speed* is *slow* or *fast*, also needs a measurement standard and benchmark so we can tell if 100 miles-an-hour is fast or is it slow. It is “fast” if we are talking about driving a car or running. But if our benchmark is the speed of light (186,000 miles a second), the 100 miles-an-hour is incredibly slow.

This holds true for every so-called sub-modality. The distinction is actually a *meta-modality* which is why we call them *cinematic features* of our movies and intimately related to meaning and, in fact, multiple levels of meaning.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #21
May 26, 2014

THE NEUROLOGY OF META-STATES

While presenting APG recently, one NLP Trainer intensely struggled to get his head around the idea of meta-states. Having been trained exclusively within “the Bandler camp of NLP,” he had been explicitly taught that the Meta-States Model was simply wrong and inadequate. Yet here he was at a Meta-States Training for *Accessing Personal Genius* (APG)! Isn’t that great as an example of being open-minded? At the breaks, he inundated me with some excellent questions that got me thinking. It was obviously he was experiencing *brain strain* as he struggled to figure it out. So absolutely fascinated at his experience and wondering what ideas were preventing him from gaining clarity, I asked him as many questions as he asked me.

Quoting Bandler and Michael Breen, he argued that there is only one neurology and that therefore we can only have one state. “Whatever *state* a person is experiencing is a *single state* within a single neurology. You cannot have a state about a state.” On the surface, that sounds reasonable, right? He asked, “There’s only one neurology, you can’t have two neurologies in the same body, can you?” Now while I had never thought about things in that way, I answered in the affirmative. “Yes, you can.” “How?” he asked.

The answer to *how* lies in brain and nervous system anatomy. First of all, we do not have a single nervous system. We have many nervous systems: the autonomic nervous system, the immune system, the digestive system, the sympathetic nervous system (fight-flight response), the parasympathetic nervous system (relaxation response), the circulatory system, the endocrine system, etc. Our brain also has layers of distinct functional parts wherein our nerve impulses processes information level upon level. We generally identify the anatomy of the brain as having three parts or brains: the reptilian, mammalian, and higher or human level brain. This makes our brain and nervous system complex and layered.

The higher level brain:

Governs: Learning, language, problem solving, deciding, creativity.

Involves: Cerebral cortex, the parietal, temporal, and occipital lobes; the prefrontal lobes (have an array of inhibitory neurons capable of stopping the directives the amygdala sends) and the left frontal lobe.

The mammalian brain:

Governs: Emotion, coordination of movement, the general adaptation syndrome (fight- flight-freeze response)

Involves: The limbic system, amygdala (the brains alarm), thalamus.

Reticular activation system (RAS): located at the beginning in the upper brain stem, continues into the lower reaches of the cerebral cortex. When emotionally charged, RAS shuts down the cerebral cortex.

The reptilian brain:

Governs: Respiration, digestion, circulation, reproduction.

Nerve impulses are processed at different levels. The body is first activated by the senses which experiences a stimulus in terms of sights, sounds, sensations, smells, etc. This “information” then enters the human body as the nerve impulses move through the nerve cells (neurons) which are connected to each other through the dendrite and axon structures. Along the way neurotransmitters as chemicals are secreted at the synapse which in turn affect the formation, maintenance, activity, and longevity of synapses and neurons.

As the nerve impulses move from sense-receptor away from the outside and into the body, it goes first to the lower levels of the brain (thalamus and hypothalamus) where we “process” that information. Then, the nerve impulses are sent to the higher brain levels to be processed there (the frontal cortex). Korzybski noted that if we “use our nervous system the way animals use theirs” then we process the “information” only at the lower levels and do not take the time to reflect on the information and so use the higher processing levels. To use our neurology as a human nervous system with its full potential, we need to take a moment to stop and reflect. This will send nerve impulses upwards to be processed further by the higher levels.

In writing about this in *Science and Sanity*, Korzybski (1933/ 1994) described the order or syntax of the nervous system and its levels:

“The structure of our nervous system was established with ‘senses’ first, and ‘mind’ next. In neurological terms, the nervous impulses should be received first in the lower centres and pass on through the sub-cortical layers to the cortex, be influenced there and be transformed in the cortex by the effect of past experiences. ... We know that the reversed order in semantic manifestation— namely, the projection into ‘senses’ of memory traces or doctrinal impulses— is against the survival structure...” (176)

In writing about our neurology, Korzybski spoke about “the nervous system works as-a-whole” and the anatomical homology of the parts of different nervous systems (177). He also frequently spoke about the structural complexity and differentiation of the nervous system (183).

“Since the cortex has a profound influence upon the other parts of the brain, the insufficient use of the cortex must reflect detrimentally upon the functioning of the other parts of the brain. ... Processes should pass the entire cycle. If not, there must be something wrong with the system.” (178)

“What part in the ‘seeing’ is due to ‘senses’, and what to ‘mind’? The answer is, that, structurally, the ‘seeing’ is the result of a cyclic *interdependent* process, which can be *split only verbally*. ... The human nervous system represents, structurally, a mutually interdependent cyclic chain, where each partial function is in the functional chain, together with enforcing and ‘inhibiting,’ and other mechanisms.” (180)

The cycle that he here speaks about is the circuit of information coming into the nervous system, being processed at various levels, and then returning to activate one to respond in an appropriate way. Later in *Science and Sanity* he provided some diagrams of the flow and direction of the nerve impulses.

“Figure 1 shows how the normal impulse should travel. It should pass the thalamus, pass the sub-cortical layers, reach the cortex, and return. That the impulse is *altered* in passing this

complicated chain is indicated in the diagram. (193)

Processing of “information” at different levels in the human nervous system creates different kinds of thinking. Here he speaks about thalamic thinking versus higher level thinking which shows up in us as being reactive versus responsive (thinking and choosing our responses). The lower levels of brain functioning and processing involves comparative unconditionality whereas the higher levels involve increasing more conditionality. This led Korzybski to talk about the lower levels to be more animal-like as it involves “the confusion of orders of abstraction” (36,37, 42). That is, people here “think” in terms of things being determined.

“... the ‘thalamic thinking’ in humans; those individuals who overwork their thalamus and use their cortex too little are ‘emotional’ and stupid. ... when these shifting, dynamic, affective, thalamic-region, lower order abstractions are abstracted again by the higher centres, these new abstractions are further removed from the outside world and must be somehow different.” (291)

“The more elaborate a nervous system becomes, the further some parts of the brain are removed from immediate experience. Nerve currents, having finite velocity, eventually have longer and more numerous paths to travel; different possibilities and complications arise, resulting in ‘delayed action’. It is known that the thalamus (roughly) appears connected with affective and ‘emotional’ life, and that the cortex, farther removed and isolated from the external world, has the effect of inducing this ‘delay in action’. In unbalanced and ‘emotional’ ‘thinking’, which is so prevalent, the thalamus seems overworked, the cortex seems not worked enough. ... it appears at the silence on objective levels’ introduces this ‘delayed action’, unloading the thalamic material on the cortex.” (422)

“... one of the most fundamental functional differences between animal and man consists in the fact that no matter in how many orders the animal may abstract, its abstractions stop on some level beyond which the animal cannot proceed. Not so with man. Structurally and potentially, man can abstract in indefinitely many orders ...” (439)

There are multiple functional parts at work in both our nervous systems and our brain. These levels of processing explains how we can have multiple states simultaneously. A further mechanism that contributes to this is our self-reflexivity. This is the mechanism within us by which we can think, then think-about-our-thinking, feel-about-our-feeling, etc. This explains how we can have one state and create another state-about-it. If they are aligned, then we can create congruent states like joyful learning, respectful anger, mindful fear, appreciative sadness, etc. If they are not, then we can create meta-states that work to our detriment as they put us at odds with ourselves: fearful anger, guilty fear, anger-at-ourselves for our sadness, fear of our fear, etc.

So the levels of brain and nervous system anatomy and the self-reflexivity mechanism explains how within our single body we can have multiple states. Now add one more factor. Add to this the time element of our nervous system. After all there is a definite and finite speed of the nerve impulses and that causes there to be a length of time required for the processing of information. So, can we have multiple states (neurological states) within our body simultaneously? Yes of course. You know it; you have experienced it as have all of us!

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #22
May 29, 2014
Announcement

TAKING TRAINERS TRAINING TO A HIGHER LEVEL

“The quality of any field depends on the quality of those leading that field.” That’s what I realized when the field of NLP went through a crisis in the 1990s. As a result, Neuro-Semantics emerged during that crisis as a call upon the field to step up to become more professional. Our original call was to stop the bickering and fighting, learn to *apply the NLP communication model to ourselves*, develop more integrity and congruency, collaborate rather than compete, acknowledge sources and others rather than ignore them or put them down, and be credible leaders. That’s how Neuro-Semantics began.

Four years after the Neuro-Semantic movement within NLP got underway, I conducted our first Training for Trainers. In so doing, my goal was to take *the quality of trainers* to the next higher level. So in Trainers’ Training we not only focus on public speaking (platform) skills, training skills, business skills, etc., we also focus on *the character* of the trainers— *being* authentic, congruent, collaborative, living with integrity, etc. Those of us leading out felt this was a missing piece.

Our aim was to raise the level of competency and integrity in the NLP / Neuro-Semantic trainers and leaders. To that end we incorporated several new things into the Trainers’ Training that doesn’t occur in other NLP Trainers’ Training.

- People receive a 22-page test *before they come* so that they can discover what they do and do not know. Many who come through the 5-day or 7-day Practitioner Trainers are shocked to discover all that they have not been taught and/or the mis-information taught.
- People have to get a *Letter of Recommendation* from a Neuro-Semantic Trainer, ideally the person who trained them in Meta-States (the APG training). To this extent, NSTT is an exclusive-by-invitation training.
- People are *benchmarked every day* (and two times) in their presentations so that they are given specific behavior feedback about their skill level and what to do to improve it.
- People *enter into a Community* for ongoing support, accountability, and credibility.
- People are constantly challenged to *apply to self* using the self-reflexivity processes that are inherent in the Meta-States Model.

The Vision of High Quality Trainers

In designing Trainers’ Training and in continually improving it, today we start off with three days of *the Psychology* that’s within and behind NLP and Meta-States. This gives a deep background understanding of the personal and group dynamics that the trainers are working with. Knowing the *Psychology of NLP and Meta-States* gives the trainers a real advantage.

Next we put everybody through very intense, fun, and strange *drills* that loosen people up and prepare them for new levels of flexibility. Colin Cox designed these and they are some of the most memorable experiences of NSTT. People talk about them for years and years afterwards.

We then focus on providing *detailed, specific shaping-feedback* every single day for the presentations. Trainers take one pattern from APG and present it over and over. In that way they learn the content of that pattern inside out as they also get to use all of the Platform Skills in their presentation, and get immediate feedback. With that feedback, they then *immediately do it again*. Now incorporating that feedback to make immediate adjustments and shifts. There's nothing like that anywhere else. This forces them to learn how to *keep themselves fresh* the 10th time they present the pattern as the first.

The benchmarks apply to Master Trainers as well. So for the first 8 evenings, the Master Trainers present key content about presenting and training to the group and are benchmarked in front of the group. Here the new participants get to see high level presentation skills demonstrated as well as the spirit of those who have developed expertise regarding the value of such feedback which they can really get nowhere else.

In NSTT we also train Training Skills—the design, structure, and processes using NLP and Neuro-Semantic models for providing trainings. Participants learn how to use the Meta-Model, Meta-Programs, Meta-States, etc. in designing a training and planning how best to transfer knowledge into skill.

Another subject that we work with every single day after the fourth day is *business acumen*. That's because we want trainers to be able to successfully sell themselves as trainers and speakers and/or to run a successful and commercially viable business. So we bring in the Master Trainers who are actually doing that and provide interviews and discussions.

With the benchmarks and all of these prerequisites—we have made the Certificate and the License to truly *mean something*. That's why we provide it only when the candidate reaches all of the requirements. Until then it is provisional. With the final Licensing, a trainer knows that he or she has truly *earned it* and that it means something — integrity and competency!

In all of this, we do the training right now only one time a year and so make it an international training. That's because in addition to everything else, *we are creating community*. In fact, we are Neuro-Semantics are the only fully functioning and operational “community” in the field of NLP today. In the rest of the field there is still a lot of competition, scarcity, petty bickering, fighting about “intellectual property,” refusal to acknowledge sources, etc.

A New and Higher Level of Trainers' Training

By stepping back to the problems that we recognized in the field and by reflecting on solutions to those problems, we have invented NSTT— **Neuro-Semantic Trainers' Training**. This is our answer to some of those problems. We came up with this by asking ourselves:

- What kind of leaders and trainers do we want?
- What kind of trainers would truly represent the spirit of NLP?

- What *qualities* do we want in our trainers and leaders?
- How would we go about *training* in those kinds of traits, features, skills, and relational qualities?
- How could we measure or benchmark the quality of trainers?
- How could we create a network of cooperation and collaboration world-wide and raise the vision of trainers that we are all in this together?

In NSTT — Trainers are viewed as Leaders and Models

A beginning place that sets the frame for what we are attempting to do is that *every trainer is a leader* and needs to behave as such. Whether a trainer realizes it or not, everyone who teaches, presents, trains, and even uses NLP and Neuro-Semantics publically with clients is in a leading role and will be seen and evaluated as a living model of what he or she teaches.

In this way we are strategically focusing on building in a strong sense of personal responsibility in our trainers regarding how we talk, act, relate, and live. This will communicate as much about NLP as the content of our trainings. Our aim: to develop trainers who *walk their talk*. Our aim is to create trainers with the heart of leadership—*leading out* and showing the way by action.

Raising the Benchmarking Level

The next distinguishing factor of NSTT is measurement. How do we measure “walking the talk?” How do we de-nominalize congruency, integrity, leadership, cooperation, collaboration, professional, etc.? By benchmarking.

Again, we use NLP with ourselves. We de-nominalize vague and fluffy terms so that we can *operationalize* our talk and find a way to measure what we want to create in the real world. This corresponds to *modeling*. Today we have two-dozen presentation and training skills benchmarked.

Benchmarking has provided fascinating insights into the structure of the experience of skill development. It provides a mirror so that we can see where we are in terms of the quality of a given skill and what are the behaviors that will enable us to take our skill to the next level. It also invites true feedback (in contradistinction to judgment). Now colleagues can reflect back in specific see-hear-feel terms precisely what we are doing so that we can make cleaner and more discreet shifts in our actions, gestures, language, etc.

Benchmarking as a process sets the frame that skills are activities that can be measured and improved. This sets the frame—we can always take our skills *to the next level*.

Challenging Trainers to Step Up

Ask yourself, “Am I personally applying this to myself?” What makes the *apply to self* frame so challenging is that it holds us responsible and accountable. And most of the trainers who come to NSTT *love this*. In fact, they can’t get enough of it. And that’s the kind of person we are looking for. How about you? Up for the challenge?

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #23
June 2, 2014

WHAT NEW SKILLS ARE YOU DEVELOPING?

While home between trips one morning, and while at Starbucks for my reading time, I recently talked with a young man who was unemployed and was looking for work. He had just returned from a job interview and so when I asked him how it went, he waved his right hand back and forth in a gesture indicating it could have gone good or bad. He didn't know and didn't have a sense. As he gestured, he said, "just so so" and then he commented, "I don't expect to get the job." That's when I asked, "So what skills do you have which you presented to the interviewer that you felt would get you that job?"

I supposed I could have asked the question too quickly because he asked me to repeat what I just said. When I did, he said, "I didn't do that, I just gave him my resume and waited for his questions." I then reflected back to him that it sounded to me that he had taken a passive role in the interview rather than an active role. Saying that, his eyes widened. I said that it sounded to me that he was expecting his resume to sell himself to the employer instead of taking a proactive role of selling himself.

"Selling myself? Do you think that's what I should do? [pause] That's kind of strange, and I don't know that I want to do that."

"So it seems strange to you? [pause] Really? I thought you *wanted* a job and went to an interview to see if you could get a job. Maybe I misunderstood your intentions?" "No, that's what I wanted." I then asked him if *getting the job* was important enough to take an active role and a role of selling himself and the value that he would add to the company? He said, "Yes it was." So I then asked if I could ask him a series of questions that would help him with that. He said that would be great. So I asked him the following allowing some time between the questions for him to reflect.

"What skills could you present to the interviewer that would indicate that you are able to add value to his business? ... And what other skills? . . . What new skills have you developed in the past two or three years that has made you more valued as an employee? . . . What skills are you currently working on developing? . . . How are you testing and refining those new skills?"

After the questions he told me that he had simply never thought about things in this way. "So how have you thought about things?" After he described how he had been thinking, I asked if thinking in terms of the skills that he had, that he was developing, and that he would be developing would be a useful way to think? He immediately said, "Yes, of course." So I asked, "What would be the benefit to you to begin thinking this way? How would this new frame of mind support you in your own personal development?"

After we completed that conversation, he asked me about myself and what I do. I said that I model

human excellence. Then I told him about the Meta-Coach Training that I was bringing to Colorado this July and how that a professional coach enables people to identify and unleash potential knowledge and skill to be more effective and productive. When he then wanted to know more about what that entailed, I talked about closing the *knowing—doing gap* and about *the unleashing process*.

He said that the idea of developing skills seemed abstract and that he didn't know where to begin. So I described about the idea of *modeling excellence* as simply looking for what people do when they operate at their best and then interviewing them about how they do that. It is about being very curious and asking a lot of questions:

What job do you want? What job do you want to eventually have?

Who is currently able to do that job? What is that person doing that you want to be able to do that you want to be able to do?

What does that person think, believe, understand, conceptualize, etc. about that?

What does that person feel about it? What emotional state is that person in when he or she performs that skill at his or her very best?

How does the person talk when doing that skill? What is the language or linguistics that facilitate that skill?

What are the actions and behaviors of that performance?

Upon asking this I asked if he knew and could distinguish his four human responses or powers which are the component parts of a skill— of any skill. I commented that I had just presented them. “Did you notice? They are so obvious that most people do not. Yet the fact is that we can break down any skill to four things:

The person's *mental* or *mind* and how the person thinks.

The person's *emotional state and feelings*.

The person's *language and linguistics*.

The person's *actions and behaviors*.

“Just find out what an expert in this field or area thinks, feels, says, and does and you will find out the component aspects of the desired skill.” “Really?” “Yes, it is really that easy and, at the same time, it is that profound. It's one of the things we teach in the trainings.”

Precisely because new skills can be developed, and every new skill provides you a more extensive foundation for your career as well as your effectiveness as a human being, that's one reason why every year I identify some new skill or skills that I personally want. Once I do that it is simply a matter of finding people really good at that skill, learning as much as I can about it, and then establishing a development plan for deliberately practicing that skill. How about you? What *new* skills are you learning and developing right now? What will be the next skill you'll develop? Here's to your ever-developing and unleashing of your potentials!

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #24
June 9, 2014

THE NEURO-SEMANTICS OF BEING GLORIOUSLY FALLIBLE

Errs. Mistakes. Failing to achieve an outcome. Faults. Strange that these very normal aspects of being human are somehow treated as not worthy of being human. Yet you were born a fallible human being and no matter how much development you experience or how long you live, you will always be a fallible human being.

While working on the leadership that's entailed in businesses as the senior management level (which led to the book *Executive Coaching*, 2014), I have simultaneously been working on the leadership that's required for governing an organization or a government. That will lead to *Political Coaching* which I'm planning for 2015 as Volume XII in the Meta-Coaching series. For three years I've been reading in political science, I have written about Political Coaching (to the Meta-Coaches egroup), and I have found myself talking about it more and more often.

That has led to many questions. One question I am constantly asked, as an American, is if I have or would I like to coach President Obama. And the answer is, Of course. And due to all of the scandals that have been mounting up in the Obama Whitehouse, the lowering of approval and trust in the poles, the majority of people thinking he has lied to them, etc., he certainly needs someone other than the political "yes" men that surround him to coach him. [Of course, this is also equally true for most people in power, most presidents and most CEOs of companies.]

Now if I were to coach Obama I would focus on something that has repeatedly occurred that seems to be one of his blind spots. Recently in the news this has surfaced again and is one of the saddest things about him, namely his seeming total inability to admit when he made a mistake. Even when caught in a contradiction or incongruency, he seems to be addicted to making excuses and explaining (justifying) himself. For instance, he said, "If you like your doctor (on your health care plan), you can keep your doctor, period." When that turned out to not be true, he justified it in several ways. Then this past week, when the five terrorists were released for the sake of a single soldier whose evidence seems to indicate was a deserter, he again justified releasing the terrorists.

This raises lots of questions:

- What is this inability to admit a mistake?
- What causes some people to seem completely unable to acknowledge what is obvious as an error or a failure and then just apologize, make whatever amends that can be made, and learning from it, adjust themselves to do better next time?
- What prevents them from making course-corrections?
- How is it that they seem to not have a reverse gear in themselves so that they cannot "back

up?”

As with everything human, it involves their neuro-semantic. The semantics (meanings) that they give to mistakes, errs, failures, etc. and the neurological states that they go into as a result. So *what meanings do such persons invest in errs* that creates this limitation and inability? The *meanings* that they construct about errors must make errors “bad,” fatal, and contemptful of their value as persons. They must semantically load an error so that it is not just an error, it is insult to their dignity, it questions their value as a person, and it absolutely ruins their relationships and reputation.

The solution to this? Easy. Simple. It is the recognition that we all make mistakes. If you are engaged in doing anything that’s significant and important and/or challenging, then you will make lots of mistakes and make them every day. You will make mistakes of the mind, of the heart (emotions), of speaking, and of doing. You will mis-perceive, misunderstand, mis-believe, make decisions that will undermine your well-being and success, mis-feel about things, mis-speak, mis-behave, etc. It’s inevitable! And why? Simply because you are a fallible human being. You are not and never will be infallible. If that’s distressing, then have a good cry and get over it. You are not God with infallible powers. You are a human being and a fallible one at that, which is great because it means you still have new things to learn and develop.

This week here in Mexico one of the coaches-in-training to become a Licensed Meta-Coach asked, “What if I make a mistake in coaching? What if I blow-it? What if I hurt someone?” I said, “Say you’re sorry.” David Murphy said, “Recognize the mistake and correct it.” Let the person know as soon as possible that you made a mistake and do whatever you need to in order to correct it. Say, “Oops! That’s not right. Let me do that one again.” Matter-of-factly recognize and acknowledge the mistake, don’t try to cover it up, be real, be human, and do the best you can as you move on.

Doing this gives you a back-up gear so that you can put yourself in reverse. Then like driving a car, if you go somewhere that isn’t where you want to go, put it in reverse, back up, and then let yourself start again, afresh. In missile and rocket design, once launched there’s lots of things that can cause the missile to get off target, but no worry. Make a course correction midstream. If cybernetic systems such as rockets can do it, surely human beings can do it.

In business we call this Risk Management. So when we design, create, and innovate something big and wonderful, we set out contingency plans. We create Plan B in case things go wrong, Plan C if things go south, etc. We think through the risk, calculate the probabilities, and create contingencies for worst-case scenarios.

In science this is call experimentation. We set out to experiment on one or more facets of a problem by altering key variables to see what happens. When the experiment fails, we have succeeded in learning something. The so-called “failure” is a success because we use it for learning, for adjusting the experiment, and for moving forward to the next experiment.

In NLP we say, “There is no failure, there is only feedback.” And this is the genius for recovering from an error, it is how to be gloriously fallible as a human being, it is how to make course-corrections in mid-stream, and it is how to not get locked into the limitations of denial of problems,

justification of errors, and refusal to admit that things don't always turn out as we hoped.

The neuro-semantics of being gloriously fallible is that a mistake is just that— a mistake. So learn from it, put things in reverse, correct it, experiment, and course-correct. Here's to being able to recognize the mistakes and accelerating your learning and to being openly receptive to mistakes and errors as just evidences of being human.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #25
June 16, 2014

WHY ALL THE KILLING?

The American media has just highlighted another murder this past week by a teenage at his school. In fact, most of the time it is a young boy or young man and most often it is someone not psychologically stable, and most often it involves guns. It seems that this kind of thing is occurring nearly every week. And in fact, they have been. Since the Sandy Hook massacre, there have been 74 murders, and sometimes mass murders, at public places. So in 18 months, that's one a week. Yet that's not the full story. Here's more of the story.

Every single day (not just every week) there are 46 murders committed in the United States. 86% of these are by guns and only 24-28% are due to aggravated assaults.

Deaths by stabbing: 10,000 per year means there are — 37 per day

Deaths by accidents on highways, 34,080 (2012) — 93 per day.

Deaths by falling (most within a person's home): 26,008 — 71 per day

Deaths by poisoning: 33,041 — 90 per day.

All unintentional injury deaths: 120,859 — 331 per day.

Deaths by suicide: 3,255 per year — 9 per day.

In total, there are 2,423,712 deaths in the US per year.

(Information in www.wikipedia.com and from wiki.answers.com).

Last week there was another young boy who murdered people. He first used a knife and stabbed three of his roommates to death, then he took a gun to shot some innocent girls, and finally he used his car to run over and maim others. The media focused on and blamed the gun. For them, that was the most obvious thing to blame. "The gun did it!" Yet, if only it was that simple. If there were more deaths by knifing than by guns (as there is in the UK), we could yell, "The knife did it!" Or we could also yell, "The car did it and ban cars!"

Yet all of these are just instruments. And what shall we say of murders by suicides, falls, poisoning, etc.? In fact, worldwide more people are killed by knives than guns. The over-simplistic answer is to outlaw guns and knives. Of course, after that we would have to ban baseball bats and all other sharp and blunt objects.

Yet in all of this, banning only deals with symptoms, not the cause. The problem is the out-of-control state of the one killing, or the deliberate revenge state, or the desperate state, or the envious and jealous state, or any other state which a person gets into that leads to the killing. *The problem is the state—and the kind of thinking* which supposes that we can solve things by killing people who we blame for making our lives miserable.

The problem is even deeper than that. Behind those hateful *states* and that *distorted way of thinking* is *the lack of resources* in being able to cope with life and *the lack of a strong sense of morality* which eliminates even considering killing someone. And contributing factors to all of that goes to our education system that teaches kids *everything but the most important things—*

- How to create and access a solid and valued sense of self.
- How to create and access the ego-strength for coping with life's disappointments.
- How to create and access a moral conscience that cares about others.
- How to create and access a sense of responsibility for self and to others.
- How to create and access a healthy sense of state management (emotional intelligence).

All of this goes into create a larger problem—the kind of culture where killing is so readily considered a solution. Today in America we don't teach "values" in schools because the values will offend someone and someone else will scream "Religious infiltration." We don't hold people responsible for their unkind actions for fear of hurting their so-called "self-esteem." We produce movies full of violence and horror and do so without any restrictions claiming that "it is just entertainment" and "it could not possibly influence the thinking, feeling, and actions of people." We produce movies and magazines glorifying wealth, status, and fame and we have a culture where movie stars and sports heroes are paid outrageous salaries and then wonder why there's eating disorders among girls and sexual abuse and violence among boys. "It couldn't be the movies and magazines, everyone knows that's just entertainment!"

In all of this we also *do not* teach and enable kids and young people *how* to watch the so-called "Reality shows," horror movies, news, internet, social media so that it does not inflict semantic damage within in.

- How to watch such and think critically about the truthfulness of the content.
- How to distinguish "movie reality" and fantasy from real life.
- How to cope with their human needs in a healthy and appropriate way.

So every time another mass murder occurs and we ask, "Why this senseless killing?" "What is driving these people to do such things?" The answer is there but it is invisible. It is in the culture in which we live and in which we hardly notice.

What if the key driving factors in all of this lies in the killer's mind? **What if** that person is not thinking in a rational and healthy way? **What if** the person has not learned the basics of critical thinking, of effective coping to meet the needs of life, and of being a caring, responsible human being to others?

What if it is *not* true that they have some "need" for anger, sex, revenge, power, or any other normal human response?

What if their thinking, believing, understanding, and the kind of thinking full of cognitive distortions is itself the problem and instead of being healthy, is itself neurotic?

What if they have created a distorted, neurotic "need" within them— a neurotic need that now expresses itself as it does?

What if they actually have a self-actualization need within them to be creative and to live one's life with creative engagement and it is stunned, undeveloped, blocked?

If that's the real problem, then banning the instruments used for the killing will never solve the problem. *The real solution lies in actualizing the humanity of persons.* That's where the leverage point for change will true occur.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #26
June 23, 2014

LIVING LIFE AT TOO LOW A LEVEL

At what level are you living your life? Strange question, right? The level of life here refers to the motivational levels that Abraham Maslow identified in his classic work, *Motivation and Personality* (1954/ 1970). There are two fundamental levels.

The Deficiency Level: This level of needs that drive us refer to all of the physical and psychological needs that make up the first four levels of his hierarchy: survival, safety and stability, love and affection (social), and one's sense of importance about oneself (self). The *mechanism* that drives the needs at this level in all of these dimensions of human experience is lack. When we lack, we have a *deficiency* and from that deficiency we are driven to gratify the need. This is the basic form of "motivation" that we all experience in life and it is related to *the requirements of life* for being able to function decently well. And at this level, when you gratify the need sufficiently (not perfectly, not at 100%), the need goes away. The emotional drive of deficiency disappears. When it is not met sufficiently, then the need becomes desperate. And that's when we tend to do things that violate and damage ourselves and others.

The Abundance or Being Level: This level transcends the lower level of the D-needs and operates by an entirely different mechanism. These are the uniquely human needs and begin with knowledge, meaning, truth, justice, beauty, music, mathematics, order, excellence, contribution, making a difference, etc. Unlike the deficiency needs that go away when gratified, these grow and abound when gratified. Unlike the deficiency needs that are instrumental and serve a higher purpose, these needs are non-instrumental. They are valuable and precious in and of themselves. Unlike the deficiency needs that are *means* to some other end, these are an *end* in themselves. For that reason, Maslow called them B-needs (Being).

Maslow also noted in his extensive studies and research in this area that the lower-needs are needs that we share with the higher intelligence animals. The social animals need all of the D-needs just as we do. None of those needs are uniquely human. They are animal needs. Regarding this, Maslow urged, "Be a good animal! Have healthy appetites! And go beyond these needs to those that are the truly human needs.

So, again, at what level are you living? Well, the question is a bit tricky because you, like me, are living at all of those levels. And that's because all of those needs are operational in you. They are requirements for your physical survival and your social and psychological well-being. The question this is this: How well are you coping with these needs? How healthily are you gratifying the deficiency needs so that you are moving on to the human *being* needs?

The problem is that without instincts, unlike the animals, we do not automatically and intuitively know what the impulses that drive us are, what they stand for, and how to gratify them. The animals do; we do not. That's why *knowledge and meaning and truth* are among the most fundamental

being needs. We need accurate knowledge so that we can sufficiently gratify the needs. If we do not have truth to do so, then we can create neurotic needs.

Neurotic needs is how we get stuck at a lower level. In this case, the mis-information distorts the drive and typically we create addictions. Typical also is that we are trying to fulfill a self-actualization need through a gratification that is designed for a lower need. For example, a person may seek love by using food as a gratification. “Food” is endowed with too much meaning— it is love, the good life, success, relaxation, etc. Now instead of food satisfying us, gratifying the drive for it, we eat more and more and cannot get enough. We push through the natural thresholds eating more and more and more. We can’t stop. To stop denies all of these “secondary gains” and psychological values that have been connected to it.

D-needs and their drives *go away* with adequate gratification. If it doesn’t go away, we are probably not gratifying the actual drive (hunger) but a psychological drive that may be a self-actualization drive. So the pattern of D-needs— *the more, the less* —doesn’t apply. What’s operational is the B-need pattern— *the more, the more*. With the D-needs, the more you truly gratify the need, the less it drives you. With the B-needs, the more you truly gratify the need, the stronger it becomes. It becomes more and more.

This distinction enables us to understand what’s wrong with ourselves and others. When a person’s drives are driving, driving, driving them and there’s no satisfaction. When a person is singing, “I get no satisfaction!” regarding the lower needs, then that person’s needs are contaminated by the higher needs. That is the person is trying to self-actualize at too low a level and with too low a need. And that’s why by over-loading the meaning of the need with too much meaning and/or distorted meaning— the need becomes neurotic.

This is the factor by which many people semantically over-load various lower needs, animal needs, so that they become addictions. And when they load it with distorted meanings, then their semantics can create “drives” that feel right and natural and intuitive to them— but that are completely distorted and destructive. And knowing this mechanism that creates the misery informs us about how to correct the problem: we reverse the semantic over-loading and we correct the distorted semantics. Sometimes this process involves reframing; sometimes it involves unlearning, sometimes it involves setting and holding healthy frames.

Why all the killings? Typically people are living at the D-need level and have distorted meanings so that they are lacking the sufficient coping skills to meet their needs in an effective and healthy way. Within their map of the world “killing” other human beings is a legitimate response to their frustrations. Solution? Well, first and foremost help them meet their legitimate needs in accurate ways. At least then they will not be operating from the desperation of unfulfilled needs. Then, update their data-base of information (their mental map) about all of the levels of their needs and how to gratify them healthily.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #27
June 30, 2014

VITALITY IS NATURAL; DEVITALIZATION IS UNNATURAL

If people can and do experience life at too low a level on the hierarchy of needs (Maslow's model, Meta Reflection #24), then what are people suppose to get and experience at the lower levels? If the "lower" needs, driven by deficiency, which when adequately gratified go away, then what? If these D-needs are instrumental and the B-needs are non-instrumental, then what are they the means to?

Glad you asked! And the answer is simple and can be describe by a single word—*vitality*. All of the lower needs are life-needs or necessities (requirements) for being *alive*. And in saying "being alive," I don't mean merely existing, getting by, surviving. I mean being *fully alive to the human experience—to the adventure of life*. Yet when we ask ourselves the questions about this level of vitality, most people are not *fully* alive. Are they? Okay, they may not be zombies, yet how many drag themselves through life, through their jobs, their relationships, and the activities of everyday life? And how many are full of everyday complaints about not being motivated, not having the energy to do things, and feeling that they have no passion about anything. They are bored. They don't know what to do with themselves. They are waiting for something. But what?

By contrast, the idea of *being fully alive* to the adventure of life is our heritage. Just look at the life of a small child. Talk about being alive to the mystery and wonder and adventure of life! Talk about *vitality*! Then of course, we send them to school and they get most of it knocked out of them—all in the name of "education."

Now this *being fully alive* is the design of the Neuro-Semantic series, *Self-Actualization Psychology*. In fact, this is the name of the first module in that series, *Unleashing Vitality*. That's where we start. Why? What's so important about vitality?

First, vitality is important first of all because we all use and need a lot of energy every day. After all, it takes a good amount of energy (vitality) to actualize anything that's important and meaningful to you—whether at home, work, or with some project that's highly valuable to you. It also takes a lot of vitality to be able to handle life's everyday demands at home and work. So if at the end of the day, you go home ... and go into your Energy Room and stand on your Joy Meter to see how much life and soul you have at the end of the day, and your Joy Meter is hardly registering—you've got a problem.

What is that problem? You could have a vitality leak. Or you could have a vitality dampener. Somehow you are letting work or friends or family or children or chores or something suck the very life out of you! Even if your Joy Meter is only registering in the middle of the scale, you still have a problem. Something is happening that's preventing you from living life with passion, and joy, and aliveness, and high motivation. I wonder what that is?

Second, vitality is important because without a strong sense of vitality or aliveness, you will not be feeling good. You will be dragging yourself through life and work and activities rather than being full of the innate vitality that you were born with. *Innate vitality?* Yes, we were born for that and as children we had that. So what happened? Were did our thrill and absorption and passion for learning go?

In Self-Actualization Psychology, as developed by Maslow, Rogers, and others, we think of human nature as *innately wired for motivation*— for vitality, energy, being alive, etc. This has tremendous applications. If we are, in our nature, in our biology, in our psychology, etc., wired for vitality, then we do not need to find some great Formula X that will solve our motivational problems. We do not need to *add* Formula X to our lives. What's needed is for us simply to eliminate the things that are downgrading, interfering, sabotaging, and throwing cold water on our vitality. Vitality is natural; devitalized is unnatural. So is depression, feeling demotivated, lacking energy, etc.

Vitality is natural. And when you are taking care of your body as it needs to be taken care of— you will be beaming and energetic. Nor is this rocket science. Among other things, it means eating right. If your body and brain is nutritionally deprived or trashed, you will not be able to think very well. It means moving your body. Today we call this experience by the disconcerting term, “exercise.” Moving your body means physical activity— walking, running, swimming, cycling, taking the stairs, dancing, standing up, moving around, sweating. Yes, sweating. That cleanses your body! If the state of being inactive and sweatless attracts you, you've chosen the wrong species to be born into. That describes the state of the dead, and you'll be there sooner than you want. Now is the time to get active.

When you are appropriately active, you will naturally get good sleep. Insufficient sleep reduces concentration and alertness. It undermines your ability to learn, solve problems and remember. Today just as so many people suffer from activity deprivation (exercise) so also many people suffer from sleep deprivation. They stay up too late mindlessly watching TV and then go through the day feeling the need for a nap and so readily able to nod off. (More about this in the next Meta Reflection.)

A healthy vitality shows up in not only in your level of energy and activity, not only in your restfulness, it shows up in your passion and ability to learn new things. There's an innate passion for challenging your brain, for reading challenging materials and exercising your mind. It will mean you won't be satisfied with life on the couch flipping TV channels. So here's to the rediscovering of your vitality— to becoming *more fully alive* to life's adventure. See you soon at a Neuro-Semantic training!

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #28
July 7, 2014

UNLEASHING YOUR SLEEP POTENTIAL

A Strategy for Peaceful and Rejuvenating Sleep

Sleeping well is critical for maintaining an ongoing *sense of personal vitality*. It does not take many nights of poor sleeping before we begin feeling unwell during the day, with low energy, and unable to focus, concentrate, and perform at our best. In this, *not sleeping well* is a problem that undermines our sense of vitality. Now for some people, this is a big problem.

The reason why it's a big problem is because when you experience poor sleep, and when you toss and turn during the night, you will probably not be in your optimal state in the following days. And if that continues for several days or weeks, you will suffer numerous physical and mental symptoms: you will not be feeling well, you'll feel the loss of energy, zest, vitality. You will not be mentally alert and your memory will be less than what it can be. With the experience of sleep deprivation, your work will suffer, the quality of your work will suffer, you will have little bouts of walking sleep when you tune out during the day. And all of this is the foundation for accidents, both little ones and big ones. It's a problem.

Poor sleep and sleep deprivation for extended period of time will undermine your physical health, your mental well-being, and your emotional vitality. None of this is good. So what can we do? Using the NLP Communication Model, let's explore the inner structures of the subjective experience and model both "not sleeping well" and "peaceful, rejuvenating sleep." At that point, we can then use Neuro-Semantic modeling to explore our *Inner Game of Sleeping*.

The Not-Sleeping Well Strategy

How does a person create the experience of *not sleeping well*? To achieve that, you have to go to bed with too much on your mind. It could simply be "all the things I have to do." And these things could be exciting and fun things, but they will be things to *do* nevertheless. But more likely, a better strategy for not sleeping well is to go to be in *a state of stress*. Feel worn out mentally and emotionally. Worry and fret about all you have to do. Be apprehensive about being able to get it all done. So stay up and "burn the candle" on both ends.

If that's the case, you can amplify it by jumping into bed and rushing from staying up too late to suddenly getting into bed. Do that without any transition time, or if there is a transition, make sure it is not a smooth transition. And another amplifier could be to watch some exciting or action-pack TV show or movie that gets you all revved up. Or watch the news, especially if you don't know how to watch it without it stressing you.

But the best way to create *poor sleeping* is to go to bed distressed. This goes beyond stress. Go to bed fearful, intensely worried, angry, sad, depressed, etc. that is, be sure to take all of your troubles to bed with you! That will pretty much guarantee that you'll have a fitful sleep.

The Rejuvenating Sleep Strategy

By knowing how we can really mess up what should be a natural process gives insight into the changes that we need to make.

Stage 1: Prepare for restful sleep. Take time to slow things down. Create a ritual or several rituals that you can use to make a smooth transition from the day's and the evening's activities to the last activity of getting into bed. What will you do to slow down? What preparations will you make in your home and your bedroom? If you have a lot of things yet to do ... you may get into the habit of writing down your "to do list" for the next day. If you feel stressed, you might write down your stresses, identify the triggers as well as your thinking and believing about them. The very act of writing, as a neuro-muscular activity, is a process that you can use to de-stress. Or perhaps you need to talk it out. If so, what preparations will you set up for yourself?

Stage 2: The Transition Stage. Having things prepared will enable you to smoothly, and in a relaxed way, engage in the ritual or rituals that you will set up. Here is a list of some possibilities.

- A relaxing bath or shower.
- Some stretched or deep breathing.
- Listening to some slow relaxing music
- Reading something for pleasure— poetry, novel.
- Having a glass of milk, or warm tea
- Turning down the lights for the last 20 minutes of the day,
- Lighting candles
- Meditating and/or Praying
- Doing a Releasing of the tensions of the day
- Invent an imaginary trip to a quiet place in your mind

Stage 3: Into Bed You Go. As you do, be sure that you link and anchor your bed to sleep and to love making. Do not read in bed. Do not do homework, or projects in bed. Keep the bed your space for sleeping so that it cues you for sleeping and love-making.

Set a thought in your mind: "I wonder what I'll dream about tonight..."

And then let it go. "My creative unconscious will handle that. I don't have to know."

Meta-Strategies for the Rejuvenating Sleeping Pattern

All of that is at the primary state level: your behaviors, actions, environment, immediate thoughts and emotions. Now let's go meta. Let's explore your *Inner Game of Sleep* and see what meta-states and meta-level framing of beliefs, decisions, identities, understandings, permissions, etc. that are operational and that may need to change.

What do you understand and believe about sleep? Is it a waste of time? Or is it your time to rejuvenate in mind and body? "Restful sleep is the source of my energy and vitality." What do you believe about time and about the time of your life? That you don't have enough time? Or "I'll take care of things tomorrow." "There's wonderful things to do in the coming days." "No need to rush." "Sleeping is essential for integrating my learnings."

What do you believe about dreaming? "I commission my creative unconscious to delight me with

dreams that will make me a better and more resourceful person.” And I don’t have to remember the dreams.

What do you believe about achievements, work, activities,. What do you believe about people calling or receiving calls late at night?

Checklist

- I take time to slow down for 30 minutes prior to going to bed.
 - I have developed at least one ritual for the transition from the day to going to sleep.
 - A relaxing bath or shower.
 - Some stretched or deep breathing.
 - Listening to some slow relaxing music
 - Reading something for pleasure– poetry, novel.
 - Having a glass of milk, or warm tea
 - Turning down the lights for the last 20 minutes of the day,
 - Lighting candles
 - Meditating and/or Praying
 - Doing a Releasing of the tensions of the day
 - Invent an imaginary trip to a quiet place in your mind

 - Before going to sleep I use at least one of the following to de-stress.
 - I write a “to do” list for the next day.
 - I do some breathing and stretching exercises.
 - I go through my office and open and close every draw.
 - I do a mental inventory of the things accomplished and therefore done.

 - To sleep really well, I
 - Set a thought in your mind: “I wonder what I’ll dream about tonight...”
 - I mentally let things go.
 - I use the Neuro-Semantic pattern for Releasing.

 - I have or I am developing the following enhancing beliefs for sleep:
 - “I believe that restful sleep is the source of my energy and vitality.”
 - “I believe I have plenty of time to do the things that are important.”
 - “I believe I can and will take care of unfinished things tomorrow.”
 - “I believe there are wonderful things to do in the coming days.”
 - “I believe there is no need to rush.”
 - “I believe that sleeping is essential for integrating my learnings.”
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From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #29
July 14, 2014

LISTENING TO THE NEWS NEURO-SEMANTICALLY

When it comes to *the news*— How well can you listen to it? Can you “just listen” to it, process the information, test it with critical thinking skills, and then choose how to respond to it? Or does *the news* induce you into negative states? Perhaps stress, perhaps feeling upset or frustrated, or depressed and sad, or angry?

For years I have been meeting lots of people who tell me that they “just cannot watch the news.” When I explore with them the difficulty of watching, they tell me that it puts them into negative states, it “ruins their day,” or if they watch, they will not be able to sleep well at night. I often have commented that “it is just information” and that “much of it is distorted,” yet that doesn’t seem to make any difference. So that has led me to ask several questions about watching the news:

- How is it that a person can watch the news and be induced into strong negative states?
- What’s going on with a person that in watching the news, he or she processes things in such a way that it can “ruin a day” or disturb sleep at night?
- How is it that other persons can watch the news and *not* be so induced?
- What states do others access in watching the news so that they can learn from it and not be seduced into a particular world-view?
- What are some of the resources in Neuro-Semantics that can empower a person to watch the news neuro-semantically?

Information Processing

NLP was the first Communication Model to put front and center the different representational systems as our “languages of the mind” by we process information. Some do it visually as they *create and hold images in their minds*, others do it auditorially as they *hear and repeat words and voices in their minds*, and yet others do it primarily kinesthetically as they *sense and feel movement and senses in their minds*. While we all have and use all of these systems, some primarily use one or two of these systems and others are consciously focused primarily on one or two of them. They are available to everyone and weakness in any system can be trained.

In NLP we also discern whether a person does this from first, second, or third perceptual position. This distinction refers to whether we process information as it were from our own eyes, from seeing the world from the eyes of the other person, or from stepping aside and seeing it from a third perspective. To process information from your own eyes and ears and skin means you are experiencing it as if you are *in* it. You have stepped in and so are *associated into the experience*. You could also do this from second position, as if you were in that person’s body and seeing, hearing, and feeling things associatedly from that place. If, however, you step out of the experience then you are observing it from another point-of-view. You could step back into neutrality, learning, witnessing, joy, seriousness, playfulness, etc. The range of choices is nearly infinite.

So how do you want to be able to listen to the news? Why not *step back into a witnessing, learning, and questioning state* so that you can listen to understand. Once you understand then you can test and evaluate with good critical thinking skills (begin by using the Meta-Model questions for this). Then you can choose what information, and when, to step into a story and experience.

Consider the Nature of “The News”

Here is something equally important. Get acquainted with what *the news* is here in the 21st century, who creates it, the biases the creators operate from, and their intentions. *The News* is by no means pure information— unbiased and without filters. Created by human being with intentions, assumptions, biases, agendas and created to fulfill a purpose for a given business, *the news* is highly prejudicial. What is *the psychology of the News*?

- *Sensational.* What makes “news” is what is not normal. It is what is out-of-the-norm and so what is sensational. In fact, the more sensational, the better. If something blew up, if a train derailed and tore through a house or a city, if an accident occurred, these are sensational things. Better yet, if a war starts— now “That’s news!”
- *Negative.* As negative emotions (fear, anger, sadness, frustration, grief, etc.) are much more compelling and sensational than positive emotions (delight, calm, joy, learning, compassion, passion, relaxation, etc.), so it is *bad news* that sells much more than *good news*. Bad news gets our attention as it shouts that there’s a problem that may be threatening me. If someone shoots a gun and wounds, that’s much more exciting news, than if someone stabs people with a knife.
- *Right now.* News is *news* only when it is “new.” As soon as it is old (“That’s old news; that was in yesterday’s newspaper”), it is no longer interesting. This gives *the news* a very short focus—hence the short-term vision of the news. Things that develop over time (which is most things) don’t seem to fit the 24/7 news cycle in this century. In reporting *the news* reporters like to have an opening and closing to the story.
- *The Rich, the Famous, the Celebrities.* News also seems to be primarily focused on those who are living the life that we want—those at the top of the social ladder. While “the man on the street” gets some coverage from time to time, it is mostly focused on those who are presented as our societal heroes—the glamorous, the wealthy, sports and movie stars, etc.
- *For Profit.* News today is a business. Whether it is newspapers, magazines, TV, cable news, blogs, online news, and so on—*the news* is offered as a commodity on the market and as such needs people who will buy. Accordingly, networks and publishers of news choose their market and deliver *the news* to those with a certain bias— conservative, liberal, radical. So part of critical thinking has to be considering the source. What biases may be behind selecting this story, presenting it as they do, what agenda could this be serving?

Watch it— Reflect Upon It — Learn from It

None of us can swallow *the news* whole, not as it is given to us, not in this century. To do so is unwise. Today we have to filter it. We have to test it— test its validity, its reality, its source. As a verse from the Bible says, “Test (prove) all things; hold fast to that which is good.” (I Thessalonians 5:21). We have to balance views to hear both or multiple sides so as to expose assumptive frames of the authors and to chase out the biases used in creating the news.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #30
July 21, 2014
Managing Conflict Effectively #1

THE INESCAPABLE AND EVER-PRESENCE OF CONFLICT

When it comes to conflict, we humans are absolute experts. Hands down. We are so good at conflicting, we don't even have to have good legitimate reasons to get into conflicts and fights. We are so skilled, we can and do conflict with each other over lots of really stupid things, irrelevant things, and ridiculous things. Truly, *we humans are experts at conflicting.* And it seems to be true that all of us have had a lifetime experience at developing this strange ability. From the beginning, we wanted what we wanted, when we wanted in, from whom we wanted it, and in the way we wanted it! And if anyone was a bit confused about what we wanted, we let them know.

This is as true at the individual level as it is at the group level, the government levels, and the international level. Just listen to the news if you doubt this. Everyday the news brings us stories of disputes between people. Some are domestic disputes, some are family disputes, business, racial, corporate, etc. Those in the news media have no fear that they will run out of these "bad news" stories—people are everywhere getting into conflicts and disputing over their wants, their needs, and their rights. And it doesn't seem to be any end in sight.

So what's a human to do? Well, historically to manage ourselves in the face of all these conflicts, we set up rules and rulers. Rules so that we have some back guidelines about right and wrong and ways to settle who gets what. Rulers by selecting and electing people who we then commissioned to pass laws that will maintain the harmony, peace, and tranquility of a community (whether a family, organization, or government). Then we create police departments to maintain "the peace" that is, to stop people hurting each other or damaging our stuff. And if the police can't handle it, we call our the army. We also set up courts—mediation, civil, and criminal courts—to settle disputes between people and bring the conflicting to an end. How has that worked out? How well has that stopped the conflicting? Difficult to tell. It does prevent all-out-anarchy.

It prevents all-out-anarchy because we have a *Rule of Law* structure. This describes a society or organization that follows the rules and let the rules administer justice—what's right and wrong for citizens or members of the group to do, and how to interact. This creates a formal community, the mores and ethics of a community that reduces the amount of conflicts.

Without a rule of law, then each person becomes a law unto him or herself. Then each person does what is right in his or her eyes. But this is no solution. It creates anarchy. It sets up a lawless chaotic mess where everyone thinks he or she is right and so seeks to do whatever it takes to be right, to win over others, and to get his or her way. Sometimes it is by physical power (gangs), sometimes by the power of money, sometimes by the corruption and manipulation via graft and bribes. Then we would have no civilization; no structure for holding back this conflicting power of humans.

Question: Where does all of our basic conflict come from? Conflict arises from numerous sources.

- *Scarcity of resources.* Whenever there is only so much of something, then whenever one person obtains that, it leaves less for the rest of us. This is what now creates the win/lose scenario that's most dominant in groups. "Your success means my loss and defeat" so I have a vested interest in you not succeeding!
- *Differences in people.* We conflict over our differences. As we differ in thinking, valuing, believing, understanding, so we differ in our style, our preferences, our likes and dislikes, etc. To the extent that I want you to agree with me or do it my way, I will frame your difference as "bad" and "wrong," and try to get you to stop it and to change to be and think like me. I thereby frame your difference as a threat to me, as against me, as an insult, etc.
- *Intolerance and rigidity.* Actually difference is not the problem, my intolerance of difference is the problem. It is when I am inflexible, unable to adjust, to go along, to make compromises, to negotiate, etc. that I come to hate your differences and resent your successes and fear your superiority.
- *Hatred and resentment.* Add intolerance to difference and now we have a formula for hatred and multiply hatred over years and ages and we have resentment, the refusal to release, to let go, to forgive. Now the perpetuated negative state becomes a mood and then an attitude and then a disposition so that we are in a perpetual conflict state, ready to see insult and attack from just about anyone at any time. Now we are highly reactive with low capacity to listen, seek to understand, adjust, tolerate, etc.
- *Arrogance and pride.* Most of us have been well-trained to hate being wrong. Even when we're wrong and know it, we cannot know it. We refuse to know it. We pretend otherwise and we generally are so skilled at this, we come to believe that we are right. Yet because at some level we know we are not, we get louder and more voracious about how right we are! We do not have the inner security to be wrong.
- *Refusal of responsibility.* We conflict as we seek to be right and seek to avoid being wrong and the less ability to be wrong, we *have to* be right and so fight for it when we are hopelessly wrong but cannot allow ourselves to know it.

It's in these ways that conflicts arise among us and which explains why we conflict so easily, so quickly, so regularly, so often, and about so many things. What we don't see to do very well is seek first to understand each other and flexibly adjust to each other. If only we could do that as easily!

Actually, the first two sources lie at the heart of the challenge before us. The other sources are human responses that makes things worse, that amplify the problem, and that creates meta-problems. The fact of scarcity of resources and differences among us are just *facts of nature and human nature* that we need to come to terms with and develop effective ways to deal with. And both are solvable.

Scarcity that used to plague the human race has been and is being overcome by science and technology. Whereas once it took many, many people farming to provide sufficient food, today we can feed many, many more people by more intelligent means of farming. And whereas once only the rich could afford cars or computers or other modern conveniences, science keeps reducing the cost so that today the average person can eat a thousand times better than Kings of old.

And why? Because we cooperate. Because we learn to collaborate with each other constantly

proving over and over that *together we are smarter and more competent than any one alone or apart*. By embracing our differences, especially different understandings and viewpoints we are able to create and innovate new solutions that we would never have thought of by ourselves. So the first two sources of conflict are actually also the sources of creativity and innovation — if so used.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #31
August 4, 2014
Writing #1

THE STRATEGY AND ART OF WRITING

When it comes to writing and writing easily and naturally, 1994 was the turning point for me. That was the year that I discovered the Meta-States Model and applied the Meta-State pattern of “accessing the genius or engagement state of writing.” Prior to that event, I struggled constantly (nearly every day) with “writer’s block.” I’d get some idea and think that I could really write about that idea, but then I couldn’t find my words. Stuck. And when I did manage to write something, I found the process itself a tremendous struggle.

The Meta-States Model changed all of that because it provided me a way to *turn on and off at will* the engagement state of writing. After that, when I needed that state, I simply stepped into and accessed the frames, the resources, the state of mind, etc. of my best writing state. Similarly, when I stepped out, I would do so cleanly so that I left that state intact ... ready to be re-accessed. In doing so, I did not contaminate it by dragging it along as part of my consciousness when doing other things. A full description of that state is in the book, *Secrets of Personal Mastery* (1997) which is the text for the *Accessing Personal Genius* training that is now the flagship of Neuro-Semantics around the world.

So how do I write 2 or 3 books a year and have since 1994? How have I consistently written 3-plus articles every week for a dozen years? Plus articles for publications in various journals? I credit it first of all to the flow-state of absolute engagement that the Meta-States Model has allowed me to access. Secondly, I attribute it to the strategies that I have learned over the years for writing itself.

Writing Strategies — These are Stages in the Writing Process

At the heart of the writing experience, and the beginning, is *an idea*. This *idea* can be a thought, a feeling, an experience, a story, an understanding, a belief, etc. It is something that has arisen within you as the writer which needs to be expressed. This is the *pre-writing* stage.

In this pre-writing stage, your writing is a creative art. In NLP we have a strategy of creativity that Robert Dilts modeled from Walt Disney which is an excellent set of steps from dreaming, making it realistic, and testing it. In this first stage of writing, when you get an idea, it is like having a lightbulb go off in the mind. You then experience a feeling that excites and delights and which has to be told. At first, writing is accepting and being with the creative experience as we give birth to something. Writing is therefore embracing ambiguity and confusion and chaos as all of the wild and undisciplined thoughts flash in and out of consciousness. Writing is coping with all of the thought-balls that bounce in and out of the court of our awareness.

Writing is tolerating the glimmer of a new thought or feeling and accepting the stress, distress, and even pain of not-knowing what it is or how to say what it is. Writing is being with such roller coaster feelings and going for a ride. Writing is a love affair with an idea. It’s dating, courting, and

seducing the idea or the feeling so that it invites you in to make love and stay the night. In this stage we organize our thinking, frame our ideas, research, explore, and interview.

The second stage of writing is the *free-writing* stage. Here aim simply to get your thoughts down on paper. Forget about being neat, grammatically correct, etc. Just get words down on paper! Now your writing as a communication process outside of your head will typically become a pretty wild process. This is where most people suffer writer's block and which shuts down the whole process. It is in the second stage that we simply have to do *the mind-to-paper act* and to write down the wooly thoughts. In this free-writing stage the point, the goal, and the outcome is one and only one —*write it down*. At this point, grammar, spelling, structure, format, clarity, etc. does not matter, all that matters is that we *write it down*.

What is writing at this stage? It is the translation of wild chaotic ideas to paper. Here writing is like a mental whirlwind of unstructured thoughts. The purpose and focus is entirely single-minded, to get it out. Writing here will have little to nothing to do with the final product.

What frame of mind supports this stage? The belief, the value, and the decision that, "I'm going to do it wrong the first time and have lots of fun making a mess of it!" Of course, without that frame of mind, without that inner permission to mis-spell and to write our *confusions*— "dragons" arise and would-be writers become blocked. Another supporting belief at this stage is, "I can and will correct things later. Revision comes after I have something down on paper to revise."

Ah, relief! The idea, the dream, the vision, the feeling, etc. is out. Most writers feel an amazing unburdening after the free-writing stage. The relief is the unburdening of the inner energy, it is the relief of having given birth and delivered something wonderful and precious—well, messy too. But new life has been given birth!

Now comes the clean-up work. After the delivery comes the third stage, *revision*. Like parenting, this is the work of shaping, forming, restructuring, reforming, training, and honing. I like what E.B. White wrote, "There is no great writing, only great rewriting." No one, not the best, most famous, or most successful of writers write it right the first time. That's the structure and strategy for writer's block. It is in re-writing again and again that excellence and mastery emerges.

In recent years I have developed the practice of doing six-revisions, each one for a different theme. This came about through my exploration and research into the field of writing. As part of that study I began exploring the structure of best sellers. What is the strategy that writes a best seller? What are the qualities and features of books that are best sellers? As I identified them, I began *revising to those features*. This now is part and parcel of the prolific writing workshop. It's a way to benchmark the particular qualities in specific terms and to craft one's writing product so that it meet that level of quality. In brief, this means revising for structure, for energy, for state induction, and then for the specific feel, mood, and style with which we want to texture our text.

What is writing at this stage? Writing here is a meta-skill, the skill of stepping out and beyond the content that you've written to work at the structural level. Writing here is meta-structural thinking and processing. Writing is parenting the unruling and untamed child. Writing is discipline and

disciplining. Writing is patience and persistence and the willingness to cut ruthlessly. In fact, the best writers say “Cut one-fourth of everything!” Here writing is wielding the sword; it is butchering that which you’ve given birth to.

Writing in the revision stage is “tough love.” I know many authors, even NLP authors, with decent manuscripts that could be refined and honed into excellent books but they refuse to take up the knife. They lack the courage to cut, to plummet the sword into their brain-child.

The last stage of revision isn’t revising at all, it is *proofing*. It is cleaning up the final revised text and examining the text for mis-spellings and grammatical problems. Again, this is where many people waste lots of time and energy. They inefficiently waste time and energy by proof-reading (or *proof-seeing* as Jacobson and Hickman, 1998, call it in their book, *The power process: An NLP approach to writing*) before the revision steps are all complete. What is writing? Writing is the meta-detailing of examining a text without seeing or caring about the message. Writing is pulling every mote out of the eye of the text. Writing is the tedious minute and time consuming task of caring about grammar and spelling.

Afer that comes the stage of *selling* one’s product. This entails the business smarts of working with and through people to get to the editors and publishers who will buy what we have written. This means being able to package, present, market, and sell the specific article, book, screen play, novel, short story, etc. What is writing at this stage? Writing is passionately selling the romance that your work creates. Writing is standing up and standing out and doing a song and dance so that people will give it attention. Writing is the business intelligence that can and will negotiate a deal so that all can win.

As you can see, writing is a lot of things and calls upon the writer to step in and out of a lot of states. That’s why I make “impeccable state shifts” in and out of the “genius” state. As a writer, you will need to sequence your states so that you can play the various roles and wear the different hats as appropriate to where you are in your writing.

References: *Improve Your Writing with NLP* by Judith E. Pearson, Ph.D.
Writing Genius, Training Manual, L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #32
August 11, 2014
Writing #2

MORE WRITING SECRETS

- Is there *an idea*, feeling, experience, or story welling up to be expressed?
- Do you have a book in you?
- Would you like to enter into the wild and wonderful world of writing and leave your touch on others?

Then explore the adventure and pleasure of writing. There is a structure to writing, to prolific writing, and to masterful writing and with NLP and Neuro-Semantics we have the tools for discovering it and making it ours. In the last post I overviewed the key Strategy and Stages in writing. This fits the basic principle in NLP that there's a structure to every experience. If the activity of writing has a structure, that strategy involves including some of the critical states and belief frames necessary. What I wrote about last week in Neurons was the five stages of writing.

- 1) *Getting an Idea: Brainstorming and Creativity.*
- 2) *Free-writing: Getting the idea down on paper.*
- 3) *Revision: Straightening out the idea, Drafting.*
- 4) *Cleaning-up: Proof-seeing.*
- 5) *Selling the Idea and Book: Finding a publisher.*

The next question that I'm constantly asked is how have I been so prolific in writing and what does a person need to do to become more prolific? The following is what I wrote many years ago in *Anchor Point*.

1) *Spend Quality Time with your Idea*

First, I have found that in the first stage of romancing an idea, it is the depth and quality of the time alone with the idea that provides the richness of thought for the writing. This is where the focus or "genius" state becomes so important. When we "access our personal genius" state and sequence things so that we can easily and elegantly step into a focus state at will, we can then be *all there* with all of our resources available. This is being in the zone. This is accessing the state of flow. And when you do, the world goes away, time goes away, even self goes away—and you experience the fully engagement of the object of your attention.

As I write these days, I step into my "genius" writing state to be fully present with whatever is capturing my attention. When I do, the writing just flows. On the occasions when it doesn't, I access another "genius" state—that of romancing the idea. I go back to the pre-writing stage where I give myself permission to explore, reflect, study, research, talk, and interview in order to have more depth and quality with the idea that I want to give birth to.

What then happens is pretty magical. With the experience of being with one idea for a long period of time comes a depth and richness of awareness, emotion, understanding, etc. And out of that comes a multitude of new connections, ideas, and creativity. That's why I read one *book* at a time,

I read it from cover to cover, and if it's a high quality book, I'll *meta-read* it the second time (that is, I read it for structural and process information). Further (and this will disappoint many people) I read in one *field* at a time and one *book* at a time. This may last from two months to 18 months. This generally leads to a training manual, one or two books, and dozens of articles. I mine it for all it's worth!

2) *Read One Book at a Time*

To be a writer, and especially a prolific writer, you have to read. Reading is the pool we bath in every day, it is the spring we drink from, it is the hot springs we relax in. Reading keeps us fresh and alive. Reading feeds our thoughts as we live with the idea.

I read one book at a time in order to be more efficient and prolific. In doing so, I then don't contaminate what I'm reading with ideas and stories from other books and then can't remember where I was reading something. I read one book at a time because I want to know the thinking, reasoning, and feeling of the author and want to understand his or her perspective honestly. Reading one book at a time gives me that kind of clarity as it supports comprehension and remembering where I read something, which of course then helps with documentation.

3) *Learn to do Mental Writing*

Efficiency relates also to working through the stages of writing, being disciplined, keeping oneself in the best of states, staying balanced in mind-and-body, staying aligned with one's visions and values, living ecologically in terms of health, relationships, fun, etc. I "write" a lot when I'm out on a run or when I hike to the top of some of the Colorado mountains. I "write" them in my mind. Often, I have returned from a four-mile run and immediately sit down at the computer and zap out a four or five page article in less than an hour.

4) *Discipline your Writing for Efficiency*

Part of the efficiency that leads to being prolific is the discipline of writing every day. Even when I'm involved in intensive all-day trainings, I will still write for at least 30 minutes. Even when I'm writing posts for egroups (we have four primary egroups in Neuro-Semantics), I usually keep and file for later use or reference. Similar to my commitment to run three to four miles everyday, I write for at least an hour almost everyday. Robert Dilts does this also as he writes every morning for an hour.

5) *Set a Great Big Why for Writing*

If you want to be prolific, then develop a great big reason to write. I have many. I write to learn. It's part of my learning strategy. My belief frame is that if I can put something into my words, then it's mine; I know it. And that will help me to remember it and to integrate it. I write to develop more clarity and succinctness in my communications and trainings. I write to influence others. I write to create products that will continue that influence beyond where I can go in person and beyond the years of my own lifespan. I write to create a positive legacy of NLP and Neuro-Semantics. I write because it's fun and because almost on a daily basis I discover new things as I write.

I also write because I believe that I can and will write a best seller for the New York list of best sellers. I have every intention of achieving that. I also have every intention of becoming five percent

better and more skilled as a writer with every year and have set up a development plan to facilitate that. What is my goal in doing that? To put NLP and Neuro-Semantics on the map!

For being efficient and prolific, I schedule my writing. I will write three books this year (2004), I have three planned for 2005 already, and at this moment, one scheduled for 2006. In addition to that I have a schedule for writing a dozen or two articles this year. A writing schedule simply keeps me focused and on target. Oh yes, it took me four hours to write and proof this article.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #33
August 18, 2014

WE ARE NOT FAR REMOVED FROM THE JUNGLE

Last week I had the privilege again of presenting the second module in the Neuro-Semantic Self-Actualization Training, *Unleashing Potentials*. I also had the privilege of speaking to the MCF (Meta-Coach Foundation) chapter in Mexico City on Neuro-Semantics and Self-Actualization. During both events, I repeated a few times that “*We are not far removed from the Jungle...*” Living in “the jungle” was Abraham Maslow’s expression of living *solely and exclusively* at the lower levels and behaving *as if* we are only animals— as if all of our needs are completely satisfied by the deficiency needs.

Living in the jungle refers to making the lower needs the sole purpose of life. It is behaving *as if* there is not a higher drive within us as human beings. Living by that premise as a manager or leader is what Douglas McGregor labeled Theory X of management and leadership (*The Human Enterprise*, 1960).

- To what degree are we still living “in the jungle?”
- To what degree does modern advertising, marketing, education, government, etc. operate *as if* that’s all there is?

I think the percentage would be very high. At the same time that I was speaking about these things, ISIS in Iraq is demonstrating genocide as they are slaughtering thousands of people and beheading people because they will not convert to their fanatical and fundamentalistic version of Islam. Putin in Russia is supporting his rebels in Ukraine fighting to gain control of cities and land that do not belong to him. In the USA, in Ferguson, Missouri, mobs of people have been looting and burning down stores in protest over the shooting death of a young man. Three activities this week that indicate that *we are indeed not far removed from the Jungle!* In fact, looking at these and many, many similar events— it seems that much of the human race is *very much living in the jungle*.

What does “living in the jungle” mean? It means that we humans seem to quickly and easily fall back to using violence when we don’t get our way. It means we are quick to dismiss “law and order” and using peaceful means for resolving conflicts, and if things don’t go our way—we are ready to loot stores, throw stones, throw burning bottles full of gasoline, beat up people, shot, knife, kill, massacre those who disagree, etc.

Why is this? Because we quickly assume and live by *the laws of the jungle*: “Whatever you have deprives me.” “Your success means my failure.” So we live by competition. To win or succeed in life is a matter of the survival of the strongest or smartest or cruelest. That’s the Jungle. In business, it is doing what you have to do even if it is unethical or even illegal to get what you want and to sign off with “It’s not personal, it’s business.”

Yet the Self-Actualization Psychology of Maslow and Rogers says that there is a higher dimension—the human dimension. They started from a very different premise as they postulated that there is within every human being a *drive for the higher needs*, a self-actualization drive for the uniquely human drives: knowledge, meaning, justice, equality, beauty, music, order, giving love, excellence, contribution, making a difference, etc. These self-actualization needs or drives are within all, but have to be identified and developed.

Maslow called these the *Being-needs*. Why? What did he mean by that? The *being-needs* contrast with the *instrumental needs*, namely, the lower needs. Yes, we need the *Survival needs* for air, water, food, shelter, sleep, sex, money, etc. Yes we need the *Safety needs* for stability, protecting, order, control, power, etc. Yes we need the *Social needs* for love and affection, for connection, bonding, relating, inter-personal relationships, etc. Yes we need the *Self-needs* for a sense of value, importance, worth and recognition. Yet all of these are *instrumental needs*— we need them as a *means* to be healthy physically, socially, personally, and psychologically. These are not *end* needs, but needs that are a *means* to an end— to growth and health.

The *being-needs* are different. They are *end* values. *They are valuable and worthwhile* in and of themselves. That's because we are made for these needs and these higher level needs enable us to transcend the jungle. Life in the jungle is cruel, competitive, and ruthless. It is all about getting. Life in the *being-realm*, while having a good foundation of the deficiency needs, is about giving. It is about being your best self, finding and living your passion, and giving of your best. It's about giving your knowledge, inspirational meanings, your music, beauty, excellence, justice, etc.

Yet we distort and corrupt healthy self-actualization by seeking to gratify our self-actualization needs by using jungle tactics. Just as you can't lie, cheat, and steal your way to truth, justice, and equality, you can't use violence and force to get collaboration and democracy. While sometimes self-actualization is presented in a way that makes it unrelated to everyday life, the way Maslow and Rogers presented it, it is exceptionally pragmatic and fits the world as it is.

To ISIS— get beyond the primitive thinking that confuses your map with the territory! Discover the peaceful message of the Koran so you can love people and accept them even if you disagree with them. Get out of the jungle of killing people in the name of God! To Putin, go home and focus on raising the quality of life in Russia—give up the need to re-establish the old Soviet Union and be a visionary leader for bringing equality and justice to the Russian people. To the people of Ferguson Missouri— don't create a context where more injustice is done in the name of justice. Rediscover the power of non-violent protest by creating a culture of personal empowerment and responsibility rather than a culture of blame and victimhood.

These and a thousand other political contexts are crying out for the message of the higher human needs so that we as a race— the human race— can get out of the Jungle!

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #34
August 20, 2014

THE SEMANTICS OF “THE MEDIA”

In the past twelve days here in the United States we have had a strange political experience occurring. A young man was shot and killed in Ferguson Missouri by a police officer. Normally, this will lead to an investigation to find out the details and then, depending on results, would lead either to a prosecution or the validation of the policeman’s conduct. But not here.

Many people in Ferguson Missouri interpreted the action to be an injustice by the policeman and so conducted a protest to say so, which is their political right. Normally, they would have protested walked in protest, made their voice and perspective known, and that would have been it. But not here.

Somehow the event hit “the media” and suddenly the event of a single death became a big media event. Dozens and dozens of news media showed up, turned on their cameras, and that fed the protest so that it went on day after day after day. As a consequence, that single event has dominated “the news” here for more than a week-and-a-half. So what began as local people protesting a perceived injustice by the police, suddenly became a “national issue.” Then, instead of waiting for the investigation to take place, “the media” descended upon Ferguson Missouri so that the protesters now had a national platform.

This then attracted other people who figured out that if they could fan the anger of the protesters, get a mob response, and create a context where they could loot and steal. And that’s what has happened. This then brought in more media to cover the looting, destruction, and rioting! And the more the media, the more the context where those who are criminally-minded could unleash their desire to burn down buildings, loot stores, destroy property. And with that more media pored in the place.

Now I can easily believe that good people living in Ferguson Missouri began by simply wanting to peacefully protest what they considered an injustice. I can believe that they had good intentions and motives. And, of course, they have a legal right to peacefully protest. I can just as easily believe that most of them go home at night at a decent hour because they have jobs to go to, families to take care of, etc.

Yet with regard to protesting, what is the purpose? Is not the purpose to make your point and to have your voice heard? If that’s the purpose of protesting—to register a complaint, to get attention to an injustice, then a question: How long should one protest? How long is it proper for the protests to go on? Why is it that night after night for more than a week, the people are still protesting? Have they not made their point? Have they not registered a complaint so that there is now awareness of an injustice? So how much longer should the protest go on?

Further, if the media's purpose is to record such, when is their job done? When should they go home? The other night I scanned the different news media—CNN, Fox, ABC, NBC, etc.— and in addition to the formal media, there were hundreds of people with cameras holding up their phones and cameras. Why? To record the crowds? To catch a scene of rioting, the destruction of property, the agitators throwing Molotov cocktails at the police or at commercial buildings? Watching all of that, I wonder:

At what point is the media creating the context that makes the problem worse?

At what point does the media become a big part of the problem?

If “the media” left, would the people who are inciting more anger, hostility, and conflict also go home?

It seems to me that one of the big contributing factors to this has been *the media*. As a Neuro-Semanticist I have to ask,

“What are the semantics of the media? What does the presence of the media mean to people? What does it mean to the people in Ferguson Missouri, to the protesters, to the agitators from other places, to the looters, etc.?”

For the protesters it *means* that their voice and complaint is now amplified. It means that they have a larger platform and that they have more “power” in what they want to highlight. To the agitators who have come in from other places, it *means* they have a context in which they can create trouble and start a “revolution.” To others it *means* that they can use this event to promote a particular agenda, they can make it about race, or police brutality, or militarization of police, or whatever agenda they have.

The fact is—*the media is political*. It is one of the political powers which so subtly influences and controls life in the twenty-first century. Whether we're talking about newspapers, magazines, television, cable news, blogs, social media of Facebook or Tweets, movies, Hollywood, documentaries, video-games, etc., “the media” plays a tremendous role in our lives today. Everybody knows this and “the media” also knows this, which is why all forms of media spends money on expanding what they are doing. Well, this is true until someone suggests that “the media” contributes to some of our social problems. Let someone say that the media plays a role in violence, and then we hear from “the media” that it is “just entertainment and nothing more.”

The most subtle aspect of the media is how it *frames* things. How it formulates and arranges their presentations and interviews influences the *meanings* that people make of things. How it *primes* the situation via the words and the metaphors they use very subtly influences the meanings and reactions of people. How it constructs the significance of the event shapes how people respond.

Now, if the media is political and exercises a lot of power in our lives in these ways—should we not hold the media more responsible about what it does and how it operates?

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #35
August 25, 2014
Writing #3

I LEARN BY WRITING

Of all the reasons that I write and love to write the primary one is this: *I learn by writing*. I don't know when I discovered that I could learn by writing, perhaps it was in grade-school. Yet if so, I have no memory of that. It wasn't until some point in my adult life that I began to consciously realize that there were times when attempting to write something I found myself actually learning new things. Amazing! How does that work? I found it incredible that sometimes when I sat down to put an idea into words, the very process of searching for words, of playing around with different sets of words and different metaphors, I would from time to time *discover something new that I had not thought of or realized before*. And when I discovered that, I really had my big *why* for writing.

Now I don't know how many times that happened before I became conscious of it. Yet once conscious of it, I began noticing. And isn't it funny that once you start noticing something, it's amazing how often you see it. What had been invisible suddenly becomes visible and you can see it in many places.

For me this happened with writing. I began noticing and experiencing more and more often that while in the activity of writing, I would *learn* something that I had not known before. Sometimes in putting one thought with another, an understanding or conclusion would suddenly arise that enabled me to explain a concept. And not infrequently, that new understanding was something that a teacher had said, but had never made sense—until now.

Writing, as a neuro-muscular activity, whether in long-hand or on a keyboard, is a process that translates ideas into words. What I discovered was that that very process offered me a learning strategy. That is, I use writing not only to record ideas, but also to discover ideas. Today what I know about writing is this:

If I can put an idea in words, if I can find those words, say those words, write those words, then they are mine! If I can't, then do I really know something? If I don't have the words, have I actually learned something?

This is especially true in the first two stages of writing of *getting an idea and free-writing*. When I'm at these stages I set my intention for the purpose of discovery and learning, not expressing. I write to see what I know and what I don't know. I may write many pages trying to articulate some thought and if I happen upon it, I may then be able to express that thought in a single sentence. There have been times when it took three or four pages to get a thought. At that point I then delete all of those pages and keep the short sentence of seven words that encapsulates the thought. I suppose it is like mining for gold in a mountain creek. It may take many, many pans of river gravel to get a small chunk of gold.

When I'm in those stages if you were to ask, "So what are you writing?" my answer would be, "I don't know. I'll let you know when I find it." If you were to ask, "What is the idea that you're

working on?” I also might answer, “I don’t know, I have not found it yet. I’ll let you know when I do.”

Now this also occurs for me in the auditory channel. It happens frequently in the Q&A (Question and Answer) period at trainings and workshops. Sometimes in the inter-play between a question and trying to provide an answer verbally, I hear myself saying things that I didn’t know that I knew. And not infrequently, I didn’t know *the answer* until I uttered a set of words. Amazing! But I’m not unique in this. From what I hear from other speakers, this is actually a pretty common phenomenon ... and often an experience that makes the interaction with an audience so compelling.

Now to *learn* in this way is not easy for some people and there’s several reasons for this. One is that to learn in this way requires that you give up the need to be right, to be sure, and to be confident in what you know. And some people just won’t do that. They have a need to be right and sure and confident. So to embrace uncertainty, to welcome ambiguity, to spin around in a not-knowing state—for them—is just too disorienting. Yet as the literature on creativity has suggested for decades, this is one of those prerequisites of creativity. New and unexpected ideas will not come to you if you don’t create an inner openness and emptiness. If you are fill up with your own knowledge, or worse, filled up with your self-importance and ego, new creative ideas have no entrance.

To use writing (as well as speaking) as a context for *learning* then, take a moment to let go of the need to be right, to be sure, to have things figured out. Go for a *learning adventure of discovery*. Play with ideas and thoughts and words and phrases and let them all get mixed up, even to the point of becoming disoriented and confused. Let them all *fuse* together (con-fused) so that later when you pull things apart and re-arrange them, you have a doorway to new learnings.

I wrote my first NLP book (*The Spirit of NLP*, 1996) from the notes which I took at my Master Practitioner course with Richard Bandler (1990). My sole purpose in writing was to learn. Each day I wrote down what I could from the presentations. When I missed things, I would ask fellow participants to fill in details that I had missed. I would even track down some of the presenters and ask them questions. In writing, I first wrote for myself and then as others discovered that I had extensive notes on the Master Prac. Training, they wanted copies. Ah, the dawning of a business! And with that I had my second reason for writing—I began writing for others as well.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #36
September 2, 2014
Cleaning Up Language Series #4

WHEN WHAT YOU SAY IS JUST WRONG

[I began a series back in March and April on *Cleaning Up Language* and then did not finish it. In fact, it slipped my mind— until a *Neurons* reader asked me about it. So with that jolt to my memory and intention, here is the next one.]

When someone is not being very clear or precise, the NLP tool par excellence to use is *The Meta-Model of Language*. This was the very first model created by the co-founders of NLP and was formulated into the great sleepers— *The Structure of Magic Volumes I and II*. I cleaned up at the behest of Richard Bandler in 1997 to commensurate the 25th anniversary of NLP. Today the expanded and refined NLP Communication model is now in the book, *Communication Magic* (2001, Crown House Publications).

Sometimes we call the Meta-Model— *The Precision Model* because that is what it is best for— eliciting precision from a speaker. That occurs by asking questions about the way the person has formulated his or her statements. What is the Meta-Model? It is a set of linguistic distinctions and a set of precision-eliciting questions.

But sometimes the problem is not that the speaker is vague, imprecise, confused, or engaged in fluffy or hypnotic language. Sometimes the problem is that the speaker is using language in erroneous ways. Sometimes a person uses language that is simply erroneous. What the person says doesn't just lack precision, it is wrong.

Sometimes the language is so contaminated with erroneous ideas and false-to-fact assumptions, that there's a contamination in the words and the ideas. I'm not talking about what some people would call "bad" words or curse words. I'm talking about something much, much worse and much more subtle in terms of its power to corrupt. This is a contamination that refers to something far more sinister and much more toxic. I'm speaking about—

- 1) the *erroneous and pseudo-language* that we inherit in language
- 2) our *interpretative filters* which can contaminate how we then explain something
- 3) the *metaphors* that we live by which mis-direct and contaminate thinking.

Erroneous Language

Some language is just wrong. It is simply false. As a mental map it is fallacious in that it does not fit or correspond to the structure (form) of the territory outside of our skin. So as a map it will not enable us to go and experience that part of the territory. Sometimes this contaminated language is just a word, sometimes it is a phrase. Korzybski called some of these words *pseudo-words*. I quoted him extensively in *Communication Magic* (2001):

Pseudo-words: Just because we can make a verbal *noise* or *spell out marks* on paper which look like or sound like words, this does not necessarily make them true words. Korzybski designated such pseudo-words as *noises* (in the auditory channel) and as *spell-marks* (in the visual channel).

Before a noise or a spell-mark can exist as a symbol, something must exist. When it does, the symbol can symbolize that existing thing, process, or concept. In language and "knowledge" we have two kinds of existence: *physical existence and logical existence*. Thus *unicorns* do not exist in the external world of unaided nature. They do not belong to zoology. When we apply the word "unicorn" to the field of zoology, we employ a pseudo-word. If, however, we employ the word with reference to mythology or human fancy, the word there has a referent and so functions meaningfully as a symbol (pp. 81-82).

What's the difference between a true word and a pseudo-word? A true word or symbol symbolizes something that exists. You can point to it. You can refer to it. A false word functions merely as a *noise* and does not refer to any actual thing or process. Obviously, if a person does not make this differentiation, that person will lack a vital skill for clear communication, thinking, and reasoning. Korzybski noted that if we *use noises* as if they were words, we create all sorts of problems for ourselves and others.

"One of the obvious origins of human disagreement lies in the use of noises for words" (p. 82).

Actually, this a form of fraud! Korzybski made this pronouncement because it literally involves "the use of *false representations*." He illustrated this with the word "*heat*" (*Science and Sanity*, p. 107). He noted that grammatically we classify "heat" as a substantive (actually a nominalization). Yet physicists labored for centuries looking for some "substance" which would correspond to the substantive "heat." They never found it. It does not exist. Today we know that no such *thing* as "heat" exists. So what exists? Manifestations of "energy" (processes) and interactions between processes that create or release thermo-dynamic energy. So we use a verb or adverb (thermo-dynamic) to more accurately represents the referent. Today we recognize that no such "substance" as "heat" exists, so we talk about *the process of "thermo-dynamics"* as two objects or processes interact.

Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) has highlighted common pseudo-words of unsanity that torment lots of people and send them to a pit of emotional hell. These include: "awful," "horrible," "terrible," etc. What do these words refer to? Answer: Nothing. They function only as *emotional amplification words*. People use them to exaggerate an unpleasant and undesirable situation. When Albert Ellis was alive, I heard him many times challenge this philosophical nonsense. He would ask a client to explain *why* they said something was "awful" or "terrible" rather than just undesirable.

"What do you mean other than that you intensely dislike that and feel a strong aversion to it?" "Why is this experience 'awful,' 'terrible,' or a 'catastrophe?' I know that you don't like it and that you wish you didn't have to deal with it. I can see how unpleasant and distressful it feels, but why is it 'awful?'"

Interpretative Filters

The filters could be a wide range of processes from our meta-programs, values, explanatory styles that we have learned, cognitive biases that are mostly built into our neurology-brain. I usually start the confrontation with a description of their language patterns. Take, as an example, the word "you"

when a person is actually speaking about oneself. This is the *generalized you*. Yet the person does not mean “you.” The person means “me.” Yet the speaker has not said so. ““You just always have to feel bad when they reject you...””

When I hear that kind of language in the context of coaching, I always highlight it by feeding it back to the person so the person can hear his or her words and take responsibility.

“I have to feel bad? *Me?* ... You are talking about me?”

That typically elicits a “No, I’m talking about me.”

“Whew! [wiping my brow] and so you *have to* feel bad? So there’s a rule? You have a rule that requires and demands that you *have to* feel bad?”

“No, I just do.”

“Okay, good. You just do. And you do because you believe what? What has to be true for you in your mental map so that you just feel bad to the trigger of someone rejecting you?”

I will keep at this *meta-modeling to create a greater sense of the precision of the person’s use of language* and to straighten out the distortion that comes from using the generalized-you and making it an universal rule. And yes, oftentimes the person will experience this interaction as confrontative, even “debating.” Yet the purpose is to provide a way to clean up one’s language from a false map.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #37
September 9, 2014
Self-Actualization Politics #1

THE POLITICS OF SELF-ACTUALIZING PEOPLE

Suppose we start from the premises of *Self-Actualization Psychology* that created Theory Y of leadership and management. Suppose we start from Maslow's picture of human beings who not only have lower-level needs as do the animals, but also have the higher-level needs that distinguishes us as humans (the theme of the books *Unleashed! Self-Actualization Psychology, and Unleashing Leadership*). If we start from that place, then what would our politics be?

Maslow would say first and foremost that human beings innately have *the capacity for self-government*. And what explains this capacity? Several sub-capacities, namely, the capacity to learn, to understanding, to make choices, to be a responsible human being, to care about values, to be courageous, to discipline oneself, to learn self-leadership, etc.

Until recently I didn't understand why George Washington and Abraham Lincoln and others described the beginning of the United States as "an experiment in self-government." I had read that phrase in their speeches, but I really didn't comprehend what they were getting at. Now after a couple of years of study in their writings and in political science, I am beginning to understand. It goes back to what was occurring back in the eighteenth century. Back then, *there were no democratic countries*. None, zero, nada. Instead, every country in the world was a Monarchy or a Dictatorship. They created that form of government because it was thought "the people" could not handle a democracy or a republic. They would argue, fight, debate, split, and then go to war and divide into smaller countries. The thought at that time was that government is best left to those who are educated and those who have had experience in government.

The colonists of the first thirteen colonies in the new world had a different idea. A new one. One revived from the ancient Greeks and Romans. They imagined *an experiment* wherein a republican form of government would be set up with sufficient checks and balances so that political and governmental "power" would be distributed and held accountable to the people they were representing. That was the original idea behind the new form of government created by the Founding Fathers of the United States. The question before them was a simple question, yet one that they didn't know what the answer would be:

- Could a people form a union in which the government would be "of the people, by the people, and for the people?"
- Could a nation operate by the principle of self-government?

Eighty-seven years later Lincoln answered these questions and proposed a new question. He said that this was the only country founded on the principle that men would and could govern themselves.

"[T]he central idea pervading this struggle (the Civil War) is the necessity that is upon us,

of proving that popular government is not an absurdity. If we fail it will go far to prove the incapability of the people to govern themselves.” (Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 585)

The years since the beginning of the country had demonstrated that self-government is possible. We have done that. But the new question is this:

- Can a constitutional republic or democracy—a government of the people and by the people maintain itself and its territorial integrity?
- Can self-government last and be sustained?

I write all of this as a preamble for explaining another idea of the founding fathers of the American experiment. They sought to create as small a government as possible. They wanted the government to take on as few responsibilities as possible, and none of the individual responsibilities. They wanted the new government to be as little paternal and/or socialistic as possible. And why?

Using Self-Actualization Psychology, because growing, maturing, and actualizing humans don't want it. Self-actualizing people do not want or need to be *dependent* on others for doing that they can do. When people experience the characteristics of self-actualization and begin living a self-actualizing lives, they are not content with being taken care of, giving up their responsibilities for making a living, pursuing visionary goals, conforming to fit in and avoid standing out from everyone else, putting up with mediocrity, etc.

The more a government thinks of people as children who need to be taken care of and themselves as the Parents, the more that government needs people to stay immature, un-developed, under-developed, irresponsible, and needy. The more it offers “goodies” to its people (welfare checks, unemployment checks, “free” food, transportation, etc.), the more people become dependent on government, the larger government grows, and the more freedoms are taken away from people.

What a paternalistic or socialistic kind of government does not handle well are *self-actualizing people*. After all, these are the people who want and need to be independent, hard working, and ethical. They want to create businesses and make money (since that's where governments get its money). And actually, government needs a portion of the population to be like that, yet not too many. Certainly not enough to effect elections. Such people are dangerous to governments and politicians who want larger government. Such people *think* and *ask hard questions* and do not buy the status quo what is politically correct simply because it is popular or in vogue. They are independent thinkers who by critical thinking cut through propaganda and the political spin.

As a Self-Actualization Psychologist, I'm for people learning, growing, and developing their potentials. I'm for them becoming entrepreneurs or intrepeneurs and taking personal responsibility for their own financial well-being, health well-being, etc. I'm for them asking hard questions and exploring the assumptions behind the political spin and holding politicians accountable to a high moral and ethical stance. There is just something wrong about “public servants”—people who want to contribute to the overall well-fare of a society—getting rich in that service. I'm all for government functioning in those areas where individuals cannot handle something and providing freedom in all those areas where individuals are better equipped than government.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #38
September 15, 2014
Self-Actualization Politics #2

SELF-ACTUALIZING PEOPLE AS POLITICIANS

The very idea of *self-actualizing politicians* surprises, shocks, and astonishes people. I should know. I've been talking about this for several years and this is the theme of the twelve book in the Meta-Coaching Series, *Coaching Politicians*, which is scheduled for publications at the end of this year. It is all based on the same premises that I based the previous books on, namely, *Self-Actualization Psychology*.

Nor is the frame as radical as it might first sound. After all, once we start from the premise that human beings are designed, created, and programmed with *the higher needs*, for the *being-needs and being-values* at the top of the Hierarchy of Needs, then we suddenly have an entire paradigm shift for many fields. It offers a paradigm shift for Coaching, for Therapy, for Leadership and Management, for Business, etc. So why should it not also present a paradigm shift for Politics as well?

Along the way in this exploration, I came across certain facts about Maslow's history and development, his collaboration with other leaders that resulted in the first Human Potential Movement and that led to "the secret history of NLP." That information is now in the book, *Self-Actualization Psychology*, it is in articles on the international Neuro-Semantic website (www.neurosemantics.com) and also now in numerous NLP books and on numerous NLP websites.

Perhaps even more surprising is the fact that Abraham Maslow set out to create a paradigm shift in psychology for a political purpose. The year was 1941. The story is told in *Politics and Innocence* (1986).

"One day just after Pearl Harbor, I was driving home and my car was stopped by a poor, pathetic parade. Boy scouts and fat people and old uniforms and a flag and someone playing a flute off-key. As I watched, the tears began to run down my face. I felt we didn't understand—not Hitler, nor the Germans, nor Stalin, nor the Communists. We didn't understand any of them. *I felt that if we could understand, then we could make progress.* . . . I had a vision of a peace table, with people sitting around it, talking about human nature and hatred and war and peace and brotherhood. I was too old to go into the army. It was at that moment that I realized that *the rest of my life must be devoted to discovering a psychology for the peace table.* That moment changed my whole life." (p. 149, italics added)

Maslow's path in working toward realizing his vision of the peace table was to develop a comprehensive theory of human motivation. To that end he then devoted a decade of study and in the end, he created his classical work, *Motivation and Personality* (1954; 1970). This extensively researched book looked into the question of motivation—What do people really want in life? What drives them to go after the goals that they set? What motivates people to follow a dictator like a

Hitler or a Stalin?

Most psychological theories are not directly political or even related to politics, but the Humanistic Self-Actualization Psychology of Maslow is, and even more, it arose from a political question. Nor did it end there. Later in his life, during a sabbatical due to ill-health, Maslow served as the manager in his brother's wine company, then as a consultant for an I.T. company in southern California that wanted to integrate the new psychology into management and leadership. Somewhere during those years, Maslow presented a political thought experiment.

He asked, given the premises in Self-Actualization Psychology and the characteristics of people living a self-actualizing life, especially the democratic attitude of equality and brotherhood, what would this mean for a society? What would happen if you took a hundred self-actualizing people, or a thousand such people, and created a brand new community out of them?

- How would that group of self-actualizing people set up their community and then govern themselves?
- How would they manage their resources and interactions?
- How would they choose their leaders?
- Who would they want to be their leaders?
- What kind of political environment would they want?

Fascinating questions, wouldn't you say? Psychology and politics—after all, what's the difference? If a political system is any persistent pattern of human relationships that involves how we get along, how we make decisions about how to govern ourselves, how to allocate resources, how to be a group of people, then politics is inevitably psychological (and sociological, and anthropological). Beyond the University catalog that distinguishes these as courses for study, they are intimately and intricately inter-related and inter-related to such a degree that any separation is a separation in how we talk about them, to the territory that we're pointing to.

Our psychologies inevitably imply certain politics and political policies and lead to certain ways of operating politically. What has been missing in most political conversations are the unspoken assumptions of people, human nature, human needs, drives, meaning-making, etc. So if politics refers to the ways people organize themselves in order to attain the greatest satisfaction of human needs possible within an environment and if our premise is that the single most important factor for a society is human potentiality, then this has to be a key factor in politics.

Otherwise our politics can be stunting and limiting and diminishing people. It can limit human possibilities and human development. If we have a stunted conception of human potential, this will be built deeply into the cultural norms and reinforced by the society. And that actually operates as a powerful form of political tyranny. It creates a stunted political system as it has a lopsided view of human needs. Perhaps it puts the acquisition of material goods and social prestige as the upper limits of human growth. If that happens, then we think that is the upper reaches of human development and we do not structure our societies for the unleashing of the highest in human intelligence, creativity, and possibility. We may then make bread and circuses to keep people entertained and occupied the purpose of government.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #39
September 22, 2014
Neuro-Semantics & Therapy Series #1

NEURO-SEMANTICS AND THERAPY

Our primary focus in Neuro-Semantics is on psychologically healthy people and facilitating their ongoing development so that they can create the best version of them and the best version of their families and organizations. This focus led to all of the developments in Meta-Coaching (the 12 books in that series) and in Self-Actualization Psychology (four books on this subject). It has led to our focus in business on leadership, self-actualizing business leaders (*Unleashing Leadership*); it has led to our focus on politics—on developing self-actualizing politics and politicians (*Political Coaching*). It has led to our focus on wealth creation (*Inside-Out Wealth*).

With all of this focus on people who are basically okay, what about those who are not? What about those who need therapy—psychological healing? What about those who are not only not-okay, but suffering on the inside their mind-emotion system? Who are inwardly traumatized and who simply are not psychologically healthy, but unwell?

This is actually where NLP began as it modeled the therapeutic skills of Fritz Perls, then Virginia Satir, and then Milton Erickson. For that reason, NLP was quickly and early mis-identified as a therapy, or a meta-therapy discipline. Yet it is not. While the early developers modeled psychotherapists, that was *not* their interest and it was *not* what they actually created. Yes, they were fascinated by what those world-class therapists were able to do and how they did it. Yet above and beyond the content of therapy, they were interested in *the process of communication and change*. Subsequently they created a Communication Model—the Meta-Model of Language.

Neither Bandler nor Grinder were therapists, only Pucelik studied therapy (Gestalt Therapy) at the University and only he continued doing what we would recognize as “therapy” as he focused on drug and alcohol addictions and ran (and still runs) recovery programs. And yet, in spite of that history, NLP has numerous patterns that are recognized as therapy patterns and for the first two decades, NLP mostly attracted therapists. Accordingly, the majority of the early books on NLP applied NLP to therapy and some of the early authors didn’t differentiate what NLP is (i.e., a Communication Model) and its application in psychotherapy.

My primary work in this area was the book I wrote on personality, *Personality Ordering and Disorder using NLP and Neuro-Semantics* (2000) in which I addressed the 14 personality disorders in the DSM IV. Collaborating with me in that book was Bob Bodenhamer, Richard Bolstad, and Margot *. Other books on psychotherapy was the second book on the Meta-States Model, *Dragon Slaying* (1996/ 2000) and *Games for Mastering Fear* (20??) With Bob Bodenhamer, also *Mastering Stuttering and Blocking* (20??) By Bob Bodenhamer, now titled, *In Their Voice*. Later, *The Crucible* (200?).

Therapy— The Neuro-Semantic Approach

What is the approach that we, in Neuro-Semantics, take regarding therapeutic work? How do we conceptualize therapy— what it is, how it works, who needs it, the therapeutic change work, etc.?

What it is. “Therapy,” by definition, refers to *healing*. So given that we’re talking about psychotherapy, this kind of therapy focuses on healing the mind, emotions, memories, and relational and social skills. Given that, what is there about one’s mind, emotions, memories, etc. that is “hurt” or “sick” (toxic) and needs “healing?” How can our mind-body-emotion system be hurt or get sick?

Using Carl Roger’s definition of self-actualization provides what I consider an excellent answer. He said that a self-actualizing person is a *fully-functioning person*— fully functioning mentally, emotionally, relationally, professionally, etc. So when that is not present, when one is not fully *well*, then one is *not-fully-functioning* in those areas or *dys-functional*.

So what is hurt or damaged or not working the way it ought to work? Answer: One’s mental maps. The meanings that a person has constructed about things are not the kind or quality of meanings that enables a person to function or cope well in the world. What’s wounded is one’s understandings, beliefs, decisions, identity, etc. *How* one thinks (cognitive processing style, cognitive distortions) and *what* one things (erroneous understandings, limiting beliefs, toxic decisions, false knowledge, etc.).

To have “hurting” emotions requires having a mis-match between what you think, believe, and expect from what you are getting and living. If the mental map is severely disconnected with the reality on the ground of one’s everyday experiences, then we experience what we call “the negative emotions.” These “negative” emotions (anger, fear, frustration, annoyance, stress, upset, grief, sadness, depression, etc.) indicate a gap between experience (territory) and mental model of the world (map). The larger the gap between experience and expectation, the more we sense that our map of the world is being violated. That’s what gets *hurt* when we feel bad. We feel disappointed or upset or disillusioned because reality felt far short of our expectations.

Neuro-Semantically, these “negative” emotions provide tremendously important information and are therefore highly significant and valuable. The negative emotion of anger says that something of value in your mental map feels violated. The negative emotion of sadness says that something of value in your mental map feels lost. Fear says that something feels dangerous. To the extent that this is true, and an accurate appraisal, that emotion provides emotional energy to “stop, look, and listen” to make appropriate change. This is the positive use of negative emotions.

Normally none of this does any *semantic damage* to us. In fact, it is the natural and normal functioning of our emotions. **But** if we *hate*, reject, and refuse the negative emotion— paradoxically it does not go away, but gets stuck in us. Then we keep re-processing things over and over and keep feeling worse and worse. This is the resentment (feeling the sentiment repeatedly) process and thereby turns our energies against ourselves (hence, it creates a “dragon” state). **And** if we do not use the negative emotional energy for changing either our mental map about things and/or our skills in handling the challenges of life (our coping skills), the “hurt” doesn’t go away, but keeps repeating. In this way we keep re-traumatizing ourselves with limiting beliefs, inadequate coping skills, meta-stating of negative emotions against ourselves ... and let that continue and it will distort human

thinking–emoting– and coping. And given that is how we “do” personality, it will over time distort personality. It is in this way that we create a strategy for misery— depression, anxiety, and all of the other problems that call for therapy. While there is nothing wrong with the person as a person— the person has come to so *misuse his or her personality powers and functions* that the person now needs to stop the traumatizing and heal the old traumas that are kept alive inside.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #40
September 29, 2014
Neuro-Semantics & Therapy Series #2

NEURO-SEMANTIC THERAPY

How does Neuro-Semantic therapy work? At its heart, it works by changing meaning. If a person is not fully-functioning as a person, if the person lives in constant fear, anger, distress, upset, resentment, etc., if the person has become addicted to a substance, behavior, or concept, if the person's very personality is becoming distorted from what's within the norm of healthy behavior—these are but *symptoms* of a problem. The problem itself is located in the person's meanings.

This is because what gets “hurt” that demands healing (“therapy”) are our mental models or maps that a person holds about the world. What “hurt” or violated is a person's *sense of meaning*. When we experience a so-called “negative” emotion, it means that we are sensing that something is wrong, not-right, out-of-balance, unexpected, undesired, etc. in the way that we are making sense of the world. That “wrong” is wrong to our meanings—and that means our understandings, beliefs, knowledge, etc. In other words, what's wrong lies in that the meanings we have created and that we want for ourselves and our life experience feels at risk or violated.

In Neuro-Semantics we have several descriptions of what an “emotion” is. One of these entails a picture of a set of scales weighing on one side, *the person's mental maps* about the world and on the other side *one's sense and experience of the world*. Balancing map and territory—our experience in the territory of the world either confirms or disconfirms our mental map about it. This leads to three possibilities:

Balanced: If the scale is fairly balanced, then map and territory are pretty close and so there's not much energy moving one way or the other. We're getting what we expected.

Tipping Down: If the scale tips downward on the territory side, then one's experience in the world is *not measuring up* to our mental map. What we understood, believed, and expected is not or does not happen. Something is “wrong.” But what? Is it that we have an inaccurate map? Is it that we lack the sufficient skills to handle the world that we're trying to navigate?

Tipping Up: If the scale tips downward on the map side and upward on the territory side then our experience in the world is going beyond what we understood, believed, and expected. Whatever is going on, our maps are being validated and so things are going very right.

With this we can now offer one of three definitions of an emotion. An *emotion* is the *difference* between our map and our experience in the territory. “Negative” emotions tell us that overall, something is wrong, something is not right. “Positive” emotions tell us that overall, something is right. Emotions are *relative experiences*—*relative* to the relationship between map and territory. So whether a negative emotion is telling you to “stop, look, listen” and make some adjustment or whether a positive emotion is tell you to “keep going, it's working,” our emotions operate as a basic *go—no go* system. Neurologically this shows up in our body in terms of our nerve impulses—some are excitatory (“go”) and some are inhibitory (“no go” stop, make a change, something is not right).

This is incredible! It means that *every emotion is right*. Whatever you are feeling emotionally and somatically, you should be feeling. What you feel is a function of your mental maps in relationship to the territory that you are attempting to navigate. The emotion itself is a symptom that provides you energy and motion (e-motion) and this generalized information of *go— don't go*. Given that, we do our emotions damage when we fear them, forbid them, taboo them, and demonize them. That's a sure way to mess them up.

This also means that what gets “hurt” in human nature is not our emotions. In spite of the way some people talk, its not our emotions that get “hurt” in trauma. The trauma emotions are just emotions— fear, dread, worried, hatred, stress, distress, sadness, etc. They say in a general way that something is not right— either one's mental maps or one's skill set and/or skill level for handling something.

So what gets hurt in trauma? *Our mental maps*. What gets hurt is your primary tool for handling reality and dealing with life, your understandings and interpretations. When that is damaged, then what can you use to move through the world? What can you rely on to know what to do, what to say, how to think about anything? Your *understandings* about yourself, others, life, the world, work, taking care of yourself, etc. is your *only* tool for navigating the territory. That's why we all hate “being wrong.” Whether we're wrong about some information or wrong about our expectations of something—*being wrong is one of the most painful and distressful experiences possible for us humans*.

And yet—because we are fallible, being wrong is a constant experience for us! It is inevitable. So what's the solution? The answer is simple: Develop an appreciative acceptance of your fallibility and a passionate curiosity about being wrong. Develop a passionate joyful learning state so that you are continuously, minute-by-minute making corrections and adjustments to your mental maps.

When you have these meta-states, you can correct whatever you discover that's wrong quickly and in the moment. Then you can keep updating your mental models of the world and the meanings within that you give to things. Then you can keep updating your coping mechanisms that you use to meet your needs. Then you can keep refining your responses, and response style, as you relate to others, find meaningful work, etc.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #41
October 6, 2014
Neuro-Semantics & Therapy Series #3

HEALING THE PERSON

Who needs therapy? What is it that distinguishes a therapy client from a coaching client? These are the questions that we ask at the beginning of every Coach Training and especially when training Meta-Coaching for ACMC credentials.

What distinguishes the population who needs psychotherapy from coaching are the following:

- The person is not okay in him or herself.
- The person is not living in the present, but living in the past (mentally and emotionally that's where the person expends his/her energy).
- The person is hurt or wounded or traumatized by something and that hurt is seemingly still occurring.
- The person just wants peace, harmony, equilibrium, the reduction of stresses and tensions.
- The person has low ego-strength for facing the challenges and problems of life.

By way of contrast the population that is fit for becoming a coaching client is as follows:

- Is okay in self and wants to fully develop and be one's very best self.
- Is in the present and wants to be fully in the present and creating an even brighter future.
- Is in the present and has resolved the problems that occurred in the past.
- Wants challenge, wants dis-equilibrium, and wants to stretch and step up to be his or her very best self.
- Has the ego-strength for taking on challenges and thriving in problems, seeing problems as opportunities for being creative.

Not-okay, not here, hurting, and without ego-strength—these are the typical characteristics of people who need therapy. So the first task is to enable the person to become okay. Actually to move far beyond just being okay, to being unconditionally valuable and feeling dignity, respect, love, and care for one self. This is what Abraham Maslow wrote in *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1968) regarding this need to heal the self:

“No psychological health is possible unless this essential core of the person is fundamentally accepted, loved, and respected by others and by himself.” (p. 196)

“Self-actualization— “all definitions accept or imply, (a) acceptance and expression of the inner core or self, i.e., actualization of these latent capacities, and potentialities, ‘full functioning,’ availability of the human and personal essence. (b) They all imply minimal presence of ill health, neurosis, psychosis, or loss or diminution of the basic human and personal capacities.” (p. 197)

The problem with a hurt, especially in the first years of life, is that we tend to draw false conclusions from it and build limiting beliefs about our value. We draw the conclusion that we are not okay, and then operate from that perspective. Then as a limiting belief, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

We take the hurt (wound, trauma) as evidence that there is something wrong with us. Then by not handling it well, we then draw another conclusion, not only are we not okay in our person, but we are incompetence and unable to handle things. This sets in play more limiting beliefs— I'm stuck, this is the way I am, nobody will like me, I'm stupid, there's something wrong with me but I don't know what, etc.

Then what many people do is take the event that hurt them and keep replaying it over and over in their minds. Of course, that keeps generating and re-generating the negative emotions, and by trying to finish the "unfinished business" they perpetuate it. Then, when it doesn't get resolved, they keep proving over and over to themselves that there is something inherently wrong with them. They have wrongly concluded that their "self" is the problem. "I'm the problem; there's something wrong with me."

Now in NLP and Neuro-Semantics we do not believe that. They are not the problem. If they *have* a problem, if they are *experiencing* a problem in their thinking, emoting, speaking, behaving, and relating, then their meanings (or frames) is the problem. The real problem is the kind of thinking that they have used to create limiting and even distorted meanings and beliefs. That's the real problem. If I did that kind of thinking—drawing those conclusions, creating those kinds of beliefs, I would have the same problems. So when therapy focuses on healing the person, it focuses on setting new frames of meaning that enables the essential core of the person so one fundamentally accepts, loves, and respects oneself.

Carl Rogers is now famous for his formulation of the solution— bring to the client *unconditional positive regard*. By *esteeming* the person to be worthwhile, lovable, and valuable *unconditionally* we set a frame that allows one to be grounded and centered in oneself with nothing to prove and everything to express. This *self-esteeming* is the key. The Jewish and Christian (and I think Moslem) faiths do this by asserting that one is created in the image and likeness of God. Talk about self-value! If your essence is a reflection of the divine, how much more value or worth do you want? Humanistic psychology gets to it by asserting that what you *are* is different from what you *do*. We don't rate people— we rate behaviors. This differentiates self-esteem from self-confidence.

This establishes the *person – behavior distinction* of NLP and Neuro-Semantics. You as a person, as a human being, are unconditionally valuable and to be accepted— no conditions. There's no way to rate that. What you can do, your skills, competencies, the value that you can contribute in a certain skill, business, sport, social context, etc. is conditional. This is a matter of your confidence to *do* something and can grow or deteriorate.

A person needs therapy to the extent that he or she has de-valued oneself, dis-esteemed self, and taken a hurt and concluded (falsely) that he is not valuable, that she is not worthwhile. The problem was created by rating one's self as *conditional* upon something— being smart, pretty, strong, fast, able to make money, etc. The solution is to reverse that problem. The solution is to unconditionally value, accept, and appreciate the person. For many this begins when a therapist brings this attitude to them. To the healing of persons— may there be more love!

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #42
October 13, 2014
Neuro-Semantics & Therapy Series #4

GETTING TO THE HEART OF THINGS COGNITIONS—> MEANINGS

Working in his residency in psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania, David Burns began research on the theory that “a chemical imbalance in the brain, specifically that patients with depression have a serotonin deficiency, and patients with mania have an excess.” But he couldn’t find any evidence!

Later he was given the prestigious A.E. Bennett Award for his research on brain serotonin metabolism. That was for the double-blind research on the theory whereby two groups of patients, each given a milkshake daily, but one milkshake was laced with 20 grams of L-tryptophan, a massive dose of an amino acid that goes directly from the stomach into the blood and into the brain. Measuring the depression levels of both groups, “there were absolutely no differences.” This was published in *Archives of General Psychiatry* in 1975 which led him and others to conclude that it was not clear at all why people were proposing the brain chemistry theory.

The theory was now in question. So David Burns asked his advisor. At the time, he was one of the world’s top three psycho-pharmacologists. He responded:

“Well David, to tell you the truth, a number of years ago, several of us got together to try to start the field of biological psychiatry. We know there are thousands of substances in the human brain, but the first one we learned how to measure with an assay, was serotonin. So, kind of tongue and cheek, we made up this theory that depression is due to too little serotonin and mania is due to too much. We just wanted to get the field of biological psychiatry going so we could submit grants to NIMH and get funding and start brain research.”

He felt that “as a basis for a dominant theory” that was ridiculous. Yet to that, the advisor said:

“Don’t rock the boat. I could get you started testing antidepressants for drug companies. You’ll make millions every year. You’re already becoming world famous. Don’t challenge the system.”

He refused. I like this guy! In the face of the ridiculous assertion that antidepressants can “cure 85% of patients with depression” he said, “that’s baloney!” Having clinical experience with depressive clients, he said most were not getting better and many were deteriorating. That was back in the mid-1970s. And that led him to discover and use Aaron Beck’s Cognitive Therapy. But at first he resisted. Why? He asked in disbelief:

“Negative thinking causes depression? Change the way people think and you can change the way they feel?”

It seemed too simplistic, too Dale Carnegie or Norman Vincent Peale! But he gave it a try. Later he had patients who were starting to say, “Hey this stuff really helps. This is great. Do you have more techniques?” And with that he wrote, “It was the patients who really sold me on it.”

“I am deeply indebted to Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck, pioneers who changed the history of psychotherapy. They were brilliant clinicians and they gave us incredible gifts...”

Noting that they did not have all the answers he described how important the factors of *motivation* and *resistance* play a great role in our cognitions and perceptions. In therapy, one has to have some way to melt a patient’s resistance and then “the patient becomes a powerful collaborator with the therapist.”

All of this is in the interview with David Burns in the current edition of *The Milton H. Erickson Foundation Newsletter* (Summer/Fall 2014). Then in a tone that sounds like NLP, Burns says, “when we deal with resistance we try to make patients *proud* of their depression, and show they why they possibly should not give it up” (p. 23).

If you can do that in a skillful way, the paradox is that the moment that you sell the patient on the fact that they shouldn’t change, suddenly their resistance disappears and they’re quite hungry to change.”

I met Albert Ellis for the first time in 1979 along with Rolla May and others during a Conference in ST. Louis. That led me into Cognitive Psychology. And with David Burn published *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy* in 1985 it bought it immediately and began putting the processes (“techniques”) that he had created into action. Later I visited, interviewed and modeled Albert Ellis at work in his New York clinic and that is the background for using the Cognitive Distortions in Meta-Coaching.

All of that background also prepared me for NLP in 1986. What NLP did for me was flesh out the details of the Cognitive Psychology model. And no wonder—the two founders of Cognitive Psychology, George Miller and Noam Chomsky were key influences on NLP. John Grinder did his dissertation on Chomsky’s Transformational Grammar model and then the early NLP group used Miller’s work of his TOTE model in *The Structure of Behavior* (1960) for creating the NLP Strategy Model.

How does all of this help with “therapy?” To heal a person, to facilitate the person to become okay, empowered to face reality, and to come into the now—the problem is always at the level of cognitions, and more specifically, *meanings*. Yes, brain chemistry changes and reflects the problem. And yes, emotions are symptomatic of the problem and can amplify the problem. And yes, behaviors can be dysfunctions and hurtful. Yet they are symptoms. The cause of the problem always goes to how the person is thinking— processing information, constructing meaning, and interpreting the experiences of life. Change that and the person changes— and so do the symptoms.

Why is this? Because “the map is not the territory.” The mental mapping of the person which is trying to comprehend and deal with the territory determines appropriateness and effectiveness. If the map is wrong, then so will be the biochemistry, the emotions, the behaviors, the ways of relating, etc.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #43
October 20, 2014
Neuro-Semantics & Therapy Series #5

HEALING THE MEANINGS

HEALING THE PERSON

If you want to consider a really controversial question in this area, here's one: *What factor does the healing in the psychotherapy process?* Taking a systemic approach to this in Neuro-Semantics, we distinguish between the variables and factors that *contribute* to the therapeutic healing and the factor or factors that actually does *the healing*.

Contributing Factors

Most of the things that are said to do the healing are actually the contributing factors. Probably first and foremost on everyone's list is calmness, relaxation, and safety. As long as a person is stressed-out, agitated, reactive, upset, etc., healing can hardly ever take place. To creating a peaceful, stress-free environment, situation, and person offers the person a chance to calm down and begin to think more clearly. This may involve removing the person from the contexts where they react and that triggers their memories or imaginations. It may involve helping the person change his or her state physically (massage, body work, medication, etc.). It may involve helping the person step aside and take a larger perspective of their life situation.

At the heart of most therapies is support—interpersonal support from a caring person. Rogers described this as unconditional positive regard and accurate empathy. Others describe it as love—benevolent good will. In psychotherapy training, it is being able to listen without judgment, even without advice-giving, it may be a support group where spending time with people to avoid loneliness, being able to confess without shame, getting hugs from people, etc.

Most therapies also offer some kind of ritual for self-exploration, self-understanding, and for self-management. These rituals or techniques provide a specific empirical set of activities that a person *does* which gives direction and focus to consciousness. These may involve relaxation techniques, meditation techniques, acting out family constellation dynamics, using the empty chair of Gestalt therapy, laying on a couch and saying whatever comes to mind (as in psycho-analysis), etc. Actually more important than the technique itself and whether it is healing in its nature, is the fact that a person has something that he or she can *do*.

These and many, many more things are supporting or contributing factors for healing and renewal. And people have (and continue) get these things from psychotherapists, spiritual faith systems, self-development programs, and so on.

Causational factors

Yet are these the same as the actual healing factors? What actually heals? To answer that question, we have to return to the previous question, What hurts? What wounds a person mentally and emotionally? What is it that gets wounded or damaged within a person so that one has to be healed?

The answer, as stated in an earlier post, is that *our mental mapping* is damaged and wounded, even traumatized. That's because you and I as a human being make our way through the world (navigate the people and places and events) via our mental maps. Our primary tool for life, our very "sense of reality," "sense of self," sense of time, others, career, finances, whatever arises from our mental maps. And if the map is wrong, if the map is distorted, crooked, fallacious, inadequate— then all of our striving, thinking, feeling, speaking, acting, and relating will be off. It will be full of errors and so we will not achieve our goals.

What gets wounded within us is not our emotions, or self, or skills— those are symptoms of that which gets damaged. What gets damaged and wounded is our mental mapping— what and how we think. Our expectations get wounded. Our understandings get violated. Our hopes and dreams are not able to be fulfilled. And what makes the mental mapping more liable for damage is when our thinking is *childish* (full of cognitive distortions) and when our thinking is *absolutistic* (demanding, rigid, and closed to new information).

Childish thinking, in contrast to adult thinking, is the kind of thinking we all start with and which in normal development, we out-grow. This is the black-and-white, either-or, over-simplistic, demanding, personalizing, emotionalizing, over-generalizing, etc. thinking that is characteristic (and appropriate) for children. So Einstein's familiar quote: "The kind of thinking (or level of thinking) that create the problem."

Absolutistic thinking is also in contrast to more adult thinking in that it allows for the possibility that we can be wrong, that we make mistakes, and keeps an open mind that welcomes information about those errors (what we call "feedback") so that we can keep adjusting. The absolutist thinker wants to be right, period. No more thinking. No more adjusting. They want to close the book on the subject. The absolutist thinker not only wants it perfect and flawless, he or she demands it! Then when an error is presented, this is "bad," this is an insult, this calls intelligence in question, and so no wonder it is upsetting and unwelcomed.

Our mind and our minding (thinking, information processing) is what we depend on for understanding what things are, how they work, their value, etc. When this aspect of conscious is damaged because someone has demanded the thinking be perfect— unchanging, and that what I want is what I will get— now— in the way I want it (elements of childish thinking)— then we will constantly experience to shock of reality. Then, not being able to trust our mental map, we spiral down into more damage and hurt— something is wrong with me, something is wrong with my emotions, my mind, my behaviors, the world, others, etc. All of these awarenesses shows up as limiting beliefs, limiting decisions, limiting identities, etc. Our understandings of things is inadequate, and worse, we don't know how to use our mental mapping (information processing) to correct things. Therapy is the process for correcting things and learning to use our neuro-linguistic and neuro-semantic mapping appropriately for adjusting to reality.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #44
October 27, 2014
Neuro-Semantic Vision Series #1

THE VISION OF COLLABORATION

NLP began as a collaboration. It began with a small group of people and then expanded to some larger groups. It began with Frank Pucelik and Richard Bandler when they began running a Gestalt Class at the University of Southern California— Santa Cruz. In recent years Frank has listed all of the names of that original group. The only one who stayed in the field from that first group and who became an early developer was Terry McClendon. Then John came in and with him, they invented the Meta-Model of Language which became the first NLP tool. Then a second group began and it became the group of people who later became the primary leaders and developers of NLP— Robert Dilts, Judith DeLozier, Leslie Bandler, David Gordon, and many others.

When the collaboration of NLP began, those were the days when there was lots of creativity, an abundance of cutting-edge ideas, and the invention of the original patterns that created NLP. But it didn't last. Frank was threatened and forced to leave. Then Richard and John couldn't get along with each other. After that began the time of the lawsuits. Then within the first years the original group split several more times into little fiefdoms.

By the time I heard about NLP and began studying it, I just could not figure out this infighting and I especially couldn't figure out why these people in particular could not get along with each other. "If NLP is such a great communication model, what's with the founders and developers of NLP? Why can't they get along? At least why can't they be respectful of each other?" That was my thought in 1987 when I decided to start studying NLP in earnest. The previous year I began reading everything that was in print on NLP. So I knew it was good stuff and on the cutting-edge regarding communication and change. But I still wondered about the incongruity of the leaders.

After that I took my original training with Richard Bandler in San Diego California. That, in turn, led me to write two books for him from video-tapes of seminars. He also asked me to work with him on re-establishing the Society of NLP, my job was to create a massive volume, The Directory of the Society of NLP. That volume still to this day has never seen the light of day. Yet working on that volume in 1989 and 1990 put me in touch with all of the early developers of NLP because I was to call them and ask for articles to be put into the Directory. Yet during that time also, Bandler finished his lawsuit against Anthony Robbins which, as I found out about the details, explained to me why Robbins would never again say the three letters (NLP) when he was on Larry King or other shows. He had not been treated well.

Next came the 90 million lawsuit against "the field of NLP in the USA" (1995 to 2000). What Bandler was trying to do with that devastating lawsuit, I can't even imagine. It certainly was not sane. In the end (Feb. 2000), he lost the lawsuit, NLP was put in public domain, and he was fined \$600,000. But the worst effect of the lawsuit which was in the courts from 1995 to 2000 was that

it essentially wiped out NLP in the USA. Now I had been a faithful trainer in “the Society of NLP” as I always paid the royalties for every person I certified, I always gave credit by acknowledging sources, etc. But Bandler wanted more. When the new contract came in the mail he wanted to claim anything which I might create as his own “intellectual property.” I crossed out that part of the contract. Who would sign that? Another paragraph asked that I would accept financial responsibility for all legal bills he might incur if he decided to sue me. I would not sign that paragraph either. Who would?

I mentioned all of that history as the background for truly understanding the Neuro-Semantic Vision. That’s what was going on in 1996 when Bob Bodenhamer and I decided to trademark and create Neuro-Semantics. We decided to unite and create something new “just in case” the NLP lawsuit succeeded and we were forbidden to train NLP. That’s why we started Neuro-Semantics. We started by creating a website. Bob did that. He created the first website and then he asked me to write our Vision. So I wrote it.

The Vision:

The Vision is to launch an international community of professional men and women who both *love* and *know* NLP and who *live* it. Our Vision is that people will take NLP models and patterns to a higher level in performance, ethics, and attitude. With reflexivity built into the *Meta-States* Model, our vision is that people will effectively *apply* the patterns to ourselves. They “walk their talk” to manifest it as their personal congruence and integrity. This works as our attractor frame. Our Vision is to work collaboratively and cooperatively since we can do so much more together than individually. We envision setting and living by the higher frames of abundance leading to win/win collegial relationships and mutual accountability. We envision a community of men and women, professional in their business dealings, effective, productive, and high performers.

Suddenly lots of people wanted to be a part of it! So we made it an International Association and began talking about the vision of abundance and collaboration and respect and being ethical. And that became a self-organizing attractor for lots of people. And as with the beginning of NLP, a new level of creativity began emerging in Neuro-Semantics which led to many new models and patterns and that creativity is still energizing the Neuro-Semantic movement. When we discovered the Self-Actualization History of NLP, then we expanded our Vision:

The Neuro-Semantic Vision is to make explicit the processes by which we create rich and inspiring *meanings* and integrate them into our *performance*. Neuro-Semantics, as the performance of the richest meanings, focuses on applying what we know to ourselves and to close our knowing-doing gap and unleashing our highest potentials.

Our vision at the beginning was singular—to take NLP to a higher level ethically and professionally. We believed that if we would apply the principles and guidelines of NLP to ourselves, then the quality of NLP would rise and the bad press about manipulation would vanish. We also wanted to demonstrate that we could working together, we could cooperation, and we could even collaboration. We were not conscious that by doing that we would re-establish the kind of creativity that launched NLP originally. But that happened and is still characteristic of Neuro-Semantics.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #45
November 3, 2014
Neuro-Semantic Vision Series #2

THE COLLABORATIVE VISION

For us in Neuro-Semantics, *the vision of collaboration* means first and foremost being *inclusive* of others rather than exclusive. We do not think that everyone has to fully and completely agree with everything to be a part of the association. Nor do we require or demand a consensus on all of the possible differences of opinion. That's not what we are about and not what we want. What we *want* is for people to bring their individuality, differences, and unique perspectives and contribute them in the community. In this, we truly do not want a bunch of clones. We do not have a creed that a person has to sign. All we ask is a commitment to the vision and values.

The vision and the values are the unifying factors which pull us together. We have a vision of applying NLP to ourselves and that highlights our value of personal congruency in those who we hold up as leaders. We also have a vision of collaboration, operating from abundance, and being a good team player. We have a vision about *quality training* and high standards—rigorous standards, in fact, some of the most rigorous anywhere. These are the things that pull us together. Another vision that we have is that NLP is a model—a Communication Model and therefore a way that we can describe human experience or functioning. This we agree on.

We hold commonly the premises of NLP such as “The map is not the territory,” and “People do the best with what they have,” and “People operate on the world with their maps.” These and the other presuppositions of NLP motivate us and from them we expect differences of opinion and style. The premises also invite us to care about and to create a collaboration at the higher level of vision and values of NLP. That's why the collaboration is inclusive rather than exclusive. And that's what has been keeping the level of creativity very high within the Neuro-Semantic community.

Next, collaboration means being respectful of others, acknowledging their contributions, giving credit where credit belongs, and quoting sources. To not do that is to not be professional. Anyone who has written a Master thesis or a Doctoral dissertation or for that matter, almost any University paper, knows that you give credit, and you acknowledge others. A professional person does not plagiarize. You do not take the materials of others and “steal” it and present it as if it is your own.

This is one of the disrespectful and actually shameful things that has and continues to plague the NLP communities. There is a lot of plagiarism, “stealing” of intellectual property, narrow claims of “ownership” of ideas, refusal to acknowledge others, etc. An evidence of this is seen in how so many NLP books are published with no bibliography! There is not a single reference! It's as if the author is so stingy with his or her information, or so fearful and insecure to mention the work of another person. And oftentimes the materials of earlier authors are used and quoted (sometimes verbatim) without any credit or acknowledgment.

That non-collaborative way of operating typically comes from scarcity rather than abundance and a low sense of self rather than a strong self-confidence. Those authors act as if they would be less or lose something if they gave credit to others. The truth is that it takes *a solid sense of self* to be able to recognize and celebrate the brilliance and intelligence of others. In fact, all of the “fighting” in the field of NLP over “intellectual property” and the refusing to acknowledge the shoulders of the giants that we stand on ... shows an immaturity and poverty-mentality.

In Neuro-Semantics collaboration also means that we can accomplish more together than alone or apart. We recognize the value of people coming together and working in unison for a project that’s bigger than one single person. And so we are accomplishing a lot because of it. The Self-Leadership School Project is a good example. It took 40 Meta-Coaches working for 2 years to turn basic NLP (Introduction to NLP, *Coaching Essentials*) and the basic introduction to Meta-States (APG, *Accessing Personal Genius*) into a course of study that could be taught at school. We turned it into 40 lesson plans, one lesson to be taught for 1 hour at school for each grade. So we created 40 grade-appropriate lessons for each of the 12 grades of school. That is now available in English and it is currently being translated into Spanish, Portuguese, China, Norwegian, and other languages and we are *giving* that to any school who wants it.

Our vision and value of collaboration also has allowed us to do something that is unique in the field of NLP—we *have created and maintained for two decades a world-wide community*. This is actually the only international “community” in the field of NLP. I wrote about this in the book, *Innovations of NLP* (2011). There are other “communities” in NLP—some are virtual, some are very small in-groups around a specific person (a little fiefdom), or around a business, and other cooperative adventures are those of a National Association which, while not a real community, at least an attempt at cooperating in holding a conference from time to time. If a community is a *collaborative community uniting to do more together than alone or apart*, then there is very few in NLP. So in this, we in Neuro-Semantics are leading the way and pioneering how to collaborate as a community.

Neuro-Semantics, like NLP, began as a collaboration. For many years I worked with Bob to construct the foundations of Neuro-Semantics and we led out by writing 9 books together. And along the way we brought in various other people and that continued until we created our first leadership team, and then as we trained Trainers who then came on board as part of leading this movement. And as things grew, we began encouraging and acknowledging Developers—people inventing new patterns and processes, people contributing to the over-all community.

In all of this, *collaboration lies at the very heart of Neuro-Semantics*. That’s why we have put collaboration (and the benchmarks of collaboration) at the core of leadership in Neuro-Semantics and encourage collaboration in the Institutes in 19 countries and the over 60 MCF chapters in many more countries. Why? If we are going to break out of the small niche that NLP holds all around the world and if we are to break out in a way that presents a positive brand — one of quality, abundance, collaboration, professionalism, respect, etc.—then we have to be working together. *Together we can do much more than we can do apart or alone!*

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #46
November 10, 2014
Neuro-Semantic Vision Series #3

THE EVER-EXPANDING NEURO-SEMANTIC VISION

In the beginning the vision was singular—*raise the quality of NLP*. For us that mean practice what we teach—communicate among ourselves, apply the patterns and the premises to ourselves, hold ourselves accountable, step up to be professional in our ethics, attitude, and actions. It meant to cooperate with each other, collaborate, support each other, give credit to each other.

Then in the late 1990s Neuro-Semantics began to expand. With the creativity that was emerging from the Meta-States Model we were enriching all of the models of NLP. I had the privilege along with Bob Bodenhamer and others to expand the Meta-Model, Sub-Modalities, Time-Lines, Strategies, Modeling, Meta-Programs, Trance, etc. As a result, with Neuro-Semantic NLP we expanded both Practitioner and Master Practitioner to include a much richer version of NLP. And that is still the case, hence our programs of Prac. and Master Prac.—Meta-NLP and Meta-Masters

Then, with those expansions of the foundational models of NLP, we began creating new models—all based on NLP and most of them using the Meta-States Model. In 1998, The Frame Game Model (now called *Winning the Inner Game*). Then in 2002, the Matrix Model, next came The Axes of Change based on four meta-programs (2004). The Meaning— Performance Axes and the Self-Actualization Quadrants (based on 12 meta-programs) came in 2005, and the Matrix Embedded Pyramid of needs in 2006. Then the Facilitation Model for Meta-Coaching (2007), then the Axes of Leadership (2008).

That's a lot of creativity! So where did all of these Models and the multiple new patterns within them come from? Two sources. *First from Modeling*. That's one of the things we have focused on in Neuro-Semantics and why we put a big emphasis on it in Master Prac. (Meta-Masters). Over the years, I have actually written five books on the subject of modeling. And then, from the expanded way the Meta-States Model enables us to model the higher hidden structures of an experience, lots of new things have emerged.

This started when I did my first modeling project on Resilience (1990–1994). From within that study came the Meta-States Model itself (1994). This was then, in turn, recognized in the field of NLP (1995) by the International Association of NLP Trainers. And since then I have conducted 17 modeling projects. And so are many others in Neuro-Semantics.

Second, from the Community. That is, from lots and lots of Neuro-Semanticists who challenge and question me and who add insights and discoveries from their own studies and experiences. Sometimes they add so much to a project that I asked them to write a chapter or two and included

them in a given book on that subject. At other times I end up adding their names to the books as co-authors because of how much they contributed. Sometimes I have included their contributions within the chapters, or in the Training Manuals. Sometimes, we simply publish their articles and their patterns on one of the websites and acknowledge them as a Neuro-Semantic Developer. Or if they have written a book using Neuro-Semantics, we recognize that and honor them also as a Developer. In addition to that, for the past three years we have been running an Innovation Contest each year from which we select the three most significant contributions and publish them. We do this to recognize what others are adding and contributing.

This really speaks to the value of a community—a place where people have a voice and can make a contribution. If the community is dominated by competition and a fierce competitive attitude, the community is not safe to share with—someone may “steal” your stuff. So people keep it as if it is a secret formula. I know many very intelligent and highly capable NLP Trainers who have some great stuff, but they keep it close to their chest out of fear. How sad.

We have worked hard to have a very different spirit in the field of Neuro-Semantics. We have sought to create an open-source community for the Trainers and for the Meta-Coaches. We have sought to honor contributions, to recognize new insights and suggestions, to adjust things when people come up with better and more efficient ways of doing things. For us that is the meaning of community.

This applies to things regarding leadership as well. We want a shared leadership of those who are actually leading—bringing people into the community and so we have set up 19 Institutes of Neuro-Semantics in 19 countries. This is based on a minimum of two trainers collaborating to create the non-profit association and together promoting and supporting Neuro-Semantics in that country. This puts them in a leadership role and when the Institute has a minimum of five members, they can recommend one of their members to the international leadership team. All of this is designed to groom leaders.

And regarding leaders in Neuro-Semantics—we need all kinds of leaders. We need thought leaders, administrative leaders, visionary leaders, inspirational leaders, managerial leaders, research leaders, moral leaders, exemplar leaders, and so on. To meet this need, we are seeking to generate leaders in the different Professional Tracks that we have established. This will eventually give us those who are leaders in NLP, Meta-Coaching, Business, Leadership, Health, Education, etc.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #47
November 17, 2014

THE NEURO-SEMANTICS OF MINDFULNESS

It is not uncommon for people who experience the Meta-States Training that we call *Accessing Personal Genius* (APG) to come away from it telling others that it is a training in mindfulness. I have heard this many, many times. Others may not describe APG in those words, but will say that in learning the Meta-States Model, they have added so much to their understanding and competency in being mindful. Recently I have had several people write and ask where I got the information about mindfulness that they were exposed to in APG. And a few others have asked that I write more about mindfulness. So here we go.

What do we mean by mindfulness? To be mindful is to be present to your current situation, aware, appreciative, and in sensory-awareness. It is to be *here-and-now* in your awareness. It is to be conscious of what you are experiencing—present, and not lost in thought about some other time and place. When a person is not mindful, he or she is somewhere else or worse, may be mindlessly responding in an automatic way from old programs that may or may not be appropriate or useful for today.

Mindfulness fulfills the oft-quoted phrase from Fritz Perls when he said, “Lose your mind and come to your senses.” The “mind” here is the chatter-box mind where we talk and talk and chatter to ourselves about all kinds of things while experiencing something—chatter that all-too-often causes us to miss the moment. NLP took this phrase as Perls’ call for coming into *sensory-awareness* so that a person sees, hears, feels, smells, and tastes one’s present moment.

The opposite is mindlessness. Mindlessness speaks about a state of mind wherein we are not present, not conscious of the richness of the moment and so we miss out on the present. Mindlessness occurs when we use our previous learnings in our ongoing experience of the world. So instead of experiencing the world in a fresh way, we see it through our categories, judgments, and ideologies. We then dismiss things with a flip of the mind, “Oh, that’s X.” “Oh that’s success.” “That’s failure.” “That’s old stuff, I already know that.” Then, using these constructs we become blind to what is actually available to us. Korzybski would say that this is seeing and experiencing the world intensionally rather than extensionally (note, it is intensionally, not intentionally).

By way of contrast to the automatic, robotic, and unconscious style of mindlessness, being mindful is responding with our full senses (“mind”), fully conscious of the here-and-now. Instead of the blind and dull repetition of being mindless, in being mindful we see everything as fresh and new. We see what we have seen a thousand times as if for the first time. Maslow described self-actualizing people in this way. He said they are able to see the thousandth sunrise as if it was the first one ever seen.

Another contrast is that in being mindless we use previous cognitive frameworks (judgments, evaluations, conclusions) rather than being open to the moment—that is, being mindful. The mindless see but do not really see. “Eyes they have and see not; ears they have and hear not.” Ellen Langer describes their mindset is that of being “motivated-not-knowing.” Having decided that one already *knows*, one turns consciousness off and then dismiss whatever is present, paying it no attention.

Numerous problems can arise from that way of orienting oneself in the world. Langer also describes mindless as being trapped in one’s categories. When a person lives by one’s labels, categories, classifications, etc. one loses the real world and lives solely in a world of constructs.

“Just as mindlessness is the rigid reliance on old categories, mindfulness means the continual creation of new ones.” (Langer, 1989, p. 63).

Being mindful means making distinctions. This is especially what we train in *Coaching Mastery*—how to make refined distinctions so that a person can listen so actively and intensely, one seems to enter into an entirely new world. Whereas being mindless turns off one’s sensory awareness of the present, in mindfulness you come to your senses in a heightened way. This explains why being mindful and living life from a state of continuous appreciation are so highly correlated.

Being mindful also entails continually creating and trying out new categories for things. This means being able to re-experience situations and contexts in new ways thereby making the world that is well-known new and fresh. In other words, playfulness isn’t just for children. As an adult you take continue to play and to be playful as you move through life. You can mindfully play with ideas and categories. Yet to do so requires an openness that reveals a mental receptivity to new possibilities.

In being mindful, your previous frames for understanding and interpreting a situation are not rigid or static. You can frame things in ever-new ways. As you learn to reframe in playful and unexpected ways new meanings emerge. Maybe this explains why framing and reframing belong to the mindful—to those with an open and active mind. The mindful can playfully re-interpret things to their benefit and to the benefit of others.

Being mindful means that you can stay aware of the process of making real choices as you move through the world. This requires a process orientation, that is, an orientation to reality as a dynamic process, and not a static one. Being mindful means we are alert to the variables within any decision so that we then think-through our decisions rather than deciding in a reactive mindless way.

In the APG training that presents the Meta-States Model, mindfulness also shows up in terms of the ability to step back, expand one’s perspective, and reflexively move up the psycho-logical levels. More about that next week.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #48
November 24, 2014

REFLEXIVITY AND MINDFULNESS

If the field of NLP as such involves and encourages a basic mindfulness, the Meta-States Model takes *mindfulness to the next level*. It does this by the emphasis in APG (*Accessing Personal Genius*) where we introduce the Meta-States Model by emphasizing several meta-skills: the ability to step back, to transcend and include, to expand one's perspective, and to reflexively move up the psychological levels.

At the essence of mindfulness is an openness to experience. NLP begins this with a strong emphasis on coming to one's senses and being open to the moment, to the here-and-now. Yet experience is not a monolithic thing. Instead it has multiple levels and this is where the Meta-States Model really excels. By embracing it fully, holding it, including it, you can then step back from the current moment experience, and transcend it as you embrace the beliefs and understanding and other meta-level perspectives that hold it in place. Do that and you begin to become mindful not only of the first level of the experience, but its meta-levels.

By including and transcending the experience, you gain a larger-level perspective of it. Now you begin to become aware and open to the multiple levels of meanings that create the experience, that hold it in place, that enable it to be what it is. *This is the reflective awareness that takes mindfulness to the next level.* It enables you to develop a more expansive openness to the more hidden but higher levels of your mind-body system. What any experience is— is not fully described or explicated at the primary level. That's just the grounding level.

Above and beyond the primary level of any experience are the meta-levels of the mind. These are the levels that enable the experience to be what it is. These are the levels that create the experience. Here we have *understanding* and *beliefs* and *identities* and *permissions* and *decisions* and dozens upon dozens of other meta-levels. And given that in the book, *Neuro-Semantics* (2012), I identified 104 meta-levels, and four dimensions of meta-levels, you won't run out of possibilities for expanded meta-level mindfulness any time soon. This means that we can develop mindfulness along both a wide range of openness to phenomenon at the primary level as well as a height range.

After all, mindfulness is a meta-state:

An awareness of your thinking-and-feeling experience.

“Why be more conscious? So that consciousness may become conscious of itself.” (Abby Eagle, Sydney Australia)

Valuing and appreciating this present moment and so being fully present to it.

Witnessing the here-and-now with compassion and without judgment.

Maintaining a calm perspective of witnessing of one's state (even states of pressure).

Being able to see and hold multiple perspectives simultaneously. Being playfully adventurous in familiar and repetitive contexts.

From these definitions of mindfulness and the wide-range of different kinds of mindfulness, these leads us in Neuro-Semantics to see *mindfulness as directly correlated with choice and creativity*. Choice requires mindfulness. It requires expanding and being conscious that in every situation you have multiple choices and are not a victim of some fate that you can't control. Then like Viktor Frankl, you will can always recognize choice as your "ultimate power." Even in the concentration camp, he fully maintained his power of choice. He was mindful enough to recognize that he had choices. So he could then boldly assert that "they can not make me hate them." His emotions were his own. How high a degree of mindfulness did that require? A lot! Even so, it is possible. When a person doesn't have a sense of choice, the problem isn't the lack of choice, only his lack of perceiving it— being mindful of it.

Creativity also requires mindfulness. It is the opposite, being mindless, that prevents one from seeing possibilities, playing around with curious questions, and being open to what is not yet, but could be. In her book, *Mindfulness* (1989) Ellen Langer related mindfulness to creativity. She posited that conditional statements would lead to being mindful and using absolute statements would lead to operating in a mindless, automatic way. After showing a relationship between being mindful and creativity she noted that at the heart of creativity is the ability to stay open enough to embrace uncertainty. Conversely it is the need to be certain that closes the door on creativity.

Regarding this Langer sounded a lot like Korzbyski. "Teaching facts as absolute truth" she says, leads to mindlessness. "In most educational settings, the 'facts' of the world are presented as unconditional truths, when they might better be seen as probability statements that are true in some contexts, but not in others." When we shut out conditions and contexts we shut down creativity. When we introduce conditionality, probability, "it depends," "it could be," etc. creativity thrives.

"If a theoretical model is presented absolutely, it will be thought absolute and the student may thereafter treat it rigidly." "The dampening of creativity in students by unconditional teaching is compounded by most textbooks. Scientific investigations yield only probability statements and no absolute facts. Yet these ... are presented in textbooks as though they were certain and context-free." (127, 128)

In embracing uncertainty by being mindful of the conditions and factors at play in a situation, people become more creative. Here is one powerful meta-state that results in one form of mindfulness. In being mindful in this way, a person details the specifics of the here-and-now in sensory-specific terms. This makes one more fully aware of the present moment. And this is why training in NLP and Neuro-Semantic inherently develops and enhances the state and meta-states of mindfulness.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #49
December 1, 2014

MINDFULNESS AND FERGUSON

One week ago today a community exploded in violence as they reacted to a decision of a Grand Jury. I had just sent out last week's post on Mindfulness, so I began wondering, How mindful were those who destroyed their own community? Were they mindfully aware of the details of the situation? Were they just reacting along with a mob mentality? Were they mindful of the language that contributed to the problem?

Ferguson Facts

Here is what happened. This past August a young man in Ferguson Missouri (part of the greater St. Louis area) was shot. The young man got into a scuffle with a police officer, reached into his patrol car and attempted to take his gun. In the scuffle, he struck the officer, then the gun went off so that the bullet flew threw the windshield. The young man then ran away. But not for long. When the officer recovered and got out of the car, he yelled for the young man to get down on the ground. He did not. Instead, he turned and ran toward him. Charging him. The officer again yelled "get down" and began shooting. When the young man was still coming, and now just 8 feet away, he was shot him in the head. The first bullets hit his arm several times; when the last one hit him in the head, that killed him. This is what the Grand Jury found after weeks and weeks of deliberation.

But that is not what was first reported. Immediately after the event, some witnesses who saw some or parts of the conflict, presented a different narrative and the only narrative which the media carried: The young man was surrendering, raised his arms, and the policeman shot him dead. Then, given that narrative, people began protesting in Ferguson Missouri. Then the protesting turned into rioting and then criminals and thugs took advantage of the situation by breaking into and looting stores, setting buildings and cars on fire, threatening people, and creating night after night of rioting and looting. This is what the international press played over and over.

The case was turned over to a Grand Jury of 12 people who listened to every witness that would come forward. After weeks of deliberation, the Grand Jury released hundreds of pages of the information presented which included the conversations, and the questions and answers which the jurors asked of the witnesses and experts. Even with the very low standard set for a Grand Jury so that they could recommend a full trial, the evidence in this case led the Grand Jury to decide that the evidence did not lead to indicting the officer for a trial. So said nearly all legal experts.

That led last Monday for chaos to break out afresh. Within an hour of the announcement, people were looting stores again, burning them down, setting fire to cars and businesses, destroying property, threatening people, and creating a war-like zone atmosphere.

Of course, none of this violence and destructiveness *is the way to resolve differences or to push toward a more equitable society*. In fact, these are the very things that not only perpetuate

inequality, injustice, conflict, etc. Instead this is the way to make the problem worse, make it less solvable, and distort it so that the real problem can't even be recognized.

Languaging the Conflict

The facts of a situation is one thing; how we language those facts and how we language our thinking, feeling, and conclusions about the situation is yet another thing. What we know in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and Neuro-Semantics is that *how we describe things controls how we think, feel, and respond to those things*. This includes our linguistic code (words, language), our evaluative frames, the sequence of our thoughts (syntax), and the assumptive frames that we hide in the shadows of our presentation. What follows is an exploration in a bit of the language that makes up the narrative promoted in the media which feeds the rioting and violence and which creates mindlessness rather than mindfulness.

First, languaging the person. The way the family and the media has been consistently describing the young man, Michael Brown, who was shot inflames the situation. Sometimes he is called a “teenager,” yet most often as a “child.” A child! Yet the facts are that this “child” is that he was a 280 pound, 6 foot 6 inches man who had just strong-armed an innocent Asia business owner and robbed him in full sight of people in the store as caught on video-tape. So this was no “innocent child.” If anything, he was a bully and a thief. The word “child” creates a false picture that inflames passions. A man who weights nearly 300 pounds and who is 6'6" is a giant of a person. This is no child. Most heavy-weight boxers are not that big! And when a man that big who assaults a policemen, will not stop aggressing, and who charges at you ... that's a very different situation from the language of “an innocent and unarmed child was shot down in the street.”

Second, languaging the act. In terms of facts—there was a shooting. Calling it “murder” or “shooting an innocent, unarmed young man in cold blood,” these are evaluations, not facts. The Grand Jury decided it was not “murder.” The evidence did not lead those 12 people to think of it in those terms. So to call these things “murder” is prejudicing and imposing a viewpoint. The day after the Grand Jury's decision, a group of community “leaders” among African Americans held a news conference and called the event the “brutalizing” of a young black teenager. Language it in that way is like gasoline on fire. It does not help or bring calm.

At the same press conference, attorney Benjamin Crush seemed to attempt to re-try the evidence which the Grand Jury heard, accusing them of being “unjust.” Of course, he was not there. Nor did he have time to read the hundreds of pages of evidence from the Grand Jury that was delivered the night before. Yet there he was presenting one side, making accusations, asking no questions, but in outrage denouncing a system that he decided was unjust.

Third, languaging the meaning. Most of the media framed the situation as a racial problem: white policeman mistreating young black men. Yet to frame it these ways, media leaves out that Michael Brown had just robbed a store and man-handled the store owner. What does that make him? A poster-child for civil rights? I hardly think so. Watching someone rob a store, bully an older man, and do so in plain daylight, and then just walk out, I would use such words as: criminal, felon, trouble-maker, etc. A few minutes later he is walking in the middle of the road, back-talking to a policeman, then he assaults the policeman, etc. To associate this person as someone whose civil

rights were being violated does not fit the facts at all. What about the civil rights of those who he was violating? So when civil rights leaders like Al Sharpen hold a press conference and frame this as a case of civil rights violations, he is choosing the wrong person as his poster-person. If anyone was violating the civil rights of people, it was Michael Brown.

Critical Skills for being Mindful

What's the bottom line? Facts and language are two different phenomenon and we cannot escape the power of language. Language sets frames on facts and most of the time this influence is outside-conscious awareness. *That's why we need critical thinking skills.*

Without critical thinking about how we and others language things, we can become the victim of mis-information and even worse, dis-information. Then those who wish to recruit you to their position depend on you being uncritical in your thinking. To defeat that kind of mindlessness, start with learning to recognize the list of common cognitive distortions: over-generalizing, awfulizing, emotionalizing, either-or thinking, etc. Then learn to use the Meta-Model questions to ask detailing questions so that you can get back to the facts, to the sensory-based descriptions of what actually happened prior to the labeling and judgment that others put on those facts.

For more about the Meta-Model, see *Communication Magic* (2001).

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #50
Dec. 8, 2014

CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT mBRAINING

An NLP Trainer of considerable skill in presentation elegance and NLP knowledge is Marvin Oka of Melbourne Australia. I originally met Marvin at the 1997 Visionary Leadership Conference in Santa Cruz California and quickly came to appreciate his skills as a presenter and him as a person. Fast forward 17 years and last week at the London NLP Conference I had the privilege of hearing him again. There he presented a seminar that he calls **mBraining**. I heard the first 2 ½ hours of that seminar and then left to participate in the NLP Leadership Summit.

The presentation was very good even though it was not interactive, not a single question was allowed during that time. Otherwise I would have raised some questions. The “m” in mBraining stands for *multiple* brains. This is central and based on the assumption that we have three brains. From that Marvin and an associate have designed several integration techniques for aligning these three brains. He calls this **mBit** which stands for Multiple Brain Integration Techniques.

Marvin began by attempting to convince the audience of his basic premise, namely, that “we have three brains.” To do this, he used colorful and fascinating images in his PowerPoint presentation of the brain— of neurons, of neuro-pathways, etc. Very impressive! He then put up a quote from a 1912 book where the author called the “heart” a brain.” Okkkaaaay. He then defined “the brain” as a complex neural network, which really isn’t a definition, but a description of its composition. Then lo and behold, with that “definition” sudden the heart is declared to be a brain! He drew his conclusion with a dramatic flare: “That means that the heart is a ‘brain!’ Because it is a *network* of neurons, it is able to receive input messages from the rest of the body and to send out output messages.” Marvin noted that it also has the ability to “remember,” and therefore it is another “brain.”

To further his argument, he quoted some antidotal stories about a man who had a heart transplant and who later experienced “strange thoughts and feelings,” only then to discover that his donor was a woman. “Wow! Was her heart— as a ‘brain’ communicating her thoughts and emotions to him?” Taking this to the next level, Marvin then asserted that the “gut,” the digestive system, because it also is “a complex neural network” and because it is comprised of millions of neurons, it must also be a “brain.” It receives input messages and sends out messages.

Now if this line of thinking makes sense to you, that’s okay. You are probably simply going with it to see where these thoughts take you. That’s a sympathetic way to listen to someone and says you are seeking to understand the person’s concept and/or conclusions. That’s what I did as I first listened. When that was complete, I then began *thinking through this line of thinking*. As I then began using the critical thinking questions of the Meta-Model, I began to sense all sorts of problems about this. Do you? You might want to stop here and check it out. If there is something wrong with

that way of thinking, what is it? What are the problems that appear to you about all of this?

The first and primary thing for me was *the label* of “heart.” In NLP we know that words are just labels, a way of mentally mapping something. So just using a word or label doesn’t necessarily make it so. So consider the label and metaphor of “brain.” Yes I know that we in the West, and especially English speakers, use the word “heart” for emotions. And on Valentines day we go crazy with “heart” as a synonym of emotion, caring, and love. But that is a cultural fact which arose in Europe and England a few centuries ago. Today western English speakers think of this as an universal fact. But it is not. Back in biblical times, for example, the Hebraic way of portraying the heart was completely different: “As a man *thinks in his heart*, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7). In the Bible “heart” never did service for “emotion,” it was the cognitive center. The emotion center was the “bowls,” the liver, the kidney, the lower stomach. The head served as the “self” or “self-esteem” center—to turn away one’s face is to shame someone, to be honored is to have one’s head lifted up. (I have a whole chapter on this in the book, *Emotions: Sometimes I Have Them/ Sometimes They Have Me.*)

Then there’s that thing about heart transplants and picking up on another person’s thoughts and emotions. So if the muscle that we call “the heart,” which pumps blood which carries oxygen and nutriment to every cell of the body and transports toxins away from the cells, is the place of “the emotional heart,” then what happens when a person gets a plastic heart rather than a heart transplant? Does that mean that the person will not have an “emotional heart?” Will that person not feel emotions any longer? We know that’s not the case. Nor is “the heart” the place where our emotions are primarily created. Instead they are created in *parts of the brain*: in the limbic system, in the thalamus, the amygdala, the hypothalamus which excites the sympathetic nervous system, etc.

Nor does the heart process cognitive knowledge. It processes information about pumping more blood, less blood. Nor does the digestive system process cognitive information. The information it deals with has to do with breaking down food for nourishment and rejecting what does not serve the body. With most of the immune system cells there, it is a first-line defense sorting out “me” and “not me.”

Three “brains” is an interesting metaphor, yet that is all it is—*a metaphor*. We do not literally or actually have three (or more) “brains.” Is there “intelligence” in our body and its functions? Yes, of course. But what intelligence? And what kind of intelligence? That’s the question. We have to be careful about the entailments when we use a metaphor like “brain” or “intelligence.” Sure the body “knows” things—all kinds of things—as its “intelligences” facilitate self-healing and automatic functioning. While a person may accommodatively use “brain” as a metaphor about heart or gut, we cannot expect the label “brain” to carry with it all of the other metaphorical connotations.

Later I heard from several people at the Conference that they liked many of the techniques that came out of this work. They said they were processes for alignment and congruency, and of course, one cannot go wrong with that. But “three brains?” When I meta-model it for precision, and challenge the metaphor for its references, the kind of intelligence in the heart and digestive system is hardly a “brain” in the way we think of brain. Being *like* a “brain” in one aspect doesn’t make it a brain.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #51
Dec. 15, 2014

THE NEXT BIG THINK **---CRITICAL THINKING**

In the past weeks I've been writing about both Mindfulness and Critical Thinking. I began with Reflection #46 on the Neuro-Semantics of Mindfulness. Now I want to put these together. Both are at the very heart of NLP and Neuro-Semantics. How do they connect? One aspect of mindfulness is critical thinking— being mindful about how you are reasoning, thinking, and using language. When you are engaged in critical thinking, you are expanding your mindfulness.

Mindfulness inevitably builds critical thinking skills for several reasons. First of all because mindfulness requires an openness to experience, an openness to perceiving things from multiple views, to seeing multiple possibilities, and an openness to being wrong. The possibility of being wrong arises due to the presence of cognitive distortions and biases. We are all liable to mis-perceive, mis-hear, mis-evaluate, etc. To not be open is to become less mindful, less aware of our fundamental fallibility.

Mindfulness builds critical thinking skills secondly by recognizing the role and predominance of our creativity. If we become mindless when we go on automatic, operate by habit, live by routine, then we increase mindfulness when we play around with ideas, when we adventure into new and different ideas, when we maintain our curiosity about how things work. Mindfulness enriches creativity and yet creativity without reality-testing, quality controlling, checking the facts, and getting feedback from our innovations can become unrealistic, fantastic, and crazy creativity.

What's the solution? It is to complete the creativity. That is, to move from the wild-and-crazy stage of brainstorming to the innovation stage of testing its reality. That's where we apply our critical thinking skills. We need both. When both are working in unison we have creativity-*and*-innovation and in human personality, we have mind-*to*-muscle. We not only have great ideas, we also have the ability to embody and actualize them in lifestyle.

One aspect of mindfulness involves being able to step back, and get the big picture. Doing this can orient you to your world and enable you to gain perspective. That takes you up and uses your self-reflexive consciousness in a highly creative and practical way. But don't stay there. Your next step will be to bring that big picture down so that you can see the details of how you can operationalize it in practical actions. In Neuro-Semantics we call this *meta-detailing*. It is one of the prerequisites of genius which is more fully described in the book, *Sub-Modalities Going Meta*.

Getting the big picture enables you to gain perspective about the details. Yet if you keep generalizing and keep moving up you will over-generalize. Then the categories that you create and the classes that you generate will become less and less useful and can even blind you from the critical distinctions that you need to make. It's critical thinking that brings mindful awareness down to the

critical details. This is precisely what we do when we use the NLP Meta-Model of Language. The “Specifically what ... who ... where ... when” questions focus our attention on the critical details. And that’s where mastery is—Mastery is in the details. That’s what distinguishes an expert from a novice. By specifying the critical success details the expert gets to the heart of things.

Both mindfulness and critical thinking enable us to “come to our senses” in new ways so that we can be here-and-now—fully present to life in the moment we are living it. And both do this by enabling us to “lose our mind”—the old mind of habit, routine, thinking we “know it all,” and assuming there’s nothing else to learn. It is *that* mind which so often blinds us to the here-and-now. Then we’re not present. Eyes we have but we see not; ears we have but we hear not.

One tool which I’m constantly recommending to our Meta-Coaches for this is the skill of effective interrupting. At a very basic level just asking a person to self-reflect as they speak tends to interrupt their “talking off the tip of their tongue” and becoming mindful so they can think critically. “Did you hear what you just said?” So in Meta-Coaching, the coach will ask this from time to time. And clients most of the time will say, “What? What did I just say?”

At a more advanced level, a Meta-Coach may ask, “Did you just hear that resource (or, solution, insight, limiting belief, presupposition, etc.)?” And again, this will interrupt most clients and they will have to ask you to repeat what *they* said so that they can begin to *hear* what they are saying and what’s hidden in their words. I’ve even had clients question me, “Did I say that? Really? Are you sure?” The interruption *interrupts* their mindless chattering and calls them to a mindful awareness.

Another coaching interruption that we often do relates to a pattern of behaviors. This occurs when we ask someone if they have noticed that they have now used a particular expression or linguistic phrase three or four or seventeen times. “I’ve noticed that you have used X-pattern some five times now, are you aware of that? Are you aware of how this may be limiting (or enhancing, empowering, sabotaging, etc.) you?”

We often do this with the linguistic distinctions which the Meta-Model of Language offers. That’s because each distinction has the possibility of creating mindlessness. Unspecified nouns and verbs do this which is why we ask, “What specifically are you talking about?” The speaker may *think* he’s clear, but his words do not create precision. This is even more true for nominalizations, lost performatives, cause-effect statements, complex equivalences, and presuppositions. Inside of these types of linguistic patterns we can really become mindless—so much so that when we are interrupted and asked to explain ourselves—we can’t! “What are you referring to when you say X?” “What exactly do you mean by Y?”

This is where learning and using the Meta-Model enhances mindfulness. It enriches your ability to be present and to engage in critical thinking about how you have and are mentally mapping things in your world. I mentioned this with regard to some of the language used by the media in Ferguson (Reflection #48) and in the metaphorical language of calling the heart a “brain” (Reflection #49). In the next Reflection I will do this with regard to one of the most inflammatory subjects on planet Earth.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #52
December 22, 2014

CRITICAL THINKING

RACE AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

We humans talk a lot about race. It seems to be in the news a lot. It seems to be a common subject, although at times it can be a hot subject and even politically incorrect subject to even talk about.

“We need more understanding between the races...” “Racial relationships have recently been improving ... “With the shootings, racial relationships have suffered are at a new low.” “Check on the form below your race— White, African, Hispanic, Asia, Slavic, etc.” “I wouldn’t bring that up, it is too hot as a racial issue.” “There’s too much racial discrimination, we need to have less of that and more sense of equality.”

In the last few weeks, the media in the US has made ‘race’ a dominant issue over some instances that were not really about race. It began as the media framed the Grand Jury decisions in both Missouri and in New York as “racial, racially motivated, shows racism, demonstrates centuries of racism,” and so on. Yet the so-called ‘race’ of the two individuals who died in these cases was *incidental* to the reason they got into a conflict with the police in the first place. In both cases, the person could have been from any ‘racial’ or social class. In both instances, if the persons had just cooperated with the police, no one would have died.

Defining the conflict and deaths as about ‘race,’ of course, make for more sensational news. In the Missouri case, there’s hardly anything newsworthy of a common criminal resisting arrest, wrestling with a cop, and making things worse for himself. Trying to turn that into a civil rights issue of ‘racial discrimination’ is stretching things for the sake of media promotion.

All of that got me thinking about the term. So what are we talking about? The term ‘race’ itself is actually a *pseudo-word* if what we mean by it is that there are different races on this planet. Why is that? Well, because there are not multiple races. On Planet Earth, there is just one race—the human race. The human species. So because it does not reference anything that’s actual, then all of the talk about different ‘races’ is ultimately nonsense. Wikipedia writes the following about ‘race.’

“Race is a social concept used to categorize humans into large and distinct populations or groups by anatomical, cultural, ethnic, genetic, geographical, historical, linguistic, religious, and/or social affiliation. First used to refer to speakers of a common language and then to denote national affiliations. In the 17th century, people began to use the term to relate to observable physical (i.e. phenotypical) traits. Such use promoted hierarchies favorable to differing ethnic groups. Starting from the 19th century, the term was often used, in a taxonomic sense, to denote genetically differentiated human populations defined by phenotype. ... the scientific community ... argue that, among humans, race has no taxonomic significance by pointing out that all living humans belong to the same species, *Homo sapiens* and subspecies, *Homo sapiens sapiens*.”

So ‘race’ does not actually mean different species. We are all of the same race! That’s why any

form of discrimination is just basically wrong. “Race” does not mean “race” as in different races. To use the term in that way is naive and simplistic as it is wrong and misleading. Yet we constantly use the term, so we must be referring to something. But what? What are we actually talking about? What are we referring to? What is actually present that we can see and hear or smell and touch which we call “race?”

Since we are all human, all *Homo sapiens*, and all of the same species, since our DNA are the same, and so much so that it readily intermingles unlike different species of animals, the differences we are highlighting are not actually racial. So what are they? In a word, we are actually speaking about *cultural differences*.

We are actually referring to a social concept. The differences are differences in how people greet each other, talent, their accent, how they value some things and dis-value other things, what they eat, how they eat, the architecture they create, their music, art, language, etc. When a group of people all share a unique culture and biologically all share some family traits—skin color, eye shape, nose, body shape and size, etc.—this is what we identify as a “race.”

Yet this “race” is not limited to just people born there, those who share the biological history of that group. We can take a baby from any so-called “race” and put that baby in another “race” and that child will grow up to take on all of the traits of that “race.” She will greet others as that “race,” value and dis-value, eat, talk, act, relate, etc. as that adopted “race.” All of the central distinguishing “racial” features which we tend to focus on—will be learned and adopted. If the external factors are close enough to the adopted “race” that person will probably not be identified as other. All except some of the most superficial ones—skin color, family traits of eyes shape, nose, body shape, size.

Sometimes this can create some shocking experiences. I have met people who originated in Africa centuries ago who have been living in England for generations and who think, talk, act, greet, and for all purposes *are* British except the color of their skin. Or French, or Australian, etc. Culturally, or “racially,” (to use the term that is currently being used), they have learned a very different way of life. A few years ago I had to readjust my thinking of Chinese when we had Philippino Chinese, mainland China Chinese, Hong Kong Chinese, and Malaysia Chinese all at the same training. Biologically they shared a similar history, but the way they talked, the way they acted, related, interacted, valued things, emoted, etc. was very, very different. It was as if they were different “races.” And if by “racial” we really mean cultural, then they were.

“Race,” as a term, is also a word that has been so incredibly over-generalized. We talk about the black race, for example, but what black race are you speaking about? Are you speaking about Africans? Nigerians, Kenyans, African Americans, Southern blacks, urban blacks, middle class blacks, upper class, British, Jamaican, etc. Or if you talk about the white race, what white race are you speaking about? Caucasians, Jewish, Irish, German, etc.

Because every culture values numerous things, the question for any given culture is: What is valued? Is it family, inheritance of wealth, secular education, moral education? Is it study, hard work and effort, discipline? Or is it being rebellious? Is it being traditional? Cultures (read “race”) is built around such things.

Because the term ‘race’ is more of a pseudo-word, maybe a metaphor about culture, it is possible, even common, to think of it in degrees. We can think in terms of “How much are you of this or that ‘race?’” It was often said in the campaign and then presidency that Bill Clinton was the first Black President, they said that because he was ‘black’ in his values and policies. Then when Obama was elected President, there were those on the left who said, “He is not black enough.” And in the matter of intermarriage among the various ‘races,’ the question comes up about *how much is one* of this or that ‘race?’ If a person is ½ or 1/4 or some other degree of some other racial heritage, then what are they? This has caused confusion about what ‘race’ one is, does one check White or Black; Hispanic or White, Chinese or Black, Irish or Dutch, Japanese or Russian, etc.? Does it count at all when one is 1/16 or 1/32?

The bottom line is that these are not actually ‘race’ questions, these are questions about family traits and culture values. What many police actually *profile* is not the so-called ‘race,’ they profile cultural characteristics—if a person walks, talks, displays certain cultural characteristics— they might look like a hoodlum or criminal. Are they? We don’t know. But if someone *looks* like, *acts* like, *presents* oneself in that way—that might be a person to check out, alias ‘profile.’ That strikes me as good precaution.

To profile merely the color of one’s skin is a waste of time and an ignorant choice. It’s not the color of the skin that determines behavior, it’s one’s character. So if we want an efficient way to figure out who is more likely to commit crimes or acts of terrorism, we have to look much deeper and in a different area. Color of skin is far too superficial of a feature. Martin Luther King Jr.’s vision was to move beyond such superficial features to more important features— one’s character. ‘Race’ is not the issue— character goes to culture and values. These are the critical issues.

What should we do?

Treat all people with respect as human beings worthy of our attention and honor.

Don’t discriminate on superficial things like color, origin, social status, wealth, age, etc.

Discriminate by character. Profile those who show in the way they act and talk that they are capable of behaviors that disrespect others— who are ready for violence against those who disagree with him or her.

From: L. Michael Hall
2014 Neurons #53
December 29, 2014

DEEP CULTURAL CHANGE

Given the posts on “Neurons” in the past weeks about race, conflict, cultures, etc., is there any question about that *we humans need to create some very deep cultural changes in a great many aspects of our lives?* We need cultural changes in just about every area of life. We need cultural change in business— in corporations, in the ways organizations operate, in the way the markets work, in families, in ethnic groups, in politics, in the world economy, in education, and so on.

What is *the culture* that needs changing? In business, the *culture* which need changing refers to the ways that groups of people have learned about how to manage their processes (e.g., leadership, followship, organization, resources, etc.). The culture also involves the group dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, communication, connection, collaboration and competition, trust, truth, secrecy, openness, and much more.

Earlier in the year I wrote a series about *Creating a Self-Actualizing Company* (#7-11), and quoted from former CEO of VISA, Dee Hock regarding his discoveries about the challenges which he faced when he set out to create a brand new kind of organization. In the aftermath of his decades of work, the realization which he highlighted in his book was that *the cultural change part of the process* was much more difficult than expected. And why? It was due, in part, to the power of old habitual ways which we are constantly revert back to, usually unconsciously. Falling back to the old ways speaks about cultures as self-organizing systems and how they inherently strive for homeostasis.

Now what is a *culture*? Culture results from how we have *cultivated* our mind, emotions, speech, behavior, ways of relating, values, rituals, etc. In a word *culture* is “the way we do things around here.” Culture then is the internal set of beliefs, understandings, identities, decisions, etc. that have developed over the years or decades or even centuries. Then, from those internal meaning frames, culture is manifested externally in the actions, ways of relating, rituals, architecture, etc. Often, this seems to make “culture” an external thing. It is not. While coded as a nominalization, it is not a *thing*, but the *process* of “cultivating.”

Culture is an internal thing that we project on the outside. It is a set of meanings that give sense and significance to our world and when we externalize it in how we greet, organize groups, communicate, value, etc., it seems that it is on the outside. But those are just expressions of culture, and not the culture. Culture is not an external thing.

That culture is the inside reality is revealed in how we all carry our “culture” with us everywhere we go and how we only become aware of it when we see, hear, and encounter something that violates it. Then we become aware of our culture and the difference in the cultural ways of doing things before us. Where is my “culture?” It is in the frames of meaning that I carry around in my mind about things. Typically, I never notice it. It operates as the invisible atmosphere or environment in

which I live and move. I only begin to notice it when something around me doesn't validate my mental "cultivated frames" and then I don't know what this or that means? Or even what it is. It doesn't make sense—to my mental mapping.

If this is what *culture* is—how do we detect it and change it? If there's a natural homeostasis energy in a system resisting change and re-organizing for getting things back to the way they were, how do we ever change a culture?

Within every national culture there are scores even hundreds of sub-cultures. Many of these sub-cultures are highly dysfunctional and really need changing. How do we change the sub-culture of violence (gangs) that's in most culture? The culture of consumerism that's driven by competition and the idea that "more is better!?" The culture of status (regardless if the "status" is determined by social standing, clothes, money, degrees, who you know, "likes" on Facebook, or whatever). The culture of glorifying bad news (called "the media"). The culture of victimhood (blaming others for one's own ineffectiveness).

To change "culture" we first have to detect it and where it resides. This is the tricky part. It seems to be external, yet it is not. What's external are the symptoms, not the essence. The problem with the violence culture is not the violence. Yes it is a problem. Yes it is destructive, dehumanizing, and yes it needs to be changed. But the actions of violence are derivative from the "culture"—the cultivating of mind-and-emotions in the minds of those who comprise that culture. They are members of that culture due to how they had their mind-emotions cultivated and how they have cultivated their mind.

What is called *racism* is not merely the unequal treatment of people. The obvious fact is that we are *not* equal in so many ways—understanding, intelligence, talents, skills, values, etc. Pretending that we are all equal is not the cure for racism. The cure is to value people as human beings and to treat with respect and to create as equality before the eyes of the law and then of opportunities as much as is possible. If a person is in a culture and has not cultivated their own mind-emotion in a way that assumes access *the critical success factors* that are needed, i.e., personal responsibility, valuing hard work, effort, discipline, study, social skills, etc., then whatever "equal opportunities" that might be available to them—will not be accessed and utilized.

What needs to change is the person's inside *mental culture of mind-and-emotions* in order to take advantage of opportunities. Throwing more money at the "problem," giving more things away, protesting about being discriminated against—these things do not address the core problem, they are only band-aides on the symptoms.

Culture resides inside. Culture is one of the "logical levels" of the mind along with beliefs, values, identities, memories, imaginations, decisions, permissions, prohibitions, rules, etc. And as a logical-level, it is one of the most *unconscious* meta-levels—which is why it seems like our mental-emotional atmosphere. Culture speaks about your neuro-semantic—the *semantics* (meanings) that you give to things and then experience externally in your *neurology* (body).