

NEURONS

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NEURONS — 2024

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From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #1
January, 2, 2024
Emotional Intelligence Series #1

WHY EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

Today nearly everybody knows about *emotional intelligence*. Well, at least most everyone has heard that term. Emotional intelligence is today a pretty regular offering in organization as business has been discovering that it is not sufficient to have smart and talented people on board, they also need to have some basic emotional intelligence. In fact, the more a business involves customers, teams, management, leadership, etc. the more emotional intelligence is needed.

Why is this so? Why has emotional intelligence become popular and what is it all about? The bottom line is that as a person can be intellectually smart and know all kinds of things, if a person is not smart about oneself, one's emotions, managing those emotions effectively, using one's emotions to connect with others in healthy ways, etc., then one's I.Q. will be less effective than it could be. E.Q. (emotional quotient) is about being *smart about people and about yourself as a person*.

Obviously I.Q. is important, in fact, critical for a person to understand his world and cope effectively within it. This is one's basic intelligence in understanding and learning *what* you are doing, and *how* to do it. I.Q. is primarily intelligence of the outside world. E.Q. speaks about your intelligence of your inside world and the inside world of others. It is your intelligence in how you handle yourself in relationship to others, your social intelligence, your intra-personal intelligence, and your emotional intelligence about how to get along well with others.

Why is it important? Because you and I are *emotional beings*. Because we are *social beings*. Because a great portion of our ability to cope with life, get along with others, and even get along well with ourselves depends on our emotional intelligence. It's important because the "logic" that of our internal world is very different from the "logic" of the external world. For most of us, it's obvious that the "logic" of our emotions is not the logic of mathematics or physics. Yet what may not be equally obvious is that the "logic" of our thinking, reasoning, and interpreting also operates from a different and unique logic.

In this series of articles, I will first identify *what emotional intelligence is*, how we define it, and it's component parts. I will then relate it to the NLP Model about *emotional states*. Long before the idea of emotional intelligence arose, NLP had already focused on it and developed a great many tools for developing it, only under the terminology of *state*. Neuro-Semantics took this further as we introduced the idea of meta-states which are, in fact, meta-emotions and all that is implied about these higher/deeper emotional states.

From there I will focus in the basics in Neuro-Semantics on what we call *Emotional Mastery*. The purpose will be to offer many of the distinctions and processes that we use to facilitate a greater ability to manage our emotions. That's important for many reasons. First and foremost, to create a sense of control. Then you will not feel that you are a victim of your emotions. Then, instead of feeling that your emotions *have* you, you *have* your emotions! Then, with a sense of being in control, you will be able to manage your stress so it is not creating various kinds of psychosomatic illnesses and problems.

By managing your emotions you can then put them to good use— feeling the emotions that move you (motivate you) to live life more fully— love, joy, peace, etc. Then, you can turn on the emotions that feed curiosity and wonder so that you can learn and develop, so that you can connect and contribute, so that you can unleash your best potentials, and equally so that you can use your negative emotions for your overall good.

There are no “bad” emotions, there are just *emotions*. And with every emotion, there is a message of some sort. There are appropriate and inappropriate emotions, depending on the context. There are useful and unuseful emotions. There are emotions to *live in* (the positive emotions) and there are emotions to *notice, learn from, and release* (the negative emotions). And in the end, they are just emotions. They are not commands from heaven. They are not infallible—they are entirely fallible. And because they are fallible, they do not always tell us the truth.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #2
January, 9, 2024
Emotional Intelligence Series #2

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

If I.Q. refers to *intelligence* generally, then it refers to your ability to think, reason, figure things out, solve problems, create solutions, etc. Given that, what does it mean when we put the word *emotion* in front of it and create this new idea of *emotional intelligence*? Peter Salovey and John Mayer define emotional intelligence in this way:

"The ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior."

Their definition that we have four abilities within the subjective experience of emotional intelligence, namely, perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. Here are some other common definitions.

"Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand, use, and manage your own emotions, and to understand and respond to the emotions of others. It is a critical skill for success in all areas of life, including personal relationships, work, and school."

"Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to perceive, use, understand, manage, and handle emotions. People with high emotional intelligence can recognize their own emotions and those of others, use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior, discern between different feelings and label them appropriately, and adjust emotions to adapt to environments (Oxford Dictionary).

The phrase "emotional intelligence" first appeared in 1964 by Beldoch M, Davitz Jr. in *The Communication of Emotional Meaning*. But it did not gain popularity until the 1995 best selling book, *Emotional Intelligence* by science journalist Daniel Goleman. From that a number of authors developed the idea of *Emotional Quotient* and developed various ways by which to measure emotional intelligence. One of the first to use "emotional quotient" was Keith Beasley (1987). And yet, going back even further, Abraham Maslow introduced the concept of emotional strength in the 1950s in his work on self-actualization.

In 1983, Howard Gardner's *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* introduced the idea that traditional types of intelligence fail to fully explain cognitive abilities. He introduced the idea of multiple intelligences which included both interpersonal intelligence (the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people) and intra-personal intelligence (the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations).

It was Daniel Goleman who outlined five main *emotional intelligence* constructs:

- *Self-awareness*. This refers to the ability to know your emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, and goals and recognize their impact on others while using certain inner feelings to guide decisions. Awareness and understanding of emotions involves comprehending emotion language and appreciating relationships between emotions. This may involve being sensitive to slight variations between emotions. It may involve recognizing and describing how emotions evolve over time.
- *Self-regulation*. This refers to controlling or redirecting disruptive emotions and impulses as well as adapting to changing circumstances. By regulating your emotions, you can then use them to facilitate such cognitive activities as thinking and problem-solving. The emotionally intelligent person can capitalize fully upon his or her changing moods in order to best fit the task at hand. In regulating emotions, you develop the ability to turn them up or down, to amplify or dampen them.
- *Social skill*. This refers to using your emotions as you manage your relationships for getting along with others. By regulating your emotions, you can more effectively relate to others and to their emotions. The emotionally intelligent person can harness emotions, even negative ones, and manage them to achieve intended goals.
- *Empathy*. This refers to considering other people's feelings especially when connecting to people, when making decisions, when seeking to understand another person, etc.
- *Motivation*. This refers to using your emotions to value, to identify what's important, to feel moved, to feel motivated, etc.

What then is emotional intelligence? It is recognizing, understanding, and managing your emotions in an intelligent way. In a word that means that *you have your emotions* rather than your emotions *having* (and controlling) you. It means that you know how you produce your emotions, the numerous contributing factors, and how to regulate them so that you are self-determining. Obviously, emotional intelligence is critical for your health and well-being, for your inner peace and joy and love, and for your relationships.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #3
January, 16, 2024
Emotional Intelligence Series #3

WHAT ARE EMOTIONS ANYWAY?

Part I

With something as fundamental and basic as *emotions*, you might think that defining an emotion would be no problem. Yet that is not the case. Part of the reason for that is due to the fact that there are several component elements within an emotion. Yet you would not know that *when you are experiencing an emotion*. When you are relaxed or stressed, when you are sad or joyful, when you are loving or indifferent, when you are disgusted or attracted, etc., experiencing the emotion seems to be a single and whole thing. It seems that way, yet it is not.

1) *“Emotion” as Movement*. Before getting to that, let’s look at the term itself: *emotion*. Obvious within an emotion there is *motion*— that is, movement. Something is moving somewhere, in some direction. Now inasmuch as the word was originally spelled *ex-motion*, the idea of an emotion is that its motion is *moving you out* (ex-) from wherever you are. Accordingly, a medical definition of an emotion is that it has within it “an action tendency.”

As this gives us our first picture of an emotion, it also distinguishes emotions that *move us out to embrace and connect with the world* and then the emotions that *move us to hold back from the world*. The metaphor which I like to use regarding this is that of the brakes and accelerator in a car. Some emotions are like *the brakes*—when you experience them, they hold you back from something threatening or dangerous. They enable you to slow down, think, consider, and decide on a course of action. Fear is like that, tension is like that, so is sadness, disgust, fatigue, etc. other emotions operate like *the accelerator*—when you experience them you want to move forward. Joy is like that, so is love, excitement, curiosity, etc.

2) *Emotions as Nerve Impulses*. Interesting enough, our neurology has a similar dynamic. We have inhibitory nerve impulses and we have excitatory nerve impulses. When the inhibitory impulses occur, we experience “negative” emotions. So we tense up, we restrain ourselves, we slow down, we may stop breathing, etc. It’s as if we have put the brakes on ourselves so that in our journey in life, we operate in a more careful, mindful way. When the excitatory impulses occur, we experience “positive” emotions. We breathe more fully, muscles relax and/or are activated to engage in some activity. It’s as if we have put the pedal to the metal and we’re ready to cruise down the highway of life.

3) *Emotions as distinction from Feelings*. Inside of these positive and negative emotions are two primary elements: kinesthetic sensations and thoughts. Technically, this is the difference between *feelings* and emotions. Within every emotion are *feelings—kinesthetic sensations*. But you can experience any and all of your kinesthetics *apart from* it being an emotion. Take any

emotion and we can ask, “What are the kinesthetic sensations of that emotion?” It may be cool or warm, calm or agitated, tension in the body in one or more muscle groups or relaxed, etc. “What are you experiencing in your body?”

- What are the kinesthetic sensations when you are afraid? What happens to your breathing, muscle tension, face, neck, hands, stomach, etc.?
- Similarly with anger—what are the *feelings* within your body? And sadness? Excitement? Fatigue?

With the *feeling* side of an emotion, we look at your diet, what you’ve been eating; your sleeping habits, your health and/or illness; your blood pressure, and on and on. Since your *body* is the place where your kinesthetic sensations occurs—how you take care of your body (or don’t take good care of it)—will strongly influence your feelings and how they play a significant role in your emotional well-being.

4) *Emotions as cognitively based.* That’s the *feeling* side of an emotion, for the *thought* side, we have to ask, “What are you thinking? What are you aware of? Remembering? Imagining? Anticipating? Intending?” That’s because, “as you think, so you are” ... “so you feel.” Together, your thinking–emoting is one system and whenever we speak about these elements as if they are independent factors, we are dichotomizing and polarizing. That, in turn, creates a false-to-fact understanding of emotions.

5) *Emotions as relative to Map and Territory.* Now while we have a good beginning in understanding an emotion, it is just the beginning. There’s much more. In understanding an emotion, we need to include in our definition that every emotion is *relative*. It is *relative to two phenomena*— first, the mental map that a person is operating from and the territory that one is trying to navigate. Imagine a scale. On one side of the scale there is the mind—and all of the *mental thinking, understanding, believing, expecting, intending, etc.* On the other side of the scale is the territory—the experiential area of life that a person is dealing with—people, work, hobbies, career, communication, conflict, sports, etc.

The emotion you feel at any given moment in time *depends* on the *relationship* between your mental map about things and your experience of those things. If you are driving in New York City and your map was develop in a country town of 2,000 people, you may be in for a shock! You may *emotionally feel stress, anger, and fear* at the same time! What’s wrong? Your map is not sufficient for that territory. If you have a map of driving in Cairo Egypt and you are in a tiny village in Maine, you may *emotionally feel joy, delight, playful, and on top of the world.* Why? Your map is more than able to effectively handle that territory.

6) *Emotions as Interpretations.* Because of the cognitive component in every emotion, your emotions are functions of your interpretations. That is, how you interpret an experience will determine the emotion you experience. It is in this way that we can say that *you are the creator of your emotions.* After all, it is something you do—you *emote*. And that’s why reframing works, when you change the meaning frame about something, your emotional experience of it changes.

Back to our question, “What are emotions?” They are dynamic *processes* within us creating movement, information, and energy—and they are the very *feel* of life. More next time.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #4
January 20, 2024

WHAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT TRAINERS' TRAINING

Announcement: You do *not* need to be a trainer to experience many of the incredible benefits from *Trainers' Training!* Why? Because at the training for trainers—there's a lot more going on than just a focus on training identity, skills, and business. That's because this training arose from *modeling top presenters and trainers and identifying how they interact with groups of people for the purpose of education, persuasion, and inspiration.*

That means that if you are interested in how Neuro-Semantics and NLP *models excellence* in general, or models presentation excellence in particular, you will find a treasure chest of valuable insights. If you are interested in how group communication, interaction, and management works at its best, you will find a lot about that here. If you're interested in persuasion and inspiration—again, there's a lot about that as well.

Trainers' Training is for anyone who wants to be more skilled, competent, and therefore confident in standing and speaking effectively in front of a group of people. It is for anyone who wants to develop skills in thinking, comprehending, planning, and structuring a message to a group. Obviously, if you have any hesitation or fear about public speaking, this training will enable you to put those fears to rest and develop a passion for getting up and sharing your ideas.

What happens at *Neuro-Semantic Trainers' Training (NSTT)*? We begin with three days about the *psychology* within and behind the NLP and Neuro-Semantic models. It is from this *psychological foundation* that the practices arise. Understanding the psychology raises one's appreciation of what's really going on in the depths of the mind-and-emotions.

We then present the foundational Presentation skills and give everyone a chance to get up and make a presentation to a small group. In fact, because every single day you will be *presenting* to your group. Getting up and presenting will become easier and easier, more familiar and less intimidating. Altogether there are more than 40 presentation skills and we will cover them from Days 3 through 10. There will also be a focus on *the business of training*. We will interview some of the successful Master Trainers and others who have expertise in the field of business.

Every evening one of the Trainers who is in the Master Training Track will make a presentation regarding a pattern that will be useful in becoming more competent. The evening presentations will be live-streamed publically on the Neuro-Semantics Channel (Youtube). Afterwards, the trainer will receive feedback regarding the benchmarks for the Master Trainer level—thereby enabling everyone to see and appreciate the quality of the presentations and how we do

benchmarks in Neuro-Semantics.

NSTT is designed to be so much more than a single training about a single subject. Via NSTT we are building up the *community* and the *future leadership of Neuro-Semantics*. We also typically have Trainers drop in to visit for a day or two. We also have Trainers re-visiting NSTT to refresh and to deepen their training knowledge and skill. After all, skills can deteriorate, and/or get distorted, and sometimes need a *refreshing*.

NSTT this year is in Kaula Lumpur Malaysia — see the Brochures that have been attached for more information as well as the details about the resort hotel, dates, times, etc.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #5
January, 22, 2024
Emotional Intelligence Series #4

WHAT ARE EMOTIONS ANYWAY? Part II

In the last Neurons (#3), I identified emotions in six ways thereby revealing a bit of the complexity about emotions.

- 1) *Emotion as movement.*
- 2) *Emotions as inhibiting and exciting nerve impulses.*
- 3) *Emotions as distinct from feelings.*
- 4) *Emotions as cognitively based.*
- 5) *Emotions as relative to map and territory.*
- 6) *Emotions as interpretations.* But wait—there’s more! I’m not done with defining an emotion.

7) *Emotions as reflexive layers.* When it comes to *bodily* emotions there are basically a dozen or more basic or primary emotions. Various authors have detailed these over the years, and depending on the author, there are anywhere from 8 to 20 core emotions. And like when you mix up the primary colors and apply perhaps brown and yellow together, you get secondary colors, and if you continue mixing colors, triary colors. So with emotions. We have primary emotions, secondary, and triary emotions. Robert Plutchik’s book, *Emotion: A Psycho-Evolutionary Synthesis* (1980) posited 8 *primary emotions*: fear, surprise, sad, disgust, anger, anticipation, joy, and acceptance (receptivity). 12 primary emotions were later coded using six continua:

Joy (delight, pleasure)	—	Sad (grief, pain, dislike)
Fear (away from, anxiety, worry)—		Anger (aggressing, going at)
Calm (relaxed)	—	Tension (distress, stress)
Fatigue (tired)	—	Energetic (vitality)
Distracted	—	Focused
Love (liking, attraction)	—	Hate (aversion, indifference, apathy)

These levels of emotions arise from your reflexive consciousness. Just as you can *think* about your thinking, you can *emote* about your emotion. It is an exceedingly simply process. Simply answer, “What do you feel about anger?” Or, “What do you feel about fear, jealousy, stress, sadness, joy, excitement, etc.?” Further, if you are human, you *cannot not* reflect on your emotions. And since thinking—emoting is a single process that we can only pull apart linguistically, when you *think—emote* you create a state—a state of mind-body-emotion. And when you bring one state to another state, you build up the second, third, fourth, etc. levels of emotions-about-emotions.

This means that we have emotions all the way up the meta-levels. And that’s one reason why

emotions can become considerably stronger as they go up the levels. So just as *joyful learning* is much more emotional than just “learning,” so *passionately joyful learning*, and *ferociously passionate, joyful learning*, etc. endows the foundational emotion with more and more emotionality. This puts the lie to the overly simplistic idea that the founders of NLP presented. They said that to “go meta” is to dissociate, to be less emotional, to be emotionless. Yet that is just not so. Going meta can, and often does, generate stronger experiences of emotion. Dissociation is only one of 16 interfaces that can occur when you *go meta*. It is one that probably only occurs about 1% of the time. (The interfaces are detailed in *Meta-States*, 2012).

To *go meta* and layer another emotion onto your previous thinking-and-emoting is to generate layers of emotions about the original subject. This explains, in part, why it is sometimes difficult to say what you feel. You feel a lot of things! About a challenge, you may simultaneously feel excited, scared, fearful, stress, anticipating, curious, etc. And about excitement, you may feel enthused, playful, curious or ecstatic. And about fear you may feel some self-doubt, apprehension, etc. Emotions as reflexive layers reveal that emotions can be quite complex. They can also set us up to feel contradictory emotions at the same time, which again, makes it difficult to say exactly what you feel—as if it is normal to feel only one things at a time.

Now true enough, many secondary and triary emotions, as they go up the levels do tend to become more like *moods* (a pervasive emotional state) or even as *attitudes* (a disposition of body, mind, and emotion). This changes the quality of the emotion, even though it is still an emotion. For example, fear becomes a generalized fearfulness, a timidity, a shyness, an avoiding. Anger becomes rage, then sarcasm, then hatredm aggressiveness, disrespect, etc.

The bottom-line about emotions is that they are a *kind of thinking*. Anger thinking creates anger feelings; fear thinking creates fear feelings. Jealous thinking creates jealousy feelings. Because thinking–feeling is a single process, theirs is no real distinction between them. Your nervous systems operate holistically so that thinking–feeling blend together as an energy source in your body.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #6
January, 29, 2024
Emotional Intelligence Series #6

FEELINGS ARE NOT EMOTIONS

While all of us use the terms *feelings* and *emotions* interchangeably as if they were equivalent, they are not the same. Nor are they synonyms of each other. The truth is that they are two very different phenomena.

Feelings are, at their essence, kinesthetics. That is, physical sensations of the body. If they are *inside* the body, we call them proprioception and if they are accessed from outside of the body, then we call them sensations or feelings.

Emotions always entails and involves feelings, but are more than feelings. To have an emotion, you also have to have a cognitive thought as noted in the previous articles.

Kinesthetic sensations consist of a large range of bodily sensations— pressure (soft, hard), oscillation of the pressure, temperature (cool, warm, hot), moisture (wet, dry), movement (quick, slow), intensity (low, medium, high), frequency (often, some, few), rhythm (rocking, up-and-down, etc.), pain (biting, dull, constant, etc.), extent (local, general), duration (short to long). Further, the kinesthetics can be at many different locations in the body. They can have texture, shape, etc.

When we ask, “What do you feel?” if we are using the word ‘feeling’ accurately and properly, we are asking for the kinesthetic sensations of the emotion. We can call attention to the beating of the heart, the pumping of the lungs, and the muscle tension in the legs, arms, face, neck, back, etc. We can invite a person to notice sensations within various parts of the body.

For the *General Arousal Syndrome* that is commonly referred to as both “the stress response” or the “fight, flight, freeze” response, the kinesthetics of these emotions are pretty much the same. Heart and lungs are highly activated so that there is a definite shift in breathing—sometimes even hyperventilating. Eyes dilate, skin sweats, blood is withdrawn from brain and stomach and sent to the larger muscle groups preparing the body for fighting or running. Adrenalin is sent to provide more energy to the body. And the body is overall highly activated. But what do you feel in the general arousal?

The amazing thing is—it *all depends*. If you *think, reason, and interpret things* in your environment as threatening, then you will feel fear or anger. *Fear* if you think it is too much or that you don’t want to get into a fight. *Anger* if you think you can handle the threat and/or if you have a habit of getting into fights. If it is too overwhelming, you might just freeze. But if you *think, reason, and interpret things* in that same environment as fun, exciting, a challenge, desirable, etc., then you might feel excited or lustful. *Excited* if the situation is positive for you (public speaking, bungee jumping, etc.) and fits your values. *Lustful* if the situation involves

sexual stimulus or arousal.

Four emotions—*fear, anger, excitement, and lust*—and they all have the same *feelings* at the kinesthetic level! The difference goes to one's cognitions. The bodily activation is the same, a state of heightened arousal so that you are ready to respond. But at the cognitive level, the semantics (meanings) are completely different.

Actually, this explains why these four emotions can get mixed up, why fear and anger are so intimately connected. That's why underneath fear is usually anger and why underneath anger is usually fear. This explains why the fearful move-away from person when he reaches a threshold, and cannot take any more, can become extremely aggressive. It's why sexual stimulation can become quite perverted—a person cannot get aroused unless chocked or abused in some way. It's why the violence of rape is not as much about sex as it is about anger.

Emotions have within them *feelings* (kinesthetics). Feelings, however, may be just that—a feeling, a sensation, and not connected to any emotion. In experiments, people have been chemically stimulated by having epinorphein or adrinalin shot into their arms, and then asked, “What do you feel?” Again, it always depends. In these experiments it depended on what they were primed to expect. If they were primed to expect to feel fear—they felt fear. If anger, then anger; if lust, then lust. The determining factor was not in the sensation itself, but in the interpretation—the semantics that readied them to respond as they did.

“Feelings” and “Emotions”—not the same. Shall we try to pass a law to prevent people from using ‘feeling’ for ‘emotion?’ I don't think so. Nor would it really make that much of a difference. It's sufficient to simply know that these are two very different phenomena and that you can understand your own emotions better when you know that they have a bodily or somatic base— a base of kinesthetic feelings.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #7
February 5, 2024
Emotional Intelligence Series #7

SCALING YOUR EMOTION'S INTENSITY

Because an e-motion involves *motion* that is going *out* of you (ex-motion), it's not surprising that your emotions involve a degree of energy. From *what you think and evaluate* as you interpret your experiences in the world, your brain sends signals to your body regarding what to do and how to respond. Your interpretative centers in your pre-frontal cortex activates your associative cortexes and your motor cortex which then activates you to sense (feel) things in a way that allows you to respond appropriately.

This enables us to not only ask, "What do you feel?" (#5), but also "*How much do you feel X?*" And with this question you can begin to scale an emotion's intensity? "How much do you feel afraid? Or angry? Or joyful? Or in love?" This gives us yet another way of operationally defining an emotion— *an emotion is an energy field*. Imagine the emotion as an energy bubble that surrounds you, give it a color:

- In anger, you're in a red bubble and it can range from 0 to 10 in intensity.
- In relaxation, a blue bubble and you could rate it in percentages, 20%, 50%, etc.
- In joy, a golden bubble and you could measure it as low, medium, or high.
- In grief and sadness, a dark bubble and you can scale it very dark to gray.

There's many ways that you could talk about the intensity of the emotion. Years ago when working with men coming out of the Federal Prison here in Colorado, I was commissioned to do "anger control" with them. So I created an *anger scale*. I took all of the words for *anger* that I could find and put them on a scale ranging on the bottom for "very little" to **anger** in the middle to out-rage and violence at the top.

Violence	Anger than has now become physical.
Out-raged	
Rage / Wrath	Anger pretty intense, at an 8!
Fury / Ire	
Anger	In the middle of the scale: 6 or 7
Indignation / Offended	
Stress	
Frustration	anger level at a 4 or 5
Agitated / Upset	
Vexed / Irked	
Dislike / Annoyed	Anger at a 1 or 2
Bothered / Peeved	

Once you *scale* an emotion, you can now make distinctions in *how much you feel a particular emotion*. The men that I worked with were under the delusion that their experience of anger was an all-or-nothing affair. Either they had it or they did not. “You wouldn’t like me angry!” a couple of them told me. “Why are you a son-of-a-bitch when you’re angry?” I would ask them—keeping my distance (!). Sheepishly, they would admit, “Yes” they were. As they would talk about a provoking event, I would ask, “How much anger did you experience?” It was always “10!” “So you can’t make it any stronger?” They always said they could—so they were not truly at a 10! “Okay, turn it down to 9.” “Are you man enough to do that?” If they said “8” or something, I would say, “Turn it up to 9, now 10. Okay, good, now down to 7.”

The amazing thing is that once you think about the energy level of an emotion, everybody seems to have the innate ability to turn it up and down. Make it more; make it less. Sometimes I had to help them do that. “Think about the threatening bully in diapers and holding a rattle. Good. Now feel the anger at 10.” They couldn’t!

In our training manual on *Emotional Mastery*, we have a page of a dozen emotional scales— a scale for joy, love, relaxation, etc. and a scale for fear, sadness, guilty, etc. In each of the scales I have searched for words that are synonymous, or nearly so, with the key word. For example, on the scale of *Joy*, at the lowest levels there is content, feeling pleasant. A little higher is playful, laughter, mirthful. Then delight, happiness, ecstasy at the top. And where language fails us, the *scaling itself* offers a sense of degree. And when you can scale or gauge the degree of intensity of an emotion— it gives you a way to describe it, at least a little bit more accurately.

I found scaling as an excellent first step in training people to begin to manage their emotions. It breaks the all-or-nothing frame and enables a person to get in touch with their inner powers for amplifying or dampening their emotional intensity.

If you have been in a learning state as you have read these two pages, how much interest, curiosity, and fascination did you experience? Was it a lot or a little? Did that degree of curiosity intensity on the scale enable you to have been in your best the learning state? Now suppose you amplify or reduce your curiosity intensity to a level where it is just optimum for you; now reread this article. How does that impact your learning? Your enjoyment of learning?

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #8
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Emotional Intelligence Series #8

KINDS & DIMENSIONS OF EMOTIONS

In the four previous articles, I began offering some basic definitions of what an “emotion” is. In those articles, I made numerous distinctions so as to create some more precision regarding the emotional life that we are referring to. One thing that is obvious from all of that is this: *All emotions are not the same.* Emotions come in many different sizes and shapes. We have already noted that there are many different *levels* of emotions (#3) from primary emotions to multiple levels of meta-emotions. There are also different kinds of emotions as well as emotions in different dimensions. Here are some more distinctions that we can make about emotions.

The go/ no-go emotions. Many emotions create a **go** energy. They are excitatory, positive, and energetic emotions that activate us to move forward to our values, our goals, and our desires. And conversely, there are many emotions which function with a **no-go** energy. They are inhibitory, negative, and constraining emotions. We commonly call these the “positive” and the “negative” emotions although that description is not very accurate.

Sympathetic emotions. As already noted, there are the sympathetic nervous system emotions of the General Arousal Syndrome: stress, excitement, fear, anger, lust, and excitement. These are all primary emotions and when you feel them, you can point to the place in your body where you experience them. You encode them somatically.

Parasympathetic emotions. The parasympathetic nervous system also activates a certain set of emotions such as relaxation, calmness, peaceful, feeling centered, etc. These restful emotions enable us to turn down the bodily activation, allowing us to feel apathetic, sleepy, bored, etc.

Social emotions. Because the social emotions actually make up the largest number of our emotions, they suggests that one of the primary functions of emotions involve how we relate to each other. These include: kindness, care, love, hate, compassion, apathy, forgiveness, jealousy, respect, disrespect, empathy, sympathy, and the list goes on and on. For this reason, there’s a very close connection between emotional intelligence and social intelligence.

Conscience emotions. Some emotions arise from our sense of right and wrong, our sense of the ethics that we want to live by in relating to others. These conscience emotions start with empathy and sympathy, how we connect to others and feel responsibility to others and sometimes for others. Conscience emotions leads us to feel conscientious about our behavior, how we relate, our integrity in living up to our values, our congruency or incongruency. Those with little

conscience will feel very little in terms of others. A person who is sociopathic may be unable or unwilling to “take second perceptual position” and at least, try on what another person may be feeling in order to understand them.

Cathecting emotions. To cathect is to reach out with your caring energy to identify with and connect with a person, thing, place, etc. By cathecting, we “bring the world into our sense of self” and with that, our sense of self expands. Our inner world expands. The cathecting emotions include: love, desire, attachment, bonding, etc. When we de-cathect we withdraw our identity, care, sympathy, sense of connection with the person or thing. We experience this as loss, as grief, as sadness.

Self emotions. Because there are so many aspects of “self,” there are a great many self emotions: sense of self, self-confidence, self-doubt, self-efficacy, self-identity, temporal self (past self, future self), role self, gender self (masculine self, feminine self), etc.

Meta emotions. Anyone with a self-reflexive mind inevitably applies feelings to feelings and this generates the meta emotions. These are layered and complex emotions. So in fear about fear, one experiences paranoia and if you fear the paranoia, you may create a fearful mood, a fearful attitude about life. If you anger at your fear-of-your-fear, that generates another multilayered emotion. Generally bringing any “negative” emotion and applying it to a previous emotion—you are *attacking* yourself, your emotions and the energy from that construct has nowhere to go except against your mind and against your body. In Neuro-Semantics we call those highly toxic emotions— “dragon states.”

Pseudo-emotions. Just as you can bring an emotion against an emotion, you can bring emotions against thoughts, against concepts, and you can bring concepts against emotions. It is in this way that we create pseudo-emotions. They seem like emotions but they are not really. While “fearing failure” is an emotion, an emotion about a concept, “shame about failure” may be a concept about a concept. That’s because the ‘shame’ here may not be so much of an emotion as an idea— “You shouldn’t be that way, feel that way, talk that way. Shame on you!” Actually you can create all sorts of pseudo-emotions by saying, “I feel...” and then add a judgment. “I feel weird,” “I feel like I’m going to be fired.” “I feel under the weather.” “I feel judged.” These are not emotions. They are judgments masquerading as emotions.

Time emotions. There are a wide range of temporal emotions. Some are about the past and some are about the future; very few are about the present moment: nostalgia, hope, regret, worry, anxiety, anticipation, expectation.

Vestibular emotions. The sense of balance that’s generated by the inner ear generates the vestibular emotions: dizziness, disoriented, balance, joy, playful, etc.

So many kinds of emotions! What this means is that when you begin talking about *emotions*, don’t assume that everybody is using that word in the same way as you are. They probably are not! That’s why it is always good to check. “How are you using the word *emotions*?” “What

kind or level of *emotion* are you referring to?”

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Emotional Intelligence Series #9

THE ART OF MANAGING YOUR EMOTIONS —I

When it comes to *managing emotions*, Aristotle said it best when he wrote:

“Anybody can become angry—that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.”

We can take the idea expressed here by Aristotle and apply it to every emotion—to feel it and to experience the emotion is easy in comparison to being able to manage it. The wisdom here is that *there's nothing wrong with the emotion itself*, it is just an emotion. The challenge is feeling it in relation to the right person, at the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way. Ah yes, that's what we all find tough. Yet, it can be done.

You *can* effectively manage your emotions so that you *have* your emotions, rather than they *having* you, by getting back to the source of your emotions—your mind and your body. Ultimately, when you learn emotional management, you will have achieved what we call *emotional intelligence*—an intelligent use and relationship to your emotions. Given that, *how does this work?* How do you learn to effectively manage your emotions?

1) Start with acceptance.

The beginning place is acceptance of your emotions. Why? Because you cannot control anything that you don't accept. When you do not accept, and when you reject your emotions—you thereby set up a fight, a fight that can become a war. Now instead of treating your emotions as symptoms of your mind and your body, you treat them as some kind of enemy—and yet because every emotion is *your* emotion, your rejection is a rejection of yourself. That's why rejection (dislike, contempt, hatred, worry, fear, anger, etc.) *toward* your emotions puts you in an un-win-able conflict.

To reject your emotions, or any one specific emotion such as fear or anger, is to put yourself in *self-attack*. Then all of the energy that you experience in that rejection (your anger, fear, worry, anxiety, sadness, etc.) becomes *aimed at you*. And that means that all of that energy is going to *go against your mind and your body*. Think about that!

Then in that *self-attack*, your mind and your body will pay the price. That's why you'll get migraines, aches in your back, neck, stomach problems, ulcers, and all sorts of psycho-somatic illnesses. The energy of your emotions that are *attacking you* has no where else to go. From a meta-state perspective, the problem is the second emotion and response you are making to your first emotion and response. You are *rejecting* your fear; you are *hating* your anger; you are *depressing with sadness* your worry, etc. In the book, *Dragon Slaying and Taming* (1995) this is the very structure of self-attack as a pathology and why it is so disastrous to your well-being.

In Meta-States Training, we use the pattern *Meta-Stating Troubling Emotions* to counter-act this “dragon” creating process. If you use negative emotions to *reject* an emotion or experience, then by turning that around and use your *positive* emotions to *accept, welcome, and embrace* an emotion or experience—you tame any emotional dragon. Instead of hating, fear, or angering at your emotion, you *accept* it and you *permit* it.

When you refuse to accept an emotion, you not only fight it and start a war on your insides, you prevent your own awareness of your emotions. You *blind* yourself to what you are feeling. As you then *expel* the emotion from your awareness, you have less and less influence over it. That's one reason, rejecting the emotion and trying to make it go away, *does not work*. Conversely, the paradox of acceptance is that by accepting the emotion, *giving yourself permission to experience the emotion*, you thereby empower yourself to be able to manage the emotion.

The pattern of Meta-Stating Troubling Emotions centers primarily in the *permission process*. Nor does it matter *who* took permission away from you— whether it was a parent, a teacher, a theology, a philosophy. What matters is that now, as an adult, you take control and *give yourself permission to experience and embrace your emotions*. When you do that—you will have a new level of freedom and control.

With the *acceptance of permission* then you are able to do your “emotional work.” You are able to let the emotion “move” (e-motion) through your body, giving you the energy to take whatever actions you need to take. Metaphorically, you let your emotions breathe and when your emotions breathe, they become more healthy, and more responsible to your guidance. Conversely, when you reject and fight an emotion, when you try to make it go away, it gets stuck inside of you and becomes toxic—sick. And then it makes you sick. Now you know why acceptance is step #1.

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Managing Your Emotions II

EXPLORING TO UNDERSTAND YOUR EMOTIONS —II

In the art of managing your emotions for your own *emotional intelligence*, the first step is acceptance. Without acceptance, there will be and can be no control. Why? Because you cannot control what you don't accept. By not accepting, you reject it and what you reject, you put outside of your control. It's a vicious circle.

2) *Explore to Understand.*

If you want to know *why* it's important to accept your emotion, this is the reason. You need to understand what, if anything, your emotion is trying to say to you. As I noted in the earlier posts, *mind and emotion* are not two radically distinct phenomena, they are actually two parts of a singular process—your mind-body system. That's why every *thought* involves an emotion and why every *emotion* involves thoughts. This is obvious with the primary emotions: to have anger you have to have angry thoughts; for fear, there has to be fearful thoughts; where there is sadness, sad thoughts, etc. “As you think, so you feel.” While that's the basic principle, it is not the only principle. There are many more.

The *cognitive aspect of any and every emotion* informs you about its message. So far example, *anger* always tells you that something feels as if it is violating your values. *Fear* always tells you that something feels as if you are in danger or that something is threatening to you. *Sadness* always tells you that something feels as if you have loss something. *Guilt* always tells you that it feels as if you've done something wrong.

But notice that while the emotion is sending you a message, *the message is indeterminate*. It is *not* absolute. It is telling you that “something feels *as if*...” Now whether your anger, fear, sadness, guilt, etc. is true *depends* on your thinking, your relating to someone or something, and the context. If there is a true threat, danger, loss, or wrong—then your emotion is true and appropriate. And you need to listen to it. In that case your emotion's message is critical for your well-being. Listen to it and take appropriate actions.

But if it is not true, if it is wrong—and it often is (!), then listening to your emotion is not in your best interest. In fact, it may be disastrous for you to listen to it or to heed it. And that's why the first thing you have to do is *explore the emotion to understand it*. That's why you start with acceptance of the emotion. By embracing the emotion, you can register it, notice it, and then ask it, “What are you trying to tell me?” At this point, check out three key factors of the emotion.

A) Your thinking. What are you thinking that's generating the emotion? "I'm angry because John said I wasn't using my head." If it were true, what value does that violate? "My honor." So your honor is at stake when John says those words? Your honor is that fragile that those words disturb your sense of honor? "Well, he shouldn't say that!" Because ...? Because I don't want him to say those words? You mean he doesn't have the right to think that, in a given context, you didn't use your head? "Well, no ... but I don't like him saying that?" Did you use your head in that context?

Thinking generates emotions. If the thinking is inaccurate, if it is childish, if it is peevish to begin with, then the emotion will also be inaccurate or childish or distorted. So check it out. How grown-up and adult is your thinking? What distortions, biases, or fallacies may your thinking contain? Is it current thinking or is it old dated thinking from your childhood?

B) Your Body. When any of us have not been feeling well, not sleeping well, eating well, etc., our emotions can be *on the edge* and ready to over-react to the most benign trigger. You know this if you have a cold or the flu, if you are sleep deprived, if you have been drinking too much. Because an emotion is a somatic (body) response, if "the hardware" of your emotions is under stress and strain—your emotions can be overly sensitive, over-reactive, and therefore highly inaccurate. You probably need a nap or a bowl of hot soup or a walk in the sunshine!

Set your goal to have a "healthy mind in a healthy body" and then you will find that your emotions will work more optimally. Years ago I heard a famous therapist say, "At the bottom of a lot of depression is a lazy butt." For your body to be healthy you need to exercise your muscles for skeleton strength, your heart and lungs for cardio-vascular strength, and to stretch for flexibility strength. That's why with many negative emotions, the first thing to do is *breathe deeply* for a period of time. It will dissipate a lot of the emotional energy and change the bio-chemistry in your brain and body.

C) Your context. Emotions are highly sensitive to *where*. Because most emotions are social in nature and have to do with our relationships to others, to experiences, and to situations, *where you are* strongly conditions how you experience your emotions. There's several reasons for this. One goes back to meaning—*meaning is entirely context-dependent*. What anything means depends on where it is said. "How are you?" becomes a very different question when asked by a friend, a doctor, a therapist, your mother, etc. And if the *meaning* is dependent on the context, so will the resulting emotion.

Another reason goes to the fact that most people constrain their emotions much more in public than they do in private. What they would never consider thinking or feeling in public, they would easily do if at home. Sometimes the transformative results in therapy, and even coaching, are delayed for this reason—the person doesn't yet feel safe enough or comfortable enough to disclose his thoughts and feelings. Sometimes all of the negative emotions that show up as frustration, stress, embarrassment, anger, fear, insecurity, anxiety, and on and on that get activated at work ... and having a way of expressing or releasing the emotional energy gets displaced improperly at home onto one's partner or children. Of course, that then creates all sorts

of emotional problems at home! Second #2 in emotional manage: *explore to understand the emotion.*

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Managing Your Emotions III

THE WORK OF EMOTIONS WITHIN YOU

In the delightful art of managing your emotions we have covered steps one and two. First, *accept the emotion as an emotion and second, fully embrace the emotion to understand it.* Now for the third step.

3) Let Your Emotions Do Their Work in You.

As emotions *work* inside you, *moving* you with their energy (e-motion), they enable you to do whatever *emotional work* they require. This *emotional work* depends on the kind and quality of the energy that the emotion triggers.

For example, the energy of anger (if it is true) is to *feel* that something is violating your values and to take action to see if you can change things and reduce that threat. However, feeling that is not a pleasant feeling. Most of us feel it as stressful and unpleasant. But sometimes there's nothing to actually *do*, no *action* to take. That's when we have to use symbolic actions to displace all of the physical energy that we feel within our bodies. So, for example, I may *speak* my anger out, I may *write* my anger out, I may even *walk or run* my anger out, etc.

The energy of fear is different. When I feel it, I want to *move away from* the threat. Sometimes if it is too much, I *freeze* in place and feel so confused I don't know what to do. The energy of fear warns me of danger and threat, and my unthinking response is to *get away from it.* If I do my emotional work, I *feel* this tendency so that I can then ask, "Should I or should I not?" "If I do, what precautions do I need to take?" The *feeling* of fear does *not* always require that we move away from the trigger; sometimes we have to face it, move forward and act anyway.

Then there's the energy of sadness, the sense of loss and the emotion of grief. I have lost something— money, a job, an opportunity, a friend, a loved one, a child, etc. Here the emotional work is that of feeling the loss, registering it, and owning it. In that way, I say to myself (and others), "X was very important to me; I feel less now because of the loss." It's through doing the emotional work of registering the loss and owning it, that you are freed to ask, "How can I replace what I lost?" The end goal of grief—the recognition of value and the willingness to risk loss again by replacing it.

In each of these instances, the emotion urges us to *go inside* and own the emotional experience so that we develop, grow, and become more human. The *emotional work* is the work of developing our humanity. Consider that as you re-read the quotation from Aristotle.

“Anybody can become angry—that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.”

When a person does his *emotional work*, he becomes a better person for it. It's only the person who has lost, and through embracing her grief that she now knows the true joy of love and connection. She now can be a fully loving person. It's only the person who has feared and has embraced that fear, and learned to take proper precautions and moved forward to face life as a vulnerable human being who knows the wonders and joys of tackling big goals with courage. It's only the person who has faced his angers and refined his values and who now can transform that anger into fighting for justice for those who cannot fight for themselves who knows the transformative power of respectful anger.

Emotions have work to do inside of us. What we know and understand about things (cognitively), such as dangers, treats, values, losses, etc., our *emotions integrate that knowledge into our neurology and physiology*. Then, as a result, with emotions we *feel* the danger or loss or joy or love or whatever. What we 'know' activates our whole mind-body system so that we are more ready and resourceful to take effective action.

Just as knowledge changes us, so do our emotions. As the word indicates, now we are *moved* on the inside and more ready and capable of *moving* on the outside. In this way, your emotions create your *states* so you can be increasingly resourceful in speech and behavior. These states are mind-body states which allow you to put your knowledge into action. They enable you to feel competent, confident, resilient, persistent, joyful, hopeful, loving, creative, etc.

Conversely, if you don't allow your emotions to *do their work within you*, their messages go unheeded and you are the worse for it. Typically the emotion's energy gets misdirected on the inside, often misdirected against you—your mind and/or your body. So we ask, “Have you done your emotional work?”

As you explore your emotions for their message, you can now let the energy work in you to make you more human. Emotions are to be felt, owned, and learned from. Doing so makes you stronger and more resilient. The caveat is to make sure you submit the emotional energy to your best thinking. If you reverse the order, and submit your thinking to your emotions, you make yourself an emotional dependent and lose the ability regulate your emotions.

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Managing Your Emotions IV

META-STATING YOUR EMOTIONS

In the art we have identified three steps:

- 1) Accept the emotion as an emotion.
- 2) Explore to understand the emotion in your experience.
- 3) Let the emotion do its emotional work inside you.

4) *Meta-State the Emotion.*

It is only in Neuro-Semantics that we distinguish *primary* from *secondary* emotions. This is not a distinction that you will find in NLP or elsewhere. And the reason is simple: until you know about Meta-States and about self-reflexive consciousness, you will not know how to distinguish the basic primary emotions (of which there are only a few, 8 to 15) from the secondary (or meta) emotions (of which there are thousands).

For developing your ability to manage your emotions, you need to know that the *first* emotion is not near as important or critical as the second emotion. Given that all of the primary emotions are *just emotions*, and perfectly acceptable as emotions, their quality, ecology, and usefulness depends entirely on the thought or emotion that *you apply to them*. Basically, if you bring a *negative thought or emotion* to any primary emotion, you create self-attack. If you bring a *positive thought or emotion* to it, you create a new quality (and category).

- *Accept* anger, fear, sadness, love, joy, peace, playfulness, curiosity, etc.
- *Reject (hate, fear)* anger, fear, sadness, love, joy, peace, playfulness, curiosity, etc.
- *Shame* yourself for feeling sexual, playful, curious, anxious, loving, etc.
- *Respect of persons* when feeling angry, anxious, hate, etc.
- *Wonder and curiosity* to inferiority, confusion, embarrassment, etc.

Every *second* thought/emotion sets the frame for the first one, establishes the classification, and thereby establishes the quality of the emotion. If you *fear* your anger, your anger is now in the category of “fearful things.” If you meta-state your anger with calmness, you have *calm anger*. With *respect*, your anger is in the class of “respectful things.” In other words, *you qualify your*

emotion with the second emotion/thought. this reveals the importance of meta-stating.

The grand insight that arises from this is that *if the quality of your emotions and your emotional life is less than you want it to be— spend some time meta-stating your emotions with the set of resourceful emotions that you want.* For almost all of the negative emotions, if you meta-state them with calmness, thoughtfulness, acceptance, respect, curiosity, etc., *you will significantly upgrade the quality of your life.* Try it. One by one, take these highly resourceful states and apply them to your anger, fear, sadness, etc. It will transform your life!

In this meta-stating you are consciously using your self-reflexive consciousness to create a set of categories (or classes) that will now become established meta-frames in your Meta Place. Imagine that you do it with *acceptance.* Eventually, by repeating the acceptance state over and over, you will be establishing *acceptance* as your frame-of-mind. Do that with *curiosity.* Do that with respect. Do that with love, compassion, kindness, etc.

Now to do this, you do not need to learn any new process or technique. That's because you have already been doing lots of meta-stating and you've been doing it all your life. Anytime you apply a thought or emotion to a previous thought or emotion, you are *meta-stating.* If you have come to *fear* your anger, lo and behold, that's the meta-state structure you created. If you have *shamed* yourself for feeling sensual or sexual, that's the meta-state you generated.

In fact, you cannot *not* meta-state yourself. The only question is *how* are you, and have you been, meta-stating yourself? More than likely, most of your life you have not even been aware of this happening. And most of your life, you have allowed others to *meta-state* your states. You felt anger or fear or sadness or something, and someone responded to you, "You shouldn't feel that! Shame on you!" Or, "What's wrong with you? Feeling that is disrespectful!" In that way, your family, friends, teachers, etc. have been inter-personally meta-stating you for years.

But now the jig is up. Since you can't change what you're not aware of, your *awareness* now gives you choice. Now you can see and detect their inter-personal meta-stating, and with awareness, you now have choice. You can accept it or not. You can question it and decide to meta-state yourself with a better choice.

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Managing Your Emotions V

EMOTIONAL INTERRUPTIONS

5) Interrupting Emotions as Necessary.

Because emotions involve *motions, movement, energy going out*—emotions will sometimes seem to have “a life of their own.” That is, once initiated they move us as they do, and if strong enough, will move us even when we do not want to experience them. So sometimes, just sometimes, you will want to *not* let an emotion play out. You will want to *interrupt* it and *stop* it dead in its tracks.

A *state interrupt* or an *emotion interrupt* then becomes a tool or skill in your repertoire for managing your emotions. This is not to be confused with *rejecting* an emotion. In this instance, you are accepting the emotion, you are simply putting a time or place limit on it. *Just not now, later.* You may be suppressing the emotion, fully conscious of what you are feeling and simultaneously feeling that right now in this place and time, it is best to not feel it or express it. In NLP we call this a state or a pattern interrupt and it’s an extremely valuable tool when helping yourself or someone else maintain control of one’s responses.

In human experience, the psychological phenomena of an *interruption* is a common and regular everyday occurrence. From morning to night, all of us experience all sorts of interruptions. Usually they are momentary and we quickly handle the interruption and then get back to what we were doing. Sometimes the interruptions are more problematic. If sometime dramatic occurs, something really out of the ordinary, something threatening or upsetting—then the interruption may be such that we are completely set off our course. If intense enough, we may later suffer amnesia. “Where was I?” “What were we talking about?”

Talking about interruptions, some people are especially skilled in constantly interrupting themselves. Because they are highly distractable, a stray thought can pop into their mind and take them complete off course. In stress it is common to experience *thought intrusions* to such an extent that a person cannot stay on the same subject to hardly complete a sentence.

While I first learned about *therapeutic interruptions* when I was studying clinical psychotherapy, it wasn’t until I learned NLP that I really understood the concept and learned to use it effectively. That’s when I learned that to protect a client from himself, there are times when it is not only useful, but necessary, to interrupt his line of thinking and emoting. This is especially true for someone “caught up in a strong emotion.” It could be anger, fear, sadness, anxiety, shame, guilt, despair, etc.

Now typically it occurs for the person who tends to always *associate* into whatever they are talking about. When the conversation turns to a subject that triggers them, *they go into the experiences that they have had as if they are there again*. They see what they saw then, they hear what they heard then, they feel what they feel then. And because they are completely *associated* into the movie that's playing in their mind, they are not present. They are not in the here-and-now with you in your office. They are back in the war zone. They are being raped. They are being beaten by a drunken parent.

Time for an interruption! “Hey! Is that a snake climbing up on your leg??” “Opps ... I didn't mean to spill water all over you!” Anything outrageous will do. Slam a book down on the floor; stand up quickly, “I can't wait; I have got to pee!” “Is that a burger in your nose?”

In RET (Rational Emotive Therapy) which I learned in the 1970s, someone wanting to break a habit (smoking, over-eating, intrusion of suicide thoughts, etc.) would wear a rubber-band on the wrist and every time the intruding thought or feeling occurred, they were to snap the rubber-band so it would hurt. It was a self-interruption—a way of shifting state.

In the *Meta-Therapy* training that I do, we typically use more gentle interruptions. “Oh by the way, did you eat breakfast this morning? What did you have?” “Did you notice anything different about the office when you came in?” It's a small interruption. Then, “Now you were talking about being scared ... what was the last thing you said?” You then let the person talk a little bit more and as soon as they seem to *go deeply into the state*, you pull them out with another distraction, “Is purple your favorite color?” In this way, they go in and then you bring them out, and you do this going in and coming out until they can do it themselves.

The significance of this is that a person can then *have* his emotions rather than his emotions *having* him. She is in control rather than the associating process of going into an emotional experience and getting lost in it. Now the person has two ways of processing an experience. She can *step in* and experience it from the inside and she can *step out* and experience it as an observer on the outside (this is meta-program #20, associated and un-associated).

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Emotional Intelligence Series #14

WHEN EMOTIONS TAKE OVER

A week ago in Mexico city I conducted one of the basic trainings that we have in Neuro-Semantics, *Emotional Mastery*. It had been before the Pandemic that I last led that training, now some five years ago. The good news is that having delivered it and updated the manual, there are several Neuro-Semantic trainers in Latin America who will now be delivering that training. That's important. Given the way the world is these days, there's just not enough *emotional intelligence* and *emotional mastery*. We need more of that.

If a person doesn't have a robust sense of emotional mastery, it is far, far too easy for emotions to take over. And when they take over, quality thinking can suffer, good decision making can go on the fritz, one's well-being and health can take a turn for the worse, the quality of relationships can go south—all sorts of unpleasant and harmful things can happen. That's because emotions are wonderful servants and terrible masters.

As servants your emotions, and mine, provide us energy and motivation for getting things done and for being effective and productive. As servants, emotions can inspire our best work, our most creative ideas, and move us to stretch out of our comfort zones to become all we can become. Emotions help us connect to each other, support each other, and create a loving context for each other.

But when emotions take over and dominate, when they become your master rather than your servant, then things get turned up-side-down.

- How is it that sometimes emotions can *have* you, rather than you *having* them?
- Under what conditions or in what situations do our emotions become dominant so you have less emotional mastery?

I was reminded of the answer to these questions in the *Emotional Mastery* manual when we hit the section on the ten myths about emotions. Actually, because I had forgotten about that section of the manual, it was a good reminder about many of the common mis-understandings, mis-beliefs, and myths that are commonly held about emotions. To the extent that you believe any of these, your emotions are more likely to take control over you.

- 1) You *are* your emotions; what you feel defines who you are.
- 2) You can trust your emotions to tell you the truth and what is real.
- 3) Because emotions are danger, avoid them and repress them (Freud).
- 4) Emotions are primary, to be obeyed; they are commands about what to do.
- 5) If you don't express your emotions, they build up inside and you'll explode.
- 6) You can't control or manage emotions; they work spontaneously.
- 7) If you control your emotions, you'll be a hypocrite and not authentic.

- 8) By reversing the clockwise or counter-clockwise motion, you gain control.
- 9) Aim for emotional comfort, any and all stress is always bad.
- 10) If you cry or feel vulnerable, you're having an emotional breakdown.

Now for the truth about emotions to counter-act those myths:

- 1) You create all of your emotions by how you think and construct meaning; emotions therefore can be distorted in many ways. Every cognitive distortion distorts them.
- 2) Emotions give you information about the relationship of your thinking (map) and experiencing (territory). They are relative to your expectations and contexts.
- 3) Emotions are just emotions; to be welcomed, accepted, and understood.
- 4) Emotions are secondary; to be evaluated by your values.
- 5) Emotions are functions of thinking: representing, believing, understanding, deciding, etc.; they do not operate like steam in a steam engine (Freud).
- 6) As lower level brain functions, emotions can be managed using the higher executive functions of the brain—intentionality, decisions, reflection, reflexivity, etc.
- 7) To act on any and every emotion is “caveman” authenticity, not the authenticity of a person who lives by his or her integrity.
- 8) The *motion* of emotions moves *out* (hence, Latin, ex-motion), not clockwise, that's an unuseful hallucination invented by some in NLP.
- 9) Stress lies on a continuum from death to stress threshold where the fight/flight syndrome kicks-in, in-between is *eu-stress* (good stress) or excitement (Hans Selye).
- 10) Tears and vulnerability are indications of *being human*, it is not breaking down, it is owning our heritage as fallible and mortal beings.

In thinking about how *emotions can take over*, I am reminded of the very first book that I wrote. I had entered into the field of Christian Counseling and using biblical stories and reference, I wrote, *EMOTIONS: Sometimes I Have Them/ Sometimes They Have Me* (1985). (It is now on *The Shop* and is free.)

May your emotions be excellent servants to your highest dreams and inside of your best performances.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #15
April 1, 2024
Emotional Intelligence Series #15
Managing Your Emotions VI

EMOTIONS AS RESOURCES

6) Use Your Emotions as Resources.

The final step in emotional intelligence is discovering how to use your positive emotions to get into resourceful states and to use the emotional energy productively. With negative emotions, set your aim to use them to alert you to dangers, to “stop, look, and listen” to find out what’s not right. Something may not be right in your map about things (understandings, beliefs, expectations, etc.) and/or something may not be right in your skills and experience in the territory. Either way, the warning signal of negative emotions is designed to protect your well-being and prevent harm. With positive emotions, aim your aim for accessing them so you can then use them as your base-of-operation for living your life with joy, love, trust, compassion, etc.

If you think of your emotions as a *set of resources* that you can use to either *access* directly and/or to meta-state yourself in creating higher quality experiences, then you frame emotions as your repertoire for health, vitality, energy, competence, skill-development, confidence, developing as a person, becoming all you can become, etc. In NLP this takes the form of thinking about emotions as *states*—as mind-body states. And because you are always in a state, the questions are:

- What state are you in? Is it limiting or empowering?
- How are you creating that state via your thinking and emoting?
- What do you need to do to make the state optimal for you? Turn it up, turn it down?
- What qualities do you want to give that state? How will you meta-state it?
- How well can you interrupt the state and shift to another? How quickly?

This are but a few of the *state management skills* that we focus on in NLP and Neuro-Semantics and explains the attractiveness of the basic NLP model about emotions. It was for this reason that some years ago Denis Bridoux and Patrick Merlevede, along with Rudy Vandamme, took the basic NLP model and wrote *7 Steps to Emotional Intelligence* (1997). It’s a well-written book that is a good example of *applied NLP*.

Feel your emotions. It’s emotions that give us a *feel of life*. With emotions, we feel more alive, in fact, we are more alive. It’s when a person fears emotions, taboos certain emotions, doesn’t track emotions to monitor them, that a dullness results. It leaves you with less energy, less vitality. Given that an emotion is just that, an emotion—the *motion* you feel to move out from your current state to another.

Access emotions to energize whatever you are doing. What emotions do you need for learning?

What emotions for skill development? For doing your job? For being with your loved ones? For going to the gym? As a form of energy, your emotions enable you to access the right state for the right activity.

Learn to access your emotions as you communicate. Imagine attempting to communicate without engaging your emotions! You would sound like a robot or an A.I. program. The words would be said, but without any energy, without any life. What makes coaching, training, consulting, leading, managing, leading, etc. effective and powerful are the energizing emotions within those conversations and/or presentations. When you can do that, you can *induce state*—which is one of the skills that we teach in Meta-Coaching and in Trainers' Training.

When was the last time you thought about and/or talked about your emotions as *resources*? If it has been awhile, or never, then today is the day to change that. With nearly every training that we do in Neuro-Semantics, we ask about emotions in terms of resources:

- What state or states do you need to access to be able to do X?
- What states do you need to especially avoid triggering when you want to do X?
- What are the quality of your emotions states currently?
- What would you want as the quality of your emotional states?

Emotions are designed to be your friends, not your enemies. In terms of *managing your emotions*, we have now covered six steps. Do these and your *emotional intelligence* will skyrocket.

- 1) Accept the emotion as an emotion.
- 2) Explore to understand the emotion in your experience.
- 3) Let the emotion do its emotional work inside you.
- 4) Meta-State the Emotion.
- 5) Interrupting Emotions as Necessary.
- 6) Use Your Emotions as Resources.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #16
April 8, 2024
Emotional Intelligence Series #16

THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF EMOTIONS

For many people it is a disturbing fact to realize that *emotions are constructed*. You construct them! Well, after all, whatever emotion you are experiencing—it is in your body and it was constructed by your mind. All of your emotions are also functions of your learning history and environment as well as a function of today’s environment. That’s because emotions are systemic in nature— as they are product of your mind-body nervous systems.

Nor is this idea new. In spite of what Lisa Feldman Barrett (2017) has written, this idea has been around for a long time. While she acknowledges that the construction theory of emotions existed in ancient Greece, she seems to think that she, and she alone, pioneered it in the twenty-first century. Yet ninety (90) years ago, Alfred Korzybski presented “emotions” and “thoughts” as aspects of a singular system and constructed via our many nervous systems (*Science and Sanity*, 1933). He always put “emotions” in quotes because they do not refer to a self-contained entity, a point in Barrett’s book, *How Emotions are Made*, except she presents the Construction Theory of Emotions as if it were a new thing that she pretty much invented out of the blue!

I like most of what is in her book, but not her failure to acknowledge others in the field and/or to criticize others in the field in order to build herself up. NLP, built on the foundation of Korzybski as well as the Cognitive Psychology Movement of George Miller and associates has been presenting *emotions as a systemic construct* since 1975. NLP, in fact, began using a more systemic word for emotions— *states*. In NLP, a state is a state-of-mind, state-of-body, and a state-of-emotion. You can’t get more systemic than that!

Yet Barrett presents the idea “Emotions are Constructed” (chapter 2) as if it was a brand new revelation. It is not! “Simulations are your brain’s guesses of what’s happening in the world” (p. 27). Ah yes, *a mental map* as Korzybski would say.

“The discovery of simulation in the late 1990s ushered in a new era in psychology and neuroscience” she asserts completely oblivious to NLP. “Scientific evidence shows that what we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell are largely simulations of the world...”

Duh, yeah! That’s NLP 101! So is this:

“Each time your brain stimulates sensory input, it prepares automatic changes in your body that have the potential to change your feeling.” (p. 28)

Yes, a nice way to talk about the mind-body as a *system*. She then brings in “mental *concepts*”

disregarding that *a concept is a thought* because she wants to argue that we construct emotions primarily through our bodies and the “body budget” of energy rather than thoughts. “Concepts give meaning to the chemicals that create tastes and smells.” (p. 29). Wow. That almost sounds like *we as thinkers don’t do it*, but “concepts” are doing it! Again:

“In these cases of disgust, longing, and anxiety, the concept active in your brain is an *emotion concept*.” (p.35) Question: Do we have a little man, “The Concept” active in the brain that’s doing this instead of *you, the thinker*?

“An emotion is your brain’s *creation* of what your bodily sensations means, in relation to what is going on around you in the world.” (p. 35) You are not the meaning-maker?

Now there are lots of good things in the Barrett’s book: she emphasizes the role of predictive thinking in the brain, that social reality plays a major role in what and how we learn and pick up understandings about things, that culture is a “superpower” for humans in that we are born into a world of ready-made concepts and she emphasizes the role of concepts:

“Social reality is the human superpower; we’re the only animal that can communicate purely mental concepts among ourselves.” (p. 286)

“You need an emotion concept to experience or perceive the associated emotion (p. 141).

“Your brain works like a scientist. It’s always making a slew of predictions, just as a scientist makes competing hypotheses. ... to estimate how confident you can be that each prediction is true.” (pp. 64-5)

Yet all in all, she works very hard to avoid saying that “thinking causes feelings” or that “cognition create emotions.” In fact, she boldly denies such, and throughout the book she uses various vague phrases to get around *thinking*. The most common one is “the brain...”

“The human brain is wired to mistake its perceptions for reality.” “Your brain uses concepts to simulate the world.” “Your brain uses past experiences...” “Your brain’s default mode. Your brain does not just predict the future: it can imagine the future at will.” (66) “Your brain is wired to listen to your body budget. Affect is in the driver’s seat and rationality is a passenger.” (80)

Reading this may make sense until you ask, “Does *the brain* do this apart from a person *thinking, concluding, believing, deciding, anticipating, etc.*? It is as if she leaves out *the person* who has a brain which he uses in these ways. With a statement like: “You feel what your brain believes. Affect primarily comes from prediction” (p. 78), it sounds like *your brain is doing lots of stuff apart from you!* For example, she writes, “Emotions are meaning” (p. 126) thereby leaving out *the meaning-maker* (you!) as the one giving meaning to things which, in turn, constructs the emotion. The implication is that we are victims of our brains.

Throughout the book there is very, very little said about the higher executive functions of the brain, the prefrontal cortex. When she does, she contradicts the current thinking in the neurosciences. She writes, “Your so-called rational prefrontal cortex is failing to regulate it. ... The prefrontal cortex does not house cognition, and emotion and cognition are whole-brain constructions that cannot regulate each other.” (p. 212). What she leaves out suggests that she either does not like what the neurosciences has discovered about the executive functions where we set intentions, make decisions, create a sense of self, encode our sense of time, etc. or disagrees with most neuroscientists.

“Ironically, each of us has a brain that creates a mind that misunderstands itself.” (287)

For her, emotions are *made* by our “body budget” and the “emotion concepts” of our culture. She discounts *thinking* by trashing it as part of “the traditional view” which she says is invalid. She relies on “the brain predicting” all the while forgetting or ignoring that *predicting is a form of thinking*.

“Prediction is a fundamental activity of the human brain...” (59). “Through prediction, your brain constructs the world you experience.” “Prediction errors aren’t problems. They’re a normal part of the operating instructions of your brain as it takes in sensory input. Without prediction error, life would be a yawning bore. Nothing would be surprising or novel and therefore your brain would never learn anything new. Most of the time, at least when you are an adult, your predictions aren’t too far off-base.” (62)

Consequently, for her, “the problem in depression is misbudgeting and prediction” (210), it is not your depressive thoughts! Quoting the central idea in Cognitive Psychology, “Change your thoughts or regulate your emotions better, the logic goes, and depression will lift.” (209), but she denies that. For her thinking rationally is worthless because it is “the traditional approach.”

“Your brain is wired to listen to your body budget. Affect is in the driver’s seat and rationality is a passenger.” (80) “You cannot be a rational actor if your brain runs on interoceptively infused predictions.” (80) “You cannot overcome emotion through rational thinking...” (81)

This book is obviously *not* an NLP book, not at all! In fact it pretty much contradicts NLP and the Cognitive Psychology. For Lisa Barrett in this book, *How Emotions are Made* (2017) what you can mostly focus on is your “body budget” of energy. She argues that you need to eat properly, get plenty of sleep, some exercise, etc. But in terms of legal issues, school yard issues, political issues— you are pretty much a victim of your “emotion concepts” that your culture has developed and that your brain uses. Accordingly, her chapters on the law and politics presents a WOKE philosophy of victimhood (women are victims, 226; African Americans are victims, 227, even Tsarnaev, the Boston Marathon bomber is a victim 230, etc.).

My recommendation, if you want a good book on Emotional intelligence— get *7 Steps to Emotional Intelligence* (1997/2000) by Patrick Merlevede; Denis Bridoux; Rudy Vandemme, Crown House Publications. As a basic NLP Book which focuses on Emotional Intelligence, the authors apply nearly every aspect of the NLP model. As such it is a good introduction to NLP itself even though there are numerous problems in the book and no application of Meta-States.

From: L. Michael Hall
 2024 Neurons #17
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Emotional Intelligence Series #17

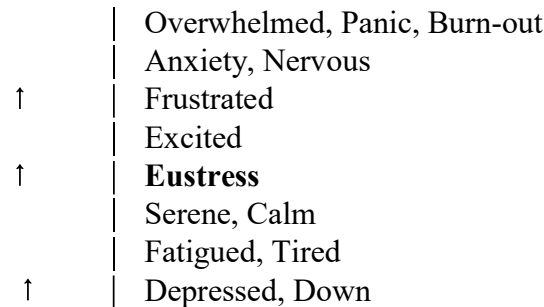
EMOTIONS AND STRESS

In one sense all emotions create or involve what we call *stress*. That’s because every *e-motion* involves moving, movement, and energy. To be without any movement, emotion, muscular tension, and/or stress is to be dead. If we then begin with the idea of a continuum, we can begin to quantify the amount of movement, energy, or “stress.”

Death Nothing	Low Energy Feeling very little	Medium Amount Of Energy/ Feeling	High Energy Excitement	Overwhelmed Stress Overload
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Let’s now ask the question, “What does it *kinesthetically feel* like at each of these stages, and what *emotions* would be typically present at each stage?” The kinesthetic feel means that at each increasing stage, there is more energy in the body, more movement, and more physical tension. Your heart beat would be very relaxed and slow at the far left ... and increasingly active to the point of reaching a really fast pace at the far right. So with the lungs, muscle tension in various parts of the body, and as a person moves to the right, there will be more nervous energy, excitement, and inability to stay still.

Emotionally, we would move from depressed, fatigued, relaxed, calm, serene, active, eustress, excited, anticipating, anxious, irritated, annoyed, overwhelmed, panic. Now imagine we turn the continuum up on its end to create a vertical line. The arrow (↑) indicates the increasing of “stress” as we move up the scale.



Eustress, in the middle, is the word that Hans Selye, the Stress Expert, invented to indicate *good or healthy stress*. The problem is not the external or internal trigger that evokes us to respond. Actually, we need and have to have a certain level of “stress” in order to live and thrive and be healthy, hence *eustress*. At this level we feel alive and energetic. Emotionally we feel enough

energy to do the things that we want to do in everyday life. Below that level we may be exhausted and needing rest, fatigued and below that we may be depressing our energy, our hopes, our dreams, etc. Stress problems generally occur above the level of eustress. When there's too much to do, when we have expended all of our energy within a time limit, when there are too many demands, or not enough resources, then we feel anxious and nervous and eventually overwhelmed.

Acute stress occurs when this happens all of a sudden. A crisis arises. An accident occurs. Out of the blue, we are called upon to take care of an emergency. There's an immediate threat or danger and generally, we experience the General Arousal Syndrome of fight/ flight in order to deal with that acute stress situation.

What's most dangerous is *chronic stress*. This is the stress that slowly builds up over time as we take on yet "one more thing." Generally, we then begin adapting and after awhile, we don't even notice. But we're getting less sleep, we're feeling drained and exhausted more often, we're cutting out long-term resources (exercise, quality time with friends, coaching, etc.). And then, eventually, *something gives*. We reach threshold and can take no more. This is the stress that causes heart attacks, strokes, headaches, backaches, ulcers, and all sorts of psycho-somatic illness wherein *the body* is paying the price for the ongoing stress.

Stress is not a thing, it is a process—namely, the process of the strain you put upon your mind, emotions, and body by how you think about the demands of your environment and your mind. That's why *what stresses* one person may be excitement to another. Stress is psychological in that it comes from your interpretations and meanings. It also is influenced by your skills in *stressing* yourself and your skills in *de-stressing* yourself.

For more: See the book, *Speak Up, Speak Clear, Speak Kind* (1987) on the Shop, it's free. It's about stress and communication.

Questions about Emotions? I have almost completed this series on emotions, emotional mastery and emotional intelligence, if you have a question, send it to me — meta@acsol.net

From: L. Michael Hall
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Emotional Intelligence Series #18

THE ART OF ANXIETY

Anxiety—an art? Well yes we could think of it in that way. How? Let's start from the basic NLP premise that *every experience is a skill*. If we start there, then yes, anxiety can be a skill—an art. After all, some people are really, really good at generating anxiety in their minds and bodies on a regular basis! I have known some people who were true *masters at anxiety*. They could produce anxiety in any given moment and just about anything that you bring up.

I'm writing about anxiety as a follow-up to the last article, *Emotions and Stress*. On the stress scale, *anxiety* is near the top. It is not yet panic or overwhelm, but in anxiety, a person is full of nerves, hence nervous and highly animated. What is anxiety? Most psychology books define it in the most unusually vague way. "Anxiety is free floating fear." Don't you love it? *Free floating fear...* aw ... be careful, you never know when some "free floating fear" may blow in and drop on you!

Now "free floating fear" does imply at least one thing—the *object of the fear is unknown*. You are afraid of something, but you are not clear about what it is, where it is, how it is, etc. So being in a state of uncertainty, there are things unknown to you, perhaps expected, and given that, then there are things to do, but that's the hitch. You don't know what to do. You have no control over what's going on. Think that way and you will activate your body. You will animate your breathing, heart rate, and nerves. You will feel nervous, upset, and you want to pace or move around.

Now starting with an *unknown fear*, the next question for you is: How do you generally relate to the emotion of fear? Are you okay with it? Are you terrified of it? Do you experience it often? What resources do you access to handle legitimate fears? How do you handle illegitimate fears? What other mental and emotional states do you bring to and apply to fear? When you answer that, you will know what meta-states you have developed about fear, and if meta-states, then frames of mind. Do you fear fear? Do you anger at fear? Are you ashamed of fear? Do you bring calmness to your fear? Thoughtfulness? Curiosity?

The way you think about 'free floating fear' (and uncertainty) determines how well or how poorly you handle anxiety. This is where the cognitive distortions can really do a trip on you.

- Consider the cognitive distortion of *predicting* the future. Of course, since you can't (no one can!), you are actually projecting worries, frets, upsets, distresses into your imagined future. People create a lot of anxiety in this way. They project that "X will happen" and many do so dogmatically as if it is a foregone conclusion.

- Consider the cognitive distortion of *exaggeration*. All you have to do is take a fear and exaggerate it. Blow it up so that you amplify the fear and create catastrophic scenes and imagine your post-apocalyptic world. Here *catastrophizing* creates lots of very toxic forms of anxiety because you will feel even more out-of-control.
- Consider the cognitive distortion of *personalizing*. Here you can think about other people's problems, which are outside of your 'locus of control,' and feel anxious about what has happened or could happen to them. Do this and you will create a large batch of powerlessness for yourself and if you keep doing it— then helplessness. What a great formula for anxiety!
- Consider the cognitive distortion of *mind-reading*. Imagine things about what others think or could think, say or could say, and then believe in your intuitive powers to know what's inside the mind and heart of others. Then you can feel anxious over these projected feelings that you impose on others.

I could go on and on. *Cognitive Distortions*, as infantile ways of thinking, are wonderful if you want to succeed in the Art of Anxiety. Anxiety sometimes arise due to your low self-efficacy. In fact, the lower your sense of knowledge and skills to competently handle some aspect of life, the more anxiety you can generate. Conversely, the more knowledgeable and skillful you are, the less anxiety. Also, the more you self-monitor yourself, your life, your relationship with thoughts of judgment, the more anxious you will be. In these cases, develop your knowledge and skills! Get to a training. Read a book. Sign up for some coaching.

Finally, Fritz Perls commented that "anxiety is the suppression of excitement." And believing this, he would ask his clients, "What excitement are you pushing down and denying?" People get excited about public speaking, they want to do it, then they push that excitement down and it becomes nervous anxiety. Some get excited about becoming a Meta-Coach, then deny their excitement so it shows up as performance anxiety when they sit with a client and are watched or benchmarked. By trying to avoid failing, they make themselves nervous which increases the anxiety. Solution: fully embrace and accept that you could fail or mess up. Hold firm the thought that "it's part of the process, that's all."

The bottom-line is that if you are anxious, you are *thinking your way to anxiety*. And if that's the case, you can *un-think that process* and turn it completely around.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #19
May 6, 2024

WHY YOU NEED TO READ ***THE DEEP DIVE***

Most coaches and therapists can do a light dive, but very few can do a deep dive. Why not? Mostly because they do not know how and because no one has ever taught them. Consequently, they have never learned how. Now when you learn classic NLP, you should be able to do a light dive into a client's inner world. After all, in basic NLP you learn about representations, strategy steps, and a little bit about beliefs. Even if you know the rigid logical levels called "Neuro Logical Levels" you only include values, identity, and purpose. It will get you a bit deeper, but not a full *deep dive*. There is no much more in the *mind* than that.

Now if an NLP trained person is highly curious and a continuous learner, he or she may have learned how to do a deep dive; but there aren't many like that. That's why the great majority of NLP trained coaches, consultants, and therapists can run patterns which work temporarily but do not last.

"Where can I learned how to do a truly deep dive into the mind, the inner world of a client?" Glad you asked. That's why I wrote the book, *The Deep Dive*, to facilitate the process of learning how to take a client inside and make the kind of updates or transformations that will unleash potentials and give a new outlook on life.

Based on transcripts of actual coaching sessions, you can follow the conversation as it goes deep into the person's mental model of the world. Step by step you will be able to identify the facilitation skills and how they are used to deepen the conversation and get to the heart of things—the person's meanings.

Back Cover of *The Deep Dive*

While it is forever true that "as you *think*, so you *are*," knowing *what* you really think is not so easy. "What's in the deepest part of your mind?" "Are your deep thoughts helpful or hurtful?" Would you like to know? If so, here's your invitation to take a *deep dive* into the depths of your mind.

A deep dive is the design of Meta-Coaching. As an intense personal conversation which gets to the heart of things—to get to your deepest meanings. Via a dialogue, we dive into your ways of thinking to arrive at your control center where you *make meanings* and where you can update your meanings. Why? To gain a new lease on life, inner power and freedom, and the ability to live more joyfully, lovingly, and productively.

In *The Deep Dive* you will discover *this conversational art* via the actual coaching demonstrations.

As an observer, you get a front-row seat on the life-changing dialogues and get to hear Dr. Hall identify his thinking, and what he's aware of, as the conversation transpires. Unlike "coaching" that's shallow and superficial, Meta-Coaching involves a *deep dive into the inner mind* where you take control of your powers of thinking and meaning-making.

Because every authentic conversation seeks to *win the inner game*, when you win the inner game, you win the outer game of your emotions, performances, and relationships. You become self-determining, self-managing, and self-actualizing. Here you will discover the art of the deep conversation that establishes your values, your thinking and perceptual patterns, your sense of self, your interpretative frames, and much more.

Now as a PDF Book

The Deep Dive is now available as a PDF file on The Shop of Neuro-Semantics. It's on page 8 <https://www.neurosemantics.com/shop/page/8/>

From: L. Michael Hall
 2024 Neurons #20
 May 6, 2024
 Emotional Intelligence Series #19

SHAME IN ALL OF ITS DIMENSIONS

Imagine a continuum. Let’s name it, “Feeling bad about something” continuum. On it we can locate a range of emotions. This *continuum of feeling bad due to having done something wrong* ranges from not feeling bad at all to feeling bad about everything constantly. At one end would be the inability to feel bad about anything you did or failed to do. Here we have the realm of the psychopath and the sociopath. It’s as if they have no conscience regarding their actions and their effect on others.

Beyond that is the troubling emotion of “feeling bad” that something didn’t go as planned, expected, or desired. Now you feel *disappointed*. Further along the continuum is *embarrassment*. After that comes *shame*. Then toward the left of the continuum, *guilt*. Beyond guilt is an over-exaggerated sense of being guilty, a guiltiness, an over-conscientiousness, usually driven by being overly-responsible and wanting to please everybody.

Blank	Neutral	Disappointed	Embarrassed	Shame	Guilt	Guiltiness
Sociopath	Normal	Didn’t go as Expected	Wrong to self	Wrong to Society	Morally Absolute	Over-conscientious Over-responsible

What is common to all of these is that *something occurred that is not desired*. You or someone else did something that should not have occurred. But what? And in what area of life? When you do something you should not have according to social mores, and someone sees you, then you feel *embarrassment*. It is *in the eyes of others* that you experience embarrassment (e.g., burp, see toilet paper attached to your pants, fail to say ‘Thank You,’ fart, etc.). You committed a social blunder of some sort. But it is a minor thing. If it is a humiliation, it is a small thing. If you were by yourself, you would *not* feel embarrassment. You might simply laugh at yourself or desperately looked around to see if anyone saw the blunder!

If the offending activity is a bigger flaw, you may feel *shame*. Even when you are alone and by yourself, you would still feel *shame*. You broke a more significant cultural rule or etiquette, and you feel *ashamed of yourself* for having done so. Here you have not done anything that is necessarily illegal or immoral. You have only broken society’s rules (e.g., you had a wardrobe malfunction, you cursed at someone then noticed that a whole group of people heard you). You have shown a personal shortcoming or you have done an impropriety. In the face of others, you feel it as a humiliating disgrace that affects your reputation. It’s your *social self* that feels shame.

Guilt occurs when you do something immoral. Guilt is the appropriate emotion for when you have broken God's rules, or rules that every society depend on as the foundation for society. "Do not steal, abuse, kill, lie, etc." In guilt, the violation is much more serious than what was violated that elicited shame or embarrassment. Now you have done something truly *wrong*, something that brings censure, reproach, punishment, etc.

All of these are the emotions of conscience. When you are conscientious about yourself, your behaviors, their effects on others, and right and wrong, then your *conscience* lets you know when you have, at some level, and in some way, done something wrong. *Embarrassment* helps you think about others and the impact of your actions on others. *Shame* informs you when your actions may violate a cultural value, a mores of your community and enables you to do what is recognized as respectful and honorable. *Guilt* informs you when your behaviors are hurting and violating someone else and destructive to human relationships.

Brene Brown, *The Power of Vulnerability*, has invented another kind of shame, one she calls "toxic shame." She defines it as "an intensely painful feeling of being unworthy of love or esteem." Now there are several problems with this. First, this is not "shame" in its normal sense at all, but a self-judgment regarding one's self-worth. It is the state wherein a person judges oneself assuming that self-esteem is *conditional*, and if you or someone else disapproves of you—you lose your value or worth. The so-called "toxic shame" actually has nothing to do with true shame (e.g., having violated a cultural value). Instead it is toxic because it violates the premise that all human beings are valuable and worthwhile, a Somebody, because we were born human.

Shame itself is actually a valuable emotion as it alerts us to when the way we talk or act is no longer respectful or honoring to the people that we live among. Good shame is when you rightly feel bad when what you say or how you treat other people fails to live up to what good decent and respectful people would do.

Albert Ellis, *A Guide to Rational Living*, describes intolerant shame as the essence of much human disturbance. It has this effect because a person "demands" that one absolutely "should not" and "must not" err at all! An impossible demand! That's unhealthy shame. Then there is healthy shame.

"When you do something that you and your culture consider 'wrong,' 'immoral,' or 'stupid,' and when others witness your 'badness,' you *wish* that you hadn't acted 'foolishly' and you almost immediately feel *healthily sorry* and regretful and try to correct your ways. Great!" (p. 231)

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #21
May 13, 2024
Emotional Intelligence Series #20

FEAR AND FEAR-OF-FEAR

Once you learn the Neuro-Semantic approach to *Emotional Mastery*, you know that all emotions are just emotions and are important. As a result, it leads us to *accept* our emotions and use them to deepen our understanding of ourselves. You also learn to distinguish *the level* of emotions, that emotions occur at multiple levels and how you approach meta-level emotions differently from primary level emotions.

Let's take fear as an example. Primary fear is a healthy and informative emotion, if there is a true danger or threat, then it facilitates your survival and safety as it warns you to slow down, look, listen, and think. This is fear¹. It is in reference to the outside world where there may be something that could be dangerous— a wild animal, traffic, a storm, icy conditions, a car-jacker, etc.

If fear¹ is at the primary level, then fear² is at the first meta-level. Fear² is not about the outside world, it is about your inside world. Using your self-reflexivity, you are now bringing your fear to your experience of fear. This is fear of fear. What are you fearing in fear²? All kinds of things! You could be fear the *experience* of fear, the *feelings* of fear, the *idea* of fear, the *memory* of fear, the *imagination* of fear, the *identity* of fear, etc. Yet whatever it is, it operates in a very different way from primary fear (fear¹).

Fear¹ tells you that there is, or could be, *danger* and infuses you with the energy to stop, look, and listen. With the energy generated by fear¹ you can exercise it by backing off, fleeing, or fighting. Fear² also produces energy and sends energy into your mind-body system, but now it is assuming *you are the danger, so you are attacking yourself in some way*. At the meta-level, the fear has no where to go except against your mind, your emotions, and your body. No wonder then that fear² is destructive in that it harms the person and sets up a vicious cycle so that the more you fear, the more you have to fear.

Fear-of-fear (fear²), as an attack on yourself (your thoughts, ideas, concepts, beliefs, memories, etc.) generates a second-level of sensations. We call these by such names as discomfort, tension, stress, unpleasantness, etc. The symptoms that results then show up in the body as you may feel dizzy, having sweating hands, feel, arm pits, etc., experience heart palpitations, choking feelings in the throat, etc. While these may be uncomfortable, they are not dangerous. Yet by fearing discomfort and falsely thinking, "I'm having a heart attack," "I will faint and die," "My lungs are going to explode," you turn even more of your psychological energy against yourself.

In this way, we humans can multiple our troubles and create all sorts of new ways to fill our minds

and bodies with fear. We could, for example, fear the discomfort of sleeplessness as we fear of not sleeping and therefore create a good dose of insomnia. We can torture ourselves, “I’ve got to go to sleep.” “I’ll not have enough energy for tomorrow.” Then we command ourselves, “Sleep. Try harder to go to sleep.” But this is a false fear and, paradoxically, the more we would accept non-sleep and not concern ourselves about it, the more likely we are to fall asleep.

Because the great majority of our fears are about potential dangers rather than actual dangers, the fear-response is inappropriate as it invites us to create a second-level problem—fear². We fail to distinguish if the object of our fear is actual or potential. Could an airplane crash? Yes, but it is not very likely. Could a car crash? Yes. And in fact you have 7 times more of a chance of dying in a car crash than a plane crash. Could you die of the lack of oxygen in a closet or a small space? Yes, but it is not very likely.

Fear, as an emotion and as a state is drive by fear-thinking. The problem with that is that if you are looking for dangers—your mind will find them! What you are actually doing is *weaponizing your fear-emotion* against yourself.

Once you begin to fear-your-fear, your fear² will then qualify any (and all) of your experiences with a tinge of fear. Do that you you will become increasingly fearful. From the emotion, *fear* will become a mood, and then an attitude. You will become more and more negative, pessimistic, and paranoid. And it will seem real to you. You will live more and more in an unfriendly universe which is out to get you.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #22
May 20, 2024
Emotional Intelligence Series #21

IS CONSCIENCE AN EMOTION?

A question arrived via email asking, “Is conscience an emotion?” After the author noted that I had not mentioned conscience in any of the articles on emotions, he then asked, “If it is not an emotion, then what is it? How do you view conscience in Neuro-Semantics?” Reading that and not having an immediate answer on the tip-of-my-tongue, I thought, “That’s a great question! I don’t know the answer, but I’ll see if I can find it.” So, here goes.

Sometimes going back to the etymology of a word or to the dictionary really helps to understand an experience or a state, but not so with *conscience*.

“Conscience: the awareness of a moral or ethical aspect of one’s conduct together with an urge to prefer right over wrong, source of moral judgment, conformity to the sense of right conduct, from Latin, *conscire*, to be conscious of, *con* plus *scire* to know.”

All we can pick up here is that *conscience* involves a knowing and a feeling, knowing right from wrong, good from bad, and feeling ‘morally right’ or ashamed and/or guilty. It shows up in the world in terms of conduct and conformity with whatever is considered right conduct. This is where the *understanding* you gain from a dictionary, or even from the word’s origin, is so vague as to be pretty much worthless. We still can’t answer the question, “Is conscience an emotion?” Nor could we answer, “Is conscience a thought?” “Is conscience a behavior?” It involves all three as factors, yet it is more than, and different from, these factors. So what is it? And how does it work?

Whatever “the conscience” is, we know it is not a ‘thing,’ it is *a process*. And what does it *process*? It processes our understanding about right and wrong, good and bad up against our actions. As we mentally grasp what is good or right in a given context which involves how we treat ourselves or how we treat someone else—our ‘knowing’ (*scire*) about or with (*con*) ourselves results in us knowing/ sensing that we are doing right or wrong. Wow! That’s a mouthful. Let’s pull it apart:

- *As we mentally grasp what is good or right in a given context*— our mental mapping about something being good for us, good for someone else. Hence, recognizing what is important or valuable, and conversely, what would *not* be valuable. It would be a dis-value.
- *Which involves how we treat ourselves or how we treat someone else*— the values we are processing the relational values. They concern how we treat a person or mistreat a person.
- *Our ‘knowing’ (scire) about or with (con) ourselves results in us knowing/ sensing that we are doing right or wrong* — an inward ‘knowing’ or ‘judging’ of ourselves, hence our self-reflexive awareness. Have we done right or not? If so, we feel upright. If not so, we feel guilty.

What do we learn from this? *Conscience* is about values. When you have deemed something as important, then you *value* it. Therefore your *value-hierarchy* is a set of criteria that defines—for you—your self-obligations or your moral obligations. That criteria defines what you “must” do to have a sense of being “right” with yourself morally and/or ethically. If you value *respect* and *respecting people*, then when you violate that, your *conscience* registers that you have violated your own values. You feel bad. You may feel ashamed or guilty. Conscience is not the emotion—it is your self-reflective awareness about how you are living. Are you living, or not living, your values?

This now enables us to understand the difference between an infantile conscience, a juvenile conscience, and adult conscience. Conscience depends on your understandings of right and wrong, good and bad. Now because infants and children think only about themselves, their *conscience* is extremely selfish and doesn’t serve them very well socially. A childish conscience is also almost entirely *fear-based* and *punishment-based*. Conscience here is always warning, “Don’t do that!” “Stop doing that!” “Don’t you dare think about...” “You will suffer if you do X.” Sadly, many adults still operate with a childish conscience.

By way of contrast, an adult conscience is *love-based* and *goal-based*. Adult conscience does very little warning, and mostly *awakening to possibilities*. “You could make a difference here!” “Think about giving of yourself there!” Here also we have “musts,” but they are a different kind of *musts*. These are the *musts of being*—“A musician *must* make music; a poet *must* write; what a person can be, he *must* be.” (Maslow).

What is conscience? It begins with your *intentionality* selecting your values, what you deem as important, and your hierarchy of values. Then your intention-drive values serve as your direction in life and your futurity—how you live into your future. Together these make up your highest meanings—what is *meaningful* semantically in your life, your ideas, your moral values. They comprise your moral obligations. Now when you fail them, when you fall short of them, you are essentially “selling yourself short” of your potentials. Now you feel genuine guilt. When you fulfill them and live them, you experience a powerful sense of inner integrity and the richness of the *meaningfulness* of life. And with that you feel integrity, congruence, and one-of-a-whole.

A healthy conscience both warns and inspires. It keeps you away from whatever is self-destructive and it engenders hope for *being* and living your best self. In living a self-actualizing life, conscience moves you to actualize more and more of your potentials.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #23
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Emotional Intelligence Series #22

EMOTIONS AS SKILLS

While we have looked at emotions in many different ways in the past articles, there is yet another perspective by which to view emotions—you can think of *emotions as skills*. Because as you think, so you feel, and because you can set an anchor on an emotional state thereby putting it under your control for ready access—emotions offer you a wide repertoire of ways to respond. And if a wide range of responses, then a set of resources as *things you can do*.

If we think of each *emotion as a skill*—then you have the skill to love and to hate, to get angry and to get calm, to appreciate, to stand in awe, to accept, to play, to enjoy, to be curious, and on and on. The emotion itself is *not* the external action, it is your internal, somatic response, but it can certainly infuse an action and give any action a certain feel. You can, and you do, texture your behaviors and activities with certain emotional qualities.

Because you can anchor an emotion and attach it to new triggers, you can access an emotion and then re-access it as you wish. This gives you the ability to create an emotional environment for yourself in a multitude of contexts and experiences. For example, what emotional environment would you like to set up for yourself when studying? When you engage others in conversation? When you work out at the gym? Does your *current emotional environment* bring out your best when you are negotiating, selling, doing your taxes, handling the kids, etc.?

Beyond first level emotional anchors, you can also set up *meta-level emotional anchors*. This is what you do when you meta-state an emotional state. If you ask, “What would I like to feel when I feel X?” you can begin the process. Let’s say you want to feel *respectful* when you feel angry. If you access *respect* and apply it to your state of anger, thereby creating respectful anger. Repeat that several times, future pace it, and set up something to remind you of it— and lo and behold, you create a strategy for *respectful anger* as a meta-emotion.

The next step might be to turn the anchor it into a ritual. Doing that usually consolidates the process even further, giving you even more access to the new emotional strategy. It is in this way that you can *choose* your emotions and your emotional response. In doing this you are making a decision or several decisions about an emotion—which emotion to feel in a given situation, how to feel it, how to express it, etc. In this sense, rituals are originally designed to induce emotional states. If a ritual no longer does that, then it’s probably time to refresh the ritual and/or invent a new one.

As you think of emotions as *skills*, how skilled are you at loving? Being compassionate, enjoying everyday life, learning from every experience, counting and validating even small improvements,

hold firm to your values, being curious, being playful, etc.? And if emotions are skills, how often do you practice one or more of your emotional skills? You could, for example, practice empathy. You could practice wonder. Emotions as skills allows you to think about them in terms of degrees.

Emotions—love them or hate them. Of course, that's thinking about them in an either/or, polarized way, one that implies that you don't know much about emotional mastery. Yet there is a much better choice now that you know a lot about emotional mastery, learn to develop them and apply them so that they make you more alive, more effective, and more able to do the things you want to do. You can manage your emotions! That's what we train in the Neuro-Semantic training, *Emotional Mastery*. And if it is a possibility, then it is a choice that you could step up to.

Emotions no longer have to be mysterious or unfathomable. "As you think, so you feel." Any complexity in emotions implies complexity in your thinking.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #24
June 3, 2024
Emotional Intelligence Series #23

MEANINGFUL MOURNING

Positive Sadness

When it comes to human life, *loss is inevitable*. In this, loss is part and parcel of reality, and loss is totally democratic—it happens to everyone. So it is something we all have to deal with at various times in our lives. Yet not everyone manages loss effectively or meaningfully. In fact, without the ability to handle loss with graceful understanding and acceptance, a person may experience the very opposite—neurotic loss and grief.

Now as with everything else in life, it is not *what* happens to you that matters most, it is *how you interpret it*—the meanings you give to it. This distinction separates meaningful grief (good grief) and neurotic grief. For grief to become destructive, sick, and neurotic, interpret the loss using the Cognitive Distortions (over-generalize, either/or thinking, personalize, emotionalize, catastrophizing, tunnel-vision, etc.). “I’ll never get over this loss.” “This is the end of my life.” “I see no reason to keep living.”

If you over-identify with the loss, then your grief becomes existential and part of what you are trying to grieve (but cannot) is yourself. By exaggerating the grief, making demands on reality (should-ing), using impossibility thinking (“I’ll never get over this.”), etc., you have all of the cognitive-emotional tools you need to turn a loss into a never-ending tragedy—a demon which will haunt your soul.

How then should we think about a loss? First, forget about Elisabeth Kubler-Ross’ “stages of grief.” Those stages describes how someone *who does not know how to properly think about loss and experience grief*. Those stages: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance describe the long and slow and painful process of coming to terms with life on planet Earth as it is—*acceptance*. Why not start there? If you start with *acceptance*, then you can skip over all of the unnecessary mental-emotional pain involved in the previous stages.

Acceptance: Start with the fact that loss is an inevitable fact in human experience. You may not like this, but that’s the way it is. If you live long enough, you will lose friends, loved ones, parents, colleagues, etc. and if you are living, you will lose opportunities, and you may experience divorce, breakups, loss of your best friend, failure of a career aspiration, defeat of a dream, etc.

Acceptance is simple acknowledgment. You acknowledge what happens. Doing this enables you to adjust your expectations, making them more realistic. The truth is you have no guarantee of tomorrow. Nor does anyone. Accidents, storms, earthquakes, crashes, etc. can happen nearly at any

time and without warning. Those who know that tend to focus on *living life fully today as possible* without demand that life be just or fair or anything else.

Gratitude: Healthy acceptance of reality, of mortality, and of fallibility can then lead you to *live more gratefully* for the life you have today. It is this sense of appreciation that enables you to mourn meaningfully. In your mourning, you acknowledge the value and importance of the person or experience. You own it. “Yes, I loved her very much.” “Yes, that job meant a lot to me.”

Meaning: Appreciation opens up your awareness of a person’s or an experience’s meaning and significance. And with that, you can now truly honor and celebrate that person. This is what happens in meaningful mourning—you search for the meaningfulness in order to acknowledge it. You focus on the person’s best moments and contributions to your life, not her absence. You simultaneously honor two emotions in yourself—the pain of the loss and the joy of the person. And what you remember—what you take away with you is the person’s love and care, humor and playfulness, intelligence and creativity, etc.

Expression: Emotions need to be expressed. The paradox is that by expressing what you feel, you thereby release the emotion. By holding in the expression, you prevent coming to terms with the loss and set up a process that can turn the emotions really toxic. Let your emotions be felt, listen to their messages, acknowledge them, “I am feeling alone, miserable, lost, unsure.” Expressing the emotion can be therapeutic. After all, you can’t heal what you won’t confront. But take care about cognitive distortions that can get embedded in the expression. You still have to tell yourself the truth, and not lies. “I’ll never get over this” is both an exaggeration and a lie; “Life has betrayed me and is cruel” is personalizing and awfulizing. Health expressing tells the truth.

Replace: *Grieving is a gift, a healing gift, if you handle it properly.* Mourning the loss of a person, experience, or thing that you had in your life is designed so that you learn, grow, and move on. It is *not* designed to wallow in misery, loneliness, regrets, guilt, etc. If you lost a friend, find a new friend. If you lost a job, find a new job. *Mourning becomes meaningful* when you use it to learn about yourself, your values, purpose, and about the preciousness of life, the shortness of life, and the vitality of living *fully in this moment*.

From: L. Michael Hall
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June 10, 2024
Emotional Intelligence Series #24

THINKING YOUR EMOTIONS

Somewhere in your physical brain and somehow, your brain thinks—via neurons and synapsis, and dendrites, and bio-electric charges that jump the synapses, *thoughts occur*. It is all a wonderful mystery which we are a very long way from solving. Yet when thinking is activated, a psychosomatic expression arises—a *feeling* which can later become an emotion. The sensation which is generated from the activation of millions and millions of neurons sends messages throughout the whole body. But the feeling, and later the emotion, are not tools of cognition, they are tools of integration.

The old proverb says, “As you think, so you feel.” What an *emotion reflects is an evaluation*—it reflects how you evaluate your mental map about something up against your experience in the world. What you think or consider important (your value), you *register* that value in your body and we call the result an *emotion*. The emotion only tells you that relative to your evaluation, the experience is either for you or against you, pleasurable or painful, good or bad, exciting or fearful, etc.

The feeling or emotion integrates into your body the evaluations that you have cognitively chosen, they do not determine the cognitive value. They only say in essence, ‘Your map is validated by this experience or dis-validated.’ It only says, ‘Something is right according to the criteria you have set or something is wrong.’ It cannot and does not determine the cognitive content of right or wrong. That job falls to the purview of your thinking.

Now as a *somatic* and *physiological* component of your neurology, a feeling or an emotion contains an “action tendency,” that is, an impulse to take action and change things. It is *not* the action and what happens behaviorally is different from the emotion, but it does contain an action tendency. What a person does with that *tendency or impulse* falls to their *response-ability*—their choices and decisions. Well, that is, if they are conscious. If they default on being conscious, then it falls to their programs—their habits or to some momentary reaction.

Love gives us the action tendency of making contact. *Fear* contributes to the impulse to avoid. *Sadness*—the tendency to register loss and to grieve. *Anger*—an impulse to aggress and/or fight. *Excitement*—to approach. *Joy*—to smile and celebrate, etc. Whatever the emotion is, the emotion creates internal *motion*, motion to move *out* from whatever state we’re in to another state. Hence, the word e-motion was once spelled *ex-motion*, motion moving out. It is this *moving out motion* as energy that we feel when we feel an emotion. The questions now become, “What are you going to do with this energy?” “What would be the best way to own it and express it in terms of your life, your values, your relationships, etc.?” “How can you monitor this energy and channel it for your health, well-being, and effectiveness?”

Emotions, in and of themselves, are neutral. Whether they are appropriate or inappropriate goes to the *thinking* that created them. Was the thinking appropriate or inappropriate? The use or expression of the emotion goes to the choices that you make about what to do with that energy. Now given that emotions are neutral, the beginning place for how to manage them effectively is first to acknowledge them and accept them, then you can monitor how you create them and what you do with them.

If you do not acknowledge them, accept them, honor them as emotions—you *repress* them. Yet in repressing them, you are not so much as pushing down the energy, as you are *rejecting them as aspects of your thinking*. In doing both of these things, pushing down the energy so you do not act on the emotion, you block the emotion and perhaps cause certain muscles to hold the tension of that emotion. The emotion goes away, but the *muscular tension* remains—showing up as tension in the neck, back, jaws, stomach, etc.

The other thing you do is *refuse to accept the emotion*. You *taboo* it. You reject it, you block it from entering your memory, your awareness, knowledge, etc. You *condemn* it, you *censor* it, you declare it bad, evil, unuseful, unnecessary, etc. You don't want to know it and you especially do not want to feel it. It feels unpleasant or even painful, so you set up barriers to it. Now *the thinking* that generates the feeling/emotion is forbidden—this is what is repressed.

The emotion is the symptom of the thinking. “I don't want to know that I'm responsible, that I did something stupid, that I hurt someone's feelings, that I did something unethical.” In repression you banish your thinking and your awareness. You forbid it. Healthy thinking and emoting entails embracing emotions as emotions calmly and choosing how to respond to it. But with a frame of tabooing the emotion—you set yourself against it.

Once repressed, those thoughts and emotions are no longer available to you. Consequently they work unconsciously and usually in irrational ways. How can you know if you've repressed certain thoughts? You will find yourself handling incomprehensible emotions, you'll experience a conflict between your thoughts and emotions, there may be significant self-doubt, distrust of self.

Your thoughts are “message” to your body. What messages have you been sending to your body? Nathaniel Branden has said, “That which is denied by the mind is thereby trapped within the body.”

From: L. Michael Hall
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June 17, 2024
A Summer Reading List #1

WHY YOU NEED TO READ *INSIDE—OUT*

Two worlds—one world inside, the other world outside. The inside world is *the world of being*—person, spirit, self, the other *the world of things*—doing, using, possessing, having. Inside is the world of mind, imagination, and communication. Outside is the world of objectives, activity, and people. Because everything human functions in an *inside–out* way and because everything socio-cultural is *outside–in*, we all experience a built-in tension between these two worlds. If your socio-cultural is too dominant, then your inside life suffers. It is actually diminished. You then become to some extent—domesticated. That’s not good! If the inside–out is too dominant, then your social and relational life could become diminished to your detriment.

Now here’s the thing—it is the inside–out orientation that is the secret for becoming *fully alive/ fully human*. It is the secret for stepping up as the CEO of your own life. It is the secret of taking charge of yourself—your thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting. Yet learning the inside–out life is a challenge in today’s outside–in culture.

All of the very best of living humanly is uniquely *inside–out*. Thinking is inside–out, learning is inside–out. So also are all of the highly desired experiences of—love, joy, serenity, understanding, productivity, communication, persuasion, well-being, humor, resilience, etc. While all of these, and many more, operate from the inside to the outside, society is structured *outside–in*. We are also trained from childhood for the opposite, for *outside–in* living, yet outside–in reduces things to living like animals in a deterministic stimulus–response world. And that undermines the human way of life.

The solution is to get to your center, to what Maslow called *the being life*, and to live *inside–out*. It is the foundation for personal empowerment, proactivity, and productivity. It is the secret to the joy of flow and the meaningfulness of everyday life. With the *inside–out* orientation, you have an



inner aliveness and vitality that enables you to take charge of your life, an inner gyroscope for stability and mindfulness. This orientation is a rich life since you live out of your own inner abundance.

How do you learn to live *inside—out* in a healthy and productive way? How does a person make the shift from *outside—in* to *inside—out*? In the book, *Inside—Out: Empowered from Within* you can learn, step by step, how to make the transition.

The Preface

Your life is inside—out. It may not seem that way. You may think and feel that your life is the result of a thousand outside influences and factors and that you don't have much control over it. But that's a lie. It is not only a lie, it is a dark deception that presents a destructive hallucination that will do you great harm if you don't turn it around.

Life as *outside—in* makes a lot of sense given that you were born without a developed *inside*. While you were not a blank slate, you did have all sorts of predispositions, talents, and possibilities clamoring within—you were also without any information about how to live. You were deprived of any skills to do anything. Then the adventure of life began—you started to think, to experience, and to learn. Today your life is a result of what you thought, experienced, and learned.

Do you live *inside—out*? Have you reversed the original *outside—in* orientation and pattern of childhood? Have you become *the author* of your life so that you “write the script?” Or, do you live as the victim of your circumstances? These are the questions I address in this book.

What you will discover in *Inside—Out* will richly empower you to live your life on your terms. *Inside—Out* will hold up a mirror to give you a view of *how* you are currently living your life. You could be living it *inside—out* from your own meanings, values, visions, and passions. Or you could be living *outside—in*. If *outside—in* then you are living a life that has been given you—by family, school, religion, culture, etc. If so, to that extent, it is not truly yours, not genuinely authentic.

Because culture is an *outside—in* phenomenon, we all begin life in the *outside—in* mode (chapter 6). To become *fully alive / fully human* this has to change. To live your highest meanings with integrity and passion, you have to shift to the *inside—out* mode. When you do, you move from merely “having” to *being*, and you then live with an energizing vitality and zest toward *becoming*—becoming your best self. As your motivation shifts from extrinsic to intrinsic, you experience a never-ending rejuvenating motivation.

I've written *Inside—out* to serve as a blueprint for building a self-actualizing life-style, one in which you become more authentic, more integrated, and more whole. The design is that as you read through the chapters, you will become much more aware of the *Inside—Out Principle*. When you can do that, you will be able to catch yourself—when you're living *inside—out* and when you are living *outside—in*. To catch those moments then propels you to *a critical choice point*:

What shall I do? What is best for me, and for those I care about, in this moment?

Living inside–out empowers you to be the author of your life, the architect of your future, and the spiritual core of your self. It vanishes all of the victimhood games and emotions and enables you to step up to *being* and *becoming* the best version of you.

With the *inside*–out orientation, you have an inner aliveness and vitality that enables you to take charge of your life, an inner gyroscope for stability and mindfulness. This orientation is a rich life since you live out of your own inner abundance. Without this orientation, you live in a world of human domestication—being domesticated by the outside world of culture and events.

When you live *inside*–out, you are more alive and more awake to yourself, to others, to the world, and to the possibilities before you. You can no longer be a victim of others or a zombie of despair. And when you set up the continuous loop of *inside*–out–*inside*, all of life becomes a marvelous adventure of discovery.

Inside–Out: Empowered from Within is on the Shop as a PDF file.
<https://www.neurosemantics.com/shop/page/4/>

From: L. Michael Hall
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June 24, 2024
A Summer Reading List #2

WHY YOU NEED TO READ *HYPNOTIC CONVERSATIONS*

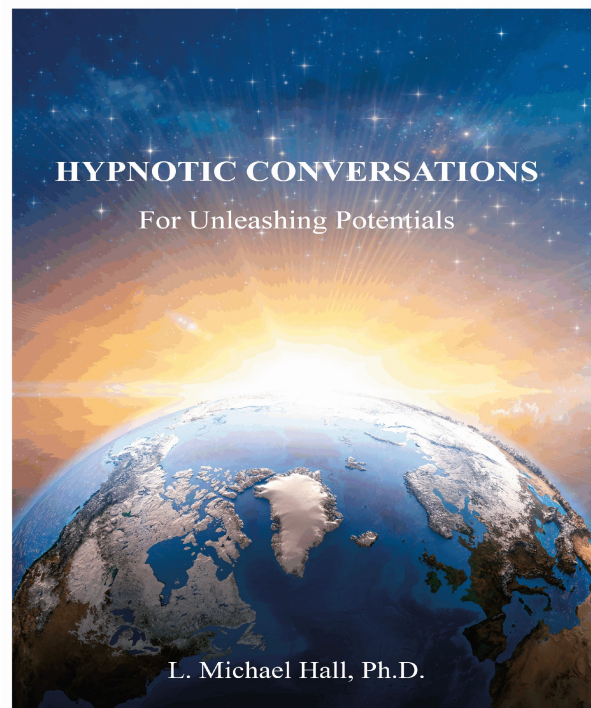
After writing *Hypnotic Thinking* (2020) I decided to apply the hypnotic language patterns to the patterns in the APG Training. Now it is true that I did put the “genius” pattern in the book (chapter 16, The Genius Trance), but that was it. So in *Hypnotic Conversations* (2020) all of the patterns in Accessing Personal Genius (APG) are included. This means that if you have attended APG, *Hypnotic Conversations* you will find those patterns in a different format, namely as a hypnotic conversation.

From the Back Cover

Given the nature of mind and language, you already talk and relate hypnotically. You may be aware of this or you may not be aware. Even if you are aware, you may not know *how* or *when* you so think and speak. Yet as you send messages and ideas to yourself and others—most of it is hypnotic in nature. This is not mysterious as it occurs whenever you *go inside* and entertain ideas in your mind by which you reason, think, interpret, explain, believe, decide, etc. Hypnotic thinking and speaking is built into the very nature of communicating and relating. Yet most do not know how to do so effectively, skillfully, and elegantly. But now you can!

While most people think and speak hypnotically, *they are not aware* of the trances they induce themselves (and others) into which is often to their own detriment. Every day people create personal limitations, induce psycho-somatic states of illness and disease, fill their internal world with misery and pain—and all because they do not know how to use this innate power effectively for health, love, success, and well-being. Yet now you can discover that!

Hypnotic Conversations offers you a way to think about conversational hypnosis as you identify your own trance states, de-hypnotize yourself from trances that undermine your well-being, and create great trance states that will empower you to be much more effective personally and in your career.



The transformative conversations here will enable you to create a solid inner sense of self and enrich you in all of your relationships. You will learn how to communicate in multi-levels simultaneously and how to use both your conscious and unconscious minds in tandem.

The Content of Hypnotic Conversations

The first two chapters establish the context: Ch. 1: From Thinking to Conversing. Ch. 2: The Process Conversation. That then leads to six chapters which make up the Foundational Conversations:

- Ch 3. Self-Talk for Well-Being
- Ch 4. The Power Conversation: *Owning Your Power*
- Ch 5. Intentional Conversations: Getting Your Big Why
- Ch 6. Possibility Conversations: *Escaping Limiting Beliefs*
- Ch 7. The Emotional Freedom Conversation.: *Permission for Emotional Intelligence*
- Ch 8. The Pleasure Conversation: *Using Joy as a Way of Life*

The next section contains three chapters of Integration Conversations.

- Ch 9. The No-Excuse Conversation: *Distinguishing Explanations from Excuses*
- Ch 10. The Integration Conversation: *Commissioning the Body to Feel Ideas*
- Ch 11. The Alignment Conversation: *Tapping into the Power of Congruency*

Then, six chapters on Personal Development

- Ch 12. The Listening Conversation: Active Listening as a Trance
- Ch 13. The Learning Conversation: *The Receptive Curious Trance*
- Ch 14. The Memory Conversation: *The Comprehension Trance*
- Ch 15. The Authenticity Conversation: *The Getting Real Trance*
- Ch 16. The Relational Conversation: *The Connecting, Bonding Trance*
- Ch 17. The Leadership Conversation: *The Inspiration Trance*

The last section of four chapters present the theme: *Making Dreams Real*

- Ch 18. The Resilience Conversation: *Getting the Bounce Back Within Your Spirit*
- Ch 19. The Persevering Conversation: *Persistence as a Secret of Success*
- Ch 20. The Disciplined Conversation: *The Mastery Over Self Trance*
- Ch 21. The Secret Conversation

If you are a Meta-Coach, you inevitably use many of the APG patterns in your coaching. This book will give you many, many more insights about those key patterns *and an induction that you can use in your coaching*. If you are a Neuro-Semantics Trainer, you already are training the APG patterns and you may be using individual APG patterns as you do other trainings and/or seminars. And now you have *inductions* that you can use to end a section or a day in your training.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #28
July 1, 2024

GO META OR GO BINDEN

As you probably know, we completed our Trainers' Training a few weeks ago. This is a training for *presentation skills* whenever a person speaks in public. The presentation skills that we offer and train and then benchmark are the essential and key skills for effective communicating to groups. So when I watched the first Presidential debate this past Thursday night between Trump and Biden, I was absolutely stunned. That is *not* the way to do any kind of public presentation! No one in their right mind would want to present like that in a seminar, at a board meeting, in a training, in a TV commercial, on the internet, or in a debate, especially in a debate as a discussion about public policy.

Nor was I the only one shocked. Most members of the Democratic party and the Democratic press (the mainstream media) were equally shocked. A great many immediately called for the party to come up with someone else to be their party's candidate—anyone else! It was a disaster. Why? If you were not one of the 51 million viewer, then you did not see Biden stuttering, mumbling, getting lost in his thoughts, speaking gibberish at times, and starrng off into space with his mouth open. When Trump was speaking, Binden often looked shocked, as if he had never in his life had ever heard what was being said, and given his handlers, he might not have.

From the perspective of *top presentation skills* that every public speaker needs, it was a catastrophe. I heard many commentators on the left say that they were ashamed, that the presentation was shameful, and that “something had to be done.” That's how bad it was. Biden also got lots of facts wrong. He said that no service person (man or woman) had died during his watch. Well, 13 were killed in Afghanistan when he impulsively pulled out of that country, then another 3 or 4 were killed in attacks by Iran. That's an extremely glaring mistake. It was not the kind of mistake one which people of good will could legitimately hold different opinions about.

But why the title, “Go Meta?” The reason is because the debate was held in a room with the two moderators and *no audience*. And? The “and” relates to what a speaker has to do when you are primarily speaking to a camera—you *have to imagine the people that you are speaking to*. You have to see them in your mind because you cannot actually see them. Sounds simple? It is to people who have a strong cognitive awareness. But for anyone cognitively challenged—that can be a big deficiency in effectively communicating.

The challenge involves using *the highest cognitive functions*—planning, deciding, reflecting, etc. These functions of the prefrontal cortex enables you to be aware of your awareness. And from that higher self-awareness, you can monitor, manage, and choose your thinking, your remembering, and how you use your self-reflectiveness. If you can't, then you'll be operating strictly at the primary level—thinking and feeling, but not being in control of those cognitive powers.

Now on Friday, the day after the debate, it was noted that as Biden was at a campaign rally, he seemed to be fully energized. He looked alive and he sounded ten times better than he did the night before. Why is that? What's going on with that? He was could see the audience and he could feed off the energy of the audience. What was wrong with him twelve hours before that? *He was cognitively challenged and could not see the audience, could not remember his 9 days of preparation, and could not maintain 'presence of mind' under pressure.*

As a psychologist who has spent the past 35 years studying Bateson's *meta-function*, I 'read' Biden's presentation on Thursday night as indicating that he was *cognitively impaired*. This has been a concern for people on both sides of the political aisle about him for several years. A few months ago the Justice Department let him off the hook from being indicted for mis-handling top-secret files. The reason? He is "an elderly man with a poor memory." So Thursday night, without notes and without a tele-prompter, and in spite of 9 days of preparation for the debate, Biden was left to his own *cognitive structures* to remember what to say. Yet in the end, *he could not do it.*

Your cognitive ability to "be presence," to remember, to keep 'presence of mind under pressure,' are but a few things essential for effective public speaking. In Neuro-Semantic Trainers' Training (NSTT) we introduce speakers to such presentation skills as framing (and reframing), gaining rapport, engaging the minds and hearts of listeners, inducing state, answering questions, remembering (using mnemonic devices), and much, much more. All of these requires the executive functions of your prefrontal cortex. And under pressure, these higher level skills are the first to go. And my guess is that Biden was under a lot of pressure— from his 16 advisors that coached him for 9 days, from his need to disprove questions about his age, from his need to win the debate, etc.

The bottom lines is that every form of public speaking which seeks to influence the minds and hearts of people requires *a high level of cognitive functioning*. And that becomes especially true when answering questions. My recommendation to both men in that debate (and if there is another debate in September) clarify the question before you answer it. Trump missed a great cue when asked about accepting the results of the election. The way the question was phrased, if he had been listening, he would have immediately said, "Yes, absolutely." When he later said "absolutely," he qualified it with the very same things the moderate had said.

[BASH: Will you pledge tonight that once all legal challenges have been exhausted that you will accept the results of this election regardless of who wins and you will say right now that political violence in any form is unacceptable?]

Of course, both listening and speaking is a real challenge when you are *under pressure*. And I'm sure there's no pressure like having 51 million people watching you (!). And that, by the way is why we present the pattern, *Presence of Mind Under Pressure* along with other patterns, at NSTT. If that fits for your future, our next NSTT will be May of 2025.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #29
July 8, 2024
A Summer Reading List #3

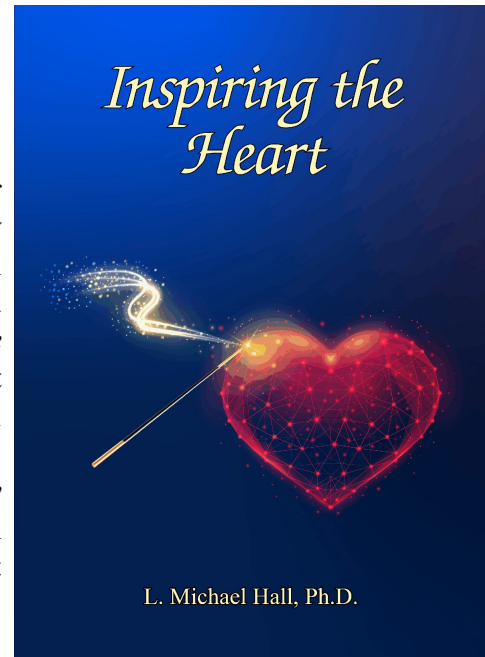
WHY YOU NEED TO READ *INSPIRING THE HEART*

While you might think that the title itself, *Inspiring the Heart*, is enough of a reason *why* (and it is), there are many other reasons for why I think you need to read this book. The key principle within this book is that inspiring the heart is an inside-out process. Yes, we do find external things and experiences inspiring, but that's only because *deep inside you—you decide to inspire your heart with them*. You do that as a meaning-making who creates your sense of reality from the *interpretations* that you make. This means that, ultimately, what mostly inspires your heart are the *quality meanings which you generate*. Now, give that, the question is: Do you know how to do that? If so, how good are you at doing that?

Yes, what is outside influences. But the deeper truth is that outside influences get inside because *you take those influences in and use them*. Nothing is innately inspiring, inspiration is an inside-out strategy. It's something you have to learn how to do.

While you are the *meaning-maker* in your life, that's not enough. For the richest quality of life possible, you have to create *high quality meanings* which touch your heart and spirit. If *what you are* inside ultimately governs your life, then knowing how to inspire your heart's highest meanings will determine your vitality, well-being, aliveness, humanity, vision, integrity, joy, productivity and much, much more.

Maslow pointed out that what truly inspires are the *being-values* of our *higher nature*. It's from your higher nature of *being* that you are fully alive and fully human. You are alive to meaning, knowledge, beauty, order, contribution, excellence, justice, etc. Here you come alive to the mystery of life itself, to the beauty of life, and to the possibilities within you. You become *alive* to the hidden potentials within every person you meet. When you are alive in these ways, your heart will be *inspired*.



I have written *Inspiring the Heart* to tell the story of how this inner aliveness works, how you can experience this inspiration for yourself, and how you can become a bearer of the light—someone who inspires the hearts of others.

In terms of inspiration and motivation, your energy, vitality, and passion all come from your heart or spirit. What is inside that needs inspiration? Answer—your *need to be* who and what you are, and can be. These *being*-needs and values are valuable in and of themselves. Well, they are *if* you see them as such. That’s where *your* meaning-making skills come in.

What this means is that *you become more alive* when you appreciate the B-values and endow them with quality meanings. That will generate lots of inner vitality, robust intentions, and a sense of purpose in life. Today there is tremendous need for good news, for hope, for optimism—for inspiration. The strange thing is, however, we have a raging bad news and fear industry—the news media. Research shows that the more hours a person watches TV, the more paranoid the person and the more he will think the world is more dangerous than it is.

Transcending What’s Typically Unhelpful

If you ask, “What is the biggest problem with self-help books?” My answer is actually pretty simple. The problem is that people confuse learning and knowing with doing. They read but then move on with their lives without taking different actions. That’s due to a particular delusion—they think that “know” is doing. *Assuming that knowing automatically means you are doing and doing well* is a wrong-headed assumption.

Each chapter ends with a *Heart Pondering* section. It’s offered to invite you to *do something* immediate about what you learn. The purpose? So you become an inspirational person to yourself and then an inspirational leader to others.

To find the PDF file of the book, it is on The Shop:
<https://www.neurosemantics.com/shop/page/4/>

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #30
July 15, 2024
A Summer Reading List #4

WHY YOU NEED TO READ *THE DEEP DIVE*

While it is forever true that “as you *think*, so you *are*,” knowing *what* you really think is not so easy. “What’s in the deepest part of your mind?” “Are your deep thoughts helpful or hurtful?” Would you like to know? If so, here’s your invitation to take a *deep dive* into the depths of your mind.

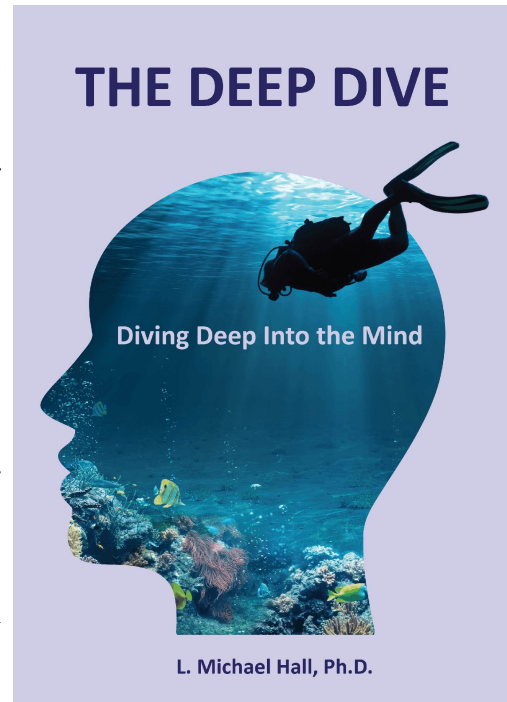
A deep dive is the design of Meta-Coaching. As an intense personal conversation which gets to the heart of things—the purpose is to get to your deepest meanings. Via a dialogue, we dive into your ways of thinking to arrive at your control center where you *make meanings* and where you can update your meanings. Why? To gain a new lease on life, inner power and freedom, and the ability to live more joyfully, lovingly, and productively.

In *The Deep Dive* you will discover *this conversational art* via the actual coaching demonstrations. As an observer, you get a front-row seat on the life-changing dialogues and get to hear Dr. Hall identify his thinking, and what he’s aware of, as the conversation transpires. Unlike “coaching” that’s shallow and superficial, Meta-Coaching involves a *deep dive into the inner mind* where you take control of your powers of thinking and meaning-making.

Because every authentic conversation seeks to *win the inner game*, when you win the inner game, you win the outer game of your emotions, performances, and relationships. You become self-determining, self-managing, and self-actualizing. Here you will discover the art of the deep conversation that establishes your values, your thinking and perceptual patterns, your sense of self, your interpretative frames, and much more.

Linguistic Deep Dives

We live in “the house of language” because the great majority of our *thinking* is with words, in words, and through words. While you can think *apart from words*, it is more difficult. Often it is nearly impossible to encode your thinking *apart from some symbolic system* like language. So to



language we go in our journey to travel as deeply as we can into human consciousness.

The Art of Diving Deep into a Person's Thinking

When it comes to our lives as human beings, *it's always about thinking!* Your thinking generates every aspect of your life—how you feel, what you do, your skills, your attitude, your relationships, your career success, your health, fitness, and well-being. Everything! Yet your thinking is mostly unconscious—it lies outside of your awareness. That non-conscious thinking is the thinking which actually “runs the show” of your life.

The deep dive in this book is an exploration into *human ways of thinking*. Here we ask, “What is your way of thinking and how is it creating the inner reality in your mind?”

- What constructs has your thinking created?
- What conclusions have you drawn?
- What thinking styles do you use when you think?

To go deep into the inner soul of another person, a client, or even yourself, we will use, and follow thinking into and through, the Meta Place. To do that is to discover the thinking landmarks that you are using, how you are thinking, and your *way of thinking*. *Ultimately, the quality of your mind is the quality of your thinking.*

The Deep Dive is a practical application of the basic NLP and Neuro-Semantic concepts. It is based on transcripts from actual coaching conversation and invites you on an inward journey into the minds of numerous people, into the very structures of consciousness. The first seven chapters use the Well-Formed Outcome Questions which we use to co-create with a client a coaching contract that defines the coaching outcome. Within these questions are the most significant themes regarding human development: intentionality, living on purpose, the clarity of precision, empowerment, strategic thinking and planning, experiential resources for unleashing potentials, and systemic thinking for implementation.

Chapters eight to ten focus on the intervention side of the coaching conversation. How do you intervene to introduce solutions and resources? These chapters highlight generating new interpretative meanings for life, integrating personality for a robust sense of congruency, and the therapeutic nature of coaching conversations for enabling resilience and persistence in living purposefully.

What Some Are Saying

“As a PCMC coach, I feel like this book is rocket fuel. It is a good way to become familiar with different kinds of skills and sub-skills, like acknowledgments, confrontation, silence, different kinds of questions, meta-questions etc. The conversations are very rich in details and reading them several times brings out even more. ... It feels like sitting on the front seat of the coaching sessions and peeking into the mind of a true master.”

Henrik Schalén, MD. Psychiatrist, Meta-Coach, Neuro-Semantic Trainer Sweden

“What if you could take a peek into a master Meta-Coach mind in action, analyzing his frames and skills in a transformative coaching conversation? This book is the treasure trove that a coach can use in modeling Michael Hall to unleash your own and other's potentials from deep within, one coaching conversation at a time.”

Irvan Irawan Jie Neuro-Semantic Trainer, PCMC Meta-Coach Candidate, Indonesia

“*The Deep Dive* is a peek into the mind of how a master coach thinks, analyzes, and navigates through the intricacies of coaching conversations. It goes into Michael's mind and heart to learn how a complicated skill can be executed simply and elegantly. It's a compilation of many concepts and years of experiences and now integrated into actual coaching sessions. The depth of knowledge and wisdom one can get from here can be a leverage point for your self development and a turning point for your coaching skills.”

Sheila Tan, M.A., Meta-Coach, Neuro-Semantic Trainer, Philippines

"*The Deep Dive* is a profound exploration of human processes, analyses, and navigations that define professional coaching conversations. Within these pages you will discover a lifetime of experiential learning and transformative coaching of the highest calibre. There's invaluable insights about how to shape the meta landscape of coaching for generations to come. For any professional coach, *The Deep Dive* is an indispensable companion of knowledge and inspiration. It's a testament to the compassionate intelligence of exploring human experience and mind."

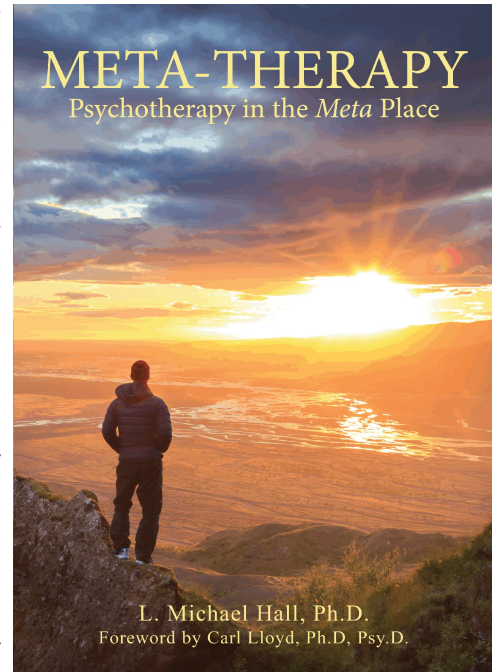
Shawn Dwyer, International Meta-Coach President, Neuro-Semantic Trainer, Australia

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #31
July 22, 2024
A Summer Reading List #4

WHY YOU NEED TO READ *META-THERAPY*

Therapy is weird. What's truly strange, weird, and unique is that the therapist cannot directly effect the learning and change that the client wants and needs. The therapist cannot step into the client's life and straighten out the messes, correct the mistakes, demonstrate the needed skills, and be the person that the client needs to be. Nor can the therapist make any guarantee regarding what the therapy will accomplish. She cannot predict what the client will do and/or what will happen in the client's world. In this, the therapist is not in a very powerful role. Strange.

Actually all of the power belongs to the client. The client is the one who is totally in charge of his life. He has the power to change his mind, his beliefs, his understandings, decisions, values, etc. She has the power to put into action the required changes. The client has to *do* it all and yet, mostly, the client doesn't realize this and typically comes to therapy to get the therapist to fix things in her life. Stranger yet.



Given that the *power to change* is actually in the hands of the client, this relegates the therapist to be a facilitator. The therapist is a guide. But what does she facilitate? Where does he provide guidance? As a guide, *therapy is the process for taking a client inside to his inner world*. There she will detect her mental maps which are somehow *not* leading her to where she wants to go. Therapy is the process of enabling the client to grow and develop as a person so he can be the person he needs to be to handle life's challenges. Therapy is the process of equipping and empowering a person to develop the knowledge, the skills, and the motivation which will unleash her highest potentials and become self-determining.

Here's another weird thing about therapy: If the goal of therapy is for the client to become self-determining, then the objective is to *stop going to therapy*. The therapist seeks to put herself out of business so that the client no longer needs her. Ideally, therapy is to be a short-term job.

There's something else weird about therapy. While there's a lot of talk in therapy about problems and solving problems, strange enough, *it is not the problems which drive people to therapy*. It is not about stress, anxiety, fear, anger, depression, sadness, demotivation, suicidal thoughts, personality disorders, etc. No. Those "problems" are actually only *symptoms of the real problem*.

The *real* problem does not exist outside in the external world of the client or in the painful symptoms that alerts the client to the fact that something is wrong. The real problem is inside. Strange also is that when the client arrives for the therapy session, he has brought the real problem with him even though he generally does not know that.

Now the test for whether the therapy has succeeded occurs back in the real world situations and contexts of the client's life. That's where we will find out if the therapeutic conversations have made a significant enough change so it is "the difference that makes a difference." Yet that is *the test of the therapy*. It is not the therapy itself.

Where therapy actually occurs is *inside the client* in the *meta* place. This is also weird. The change is not merely in what the person thinks or feels, or what the person says or does. While these four fundamental powers of a person—as resources—come from the *meta* place, they are not the *meta* place. They make up the surface expression of a person's conscious state. And while therapy will certainly touch, influence, effect, refine, and renew the client's immediate thinking, feeling, speaking, and behaving, genuine therapy is much deep—or as I should say, much *higher*.

Effective, long-lasting, and sustainable therapy which rejuvenates a life is a *meta phenomenon*. It occurs *meta* to a client's thinking, feeling, speaking, and behaving. It occurs in the *meta* place—which is what makes this book unique in the field of therapy.

Now while there are lots and lots of books on therapy—thousands upon thousands, and a great many of them are excellent books on therapy, this one is unique. There are books on how to do therapy, the variables which are "necessary and sufficient" to be successful, the philosophy of therapy, the language, etc. There are also hundreds of books and articles on the meta-analysis of therapy. There are even some books which address the meta-levels of therapy. But, as far as I know, there are no books which focus exclusively on meta-therapy. Therefore to fill in that gap I have written this one.

From the Back Cover

Psychotherapy occurs in a very special place inside of people—in the *meta* place. Here you find the dynamic *meta*-structures which comprise a person's background knowledge, beliefs, values, understandings, reference points, meanings, assumptions, prohibitions, memories, imaginations, etc. Meanings which define a person's sense of reality and well-being.

Here *meta* structures function inside us as if they were instincts—automatic, unconscious programs for thinking, feeling, acting, and relating. Yet they differ from instincts in that you have access to them so you can manage and control them. You can do your own 'programming' for healing, well-being, health, effectiveness, productivity, resilience and much more.

Meta-Therapy will take you on a journey to the inside *meta* place giving you an understanding of how human life is inevitably lived *inside-out*. You will learn how to access the *meta* place, how to use observation, questions, metaphors, etc. to introduce transformative change. You will learn how to negotiate ‘problem definitions’ and solutions in the *meta* place. How to use presuppositional questions and comments to implicitly set new frames of meaning to enrich and empower a person.

Without a rich understanding of the dynamic *meta* system within a client, a therapist’s interventions will be superficial and deal mostly with symptoms, rather than the overarching causes. Discover how the *meta* place is organized in yourself and your clients. As *Meta-Therapy* repeatedly emphasizes “the person is never the problem, if there’s a problem, the frame is the problem,” it frees you to look for and transform those frames.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #32
July 29, 2024
A Summer Reading List #5

WHY YOU NEED TO READ *THE META-PLACE*

You live in two worlds—the outside world of sights, sounds, sensations, smells and tastes and the inside world of ideas, thoughts, memories, imaginations, beliefs, etc. The outside world is given; the inside world is what you make of the outside world. What you see, hear, and feel in the outside world—you bring inside and create *the world of mind*.

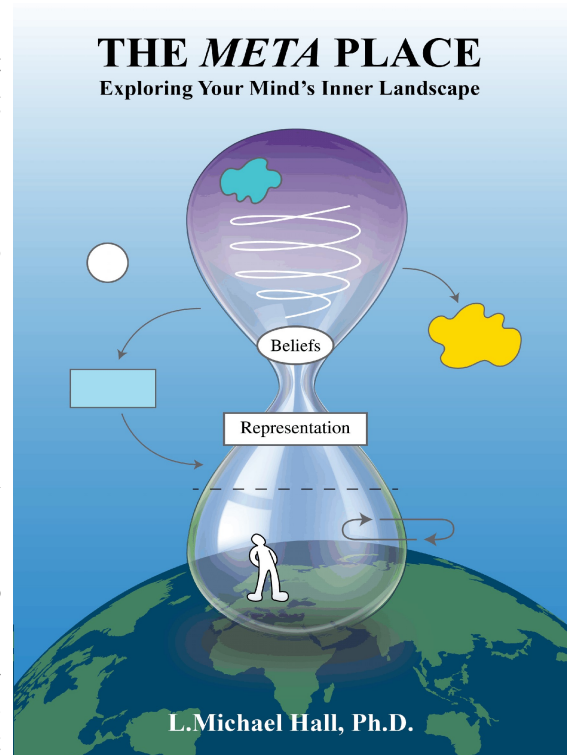
It is your *meta* place, control central of your experiences that governs life from the *inside-out*. When you learn to master your *meta* place, to see it, to enter it, to design it, to transform it, *you then become the master of your own fate, your experiences, and the quality of your life*.

Your meta place is a rich, wondrous, and mysterious world. It is the hidden and invisible world that you live in and that you operate from. Its development is a gift to you—what you fill it with, however, is your gift to yourself. It is what makes you uniquely *you*. What you do with your capacities is your choice and responsibility. And while you may have had very limited choices as a child growing up, as an adult, you are now free to make it as you will. So as an adventure in being human, make it a great one.

While some people put up a sign, “Closed for business,” and try their best to avoid, deny, and reject their *meta* place, but in the long run, it does not work. To be human is to have and live from the inner world of your mind and memory. The *meta* place describes the architecture of that place and this book gives you the keys for how to manage your *meta* place with grace, elegance, humor, and power.

Looking Inside Your Mind

My invitation to you in this book is to go inside and discover the *meta* place. It is an invitation to *look inside your mind*. If you ever say to yourself, “Why did I say that or do that?” or “I know better



than that, what's wrong with me?" or "How can I release the full potentials of my mind and intelligence?" then this journey is for you.

Now there's a strange thing about the *meta* place. Each of us have his and her own *meta* place content. The inner world that each of us live in differs. When you understand your own *meta* place that will *not* give you a specific template for understanding others. It will only give you *a basic template for how meta places are organized*. And that will empower you to be so much more effective in relating to others.

When you learn the *meta* place template, you will be able to listen in an entirely new way to people, in a way that will enable you to figure out what's inside a person's *inner world*. You will discover that everyone has the same set of structures—thinking patterns, representations (a cinema in mind), editorial capabilities, beliefs, the meta-state funnel, background knowledge, future anticipations, an ecology check, intentionality, etc. That, in turn, will give you a tremendous edge in communicating, influencing, and loving.

Now as if that wasn't complex enough, there's something else that makes the inner world even more complex. The information in your *meta* place, and everyone else's, is constantly shifting and changing. It does not stay the same. As you grow, your *meta* place grows. It evolves to reflect your increasing knowledge, understandings, and experiences.

Each person's *meta* place is an assumptive world—an *inner world of meanings*. Out of your *meta* place comes your patterns which make up your "way of being in the world." There your intentional world is manifested most clearly and from it, you become engaged in whatever you are doing. That raises a critical question, "What are you trying to do?" "What are you *striving* to do or to achieve in your life?"

Obviously you have a great many intrinsic human needs which drive you. You have survival needs, safety and security needs, social need for love and affection, and the need to be esteemed as socially worthy and able to gain respect (Maslow's hierarchy of deficiency needs). Yet as you experience these deficiency needs (the D-needs), you do so by *interpreting* them via your *meta* place. This alludes to the first of the *Being-needs* (B-needs), namely, knowledge, information, and meaning.

As you learn about the *meta* place and discover how to enter into it and even better, how to change it for the better, you will find yourself on a journey of self-discovery and self-empowerment. Given the *kind of consciousness* that you have (i.e., self-reflexive consciousness), you inevitably create, and then live from, your *meta* place. Your life is inescapably inside-out. From there, *the quality of your life is a function of the quality of your meta place*. Now on to the journey!

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #33
August 5, 2024
A Summer Reading List #6

WHY YOU NEED TO READ *THINKING FOR HUMANS*

The Art of Mindful Awareness

From the Back Cover

Above and beyond the world that you live in and deal with, there is another world that you carry in your head—a mental model of the world. Because it is *above and beyond* the outside world, it is your *mind* or *Meta Place*. Actually this world in your head is the only world that you know and ever will know. It is in this world that *you think*. But how well do you think? Is your thinking creating a life of love, joy, and productivity for you?

Thinking is the most human thing that you do. It is the lifeblood of everything human: communication, sense of self, sanity, understanding, belief, hope, and love, creativity, innovations, well-being, etc. While some people think clearly, precisely, accurately, creatively, most people are poor thinkers. They constantly think themselves into painful states of stress, fear, guilt, anger, being a victim, etc. They think themselves into unproductive habits (over-eating, drugging, gambling, etc.) or into destructive social habits (criticizing, blaming, gossiping, competing, etc.).

Thinking for Humans focuses on the thinking skills or powers that transform your thinking making it clear and precise, critical and creative, productive and inspirational. As you learn to *think about your thinking*, you will unleash your potentials for your best performances. With meta-thinking skills, you will solve problems, banish pseudo-problems, create inspirational meanings for yourself and others, become a leader of minds and hearts, and much more. If *the quality of your thinking* determines the quality of your life, what is the level of quality does your thinking habits reveal?

From the Preface

*“Thinking is very hard work.
And management fashions are a wonderful substitute for thinking.”*
Tom Davenport



“Peter F. Drucker, *CIO Magazine*, 1997

I have written *Thinking For Humans* because of what I believe about thinking and about its incredibly extensive effects within the human experience. Here’s what I believe:

- The quality of your life is the quality of your thinking.
- To be “fully alive/fully human” requires the ability to truly and authentically *think* and think for yourself.
- *Thinking* lies at the core of everything that we do that’s *human*.
- As you *think*, so you are and so you are becoming. Your thinking defines you and shapes your inner self and “personality.”
- The quality of your beliefs, decisions, emotions, memories, knowledge, imaginations, etc. depends on the quality of your thinking.
- To manage your thinking requires that you think about your thinking, to use your meta-cognition to *meta*-think.
- Meta-thinking enables a special kind of learning— *meta*-learning by which you can then manage the quality of your thinking.

An Untaught Essential

While *thinking* is the most fundamental thing you do, *the great majority of people have never been taught how to truly think*. That’s because at school we are taught *what to think*; we are not taught *how to think*. Thinking was, and continues to be, assumed and taken for granted. It should not. Consequently, the great majority of people are poor thinkers. Their thinking is superficial and is easily dominated and distorted by emotions. As the quality of their thinking is low, this causes most of their problems in life. Shockingly, we mostly think our way into difficulties as we fail to discern quality information, make bad decisions, engage in stupid actions, create disastrous relationships, etc. All of that sabotages one’s best efforts. The good news is that you can think your way out of those problems by learning the genuine article—critical and precise thinking.

“... the problem is that we think very poorly. How could it be otherwise when few of us are given any instruction...” Steven Alan, *Thinking Creatically* (1991, p. ix)

If *thinking* governs the way you learn, the way you comprehend the world, the way you make decisions, the way you relate to others, the way you manage yourself, the way you treat yourself and others, no wonder thinking plays the most critical role in your successes and failures. Yet most people dismiss thinking as unimportant. They *assume* that “thinking is thinking” and “what else could it be?” They don’t know that a person’s brain could be active without the person actually *thinking*. They don’t know there are multiple kinds of non-thinking. In each, a person may seem to be thinking, and he may think that he’s thinking, but he is not actually “thinking” (chapter 21).

The Book’s Design

Thinking For Humans focuses centrally on the most fundamental thing you do—*think*. Part I has the most fundamental aspects of thinking and a series of chapters on *essential thinking skills*. Is thinking a skill? Yes, so think of *thinking as a skill*—a mental activity that gives you a lease on life. Parts II and III covers the constructive or *eureka thinking skills* and the *executive thinking skills*.

Part IV: The seven kinds of deceptive non-thinking aspects—aspects we all default to and which cause most of our problems. By knowing these and shifting to real thinking, you will solve most of the problems you will ever face. You will become an excellent problem solver. Intelligence is not a trait, but a function of thinking.

The central theme: *The quality of your thinking determines the quality of your mental and emotional well-being.* A central component of mental and emotional illness is poor thinking—distorted thinking, and thinking that is not under your control. When you correct your thinking—you set in motion a healthy way of moving through the world that makes you more effective and productive, that makes the way you relate to family and friends more rewarding and loving, and the life you live more joyful.

“The neurotic is not emotionally sick— *he is cognitively wrong!* If health and neurosis are, respectively, correct and incorrect perceptions of reality, propositions of fact and propositions of value merge in this area...” (Maslow, 1970, p. 153)

Thinking seems so natural so why spend time *learning how to think?* Because most people are not actually thinking! Actually, *thinking is your secret weapon for succeeding* in every aspect of life. It is the secret for sanity and well-being, for healthy relationships and productive careers.

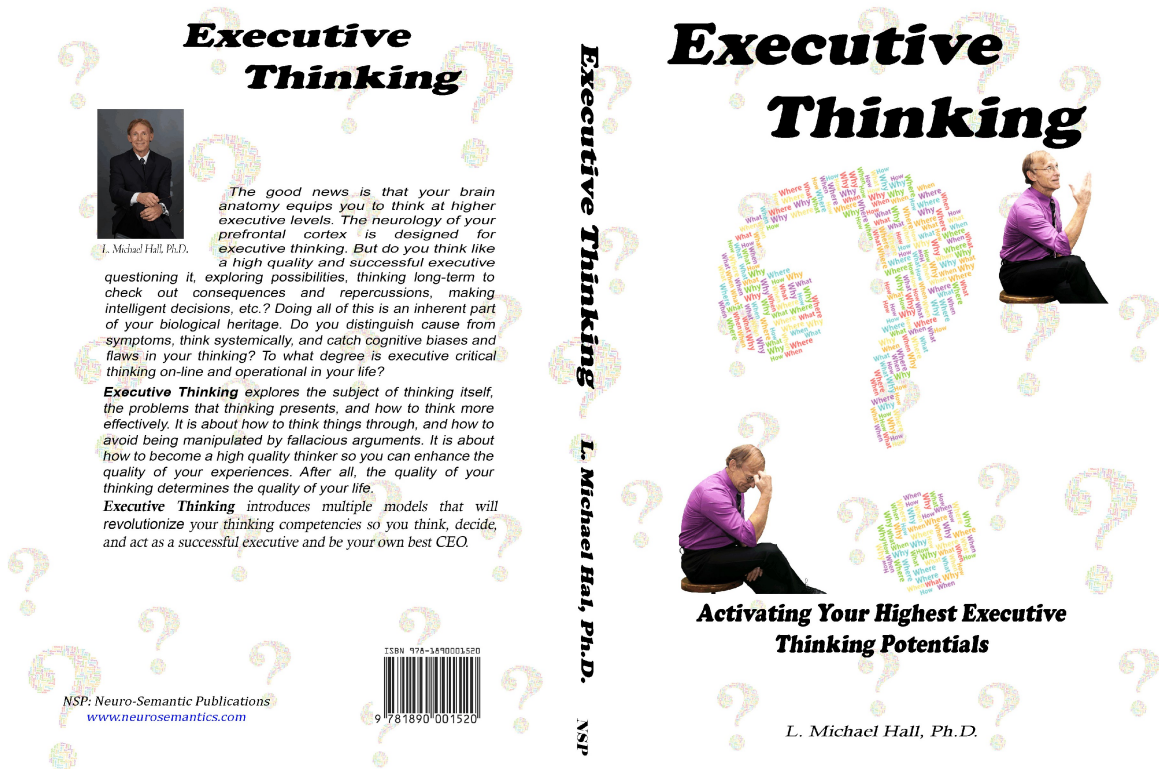
From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #34
August 12, 2024
A Summer Reading List #7

WHY YOU NEED TO READ *EXECUTIVE THINKING*

I should have written *Thinking for Humans* first, but I did not. I first wrote *Executive Thinking*. I recommend that you read it second. It is much more academic and therefore deeper.

From the Back Cover

The good news is that your brain anatomy equips you to think at higher executive levels. The neurology of your prefrontal cortex is designed for executive thinking. But do you think like a high quality and successful executive? Do you think like an executive in gathering information, questioning it, exploring possibilities, thinking long-term to check out consequences and repercussions, making intelligent decisions, etc.? Doing all of this is an inherent part of your biological heritage. Do you distinguish cause from symptoms, think systemically, and catch cognitive biases and flaws in your thinking? To what degree is executive critical thinking on-line and operational in your life?



Executive Thinking explores the subject of *thinking* itself, the problems that thinking presents, and how to think more effectively. It is about critical thinking, it is about creative thinking, it is about how to think things through, and how to avoid being manipulated by fallacious arguments. It is about how to become a high quality thinker so you can enhance the quality of your experiences. After all, *The quality of your thinking determines the quality of your life.* ***Executive Thinking*** introduces multiple models that will revolutionize your thinking competencies so you think, decide, and act as a successful executive and be your own best CEO.

From the Preface

The best thinkers on Planet Earth are those who have somehow learned to use their minds in highly effective ways. They have learned to create an understanding of the world which enables them to take effective action in achieving their goals. They are executive thinkers. As a result, they invent great products and services. They start innovative companies. They stimulate billion-dollar industries. They live a life that makes sense (has meaning) and is meaningful (highly significant). They enjoy themselves and others thoroughly. And in the end, they leave the world a better place. Would you like to be one of them? Would you like to unleash your executive thinking potentials?

From the simple fact that they actually *think* and *they think well*, they construct mental models which then enable them to navigate the world according to their pleasure. They go places, achieve goals, and generate the experiences that make their life, and the life of others, rich, full, and of high quality. They have mastered the one and only tool that we human beings possess for living successfully—*they use their minds effectively.*

Who are these *best thinkers* on Planet Earth? Where do we find such people that we can model? Look no further than those who succeed in the two primary domains of life—work and love. Do they get along well with others? Do they love and are they loved? Do they take care of themselves and others? Do they have friends and colleagues who love and trust them? Are they productive in identifying their talents, developing their skills, and deploying them in business so that they can make a good living for themselves and contribute to others? Do they get things done and do so in a timely and effective manner? If so, let's start with them and ask, "How do they do that?"

My hypothesis in writing this book is that *highly successful people are critical thinkers who use their highest executive functions for thinking.* This does not require that they have the highest I.Q. It does, however, require that they *use their mind* and engage in the most unique activity of all, one that so few actually engage in—*real thinking*—thinking that is both critical and creative—executive thinking.

The real thinkers do not focus on academic knowledge. Instead they focus on the actual intelligence of using their thinking capacities well in practical matters. This is their secret. They *think* so that they can *do*. This practical intelligence is an integrated thinking that enables them to both think and act. Generally they are successful entrepreneurs who make things work, invent new products and services, and new ways of doing things. They are executives who combine vision with action. For that reason I describe this kind of thinking as executive thinking.

In calling it executive thinking, this does not mean that all people in executive roles do this kind of high quality thinking. Obviously, many do not. In fact, most do not. Yet this kind of thinking does partake of the highest form of human thinking—the kind that comes from the executive functions and levels in the brain. So “executive” partly refers to using the executive levels of your mind, your frontal cortex where you make conscious decisions about yourself, your values, your life, your direction, the meanings you ascribe to things.

This is mindfulness—an executive level functioning that enables you to use your mind consciously regarding how you are thinking and acting. Robert Sternberg teasingly wrote:

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

What distinguishes the best executive thinkers is both *what they think* and even more important, *how they think*. The first is “knowledge,” the second is *intelligence*. Together they determine quality thinking. When you examine their thinking, it is rich, open, and flexible. They have developed their thinking skills so that now their thinking is clear and precise, it is inspirational and visionary, *and* it is practical and pragmatic. They think simultaneously both critically and creatively. Their thinking is expansive, wild and chaotic at times, then they bring it down to earth in specific details and how-to instructions. Tavis and Wade note this quality of thinking:

“You can’t separate critical thinking from creative thinking, for it is only when you question *what is* that you can begin to imagine *what can be*.” (1995)

Executive thinking is the high quality thinking that characterizes highly successful executives—men and women who lead entrepreneurial enterprises and who are changing the world for the better.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #35
August 19, 2024
A Summer Reading List #8

WHY YOU NEED TO READ *WINNING THE INNER GAME*

Is it time for you to discover how *The Inner Game* works and how to successfully play it? Are you ready to win the outer game of performance thereby translating your dreams into reality? The *Game of Life* can now be yours; all you need to do is to learn the rules of the game—the frames. Then, as you *Win the Inner Game* whole new dimensions of life will open to you.

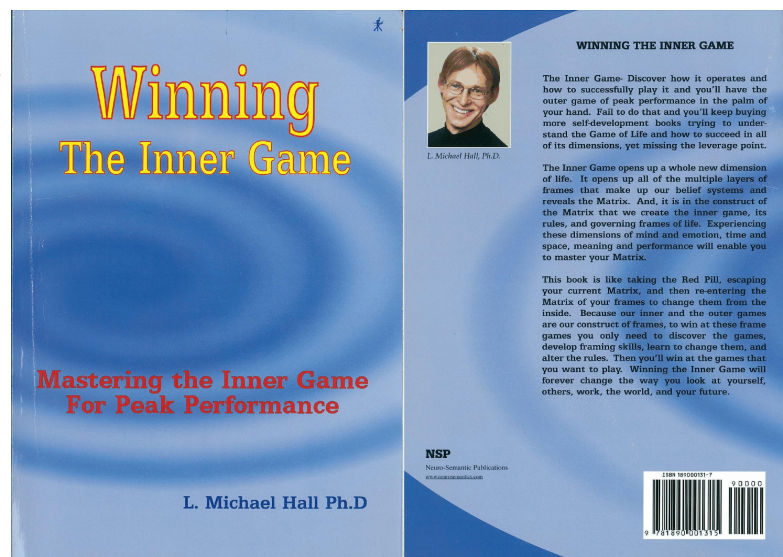
While it may seem that being effective, successful, and productive in the outer world depends on external factors—it actually depends much more on the internal factors—the things in your mind! It depends on the frames in your mind—in your beliefs, in your values, in your identity, your intentions, etc. There, in the construct of your Matrix, your Meta Place, you have created an inner game.

Winning the Inner Game is like taking the Red Pill, escaping your current Matrix, and then re-entering the Matrix of your frames to change it from the inside. Because *inner* and the *outer* games are construct of frames, to win these *frame games* you need certain skills. Skills for discovering the games and changing the frames.

From the Preface

In life, there are two games. Sometimes it seems that there is only one game—the *outer game*—what you do, achieve, and perform. Actually, above and beyond the outer game is the *inner game* where the real action takes place. It is a game that this book is all about.

This book is about finding the inner game, understanding how it operates, and learning to successfully play that game. Do that, and you'll have the



outer game in the palm of your hand. Fail to do that and you'll keep buying more self-development books trying to understand *the Game of Life* and how to succeed in all of its dimensions, yet missing the actual leverage point.

Discovering the inner game opens up the dimension of mind—where your multiple layers of frames comprise your beliefs and your inner world. And from that inner world you live and operate. From there you can make whatever changes you need to make to take charge of your mind and emotions and create the life that you want. From there, you can experience life as the adventure it is. You will discover how it is your frames that create your reality.

It's your *frames* which are *the true levers of change* and when you know that, change becomes fairly easy. Then it's a matter of setting up the frames that you want and reframing what's not working well. Do you know your current frames of mind? Do you know what matrix of frames you now live inside?

The design of *Winning the Inner Game* is to equip you as a *frame master*. Then you will be able to read the code of experience inside you and within others. You will learn the heart of *Neuro-Semantics* in terms of how you create meaning and how you *embody* that meaning in your posture, walk, muscles, face, and eyes.

Neuro-Semantics focuses on how we *perform our meanings* in our actions, behaviors, skills, competencies, emotions, and health (or lack of health) to create our outer games. As a whole mind-body psychology, Neuro-Semantics focuses on modeling the best and highest performances of human possibility and working with the inner game of our frames to set up the most robust and empowering matrix of frames.

Morpheus said to Neo, "I am only offering you the truth." So also here. Not truth with a capital T, but your *truth*—what's true in your life. It's the truth of your frames. So when you know that you live in frames and frames-of-frames, you know that your reality, experience, skills, emotions, and sense of self is in your hands. So if you ready, then as Ciphher said in the *Matrix* movie, "buckle up, Dorothy, because Kansas is going bye-bye."

You can find the PDF on

<https://www.neurosemantics.com/shop/page/10/>

and the book, on

<https://www.neurosemantics.com/products/>

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #36
August 26, 2024

THE ART OF THE DEEP DIVE

After releasing the first book on *The Deep Dive*, several people asked me about this frame in NLP and Neuro-Semantics. “Where did you get the idea?” “What does it mean?” “How do you do it?” The deep dive is an indepth exploration into a person’s mind—to discover what is there and how the mind works.

For that, however, we need a functional and workable *model of the mind*. When we have that, we can then begin to *track the mind* as it operates. Without an operational model, we cannot do that. But with it, we can and when we do, we can figure out how a person’s mind creates his experiences. And that creates a doorway so we can model her expertise. We can know how an experience works as we gain an insider’s view. Then we will know about what we can do to enhance and improve the quality of that person’s life.

Now in this, we are not talking about focusing on the brain, *our focus here is on the mind*. That’s why the neuro-sciences, for the most part, have actually very little to say about *the mind*. It’s only relevant to the extent that the physical hardware of the brain and its functioning influences mental capacity. And that mainly occurs when there’s neurological problems. If neurology is basically normal, and there’s no neurological damage, then functioning of the mind will have almost no need for neurological information. At that point, you don’t need information about the brain, instead you need information about how the mind works.

If a person has problems, they will be problems of how the mind is functioning—and that takes us to how a person has *learned*, how he *uses his mind*, how she has *learned to think*, and to what cognitive distortions, biases, and fallacies may be interfering with the person’s best mental functioning. For example, very seldom does ADD or ADHD have a neurological base; it is most often the result of failing to learn to focus by caring about the subject and being intentional.

Now apart from neurological damage, the quality of the mind’s functioning *depends on the quality of one’s thinking*. It depends on one’s ability for critical thinking and creative thinking. It depends on the person’s ability to think about this thinking (meta-thinking) which in turn, enables him to correct thinking errors in real time.

Previous Attempts at Going Deep

There actually have been many attempts to get beyond the surface level of experience and to plummet the depths of human consciousness and experiences.

Freud used archeology as his mental picture of depth. He viewed the *deep* as “deep in the past,” buried in the unconscious. Then from that unconsciousness thoughts and beliefs leak out in the form of verbal slips, dreams, symptoms. His metaphor was that of an iceberg, with only a small percentage seen on the surface. Most are hidden underneath the water and out-of-sight. His solution was to do psycho-archeology. His assumption was that “the cause” was in the past.

John Watson had a different mental picture of *depth* in Behaviorism. He viewed it as “a black box,” one that you cannot penetrate. And because it is dark and inaccessible, he focused only on what could be seen, heard, or felt—the Stimuli that triggers responses, and the Responses that result, hence the S–R Model.

In Cognitive Psychology what is *deep* is “the deep structure” which Noam Chomsky said is accessed via the surface structure. To access it, you can infer the deep structure through Transformational Rules. Then as George Miller and others revisited the Black Box, they inferred that it was a TOTE process, and because of that, we could infer much about the internal testing and operating on one’s internal mapping.

Later the NLP’s founders took the Black Box and TOTE process even further. What is “deep” in NLP is hidden in plain sight. It is hidden in the representational systems and sub-modalities. There, what is unconscious for many people, can easily be brought into consciousness. They filled in the TOTE model with the representations systems to create the Strategy Model thereby making the TOTE more explicit. From Erickson they learned how to recognize and use hypnotic language patterns to access the unconscious.

In Neuro-Semantics, deep is in the *thinking*—conscious or unconsciously, which occurs in the “back of the mind” and in the higher, but hidden meta-levels which govern the framework of consciousness. What is *deep* is what is not immediately present or available. Yet it is deep inside as a person’s frame of reference. Having dropped out of awareness, it operates as a “way of thinking, feeling, speaking and acting” as a program for how to function.

It is hidden out-of-mind and therefore “deep” simply because it is an old program (or habit) that we learned. To some extent it worked in its original context—at least to some extent. But things have changed. We have grown up. The original habits no longer work, or only partially. Now what we need is to update the old habits/ programs.

Now you know why *we do the deep dive exploration in Neuro-Semantics*. We do so to find old habits (neuro-linguistic programs) and update them. We do so to identify the structures by which people create their experiences and in order to give them more choice. We do so to empower people to unleash their hidden potentials.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #37
August 31, 2024

HOW TO USE MANY WORDS AND SAY NOTHING

When I listened to the CNN interview this past Thursday (August 29) between the interviewer and the presidential candidate, *I listened with my NLP-ears*. I listened not so much to the content, but to the process and structure. All I will present here is the first minute or two which is how it began. Consider this an NLP perspective which reveals how most politicians seem to think and speak. I have *italicized abstract words, vague words and nominalizations*.

Bash: The voters are really eager to hear what your plans are. If you are elected, what would you do on day one in the White House?

Harris: Well, there are a number of things. I will tell you first and foremost one of my *highest priorities* is to do what we can to *support and strengthen the middle class*. When I look at *the aspirations, the goals, the ambitions* of the American people, I think that people are ready for *a new way forward* in a way that *generations of Americans have been fueled by—by hope and by optimism*.

I think sadly in the last decade, we have had in the former president someone who has really been *pushing an agenda* and *an environment* that is about *diminishing the character and the strength of who we are as Americans—really dividing our nation*. And I think people are ready to *turn the page* on that.

Amazingly, two paragraphs and 120-plus words and she did *not offer* a single item of what she would *actually do* on day one. One visual word “look at the aspirations...” three kinesthetic words: “pushing an agenda...” “dividing our nation...” “turning the page.” Talk about hypnotic language! Those two paragraphs are full of vague non-referring words, nominalizations, and metaphors. Isn’t that incredible! In terms of being a professional communicator—this is what we *do not want*. Further, she did not answer the question! Dana Bash caught that and so she repeated the question.

Bash: So what would you do Day One?

Harris: Day One, it’s gonna be about one, *implementing my plan* for what I call *an opportunity economy*. I’ve already laid out a number of *proposals in that regard*, which include what we’re gonna do to *bring down the cost of everyday goods*, what we’re gonna do to *invest in America’s small businesses*, what we’re gonna do to *invest in families*.

For example, extending the child tax credit to \$6,000 for families for the first year of their child’s life to help them buy a car seat, to help them buy baby clothes, a

crib. There's the work that we're gonna do that is about *investing in the American family around affordable housing, a big issue* in our country right now. So there are a number of things on day one.

Wow! Two more paragraphs and another 120-plus words and only vague phrases that have no actual referent and nothing that could be counted or measured later to test if she will do that on day one. The one specific item: "extending the child tax credit to \$6,000" is something that they have already done, this just raises the amount a bit. So why wait? If it is important to do, and if you are already Vice-President, why not do it now?

What a model for how to *use many words to say nothing!* Like so many politicians, with this kind of hypnotic language, you can promise the moon without being held accountable for anything specific. This is the kind of language that needs to change in Politics if we are to change the world. And it would not be hard. With even just a small exposure of NLP— a person can learn to be a lot more specific and precise. Of course, politicians tend to *not* want to do that. Why? My guess is a fear of accountability.

The cure here is the Meta-Model of Language that you can find in *The Structure of Magic* (1975), *User's Manual of the Brain* (1999) and *Communication Magic* (1997).

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #38
September 2, 2024

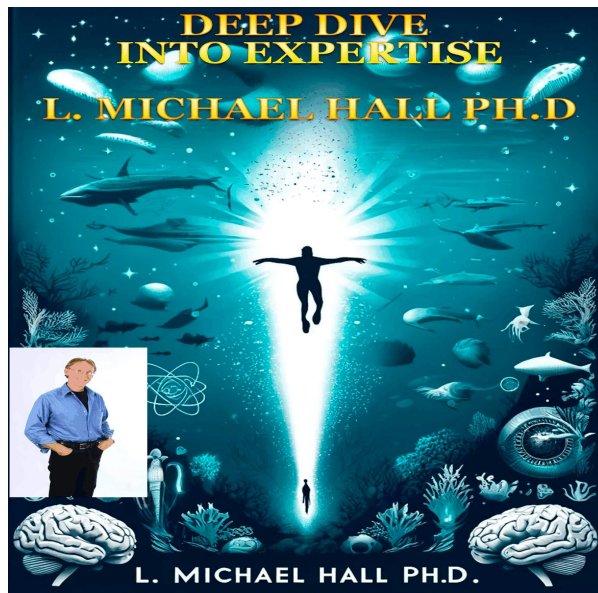
DEEP DIVE INTO EXPERTISE

This is my *newest book!* It is a companion book to *The Meta Place*, *Thinking for Humans*, and *the Deep Dive*. And as it is a book about modeling—modeling expertise, it is my sixth book specifically on the process of modeling. What’s new and different about this book compared to the NLP books on modeling? One key thing— instead of *only* tracking out the structure of an experience horizontally, step-by-representational-step, *Deep Dive Into Expertise* takes you into the upper regions of the *mind* (what we call the Meta Place).

From the Back Cover of *Deep Dive Into Expertise*—

There’s one thing that we all want to know, *How does the expert become so amazingly good at what he does?* What secrets enable her world-class performance? Is it possible for me to achieve such expertise? If so, what’s involved and how long will it take?

The *Deep Dive into Expertise* starts from the premise that expertise is *developed*, not given. It is not inherited, it is learned and lived. *Deep Dive* takes you on an exploration of the specifics of the mental, emotional, and behavioral development required for expertise. The focus starts with learning *how to think like an expert thinks*. With that, the next questions are: *How do you integrate the expert thinking into your own mind-body system? How do you practice the way an expert practices and get similar results?* Now while the answers to all of that are amazingly simple, the process for experiencing it is not.



This is where the *deep dive* comes in. *Modeling expertise requires discovering the full multi-level thinking of an expert’s mind.* It’s an illusion to think that what’s on the expert’s first level of thinking is all that you need. It is *not*. You have to know what’s in the back of her mind. You have to know the distinctions that he makes. You have to know how to use the deep dive to wire your neurons to make the distinctions

experientially. You have to know the interferences to expertise and how to effectively handle them.

Expertise seduces us. There's a deep drive within us all for striving to become our best selves and actualize our potentials. Paradoxically it's a drive that gets stronger the more you fulfill it. It's a drive that leads to peak performances and even better, peak experiences. Welcome to the deep dive for expertise!

Currently, *Deep Dive into Expertise* is only in PDF form. You can find it on **The Shop** at Neuro-Semantics

<https://www.neurosemantics.com/shop/page/2/>

So You Want to See the Table of Contents? Okay, here it is.

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From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #39
September 9, 2024

THE ART OF BEING CONCISE

Not long ago an organization asked if I could deliver some trainings for their senior management. The first items on their agenda was “the ability to be concise.” They wanted “concise communication” because that was a problem in the company. They wanted their “Executives to be able to deliver key messages *concisely and effectively* within the limited time available.” As I read through their list of the “skills” that they required, the idea of “effective delivery,” “clear communication,” able to “convey complex information in a concise and understandable manner,” etc. came up over and over.

That got me thinking. I made a quick dip into the dictionary and found: “To say much in few words, clear and succinct.” That would mean that the *opposite of concise* is being wordy, verbose, redundant, repeating oneself again and again, and over-talking. It involves being vague, ambiguous, abstract, convoluted, etc. In other words, the way most people talk most of the time and the way politicians talk all the time!

As I continued thinking about this, I realized that this is *the primary purpose of the NLP Communication Model*—to enable people to be more professional in the way that they communicate, that is, to be clear, concise, and succinct. To do that, the Meta-Model presents 21 linguistic distinctions that are ill-formed along with a set of questions for each one. Then by engaging in a clarification conversation, the dialogue will lead to clarity, precision, and accuracy. It will enable the speaker to *get to the point*. [See *The Structure of Magic* or *Communication Magic*.]

But now I had a problem. This organization wanted training in concise communication along with training in public speaking, negotiating and influencing, and organizational management! And all of that in 3 days! Obviously, they first needed training in *Realistic Expectations* and probably a crash course on *Patience*.

Anyway, my challenge was: How could I go about providing training in *concise communications* without training the entire Meta-Model which itself is a 3 to 5 day training? So I put together the following training outline. The design is for the executives (or whoever receives the training) to first get *clear themselves* and only then attempt to communicate that to others.

1) *Establish clarity*. *Ask yourself* (or another), *What is your point?* What is the message that you want to get across to someone? Now when I have done this in our Trainers’ Training and in Executive Coaching, I always get answers that are ambiguous and vague.

So I ask the question now about that answer, “What is your point in saying that?” And again, another abstract and sometimes convoluted answer. So again, “What is your point in saying that?” By repeatedly asking this question, as well as asking “clarification questions” about specific words, the person slowly becomes more and more clear. In this way, we can enable a person to *think through what* he or she is trying to say.

You: “I want to help people adopt a more positive attitude about selling.”

Me: Okay, good, and your point is?

You: Well coaches and trainers think that selling is negative, but necessary.”

Me: That’s your point? ‘Selling is negative and you need to sell.’ That’s what you want to say?

You: Well, not exactly. It is that selling does not have to be manipulative or controlling.

Me: Okay, so if it *not* that, what is it?

You: It is helping people understand a purchase and make a good choice.

Me: So that’s your point!?

2) *Test its importance.* Once we have a basic ‘message,’ now we can test to see if it is truly important and needs to be said. So we ask, “Why is it important for you to say that, to send that message?” And again, we iterate that question again and again to move up and identify a hierarchy of values for the speaker. Along the way, just to test things, we may ask, “What result or consequence are you hoping to get from this message?”

Me: Tell me why that point is important for you. Why is it important to communicate?

You: Because most coaches and trainers are not very good at selling.

Me: So they are not good at it, so why is it important to you? To help them get good?

You: Yes, to help them get better at selling.

Me: And why is that important to you?

You: Because then they will have more clients.

Me: Yes, that’s for them. What about you? Why is it important to you?

You: I will realize my ability as I help them? And then my services will be more in demand.

Me: Sounds important to you, and what’s even more important for you?

You: I will be fulfilling my responsibilities and my life will be full of lots of meanings.

3) *Index the message.* Once the speaker has clarified the message and identified its importance, we ask a series of questions to make sure it is well-grounded in reality. Now that we have the *what*, we ask the other indexing questions: *When* do you need to send this message? To *whom*? In what *context*? By yourself or will you and someone else jointly deliver this message? Once you have indexed your message’s referents, is your point now objective? What are the facts? What are the evaluations you’re making from the facts?

Me: When and where will you be doing this?

You: I will be doing it next month at the Holiday Inn.

Me: Who will you be contacting and how will you contact them?

You: I will be using social media, some videos, some actual flyers.

Me: Do you have anyone helping you with this?

You: Yes, I have a sales team of three people.

4) *Distinguishing the message.* Sometimes a message has many parts, many aspects and sometimes what creates ambiguity and vagueness is that we try to say everything at once without distinguishing its parts. “Are you trying to say more than one thing?” “What

are the component parts of your message?” “What part should be first, second, third, etc.?”

Me: So your message now is what?

You: Come and learn how to be more effective at selling, to treat it as helping people make a great decision that will add value to their lives.

Me: Anything else?

You: Yes, come to Holiday Inn on Sept. 5.

Me: Anything else?

You: Yes, I want to mention the price and how to sign up.

Me: Sounds like you know what to say and how to say it.

5) *Multiple Perspectives.* Take your message, write it down and now examine it. “Is it stated in first-person perspective using ‘I’ language?” How would it sound if stated in second-person perspective? Third-person? Which of these perspectives (first, second, or third) is most relevant and/or effective for your message? Is it stated in the business language of the organization? In psychological language? In everyday parlance?

Me: Now that you’ve written it down, read it to me.

You: You can learn to effectively enable people to make an informed and smart decision for your coaching and/or training, what we call ‘sell’ without feeling that you are pushing or controlling people, because you and them see the value. Meet me at Holiday Inn and learn how to bring in lots of new clients.

Me: Would you like to state this in first-person rather than second-person?

You: I tried that, but it sounds too arrogant, ‘I want to teach you...’ So no.

Me: would you like to use more business language?

You: No, I think that would turn off coaches. I would do that when I train business people

6) *Streamline the message.* Write out your point or your message in full. Now go through it and see if you can cut out 1/3 of the words. What words are unnecessary? What “filler” words is in your statement? This is a key process for becoming succinct as every writer knows.

Me: Your statement is already pretty tight and concise, but go ahead and see how many words you can cut out of that statement.

You: Discover how to effectively invite people to make a smart decision for your coaching and/or training— ‘selling’ without feeling pushing or controlling, because they see the value. Meet me at Holiday Inn and begin bringing in lots of new clients.

Me: Do you like that? How does that feel?

You: Yes, I do ... Great.

7) *Check the message’s relevance.* Is the message or your point relevant? If so, it is relevant to what criteria? Name the criteria. What is the larger context that you are speaking to?

Me: Is that statement relevant? Does it allow you to make your point to your criteria?

You: Yes, it does.

8) *Test for congruency.* Is your message now congruent? Are you fully aligned with it? Do you have any doubts or hesitations about it? Are there any cross-purposes in the back of your mind about it?

You: I will need to practice it for awhile so it is fully congruent, but that's no problem.

9) *Check your own inner permission.* Do you have permission inside yourself to be direct and concise? What do you believe about speaking directly? How direct can you be in presenting your point? What are the qualities of your directness and conciseness?

Me: Do you have internal permission to make this statement and talk this way?

You: Yes, now that I'm not thinking about all of the problems of selling or that people basically don't like it. So, Yes.

10) *Practice your message.* Once you have done all of these, practice saying your point out-loud or on a recorder. Practice saying it to a friend or a coach. What feedback are you looking for so that you know you are ready?

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #40
September 11, 2024

THE DAY TRUMP GOT TRIGGERED

As I watched the Trump–Harris debate (September 10), it was obvious that Harris was well rehearsed in how to “get under Trump’s skin” and irritate him. I began counting every comment that seemed to be oriented to do that. But after 5 or so minutes, I gave up counting. She was doing it almost constantly. And she was good at taunting and annoying him by saying things that were intentionally provocative—often as a side-comment when saying something else.

What was also obvious was the fact that while Trump didn’t let many of the provocative statements and lies get to him; he did get triggered by many of them. Yes, he took the bait! And in taking the bait, he ended up talking about things that no one cares about except him and what no one trying to decide who to vote for cares about—numbers at the rallies, who want the 2020 election, Harris’ father, which former administrative persons left and thought Trump unfit, which world leader is laughing at him, etc. All irrelevant! But by taking the bait, Trump got distracted, and wasted his time on irrelevancies.

I found it interestingly sad that Harris spent so much time baiting Trump and almost no time defining any of her positions. Perhaps that was her intent. She avoided answering quite a few direct questions: Are we better off today than four years ago? Why have you flipped on so many issues? Would you abort a baby in the 7th month, the 8th month, the 9th month? Do you take any responsibility for the terrible way we pulled out of Afghanistan?

If her goal was to get under Trump’s skin, then she certainly succeeded in doing that. He certainly seemed to be rattled by her insults, zaps, insinuating implications, personal attacks, etc. He was rattled so much that he got angry. And as he got angry, he become less coherent so that whereas he is usually very sharp and can improvise a comeback in the moment—he missed a great number of opportunities. On the first question, “Are you better off today than you were four years ago?” when Harris did not answer it and talked all around it, he could have simply noted,

“Did you notice that she failed to answer that simple question? I wonder why? Is it because the whole country was better off four years ago than they are now.”

Then he could have quoted the facts about the cost of groceries, gas, rent, housing, etc. But being triggered, he missed that opportunity.

Nor was Harris the only one on the attack. So were the two ABC moderators. For Trump they asked follow up questions, they fact checked him 5 times to correct him, but they fact checked Harris 0 times—zero even though she made several glaring mistakes. So as many have noted, the debate was really 3 against 1.

I felt sorry for Donald Trump as I watched the debate. He could have done so much better if he had not taken the bait, if he had not let her get under his skin. So what is my point in all of this? To make the point, let's do some imagining. Imagine that Trump had attended a Neuro-Semantic Training or Hired a Meta-Coach and learned the *Un-Insultability Pattern*! Imagine that! If he had learned, as so many have learned, how to reverse his “taking insult” strategy—a strategy that everyone seems to learn and learn really well as they grow up(!)—then he could have maintained *presence of mind while staying calm and cool*. Then he would have had all of his knowledge and communication resources fully available to him.

Since first developing and teaching the *Un-Insultability* pattern in 1995, I have taught it to Police Departments, to busy open-room news departments, and to the medical responders on the front lines. I have taught it at Sales Training meetings. But mostly I have trained it in NLP practitioner courses and our Trainers' Training course. What's amazing is that it is imminently learnable. If a person wants to be able to *not* be so easily triggered, even if he thinks of himself as “a sensitive person,” he can learn this as a way of being in any context of pressure.

Every year at Trainers' Training, we have one of the more skillful trainers present the *Un-Insultability Pattern*. This past May, Wahyudi Akbar or Yudi made the presentation which was live streamed as he presented it. It was a fabulous presentation and it is what enables those who experience it to stand up and keep presence of mind without getting triggered! Mr. President, if you'd like to experience, just call on us.

[You can find *Un-Insultability* in the book, *Meta-States* (1995/2012) as well as in *Dragon Slaying, The Sourcebook of Magic*, etc.]

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #41
September 16, 2024

ON THE CHANGING OF VALUES

When Your Position Changes, so do Your Values

If Neuro-Semantics and NLP is about anything, it is about *change*. It has been since the publication of the first book which was sub-titled: *A Book about Communication & Change*. That's what got the founders interested in it in the first place—they could not explain all of the *changes* that were occurring in the Gestalt Class that Richard and Frank conducted.

So when Kamala Harris said that her “values have not changed” my ears perked up. The statement occurred in her interview on CNN with Dana Bash (August 29). She was asked about all of her “flip-flops”—*changes* regarding a dozen-plus positions. In response, she said “my values have not changed.” Interesting! But now we have a problem. Namely, that statement does *not explain* how she came about to hold *new and different* positions (which actually is what ‘change’ refers to) that she did in 2019 when she ran for president against Biden in the Democratic Primary.

Further, since the interview, and also in the debate, no additional information has been given about her *changes*. In the 2019 primary she promoted a whole set of objectives that were considered “progressive values.” She was for open borders, big government spending, government give-aways, raising taxes, abortion, and she was against fracking, new oil development, tax cuts, etc.

About a month before the interview, seeing how the progressive values put Biden at a disadvantage to Trump, she began reversing her positions. Suddenly, she shifted and now she is for closed borders, building the wall, fracking, tax cuts, etc. Now she is for what are regarded as “conservative values.” Now as a psychologist, trainer, and modeler committed to understanding *change* and developing models of the change processes and mechanisms, etc., this is fascinating.

Here's the problem in a nutshell. When you are now *for* something like building the wall or fracking (as two examples) and previously you were not and these are “conservative values,” you can't say that your “values” have not changed. They certainly have. That's because when you are *for* something, that means that *you value it*. It means it is important to you. That's why you speak up *for* it and urge others to take it on as theirs. All of that describes what we mean by a “value.”

So here's what we have—Kamala says she has changed her positions, but she says her values have not changed. How does that work? Why would you hold a position that you

did not value or think important? And if you changed your position to “conservative values,” doesn’t that mean that your values have changed?

For argument sake, let’s say that her “*values have not changed.*” If that is true, then her new proposed “conservative values” now become only an election ploy designed to get votes. That seems to be what Bernie Sanders said about her changes. Yet it is hypocritical and deceptive.

On the other hand, if it is not true and her values have indeed changed, then she would be sincerely promoting “conservative values.” So which is it? If it is the latter, and *she changed her values*—then two things follow. 1) She lied to the progressive side of her party. That means she wants to keep them as voters even though she has changed, she just does not want to tell them that. 2) Something amazing happened to her after the Democratic Convention, something she has not revealed which led to this tremendous change. But what? What could have convinced her to change her mind *that* much?

After-Thought

Values can and do change—although for most of us they change slowly and generally over years. Yes, there are times when a person has a radical life-changing experience and all of a sudden, the heavens opens up, light shines down on our fallible head, and suddenly we have a whole new way of seeing things. It happens. But it doesn’t happen very often. I wonder what Harris’ light-from-heaven moment was that led to her coming over to the “conservative values” that she’s now proposing?

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #42
September 23, 2024

NLP: **DEEPER THAN COMMUNICATION**

After several years of research into the field of critical thinking, and then into *thinking* itself, and after publishing more than ten books on *thinking* and its many kinds, I wrote about *NLP as a Thinking Model* [that was Neurons, 2023 #43 and #44]. That came about after I surveyed all of the early NLP books to see if I could determine why the founders and developers choose to focus NLP as a Communication Model rather than a Thinking Model. I wanted to know, “What was their reasoning to do that?”

“NLP is the martial art of communication: graceful, enjoyable, and very effective.” (Seymour and O’Connor, 1990, 41).

Sometime after that I re-read one of the very best NLP book, *Introducing NLP* by John Seymour and Joseph O’Connor I came across this which is right in the beginning of that book: “*NLP—a way of thinking about ideas and people.*” (1979, p. 21). Now for a moment I thought that perhaps I had jumped the gun by making my statement that “no one had recognized NLP as a Thinking Model.” But then, when they wrote the following, I realized something else.

“What is thinking? ...everyone knows intimately what thinking is for themselves. ... Thinking is such an obvious commonplace activity, we never give it a second thought. We tend to think about what we think about, not how we think about it.” (Ibid., p. 43)

By framing the phenomena of *thinking* as “such an obvious commonplace activity” that everybody does it and everybody knows what it is—*they thereby dismissed it completely!* “We never give it a second thought.” Amazing! Somehow they forgot Bateson’s comment in his Preface to *The Structure of Magic* (1975) that what he and his colleagues had struggled to do for years and years trying to find a basis for human psychology, linguistics, consciousness, and thinking. He said that the NLP founders identified it in something so simple, and so obvious, namely, the sensory systems. *Thinking* has its beginning in the sensory representations which we use to reference, in our minds, what we’re thinking about. That was an incredible discovery!

Yet, for the most part, NLP as a field essentially dismissed the thinking question, “What is thinking?” and focused on another question, “What is communication and how does it work?” “What makes Perls’ and Satir’s communications so transformative?” Ultimately, as they built the NLP Communication Model, they ignored the deeper phenomena of thinking. Yet ironically they built it out of the thinking patterns of the Meta-Model, the representation systems, and the cinematic features (falsely labeled “sub-

modalities”). In that way, NLP shifted from its essence as a *thinking model* as it was sold as a Communication Model.

Now NLP as a Communication Model has performed wonderfully. The sensory systems (VAK) has provided a deeper look into the key variables that operate in the theater of our minds. That, in turn, establishes many of the different intelligences that we have which we can use for learning, information gathering, knowledge building, modeling, and much more. Of course, anything powerful can be powerfully misused and NLP has suffered that fate as unethical persons have used it for personal gain by taking advantage of others.

Yet in focusing on Communication rather than on thinking, NLP has missed so many opportunities for changing the world. Because more fundamental than communication is the *quality of our thinking*. If your thinking is distorted or biased or fallacious—then so will be your communications. Therefore the place to correct things is at the level of *thinking*. And that’s what we call *critical thinking*—to think about our thinking so that we can check it against reality, so that we can make sure it is accurate and precise. And if we can do that—we can much more easily change ourselves, invite change in others, and ultimately, change the world. To that end, we now have three *Brain Camps* wherein we train people for critical and creative thinking. We call the critical thinking skills—*essential skills*, and the creative skills—*eureka thinking skills*, and the meta skills—*executive thinking skills*.

Of course, at this point an old problem arises. *Thinking is hard work*. Well, real thinking is. Superficial thinking is easy because it is pretty much mindless. *Real thinking* starts when you realize that we don’t *truly think* until or unless we have a problem. Ah, that’s the problem with thinking! Problems elicit thinking. “*We do not think unless we hit a snag.*” That’s what John Dewey wrote in his classic book, *How We Think*. “The origin of thinking is some perplexity, confusion, or doubt.” How about that? If you are moving through your daily interactions without problems, puzzles, inquires, questions, etc., you are probably not thinking. But here’s the magic, you can! If you want to, you can choose to actually and truly *think*. But be warned: when you do—you and your world will change.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #43
September 30, 2024

HAPPY BIRTHDAY META-STATES YOU ARE 30 YEARS OLD!

The date was September 1994. Thirty years ago this month I traveled to Denver, Colorado where I presented a workshop at the NLP Comprehensive Conference. I had been studying *Resilience* for nearly four years at that point and had put together a workshop that I titled, “*Go For it—Again.*”

The workshop was the result of studying as extensively as I could on the subject although thirty years ago there was very little published on resilience. Because of that I began interviewing people who had suffered a significant set-back to find their strategy. So using the basic NLP Strategy Model, I elicited the strategy from three-dozen men and women.

At the time I was excited to explore the NLP idea that every experience has a step-by-step structure that could be made explicit. So that’s what I worked on and what I had prepared. I made another assumption, namely, that experiencing a set-back was a loss, and therefore the grief stages of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross also described the *loss stages* of a set-back. And with that I put together the *stages and the strategy* of resilience.

Then came the workshop. It was a Sunday afternoon and I had a group of people who signed up for the “Go for it—Again” workshop. Then something unexpected happened, something I had not anticipated. The person I interviewed for the demonstration had enough awareness of himself and his experience to make the kind of statement which I had not heard in all of the interviews. Guiding him through the set-back stage, the emotional roller-coaster stage, the acceptance stage, the coping stage, the mastering stage, etc., he commented that he knew that he would transition from one of those stages to the next and bounce back.

That was a bit of a surprise. “You do? You know that you will move from that stage to the next?” He confirmed that with a strong “yes.” So I asked, “How? How do you know that?” “It is like I have something like a state, a state meta to my current state that I know I will get through all of this.” “A meta-state?” “Yes, a meta-state.”

And that did it. The words hypnotized me into an *Eureka state of awareness*, suddenly all of the studies in Korzybski and Bateson as well as studies in the field of Meta-Cognition exploded in my mind. And with that I suddenly saw the hidden structure behind the step-by-step Strategy Model. I pictured a state-*about-a-state* and the layering of mental and emotional states on top of each other and that gave birth to the Meta-States

Model. A few years ago I updated the resilience model in the book, *Resilience: Being the Phoenix* (2018) and also told the story in the book, *Thinking as a Modeler* (2018).

What's happened in the past 30 years with the Meta-States Model?

- In 1995 the Meta-States Model was recognized as “the most significant contribution to NLP” by the International Association of NLP Trainers.
- In 1996 Meta-States launched Neuro-Semantics, both as a model and as a community, the International Society of Neuro-Semantics (ISNS).
- In 1996 I began *The Meta-State Journal* which is now the PDF book, *Meta-States Magic*.
- In 1997 Bob Bodenhamer and I decided to see how Meta-States would fit into or re-model several NLP Model, that led to four books: *Mind-Lines*, *Adventures in Time*, *Patterns for Renewing the Mind*, and *Figuring Out People*.
- In 1997 I put the basics of Meta-States into the book, *Secrets of Personal Mastery*, which led to formatting Meta-States as a training, *Accessing Personal Genius* (APG) and APG then became the Gateway training for Neuro-Semantics which is now trained by hundreds of Neuro-Semantic Trainers all around the world.
- In 1999 we began training Trainers for training Meta-States which led to Neuro-Semantic Trainers' Training in 2000.
- In 2002 Meta-States gave birth to *The Matrix Model*.
- In 2002 we launched *The Meta-Coaching System* which highlighted NLP, Meta-States and the Matrix Model. Later we added other models: Axes of Change, Benchmarking, Facilitation, and Self-Actualization.
- In 2004 I gathered together 144 Meta-State Patterns and put them into the book, *The Source Book of Magic, Volume II*. Volume I (1997) only had a dozen Meta-State Patterns.
- In 2005 studying the history of the Human Potential Movement, Meta-States became the key ingredient in the process of *unleashing potentials* leading to the Construct, the Crucible, and the Zone. That, in turn, led to 16 books on Self-Actualization.
- In 2011 Meta-States was recognized in *Innovations of NLP*.
- In 2016 I delved into the *kind of thinking* inside of Meta-Stating, self-reflexivity, etc. which has led to 11 books and defined Neuro-Semantics as a Thinking Model.
- In 2020 I reviewed Meta-States and presented *The Unexpected Extensiveness of Meta-States* to several NLP Conferences and ISNS Wisdoms.

If you ask, Is Meta-States still generating new ideas, patterns, and models? The answer is *Yes!* Just two weeks ago as I was working on the manuscript for my next book, *Strategic Thinking*, I discovered something new about Meta-States. Namely that the driving factors for what makes any strategy works is not the step-by-step representations, but the hidden meta-strategy. Here's *Happy Birthday Meta-States!*

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #44
October 7, 2024

WHY THE “BRAIN CAMPS?”

Why did I create the Neuro-Semantic Brain Camps? Simple: To change the world! Period. Oh, you want a little bit more information about the Brain Camps—their design and function? Okay, here goes. If there is anything that seems to *govern the world*—it is how we talk, communicate, and relate to each other. How you and I talk, communicate, and relate determines how we get along, the quality of our relationship, how we work together, how we create partnerships and collaborations, how we manage ourselves in our cities and countries (also called ‘politics’), etc. How we talk, communicate, and relate governs how we do anything and everything—research, science, media, government, etc.

Now for a penetrating question: *What governs how we talk, communicate, and relate to each other?* Amazingly the answer is one thing—**how we think**. The *quality* of our thinking determines the *quality* of our life. If we think as a child—wishful thinking, magical thinking, egotistical thinking, concrete thinking, etc.—then we will talk and relate to each other in childish, silly, and stupid ways. That’s why we need to *grow up in our thinking* and put away childish thinking.

Children think as children because that’s what they are—*children*. And as children they are in the middle of growing up through the cognitive developmental stages. This is something we cover in Meta-Coaching and why we introduce the list of Cognitive Distortions. The very thinking patterns which are appropriate and good for children become *dangerous and destructive cognitive distortions* for adults.

Once we get beyond puberty and begin to experience the executive functions of the prefrontal cortex, then we begin *the journey into adult thinking*. It begins with the ability to think conceptually and abstractly. But this is where—*unless you get some training in how to think clearly*—you will fall into another set of thinking problems. We call those problems *Cognitive Biases*. They describe some of the built-in biases that frequently work, but that can also create all kinds of problems for us. And because there are so many of them (perhaps a hundred or more), I organized them into 7 categories in *Executive Thinking* (2018).

The third set of dangerous thinking patterns are called *Cognitive Fallacies*. We learn these ways of “reasoning” from parents, teachers, TV, peers, and social media because we hate to be wrong. We want to be right even if the way of thinking is *fallacious*. At least it helps us to win arguments!

So why the Brain Camps? To provide training in *how to think clearly and accurately*. Everything important in our lives depends on it! If you cannot *think about your thinking* then you cannot manage your thinking. Then your thinking *has* you rather than you *having* your thinking. And if you cannot manage yourself—change yourself, especially your thinking, then you will not be able to change how you talk, communicate, and relate. And if you cannot do that, then you cannot *change the world*, neither your immediate world or the larger world that you live in.

I want to change the world. How about you? Are you satisfied with the way the world is going? With the way your relationships are going? Your work, career, wealth creation, health, well-being, your physical fitness, etc.? If not, then if you want to change any aspect of any of these worlds—it always begins and depends upon your thinking. That’s because from your thinking comes your meaning-making, your framing, and reframing. This is not new, the ancients knew this power of thinking:

In *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius wrote: “*The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts.*”

In William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* arose the quotation: “*There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.*”

In Proverbs 23:7: “*As a man thinks in his heart, so he is.*”

To this date, we run three Brain Camps:

- *Brain Camp I: Thinking for Humans.* Here we cover the 15 thinking skills essential for clear, critical, and creative thinking. This is the foundation for every skill that you have and the key to tapping into your greatest resource.
- *Brain Camp II: Executive Learning.* Here we cover the 7 Dimensions of Learning, how you can accelerate your learning, and the quality of your learning. Put off by the word ‘learning,’ then try *Discovery* because that’s what learning is all about—discovering yourself, others, anything that fascinates you, the world.
- *Brain Camp III: Executive Decisions.* Here we cover the 5 stages of the decision-making process so you can become a truly smart and effective decision-maker. We do that because the quality of your decisions is the quality of your life.

Ready for tuning up your brain? Actually, the brain camps are not about your brain, they are about your mind—which is an emergent property from your brain. So most literally these are *Mind Camps* ... but Brain Camps sound sexier so we’ve gone with that.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #45
September 14, 2024
A Deep Dive Into Expertise #1

WHO WANTS TO BE AN EXPERT?

*“If we are to achieve results never before accomplished,
we must expect to employ methods never before attempted.”*

Francis Bacon

Do you remember the TV show, “Who wants to be a Millionaire?” It was a game show in which participants played to see who could win a million dollars. Similarly, I want to ask the question, *Who wants to become an Expert?* Now obviously, no one has the time, energy, talent, or resources to become an expert in everything. Even two things would be really, really pushing it. But what about an expert in one thing?

Now in most things I’m perfectly content to perform at a mediocre level. Cooking, driving, dressing, eating, doing math, handling my tax returns, mowing the yard, tasting wine, and a hundred other things—I have no desire to develop my knowledge and skills. I want to be a safe and responsible driver and that’s it. No dreams about driving a Formula 1 car around a race track.

Now if I understand the writings and psychology of Abraham Maslow, there is within every person a passion for excellence. *Excellence* is one of the *being*-values and one of the dominant ways that people often choose to actualize their “highest meanings and best performances.” What about you? Is there one thing in your life that you would love to be *excellent* at? Is there one area that resonates with you, that calls to you, and in which you would like to become *as good as you can be*?

For me that one area is modeling, and especially modeling subjective experiences of expertise. That’s what I discover in NLP that completely turned me around and gave me a new lease on life. Professionally I had moved into counseling and then into doing therapy. And while I enjoyed seeing people overcome their personal challenges and grow and become more of who they could become. But, then, after a number of years of working with people who were struggling with “the common cold” of therapeutic issues (i.e., anxiety, depression, grief, addiction, etc.), I wanted something more, something different.

That came in my first NLP trainings—the idea of capturing the structure of the best of experiences. I had already been moving into various forms of psychotherapy that also focused on that—strength-based therapy, narrative, brief psychotherapy, solution-focus therapy, etc. So finding NLP was a heavenly gift—here was a field devoted not so much

to remedial change but to generative change. The focus was on changing things to enable people to find their form of excellence— their expertise.

Much later I dived into Abraham Maslow’s work on self-actualization. And while I had read Maslow back in the late 1970s, apparently I was not ready to hear what he had to say. I suppose I was living at the lower needs levels and not ready for the higher needs levels. Nor did I have any idea at the time that Maslow was at the foundation of NLP. I discovered that by accident. As it turned out, Maslow and Rogers were the thought leaders of *the Human Potential Movement* through the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. They planted the original ideas about generative change and generative psychology. Then out of the late 1960s and 1970s second generation leaders arose—Fritz Perls, Virginia Satir, Gregory Bateson. Then also the new Kresgie College (1972) emerged to embody the values and thinking of Carl Rogers’.

Now what is called *self-actualization* took on a whole new meaning—it is a human being *fully alive/ fully human*. Rogers said “fully functioning.” Maslow said fulfilling the highest values—the meta-values (*being-values*).

Study your own top performers. That’s what Disney, Southwest Airlines, GE, and Ritz-Carlton did. They learned from their best. Studying internal best practices is the regimen that makes the difference. 159. It takes years to become the world’s best. Great managers use excellence as their frame of reference when assessing performance. Tough love, they do not compromise on this standard. Not what level of performance is unacceptable. Any level that hovers around average with no trend upward.

For the *Deep Dive* books — click on the following:

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #46
September 18, 2024

JUST ANSWER THE QUESTION!

Personally, *I love questions*. Good questions means that people are thinking—and great questions opens up new venues for new discoveries. And when I know the answers to deeply felt questions, I love providing those answers. I’ve studied and researched for years to be able to do that, and if it enriches the minds and lives of those asking—then it’s fantastic. And when I don’t know an answer, I just say, “I don’t know but I will find out.” That would then put me on the search for the answers.

But apparently, Kamala Harris does not like to answer questions. She does seem skilled at memorizing certain lines and repeated them over and over—lines that say nothing and convey no actual information. This became clear in the recent interview this week.

When Bret Baier interview Kamala Harris on Wednesday he began by asking “How many illegal immigrants do you estimate have entered the US during your tenure as vice president?” Instead of answering the question, she said, “I’m glad you asked that question; that’s a questions that lots of people want to have a conversation about ... “ etc. Now if someone asked me, “How long have you been in NLP?” I would not say, “I’m glad you asked that question; that’s a question that lots of people would like to have a conversation about...” and then go on to talk about something else. Instead I would say, “Since 1985, so 39 years.” The only thing that Harris demonstrated was her ability to talk in such empty glittering generalities.

Throughout the interview I kept thinking, “*Just answer the question!*” But she did not. Time and time again, she deflected from the topic Baier brought up and never got around to answering the question. Now why would someone do that? What’s wrong with someone, especially who wants to be a leader, who simply does not answer a question? It makes us wonder, What is the person hiding? What is the person afraid of? So why would a person *not answer* a question? Here are some possibilities.

- 1) The person does not know the answer.
- 2) The person does *not want* to answer because it would embarrass him or her.
- 3) The person feels that she would be ‘out-of-control’ if she follows the questioning of another person and from a strong-will perceptive has to resist.
- 4) The person thinks that an interview is a game of winners and losers and to answer allows the other person to ‘win.’
- 5) The person only knows how to speak in terms of glittering generalities and is simply unable to speak in specifics.
- 6) The person thinks that people can be duped by generalities and that she can distract people by lots of talk (filibusting) that moves the conversation away from the subject of the question.

7) The person refuses to be held accountable for her own behavior or for what the Binden/ Harris administration did and is doing.

Whatever her reason, she was excellent at not answer the questions and trying to deflect attention away from herself. She did that by constantly attacking Donald Trump; in 25 minutes she mentioned him 113 times(!). But sadly that is the old *fallacious thinking error* called *ad hominen* which means “to the person.” It is used when someone wants to attack someone’s reasoning and argument, but cannot do it, so they attack *the person*. [I wrote about fallacious thinking in *Executive Thinking*, 2018.]

Once after speaking about her psychological abilities to read Trump and see him as unstable, she was asked about her perceptions of Joe Binden and the months (or years) of his mental decline. She immediately said that Binden is not on the ticket. and while that is true, *her judgments and evaluations* are on the ticket. Could she not see Binden’s decline? If so, why did she never speak of it? Why did she speak up constantly saying that he was sharp as a tack and could run circles around others? Otherwise if she did not, what makes her able to do it now with Trump?

Personally I think the interview was a total shipwreck for Harris. It was suppose to let her present her positions about what she would do to make things better. But instead of that, she never talked about her program, she only talked about her criticisms of Trump. And given that to this day she has not held a single Press Conference and only done friendly interviews, with this first serious interview, she completely failed to handle things and, in fact, got pretty angry.

In terms of *thinking* and *communicating*, it was a good example of how a person can say a lot and convey nearly no information. Someone should offer her some training in NLP!

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #47
September 21, 2024
A Deep Dive Into Expertise #2

FOR EXCELLENCE—GO META!

You could do a really, really good job by behaviorally copying when an expert does. It's possible. And that's what many people do. They see an expert doing something or they find a best practice—and they simply repeat or mimic as best they can what they see. And they could also be very diligent about this. They could make videos of what the expert does; they could study it frame by frame. They could use deliberate practice to integrate the actions. But there's a problem. If they don't enter into the expert's mind—into the person's meta place of beliefs, values, understandings, memories, imagination, intentions, etc., *they will never truly model what that expert does.*

How can I say that? Why is that the case? The answer is simple—it's because excellence in behavior springs from the higher level mental mapping—*the expert's frames*. Excellence is not merely, or just *behavior*, even though that is obviously where it shows up. And it is the excellent behavior which causes us to stand in awe of the expertise in the first place. Yet the excellence in behavior is driven from a higher place—the expert's mind in her Meta Place.

This is the scandal of NLP Modeling. In NLP, most so-called modeling focuses on the primary state, not the meta-states. It focuses on the representations steps of the Strategy Model and not on the higher level frames that makes it possible. That's the scandal. It offers “the study of the structure of subjective experience” but fails to give the full structure. Now that model works quite sufficiently for simple, in-the-moment type of strategies like spelling. But if we are to identify “the structure of experience” by an expert that involves anything more complex, we have to elicit the structure of the expert's meta-mind. We have to ask, “What's in the back of the mind?” and we have to ask that question about each aspect of the strategy.

Now true enough, both Dilts and Gordon attempted to get at least a little bit of the expert's meta-mind. Robert Dilts did it with his four meta-levels of his *Neuro-Logical Levels Model* (beliefs, values, identity, purpose) and David Gordon did it with his *Experiential Array Model* which elicits different kinds of beliefs. But both of these attempts at making explicit the meta-levels of the mind severely fall short of what's there.

This is why the Meta-States Model truly opens up the meta-levels and lets us look in to see a much fuller richness of the mind which is the Meta Place. In the original Meta-States Model, I collected as many meta-levels as I could think of (i.e., meta-terms) and

put them in the *Diamond of Consciousness Diagram*. As a result of that—you have 26 meta-levels to work with.

The purpose of the *Diamond* was to indicate that all of these are *facets* of the same thing—the consciousness of the expert or his conscious experience. Therefore if one of the meta-level *terms* did not work, simply go to the next one. If you ask, “What do you believe about X?” and the person says, “Believe? I don’t believe anything about that, I just know.” Then ask, “What do you know about X?” Shift the meta-level from belief to knowing.

The 26 levels, however, is a lot and over the years I noticed that I tended to only use about 10 of them. So in Meta-Coaching, under *Meta-Questioning*, that’s what we focused on—the *ten most common meta-levels that defines the Meta Place*.

Belief — Value — Identity — Intention — Decision — Expectation —
Imagination — Memory — Permission/ Prohibition — Metaphor.

What’s wonderful about these 10 meta-terms and meta-levels is that by asking about these, they will take you just about everywhere you need to go with a person. You won’t need any more. These are enough. Notice that two terms are not in the list, two terms that are very general and which actually cover the ten because all ten of the terms are also *frames* and each one is a form of *meaning*.

The modeling of “mind” (thinking) beginning in 2016 brought to my attention that we have all of these *meta-level words*, but no structure. Then I also began identifying more, in fact, 100 terms for thinking. And without a structure, it is next-to-impossible to even imagine what the Meta Place would look like. Consequently I struggled with that for several years. Later by examining the *process itself—namely, thinking*— I began to sort the ten meta-terms out and consider a few more. That led to the diagrams of the Meta Place as a model of the mind. And while the Meta Place is not an actual, literal or real diagram of the meta-levels (there is no such thing), it does enable us to *take the major processes of consciousness (mind) into account*. And that is its purpose—so that we can embrace all of the mind’s functioning.

Why do you need to go meta when modeling excellence? It’s because above and beyond the first-level representation of the steps, you need to know the hidden frames that actually drive and determine the behavior. That’s where you will find the true distinctions of the expert’s mind. And it’s the expert’s mind that drives the expertise. It’s her attitude, perspective, and understandings.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #46
October 21, 2024
A Deep Dive Into Expertise #3

EXPERTISE IS IN THE META PLACE

Because *For Excellence—Go Meta* (Neurons #45), the actual structure and essence of expertise is in the Meta Place, that is, in the mind. Yes the mental structure will ultimately be expressed in the step by step *action steps* which require for you to *do* specific actions in the real world. Yet that's not where "the magic" lies. What makes the experience magical and awesome lies behind the scenes—in the back of the mind in the person's higher *thinking* (consciousness). And that's what we have to model if we are to be able to replicate the expertise of the expert.

Anyone who tries to *merely copy or mimic* the expertise of a highly skilled practitioner only cheats himself. He's only working with the obvious behaviors and missing out on all of the inner richness of the expert's mind-and-emotion, values and understandings, insights and beliefs. In this, as in everything human, it is inside—out. What's on the outside did not originate there. It came from the inside. The expert operates from an internal mental model, that's what we want to discover.

Now we have a problem. While we can see, hear, and sense what's on the outside, how do we see, hear, and sense what's on the inside? How can we see the mind? How can we see an expert's mind in action generating the information and forms which enable the expertise to arrive? In answer to these questions, we need a way to see or imagine the mind, especially the mind in action.

The wrong answer here goes to the brain, brain anatomy, neurology, and the neurosciences. *The brain is not the mind*. And no matter how well you understand the brain—that does not necessarily open up an understanding about the mind. Yes, the mind arises as an emergent property from the brain and as a felt, subjective experience of the brain, but it is not the brain. You can know all about the brain and know nothing about the mind, how it is functioning, what it is doing, or how to manage it.

For the right answer, we have to ask a very different question. Namely, what does the mind do? If we ask, what does the brain do? The answer: *it processes information*. Neurons jump synapses, neuro-transmitter, and neuro-modulators help with this. Then other parts of the brain, and with the information substances, transit bio-chemical and bio-electrical information around the brain. But none of that helps us. So we repeat the question— what does the mind do? The answer is as simple as it is profound—it *thinks*.

What your mind and mine most fundamentally does is *think* and it *thinks* in many different ways and at many different levels. In thinking, the mind represents, edits, **From:**

concludes, believes, values, remembers, imagines, identifies, intends, etc. These are the different kinds of thinking which your mind does. It is because of this that I started to identify these kinds of thoughts as *landmarks of the mind*. And with landmarks we can now see the mind functioning and the way these kinds of thinking relate to each other. Now we can see the mind thinking and operating and can influence it.

Now given all of that, as we look into the expert's mind to see what she is thinking, we can visit each thinking landmark and ask: What is she representing? How is she editing her representations? What is she concluding? Believing? Valuing? Remembering? Imagining? Intending? And in this way we can map the higher level thinking of the expert which creates the excellence.

For Training in the Meta Place

contact: Mariani – mariani_ng@meta-mind.com

Mandy — mandy@apti.com.hk

Bali, Indonesia — November 29-30, 2024

For the book — *The Meta Place*

For an actual real book: <https://www.neurosemantics.com/products/themetaplace/>

As a PDF book: <https://www.neurosemantics.com/shop/page/8/>

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #47
October 28, 2024
A Deep Dive Into Expertise #4

REVERSING FAILURE DOES NOT EQUAL EXPERTISE

“You cannot learn very much about excellence from studying failure. Of all the infinite number of ways to perform a certain task, most of them are wrong. There are only a few right ways. Excellence is not the opposite of failure. It is just different. It has its own configuration.” *First, Break all the Rules.* Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman.

This quotation reflects the very premise which we use in NLP. Namely, that when you want to develop models of excellence, it will do you no good to study what is broken, flawed, or dysfunctional. Bandler compared that approach to visiting a junkyard and studying broken and crashed cars if your outcome is to design and build the next generation of new cars. If you study the cars in a junkyard and how they broke down, or were destroyed, and then try to reverse what went wrong, that is not likely to enable you to create an excellent car. The same is true of dysfunctional families, individuals, and organizations —studying them will not give you the pathway to excellence.

Buckingham and Coffman suggest that there’s not that much we can learn about *excellence* from *failure* because there’s so many ways to fail, and only a few ways to succeed. To succeed at doing something with excellence, and developing expertise requires being willing to identify the required factors and then working with those variables in a focused way. The first key is to identify what’s necessary and sufficient. And those factors may be the ones especially missing in the junkyard.

What this means for you, if you want to pursue expertise, is that when you know the required factors, *stop chasing options*. For people who are option-oriented, this can be challenging and at first unpleasant. What happens when a person is always trying to find *yet another way, another alternative, etc.* to doing what you know are true and tested ways? You get distracted and lose the intensity of focus which you need to develop excellence in what you are doing.

The authors also say something else important about excellence, namely *expertise has its own configuration*. It has its own structure or form. Often that’s what is discovered and what creates a paradigm shift in a field. Someone thinks outside of the box and comes up with something that no one had ever thought of before. How do we find such

variables? This is where brainstorming comes in, reading outside of the field, asking, “What am I missing?” “What else could be there but is not?”

Excellence is almost never about *fixing* what has not worked or what barely worked. Excellence is not a remedial type of experience. Instead it is generative by nature and arises from thinking anew about an area, often re-thinking the assumptions and premises that have led to the previous failures. Not infrequently what goes wrong and causes failure goes to the fact that the previous actions were based on false premises.

When you study failure, you will mostly learn excellent ways to fail. You might also learn about the variables that make something go wrong. At best, you will learn about the factors that need to be fixed or repaired. Ironically a great deal of “problem-solving” among individuals and in organizations is entirely *problem-focused*. It is directed to identifying and correcting the problem, or identifying the persons involved, it is remedial in nature. It is not focused on excellence—on a superior product, service, or methodology.

The solution to trying to study failure and then reverse it to identify excellence is to move away from a problem focus in the first place and *adopt a solution focus*. It is to focus on your desired outcome and what excellence mean in terms of that outcome. And that’s why we look to experts and Carl Rogers’ “fully functioning persons” as exemplars who we want to model.

For more

Thinking Like a Modeler (2018)

Deep Dive into Expertise (2022)

<https://www.neurosemantics.com/shop/page/8/>

<https://www.neurosemantics.com/products/>

L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #48
November 4, 2024
A Deep Dive Into Expertise #5

THE BRAIN MIND CONFUSION —AGAIN

I just finished reading *The Immune Mind: The Hidden Dialogue Between Your Brain and Immune System* (2024) by Monty Lyman, M.D. The book describes the current state of neuro-immunology and lots of recent discoveries in the neuro-sciences. Overall I appreciated his systemic thinking about body, brain, immune system, and microbiome. He speaks often and elegantly about the problem with the Descartes' dichotomy of mind–body; body–brain, etc. He focuses mostly on *inflammation* as one of our biggest biological problems and how it undermines the immune system as our “defense system.”

As a storyteller he relates the history of how we got to where we are in terms of brain and body anatomy and discoveries regarding the immune system. He notes that “the brain and the immune system live parallel lives.” (17). He described in detail the discovery of meningeal lymphatics and “the immune highways between brain and body.” (25).

“Your skull is not just a crash helmet, protecting your brain from the punches, falls, and bites of the macroscopic world. It is also an immune watchtower, surveying the brain for microscopic threats.” (28).

“If the brain and the body are intimately connected, we are only just beginning to decode their language and listen in on their conversations.” (37)

Now in spite of all of the good stuff in the book especially at the end about eating, sleeping, exercising, playing, etc., Lyman makes one big mistake. Namely, *he constantly confuses the brain and the mind*. For the first three chapters he mostly described the brain and the nervous systems and how they work, including the immune system. He constantly used the phrase, “our body and brain” (35). Then he began substituting “mind” for brain and continued that false equation throughout the rest of the book.

(You can see this on pages 66, 69, “the many ways our gut microbiota can communicate with our *mind*” 82, “*mind*, immune system, and microbiome’s three parts of the same process” 89, anti-NMDA encephalitis is a case of the immune system attacking the *mind*” 100, 103, 107, 109, 111, “between brain and immune system— between *mind* and body” 142, italics added, etc.)

When it came to defining terms, he did an excellent job on nearly all of the terms he introduced. He even wrote, “We need to define our terms.” And he did a thorough job defining “depression.” (p. 116-7). *But shockingly he never defined “mind.”* Instead he just assumed that it is the same thing as the brain. Now why would he make that assumption? As a physician and psychiatrist, his focus is on the body, the physical, and

the medical, not the psychological. And since the brain “thinks” he seems to assume, “ah, that’s the mind.” He also equated the effect of neuro-chemicals to changes in mood to those chemicals making the mind do what it does. “Endotoxin has proved a great way of studying how inflammation affects the mind” (38).

“We now know the *brain* and the *immune system* are tightly enmeshed, and this enables the *immune system* and the *mind* to achieve the common goal of surviving and thriving in a microbial world.” (48, italics added).

At one point, Lyman does mention the *mind* and the functioning of the frontal lobe and its role in personality, self-control, etc. (76), yet he makes no distinction here from his previous uses of ‘brain.’ His big mistake comes from his equation: “Remember psychology *is* biology” (149). To say that is an over-statement is an under-statement! Psychology emerges from biology, but is not the same. Later he diagramed his model with 3 items: Immune system — Microbiome — Brain (183). So where is the *mind*? Sadly, the “mind” is missing here!

Does the brain “think?” It depends on what we mean by “think” doesn’t it? The brain certainly *processes information*. Most of this information processing and transfer occurs outside-of-consciousness and we not only are not privy to it, we cannot become aware of it. Bateson and Korzybski described this *abstracting* and *cognizing* of the brain as occurring below conscious awareness. In this the brain does a lot of *unconscious learning and remembering* which enables us to function as we do. So like Korzybski (and NLP), Lyman writes, “our brain generates a model of the outside world which it constantly builds on and updates.” (50)

It’s the brain working outside of our consciousness that screens sensory information and abstracts what it perceives. He’s ‘right on’ when he writes, “The brain is not primarily there to think; it is to serve a complex and fragile body in an ever-changing world.” (54). But then he really misses it when he says, “humans always seem to be seeking novelty and uncertainty.” That’s because he fails to distinguish between primary, automatic, and reactive “thinking” and the ability to be conscious of our consciousness (thinking about thinking).

The distinction that both Korzybski and Bateson made, and all of the theorists in the field of Meta-Cognition, is that between *the levels of thinking*. All thinking is not the same. Thinking can and does occur on multiple levels. Certainly the brain “thinks” unconsciously when it (or the immune system) does the following:

“The brain can powerfully perceive infection...” (57). “Your brain is constantly interpreting your body...” (59). “You could say that your immune cells are listening to your thoughts” (61) well that’s going too far!

But the brain does not do *conscious thinking*, that’s the role of the mind. *The mind*, based in the brain and completely dependent on the brain, *arises as an emergent property from the brain*. In other words, you are not your brain. You have a meta-awareness that allows you to be aware-of-your-awareness—that’s the first meta-state we all have. This arises from the *reflexivity* mechanism *or your self-reflexive consciousness*. How does that

work? Ah, the big mystery that has, and continues to, mystify philosophers especially those in the field, ‘the philosophy of mind’ (yes, that’s an entire field in the narrow area).

Lyman quotes many neuro-scientists throughout the book and most of what he presents is really good and valuable. But as I’ve mentioned before— NLP is *not* about *literally* “running your own brain” even though we use that phrase. Yes, we *take care* of our brain by eating right, sleeping sufficiently, exercising, etc. and stimulating it intellectually. But NLP and Neuro-Semantics is about *managing our mind, controlling our consciousness, and in that way increase our IQ and our EQ.*

The bottom line: The brain is not the mind. With the brain we “think”—the intelligence within our body, our nervous systems, our immune system, etc. processes information and does so apart from our consciousness. With your mind, you consciously think (at least we hope you do!). You are able to become aware of the results of your brain’s processing and aware of your conscious thinking and because of that, you can become *mindful* and you can live *mindfully*.

The brain is mysterious enough and this book is about demystifying the brain’s immune system that distinguishes self and not-self. The Mind —however— now that’s where the mystery really lives. And when all of the mysteries of the brain are finally revealed, there will still be the mysteries of the mind.

Training Announcement:

Want to explore the mind? Join me in Bali Indonesia for *The Meta Place*.

L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #49
November 8, 2024
Election Reflections
[My personal opinion]

MAP & TERRITORY MEDIA & REALITY

During the last three days, since the historic landside victory for Donald Trump in the US Elections this week, there has been a flood of postmortems now occurring on all of the news channels, cable news programs, podcasts, and radio talk shows. Everyone is trying to figure out *what happened and why*. Within nearly all of the categories that typically vote Democrat (women, Hispanics, Blacks, Jews, young people, families making less than \$100K, etc.) people broke at unprecedented levels for the Republicans. Surprisingly one group that increased for Harris were people making more than \$400K a year (the 1% wealthy).

Now prior to November 5, if you listened to the mainstream media (ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, and even Fox, Newsnation, etc.), you would have thought that it was “the tightest race” ever. It was “razor thin.” That’s what they all said. But no. What the media presented and the reality of what people thought and did were miles apart. The mental map that we received from the media and the actual territory were not the same at all.

Now to add to the gap between media and reality is the fact that the media’s reports, stories, and framing about Donald Trump was 90% negative and for Kamala Harris it was 87% positive. The media was definitely and highly biased for Harris and against Trump. No wonder we got a distorted picture! No wonder what we saw and heard via TV, newspapers, radio, social media *and what we experienced* at the grocery store, the gasoline station, the monthly electric bills, mortgage and/or rent bills, etc. were worlds apart. The world of media and the world that we live in were not the same.

That’s the thing about *the reality of the territory*, it is what it is in spite of your mental map. And whatever the mental map—it is *just a map*. No matter how strong your bias is for your map—your beliefs and your confidence—it doesn’t change *what is*. Being told that inflation is now “lower” does not lower the price of eggs and bread, and especially when you mean “the rate of inflation is lower now than it was.” *Being told* something does not make it so. Whatever the facts on the ground are—that’s what’s real. The verbal spin about it is someone’s *interpretation* about it.

Korzybski said “The map is not the territory.” There are several excellence metaphors of that metaphor: “The menu is not the meal.” “The sex manual is not sex.” “The picture of your children in your billfold is not your children.” Korzybski also said that a map is

only good and useful (not particularly ‘true’) if it’s structure is similar to the territory. Then you can use it to navigate the territory—you can use your mental map (your thinking, believing, understanding, etc.) to achieve your goals and experience what you want to experience.

So in NLP and Neuro-Semantics we ask, “Does the information (map) correspond to the reality?” “What are the brute facts on the ground and not the so-called ‘facts’ filtered by the bias of the speaker?” Untrue facts mislead our minds and emotions because they distort what’s real.

Why did Trump win? The good news is that people *distrusted the media*. They trusted their own eyes and ears, their own pocketbooks when they shopped more than what the media told them. That’s good. It means that the common people—especially the working men and woman used their common sense. It means, to quote Lincoln, you can’t fool all of the people all of the time.

The media *said* that crime was down, but it wasn’t and we could see new levels of crime going on all around us. The media *said* the border was secure yet we could see thousands coming across the border every single day adding up to millions unvetted people entering. The media *said* Trump was dangerous, a Hitler, a Fascist, a Felon, etc., but we saw him preparing fries and serving hamburgers at the drive-through and getting into a garbage truck with the appropriate vest. What the media did not say is *who* Trump is dangerous to—not the everyday person. He’s a threat the elites and the bureaucrats.

Map and territory—they are not the same by any stretch of the imagination and that’s why we put such a big emphasis on *clear, critical, and creative thinking*. Your mental map and mine come from how we think. For democracy to succeed, there needs to be an educated populace—people need to think for themselves and speak up. There’s been far too much censorship and social pressure against questioning. To *Speak Up, Speak Clear, Speak Kind*, see the small book with that title. For thinking clearly, critically, and creatively, see *Thinking for Humans*. When you graduate from that book, then you’ll be ready for *Executive Thinking*.

<https://www.neurosemantics.com/products/>

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #50
November 11, 2024
A Deep Dive Into Expertise #6

EXPERTISE

A FUNCTION OF FOCUSING

*“If people know how hard I work to gain mastery,
it wouldn’t seem wonderful at all.”*

Michaelangelo

The person who has probably most emphasized the relationship between focus and expertise is Csikszentmihalyi and his work on the phenomena of *flow*. For him, to get into the flow zone meant a special kind of thinking, a special kind of attention, what he described as a near-total concentration on the task at hand. In searching for words for this state, he called it an altered state, a hypnotic state, and a state of absorption. In this state of focus, you would be doing no multi-tasking because of the intensity of your focus.

This focus state would also be a state of mental clarity in each and every stage. First mental clarity about your goals, then about your actions in reaching your goals, then about your problem-solving and decision-making as you identified the specifics for reaching your goal. For Csikszentmihalyi this *mental clarity* was something you had to work for in terms of your thinking skills and abilities. It does not come to the mentally or physically lazy.

Speaking about the effort it takes, it was Csikszentmihalyi who came up with the two axes, challenge and competence. When a person unites both in a singular action, she enters *the flow zone*. If there is ability to perform and the focus is entirely there, then one will easily get bored and enter into *the drone zone*. If there is the ability to take on the next level of challenge, but only to do that, then one enters into *the panic zone* of anxiety and stress.

For the excellence of the flow zone, you have synergize both challenge and competence. In Neuro-Semantics we do that with the Meta-Coaches and the Trainers by using *deliberate practice*—constantly adding a bit more challenge to whatever level of performance a person can achieve. Doing that keeps you in the flow zone—always learning, always getting a bit better, always moving toward excellence.

Now to do that, welcome the next level of challenge even if it scares you. By doing that you can transform your fears into *a challenge*. The amazing thing is that when you frame it as a challenge, your fear becomes a compass for you. And eventually you can learn to

enjoy the risk as you look forward to the challenge as the next to step up to. As you keep doing this, you'll experientially discover that risks are always relative. What is a 'risk' at one time, becomes 'nothing' at a later time. The more your skills and competence increase, the less your sense of risk. You'll also discover in your experience that risk is actually needed if you are to stay in the flow zone.

Whatever you are currently doing to become more skillfully competent, how much of a sense of risk do you feel? If none, then you're playing things too safe. And you are probably selling yourself short. If it is too much, you are in danger of getting overwhelmed and too anxious and giving up. So aim for a moderate amount of risk—perhaps 5% more challenge. Push yourself to reach beyond your current level of skill. You will need to find *the sweet spot* for yourself as we all do. If you are a coach or trainer, sit for assessment! Scary? Good. It's good because when you don't know what's going to happen, you pay more attention.

To find the synergy between challenge and competence, you also need the right attitude. You need a mind-set that allows you to stay flexible so you can adapt. The risk of acting is not about "success or failure," it is about learning, improving, discovering new insights. The motto in Silicon Valley has been, "Fail early, fail often, fail forward." And that's the attitude—failure is a tool for progress. No wonder experts themselves often say that the path to being exceptional begins when you decide to be responsible for your actions no matter the situation. Notice the response you get, if it is not what you want, learn from the experience, and go for it again. Maybe, just maybe, that's what Michaelangelo meant in his quotation at the beginning of this article.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #51
November 18, 2024

POST-MORTEMES & THE ELECTION

Figuring Out ‘What Went Wrong?’

What went wrong? How did Kamala Harris lose so badly? And how did Donald Trump win so decisively? Since the election there has been over a week of post-mortems and a lot of it degenerated into various “blame games.” And just about every democrat was targeted for the blame—*Biden* for getting out so late, for not supporting Harris more, for hiding his cognitive decline, for blowing the debate.

Harris for not having a specific agenda, for not answering questions, for her word-salads, for not accepting tough interviews. *The democrat party* for not having a primary, for a Woke agenda. *The media* for covering up Biden’s decline, for not asking follow-up questions of Harris, not focusing on the everyday issues of the voters (economy, inflation, border, etc.). *Obama* for scolding black men. *The voters* for being ignorant, being brainwashed, for their racism, sexism, etc.

As “the blame game” by which various commentators, and others who were invited to chime in—people tended to think in very simplistic either/or ways. A few, however, knew how to distinguish *blame* from *responsibility*. I was impressed by Stephen Smith, a very thoughtful democrat pundit, who identified a whole range of factors that came together to create the situation. He also used the post-mortem as it is designed—as a way to *learn* from mistakes and to correct them. He focused on *responses* and *responsibility* rather than judging people. His focus was on learning and understanding.

When I think about it—Trump’s overwhelming victory was *in spite of so many things*. He won in spite of having a lower “favorability” rating, in spite of being labeled a felon (due to the lawfare bring by Biden’s DOJ), and in spite of being called the worst of names, Nazi, Hitler, Fascist, etc. He won in spite of talking like a gruff blue-color worker, in spite of the media’s bias against him (90% of all media reports were negative about him). And in spite of all of that—*Americans voted overwhelmingly for him*. So, how did that happen? The lawfare did not work; the media bias didn’t work; the assassination attempts did not work; and the name-calling didn’t work. So how do we explain that?

A Psychological Perspective

As a psychologist here’s my view of the victory as *a psychological victory*, rather than a political one. It seems to me that there were several *psychological factors* which worked to his advantage.

First, everyday reality won. The reality of grocery prices, gas prices, mortgages, rent, etc. won. And media's spin that the economy was getting better did not deceive people. Everyday people could tell the difference between media spin about the economy and the reality of the economy as they experience it. (Neurons #49)

Second, authenticity won. I wrote about this earlier (Neurons #46). You may not like how Donald Trump sometimes speaks, but he speaks his mind and he is authentic. The same cannot be said for Harris at all. She was far too cautious, too hesitant to say what she actually thought, to explain why she changed her mind about many things, to answer questions. She played the role of a "politician" far too well. There were also too many contradictions in her. On the one hand, "nothing comes to mind" regarding anything she would do different from the four years of the Biden administration, but on the other hand, she is going to "turn the page." On the one hand she was a prosecutor, but on the other hand she could not say she would vote for proposition 36 in California making shoplifting a crime.

Third, memory won. People remembered what life was like when Trump was President (2017- 2020) in contrast to what life has been like under Harris/Biden (2021-224). Repeatedly people exited the poles saying, "I had more money in my pocket." "There were no new wars under Trump." "There was no invasion at the border." They remembered and that memory made the difference. The current reality was too painful and Harris and other democrats running for office did not communicate that they under their pain.

Fourth, common sense won. You can't "defund the police" and then claim that you will make people safer. You can't open up the border and then ignore migrant crimes. You can't promote boys in girl's sports and claim it is fair or democratic. You can't prevent parents from knowing what's going on with their kids in school regarding their gender and say you are for democracy. None of that makes sense. It is certainly not common sense.

Fifth, human needs won. Finally, I think that people voted according to their human needs rather than ideologies. They voted in terms of their needs for safety and security, financial survival (lower taxes, lower inflation), and physical survival (wanting lower crime). They did not vote for Woke ideology and the Political Correctness.

Sixth, humor won the day. Having written a book on human (*Thinking Humorously*), I looked for and noted the amount, kind, and nature of the humor used by both Trump and Harris. In Harris' campaign speeches, there was almost no humor. By contrast, Trump uses a lot of humor. Most often is his exaggerations, his play on words, and some of it is his storytelling. He told about wearing the garbage man's vest and how someone said "it makes you look thinner." So he wore it on stage! He often used self-depreciation humor which was aimed at himself.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #52
November 25, 2024
A Deep Dive Into Expertise #7

STRATEGIC THINKING AND CHESS

If you want to make a deep dive into expertise, you need to *learn to think strategically*. When you learn this kind of thinking, you learn to think in terms of the future and you do so from today's perspective. Strategic thinking is a *Now—Then* thinking that answers several questions: What do you want? Where are you today? What do you have to do to achieve your future vision? Having recently completed my next *thinking* book, *Strategic Thinking*, I realized that we could actually use the game of chess as a tool for developing this kind of thinking.

Now if there's any game that without question facilitates *strategic thinking*, it is chess. And not only strategic thinking, but also *tactical thinking*. Now what's fascinating about chess is that a young child can learn the required "knowledge" about chess in just a few minutes. It's not that complex. There are only six kinds of *players* in the game—pawns, knights, bishops, rucks, the queen, and the king. And the way they move is also pretty simple. Only the knight is a bit strange as it moves in an "L" shape (two spaces forward, one to the side). So actually learning to play chess is remarkably easy.

What's difficult is the complexity of the interactions of the parts. Now you have to do some strategic calculating about future consequences. "If I move X-piece to this or that space, what will happen?" In this, with chess you learn to consider lines of play—"If I do this, my partner will do this other thing." Accordingly, you learn to calculate with care, with precision, and with concentration. And with that, you are learning to think strategically—you learn to think about the future from where you are today.

As you play chess, you learn to plan, but also you learn that the value of your planning does not last very long. As soon as you plan, and your partner makes a move, your plan goes out of the window. Now for some new planning. And while you do the long-term thinking of planning, in the meanwhile you have to do the short-term thinking of coping with the situation on the board and adapting to what's happening right now.

Accordingly, to play well, you have to stay constantly alert to the feedback that you're getting from the other player and manage your own state about mistakes. That's because mistakes are inevitable especially when beginning to learn and even at the professional level, everyone makes mistakes. It's part and parcel of the fun, the adventure, and the challenge.

The solution is to learn to see the whole game in all of its dynamism. And to do that is make systemic thinking part of your strategic thinking. Systemic thinking means

understanding the whole will often have properties which do not arise from the sum of the parts. When everything is connected, then new properties can emerge. Jonathan Rowson explains:

“Chess players are intuitive systems thinkers because we learn that if we do not see the relationships and interactions that define the whole position, we are likely to misunderstand the parts, the pieces, and put them on the wrong squares. Chess can therefore be a source of *tacit* learning about systems.” (*The Moves that Matter: A Chess Grandmaster on the Game of Life*. 2019, p. 121)

“Chess can help you think of the world in relational and system terms and perhaps even cultivate some ecological sensibility. The game serves to highlight perspectives that can transform our understanding of how we might think more clearly and wisely.” (*Ibid.*, 2019, p. 105)

The meta-detailing aspect of strategic thinking is learned as you play chess because to succeed you have given attention to minute detail. You might think it would be so simple to see six kinds of players and 16 pieces on each side—yet due to the many different kinds of interactions and the constant changing of the board, it requires a lot of focus. And not only focus, but *keeping the pieces in mind*. When you can do that, then you are getting into the place where you can do effective *pattern recognition*.

In chess, *pattern recognition is the essence of strategic thinking*. That’s because it is pattern detection whereby you grasp the complex system as a system which enables you to do relevant and effective calculations as you plan and adapt. From there you can begin to do effective heuristic thinking. That is, you use some basic guidelines (heuristics) to inform your strategy: Develop your knights before your bishops; Don’t move your queen in the opening; Capture towards the center.

The bottom line is that *if you want to develop your strategic thinking skills*—play chess. Chess gives you a desired outcome—checkmate your partner. Then with that goal, now you have to plan your moves to see if you can arrange things to achieve that outcome.



From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #53
December 2, 2024

TRUE THINKERS ARE DANGEROUS

If there's anything that a tyrant or a dictator does *not* want, it is *people who think*. People who hunger for power and control want people they can control, and the more a person is a *true thinker*, the less one can control them. The less they will mindlessly comply. They will ask questions. They will ask for evidence and reasons. They will use a healthy dose of skepticism to question where you get your information and check if you have done due diligence in gathering that information.

This makes a true thinker dangerous—dangerous to the status quo, dangerous to manipulation, dangerous to politics as usual, to PC politics (politically correct), dangerous to fake news, and dangerous to Woke philosophy. Given all of that, a personal question: *Are you a true thinker?* A sign that you might be is if people around you, above you and below you are constantly saying, “Relax, you think too much!” “You shouldn't ask so many questions, it's not polite.”

Now truly *thinking*, and asking lots of questions, is one of the things that Abraham Maslow discovered in the self-actualizing people who he modeled. Actually, they were self-actualizing precisely because they were thinking and because they were asking lots of questions. And this fits our long-term goal in Neuro-Semantics of *changing the way people on Planet Earth think*. Our goal is to enable people to think clearly, critically, and creatively. Maslow wrote that: “People who know too much are likely to rebel.” (1968, p. 62). Accordingly with more thinking people on this planet, they will be rebelling against what de-humanizes and for more humanity.

William James added this: “A great many people think they are ‘thinking’ when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.” When you do borrowed thinking, you merely quote the bullet points that someone else created. You are not yourself engaged in asking and answering probing questions to get to the facts or to the heart of things. The result of this: “Many people are *strangers* to their own minds.” (*Think like a Genius*, 1996, p. 2). So they don't know how their mind works. They don't know how to create or find the information they need and/or how to apply it. They don't know how to do original thinking and/or independent thinking.

Learning how to truly think is something you have to learn. It doesn't come naturally—what comes naturally is biased thinking, cognitive distortion thinking, and fallacious thinking. There are the thinking patterns we have to grow out of and rise above. A primitive culture is a primitive culture precisely because people are still engaged in the childish thinking patterns that we call the Cognitive Distortions.

Now because critical thinking means refusing to simply accept information at face value, it is dangerous to all forms of brainwashing, manipulation, and misinformation. It is the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do and what to believe. To do that use the beginner's mind to ask dumb questions and assumptive questions. This will also be dangerous to your own biases and prejudices, but that's okay, if we are truly committed to following what is true regardless of the consequences.

Because true thinkers are dangerous, those who like to control what others think, believe, and do are always wanting to restrict people's freedom of speech. They want to control what people hear. And whenever something is said that they don't like, they call it misinformation or dis-information. The implication, however, of this is that they think people are weak and unable to think for themselves.

In Neuro-Semantics, we believe that everyone can *learn to think critically, clearly, and creatively*. To that end we teach the Meta-Model of language; we conduct the Brain Camps, and it's why I wrote *Thinking for Humans*. Here's to you becoming a dangerous thinker—one who thinks for him or herself and who searches for truth.

From: Jason Schneider
2024 Neurons #54
December 5, 2024

HOW I INVENTED THE META-STATE MASTERY PLAYING CARDS

When I first learned about meta-states I did not fully understand how they worked. I didn't comprehend the impact of how I was applying my thoughts to previous thoughts, and feelings to my previous feelings (which is largely unconscious). I was walking around ignorant, and unfortunately, more often than not it was not a 'blissful ignorance'. My emotions 'had' me and the way my brain had learned to run itself was running me into walls left and right. I led myself to a poor level of physical health, toxic relationships, a lack of marketable skills, and a savings account to show it. Worse yet I was busy blaming the world and others for my circumstances and not recognizing that it was my own thinking, feeling, and believing that was in my way.

When I first experienced *the skill of meta-stating* my life transformed. I could bring acceptance to my frustrations, and appreciation to the blessings I had been taking for granted. I could transcend limiting emotions in a single bound, and slay some dragons with a single swing of my metaphorical sword. How had I not heard about this before? And what about all of the other people who have no idea about the transformational power of meta-states and the impact it could have on their relationships, health, career, and overall quality of life. I knew I had to get the word out.

When I started training the Meta-States Model in my training programs I would guide the participants to rip up a paper into pieces and write some 'state' words onto the shreds of paper. We would mix up the papers and experiment with different state-upon-state interactions. With time I began to collect the papers and over that time I detected some patterns. There would be many unresourceful states repeated from participant to participant e.g. anger, sadness, frustration, etc. Also there would be crucial resourceful states that were missing from the pile, e.g., acceptance, permission, trust, releasing, etc.

Eventually I took the 52 emotions that were the most repeated as well as the significant states that I repeatedly found missing from those torn pieces of paper and formalized them into a professionally designed deck that I called the *Meta-State Mastery Cards*. Essentially they were a set of flash cards with a crucial mix of resourceful and unresourceful emotions to practice, play with, and transform. I produced 100 packs of the cards and the feedback was fantastic. People were reporting that they had increased their emotional vocabulary, they were more empowered to transform their limiting states, and

they were cooking up powerful ‘recipes’ to proactively prepare for anticipated events. All 100 decks sold out which validated the concept.

As I played with them in workshop environments and others experimented with themselves, their friends, and family members we found some interesting new use cases and I set out to develop version 2.0. We changed some of the emotion cards, bringing in some that were missing and removing some that were rare or redundant. We also added an instruction booklet that included some new ways we had discovered to use the cards. Again I produced 100 decks and again they sold out. I was excited for the next round of improvements.

I am happy to announce that I recently produced the *Meta-State Mastery Playing Cards 3.0* and I am so proud of how they have turned out. This deck is an actual deck of playing cards (Think ace of spades, two of hearts, etc.) and there has been a third round of refinement to the states represented in the deck. There is a new two player card game called ‘Peace’ (a variation on the game known as ‘War’ for those who know how to play it) that allows you to play with meta-states with others in a fun, simple, and memorable way.



We have used the cards in a training environment with great success from icebreaker exercises and energizers, to training exercises to learn basic meta-stating, using meta-states to transform negative states, ways to play with groups, and ways to use the cards for yourself for mastering the meta-levels of your mind. Many of these uses are incorporated in the included workbook that explains how to elicit states in yourself, how to meta-state, how to use the cards, and some fun facts about meta-stating to deepen your

understanding and practice. I imagine that as you play with them you may even discover and share even more ways to use them

In future articles I will go deeper on some of the ways we have utilized the playing cards for increasing emotional mastery and in training environments as I imagine you may have some questions and I am happy to support. No matter one's level of knowledge and experience, these cards are a powerful learning tool for beginners all the way to experienced trainers, and an excellent gift for loved ones for whom you would like to offer the meaningful gift of learning to master their mind and emotions.

I have attached some photos of the cards below and you can learn more about the cards and reserve your decks here: <https://www.perceptionacademic.com/metacards/>

We have a limited supply and for being part of the Neuro-Semantics community you can use coupon code **NEURONS** for an additional \$10 discount as we continue our mission of actualizing excellence, one person at a time.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #55
December 9, 2024

THE WHAT AND THE HOW

When you learn something, you learn content. You learn *the what of the subject* which answers the question, “What are you talking about?” While you need *the what* regarding whatever you want to do, learning *the what* (the content) is not that hard. Gaining an understanding of content is just a matter of learning. If you know who to read, study, ask questions, regarding most things, you can fairly quickly learn *what to do*. For deep and intricate subjects, learning may take a long time—sometimes years—yet still, it is just a matter of learning.

The challenge is *the how*. Once you know the what, learning *how to do it*—that’s the hard part. *What* is intellectual; *how* is practical. *What* is conceptual, it is understanding. *What* is content; *how* is process. *How* is doing, it is action, implementation, execution. *How* is capability and ability which manifests itself in skills.

How is about implementation wherein you actually execute what you know. Richard Kovacevich, CEO of Wells Fargo Bank, argued that organizational culture and the ability to operate effectively, is much more important to organizational success than having the right strategy. To illustrate his point, he made a statement that sounds utterly radical to many people:

“I could leave our strategic plan on a plane, and it wouldn’t make any difference. No one could execute it. Our success has nothing to do with planning. It has to do with execution.” ... p. 145 *Hard Truths* footnote 26.

Can you execute? That’s the ultimate question if you want to be successful. Knowing *what* to do in business, in sales, in tennis, in football, etc. is important. Sure. But it is **not the key** to success. You can know and not do. You can be intellectually smart, knowledgeable, and able to describe in detail all of the aspects of the *what*. You can teach it, train it, coach it, and explain it. But if you can’t *do* it effectively in the moment that it needs to be done, you won’t be effective.

For example, it is easy to understand the idea, “Listen to your client, meet him at his model of the world.” It is a simple strategy. No problem with comprehending the idea. The problem and challenge is in the execution. *Strategies* generally are like that—not all that difficult to understand. This is true for personal relationship strategies—how to get along, how to solve conflicts, how to parent, how to lead, how to save, how to budget, how to exercise, etc. What we find challenging is *living the strategy*—that’s the problem. That takes a lot of self-management, self-control, emotional intelligence, persistence, resilience, etc. It is at the point of implementation that the notion of being wise is more important than being smart.

Strategy can reduce peripheral vision and flexibility in adapting to uncertain and changing environments. This occurs when your strategy is too rigid or absolute. It occurs when you treat strategy as “the last word” about something or as “the truth” for all situations. For any strategy to work you will need the right attitude in applying it. If you do the right thing in the wrong way— you can create a disaster!

NLP is most essentially a *how* model. For expertise and for pathology, we ask, “How do you do that?” For any statement about knowledge, we ask, “How do you know that?” It is the *how* that puts us into the center of life and requires our commitment. Where NLP fails, however, is in neglecting the meta-levels and the all-pervasiveness of a person’s self-reflexive consciousness.

That’s why in Neuro-Semantics, we have focused on “the inner game” of what occurs in the higher levels of the mind. This means there are two dimensions of *how*. There is the behavioral *how*—how do you do X? What actions do you need to take? Then there is the mental-emotional *how*. How do you think so that you can get yourself to carry out the actions of X? How do you put yourself in the right emotional state in doing X?

To deal with the meta-*how*, you have to go meta, you have to go into the *Meta Place* and there you can use the 12 to 18 landmarks of the mind. When you do that, you will be able to identify the invisible structure (strategy) behind any human experience.

Want more?

Check out *The Meta Place*, *Thinking for Humans*, and *NLP Going Meta*. These books are in the Products section and also as PDF files in The Shop.

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #56
December 16, 2024

NLP’S FAILURE

With NLP Ideally, You Learn to Think

Earlier this year (2024), I completed the book, *Thinking for Humans: The Art of Being Mindful*. In it I addressed a problem in the field of NLP—something that *to this day* the field has still not recognized:

“While a great many people in NLP don’t know this, *NLP is essentially about thinking*. NLP begins with representational thinking (the VAK, sensory-awareness), it then goes to associative thinking (anchoring, cause-effect linkages), linguistic thinking (language, the Meta-Model), evaluative thinking (values, beliefs, meta-programs), and finally integrative thinking (state, embodiment, mind-to-muscle). *In learning NLP, you learn to think*. Or at least you should if you learned it well. Yet because most trainers and educators in NLP don’t know this, they do not emphasize this. This book is designed, in part, to change that.”

Previous to this book on thinking, I wrote *Executive Thinking: Activating Your Highest Executive Thinking Potentials* (2018). I wrote that, in part, because in the field of Critical Thinking I could not find a single book anywhere that even mentioned NLP or the Meta-Model of Language. I realized that after reading 80 books on the subject of critical thinking. Imagine that! **Not a single one even mentioned NLP**, let alone presented the Meta-Model as a great tool for critical thinking. I found that shocking!

Why? Because, in my opinion, *the Meta-Model is the greatest tool that’s ever been presented for clear, precise, accurate, and creative thinking*. So in writing *Executive Thinking* one of my objectives was to get the Meta-Model known in that field. Another objective was to introduce, or perhaps re-introduce, the Meta-Model to the field of NLP as a tremendous tool for critical thinking. And that’s because, as noted above, ideally when you learn NLP, *you learn how to think*. But, of course, *ideally* implies that ‘actually’ many people do not.

Astonishing, isn’t it? While NLP is a model of thinking and learning NLP, you should be learning *how to think*, many do not. I venture to suggest that *most* do not. How can that be? What’s going on that in the teaching and training of NLP that people are not getting a deeper learning—learning *how* to think. Anyone can teach you *what* to think. That’s what our schools primarily do which is why most young people graduating from High School *do not know how to think*. Again, why is this? What explains this? Here’s my guesses.

#1: Thinking is not made the focus of the training. Instead, NLP is presented solely as a Communication Model or it is presented in terms of one of its applications—sales,

personal development, therapy, coaching, consulting, hypnosis, etc. There are also many trainers who are mostly enthralled by the “techniques,” and so all they present are the quick, easy, and/or sensational patterns. So people learn the techniques without learning *the thinking* behind them which makes them work as they do.

#2: *The NLP trainer him or herself has not learned how to train the Meta-Model.* This is a really sad one. From my experience in meeting lots and lots of NLP trainers, most of them do not even teach the Meta-Model in their trainings or if they do so, they devote a few hours to half a day at best. And why not? Because that’s how they were taught! Obviously, if you were not effectively taught how to think about the Meta-Model and how to train it, you won’t be able to teach it well yourself. Worse, if you think of it as grammar and linguistics, your mis-understanding of it will cause you to downplay it.

#3: *The NLP trainer him or herself has not learned how to think using NLP.* I think this is a big one. Having not become enthralled with the power and beauty of the Meta-Model and having really no idea how pervasive it is in NLP, a great many trainers and leaders in the field of NLP have never *applied the critical thinking skills of the Meta-Model to themselves*. This is obvious from reading some of the NLP books that have been written. This is obvious from reading the articles and promotional pieces on NLP websites. Sometimes when I do so I wonder, “Didn’t you ever learn the Meta-Model?” “Who taught you the Meta-Model?” That’s why in a lot of NLP communications on the internet and elsewhere you will find uncontrolled generalizations, distortions, and deletions. You will find mind-reading statements about people; unfounded cause-effect beliefs, ridiculous complex equivalences, and on and on.

#4: *Thinking itself is devalued as ‘a given,’ and so little thought is given to it.* Unless you have spent some time *thinking* about “thinking,” the cultural norm that we all grow up in is to take it for granted. “Yeah, thinking, so what?” We consider it natural, inevitable, and sometime everyone can do. No wonder we do not think of it as a *skill*—and a skill *we need to learn*. No wonder we put all “thinking” into that one category and don’t realize that there are dozens and dozens, scores of different *kinds of thinking* as well as *levels of thinking skills*.

#5: *Some NLP trainers have been deluded into thinking that thinking is conscious and the really important stuff is unconscious.* I’m now describing the two camps that have moved away from the mainline NLP field, the Bandler group and the Grinder group. What a paradox! Once Ericksonian hypnosis was modeled, both Bandler and Grinder decided to stop addressing what they called “the conscious mind” and focus almost exclusively on “the unconscious mind.” (Of course, there is only one mind—some content in conscious awareness and most of it outside-of-conscious awareness.) But *thinking* itself is a dynamic that involves all aspects of our brain-body and mind and so fluctuates in and out of conscious awareness. If you dichotomize this, then you set up an Either/Or limited way of thinking and dismiss “thinking” as only the conscious stuff.

Recommendation

Let's get back to *NLP as a thinking model* and train it or use it to *enable people to do more critical and creative thinking*. If the world needs anything beyond love, it needs people who can actually *think*, and think *clearly, precisely, and accurately*. If we don't have that, we will lose our civilization, our science, our well-being, and our sanity.

They should have known because from the beginning the founders said things like the following:

“The whole idea of the meta-model is to give you systematic control over language. It teaches you how to listen not only to other people, but to yourself. The meta-model is really simplistic, but it's still the foundation of everything we do. Without it, and without systematic control over it, you will be do everything that we teach you sloppily. The difference between the people who do the things that we teach *well* and those who don't, are people who have no control over the meta-model. It is *literally* the foundation of everything we do.” (70).

From: L. Michael Hall
2024 Neurons #57
December 23, 2024

TOO OLD TO REMEMBER OR TOO MUCH “CHANGE PERSONAL HISTORY”?

I recently watched a current 2024 video of Richard Bandler. For some unknown and unexpressed reason, Tony Robbins invited Richard to speak to a training that Tony was conducting in Florida. I got the impression that Richard was already in the area, so Tony invited him over, but that was not made clear. Anyway Tony thought he might be good to have him speak to a group of 40 people. So Richard did. You can see the video on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_GCNIk05jY

The video is about 110 minutes and Richard simply sat in a chair and “talked” to the group. Three times he invited someone to the stage to do a process—once a hypnotic state and the other resolving troubling thoughts of the past, and once to get someone to get himself to do what he wanted to do. But what he mostly did was tell stories. And to his credit, he has always been a good story-teller, not necessarily accurate or truthful, but engaging stories. And if you’ve never been to a training or watched videos, I’m sure you will be fascinated by the stories. But if you have, then *the stories are the same old stories* and, sadly, they were not told as effectively as he once was able to tell them.

Critique

There’s a problem in these *Bandler stories*—they are usually exaggerated and told using all-or-nothing language. Sometimes to the point of being ridiculous, and sometimes they are just blantly false. At the beginning he says he “*remembers* Eisenhower’s presidency and how he ran against Adlai Ewing Stevenson II. Hmm, just how old is he anyway? Now true enough, he does look old, and he does talk about himself being old. But he’s not that old! Eisenhower was President in the 1950s. That reference was 1955-6, so Richard would have been 5 years old! Now how much does a five-year-old remember about political debates?!

He then speaks about “a psychiatrist’s” house (i.e., Dr. Robert Spitzer, publisher of Science & Behavior Books) that he stayed in and says, “it was the 1960s.” Well no, actually it was 1971 when he just turned 21. He says that he read 100 books in Spitzer’s library and “not one of them said anything about what to do about problems except take drugs.” Well, no. In that library would have been Fritz’s books on Gestalt and Virginia Satir’s books, including *People Making*. So there would have been lots of things suggested to solve problems. That’s the kind of exaggeration you can expect to hear from him. And if you have any knowledge about these things, it significantly undermines his credibility.

He said that he was playing in a band, a friend went to his medicine cabinet and found some drugs ... the picture is that of a young adult Bandler, but he dates it in the 1960's, so he would have been 16 or 17. Another statement meant to mis-represent things. Next he says "I was an information science major." Well, from transcripts of the colleges he attended, that just was not so. He took some classes on computer science, but that was it. His degree was *not* "information science." It was general psychology, BA from University of California, Santa Cruz, and a MA from Lone Mountain College in San Francisco. He never earned a Ph.D. He took some mathematic classes, but taking some classes does not sudden make one "A Mathematician."

Again, describing the 1960s, he said that's when he met Virginia. But not so. That did not happen until 1974. He then tells a story of meeting a psychiatrist ... but that story occurred later when he and John were applying the Meta-Model, somewhere around 1976-7 or later. I suspect that this is the effect of too much "Change Personal History."

Talking about Virginia and her statement, "I know it intuitively" he says that means "it is not learnable." He asserts that he "made them up"—namely, "deletion, generalization, and distortion." Ah yes, more claims to intellectual ownership! Actually, these come from Transformational Grammar which is what Grinder contributed to NLP. Richard did not "make them up." This is a case of not giving credit where credit is due.

Richard then tells a *new story* about "the origin of the phobia cure." In other videos from the 1980s he said that he met a person who said "I used to have a phobia." He then asked how he got over it and wrote down the steps. In this story, he says he was working with a group of 6 psychiatrists. He asked each of them to bring him one person who got over a phobia. They asked, "How would we know someone got over a phobia?" If there's any question that strikes me as silly, that is it. So he put add in the paper offer \$100 for someone who got over a phobia. Then he gave them a lie detector test; "90 percent" of those who responded. Again, all this seems pretty preposterous!

Next he claims to be a "Physicist." and with that he declares, "When psychiatrists speak about reality, they as a group know nothing about reality." Sadly, when talking about his own books, he says that his books "are not a repeat of anything" (24:30 min). But they are! In fact that's one of the disappointing things, he has hardly presented anything new for decades.

Another new story emerges here about eye access cues. Here he claims to have read an article in 1972 of an experiment that suggested eye accessing cues. Then he went to his class at the university that had 300 students (!). In saying this, he implies he was the teacher (he was not) and that they had classes that large at Kresge (they did not). He asserts, "That's where accessing cues came from." Well, the previous story which he told for years and years is that the discovery occurred in a night club where he was playing a guitar. And another story, which is recorded in Grinder's book, John discovered it in a liquor store!

Again, speaking about the 1970s, he tells the story of Andy the Schizophrenic. The problem is that that story occurred in the mid-1980s in Denver with Steve Andreas. There's a two-part video from NLP Comprehensive about that. "He walked into the room, I grabbed his hand and put him in a trance." Well, not exactly. The video shows it beginning as they sat in chairs and began talking.

Finally, Richard says—quickly and briefly—that he “certified” Tony Robbins as a trainer. Well excuse me, if that's true, why did you sue Tony for Six Million Dollars in 1989? And why did Tony settle out of court, paying you \$500,000 and signing the trainer's contract in 1990 when I was with you at your home in San Francisco? At that time, I asked, “What stops Tony from changing the name?” you said to me, “I grabbed him by the balls and he would not dare.” Of course, Tony did dare— Neural Associative Conditioning. Now if Richard is “thinking” he signed the contract and that serves as me “certifying” him ... it is a major piece of mis-communication!”

<https://www.bing.com/search?q=Richard+Bandler+lawsuit+against+Anthony+Robbins&qsn&form=QBRE&sp=-1&ghc=1&lq=0&pq=richard+bandler+lawsuit+against+anthony+robbins&sc=0-47&sk=&cvid=AAD8CD466A14412089301D2E0506CB5D&ghsh=0&ghacc=0&ghpl=>

Some Good Stuff

In spite of the exaggerations, distortions and sillinesses, there is some good stuff on the video. Here's the best stuff you will find on the video that stands out as really valuable. Namely, the two times when he said: “If you don't have control over your thoughts, you won't have control over your feelings.” (20 min.) Therefore, be sure to “take control of your thoughts.” Later, “If you ask the wrong question, you will get the wrong answer.” If you ask yourself, Do I want to go to the gym? The answer is “No.” If you ask yourself, “Do I want to live long and healthy?” the answer is yes. Planning enables you to be connected to your desires. Desire is what leads us to move forward. The Meta-Model is designed to solve problems. It helps you focus on the right thing.

With a co-founder like Richard Bandler, no wonder the field of NLP has struggled to attain a respectable reputation and credibility. For years, I had hoped that he would have matured as he aged, but no. His original genius gave the world a wonderful communication/ thinking model and he could have produced so much more than it has.

From: L. Michael Hall
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BANDLER FINALLY WISES UP

My first thought was that maybe he's spying on Neuro-Semantics to find out what we're doing, so that he would then be able to be the inventor. But that's far too paranoid of an assumption, so I rejected that one. Maybe he has secretly been reading the Neuro-Semantics website. Anyway, what he has been doing most recently is following very much the same line of thought and focus that I have been doing since 2016, namely, talking about *thinking*. In 2016 I began writing about "The Next Big Thing" in NLP and Neuro-Semantics, namely, *critical thinking*. Two years later, I published, *Executive Thinking* (2018). That then led to the whole series on *thinking*—now going on 14 books.

- 1) *Executive Thinking: Activating Your Highest Executive Thinking Potentials* (2018).
- 2) *Thinking as a Modeler* (2019).
- 3) *Thinking Hypnotically* (2020).
- 4) *Hypnotic Conversations for Unleashing Potentials* (2020)
- 5) *Humorous Thinking* (2020)
- 6) *Executive Decisions: Deciding Wisely* (2020)
- 7) *Thinking Metaphorically: Becoming a Skilled Metaphorian* (2021)
- 8) *Executive Learning: Learning How to Learn* (2021)
- 9) *Executive Wisdom: Being One of the Wise Ones* (2022)
- 10) *Inside Out: Empowered from Within* (2022).
- 11) *The Meta-Place: A Model of the Mind and Thinking Landmarks* (2023)
- 12) *Thinking for Humans: (2024)*
- 13) *Strategic Thinking* (2025)
- 14) *Unconscious Thinking* (proposed for 2025)

I found out what Bandler has been up to when I recently purchased *Patterns for Problem Solving* (2023). Here Bandler devotes the first 161 pages to reproducing his 1975 *The Structure of Magic* and adding in a few (very few) comments. The book actually begins on page 162. After that he focuses on *thinking*. And in doing so, he says that the Meta-Model was designed for problem-solving. To that end, he frames things in terms of *thinking*:

"What the most successful therapists did ... they got people to *engage in new thinking*. If you change the way you *think*, it changes the way you feel and therefore changes what you're capable of doing." (iv) "The Meta-Model is full of terrific questions that help us *to think differently*." (171) "Our model enables us to effectively and decisively challenge the various biases that originate in *people's thinking* when they make decisions." (178). "Most of this is about getting people *to think* on purpose." (181). "The Meta-Model provides us a way of gaining insight as to *how people are thinking* and what is missing or distorted in their model of the world." (192). "The mindset for solving problems involves *thinking through* the right questions to ask." (200) "The Meta-Model is designed to enable you to help people to *think differently* about their problems and uncover solutions they couldn't see before. (211) (italics added).

What Richard and Owen present however, is *only* representational thinking. That's all—the VAK. And in doing that, he makes the same mistake that NLP has made from the beginning, namely, assuming that *all thinking is sensory-based thinking*. So with beliefs and decisions, he assumes these are pictures and self-talk which people have in their heads. That's where he got the mistaken idea that you can change beliefs by changing the cinematic features (sub-modalities). But you can't. Give that assumption there is also not a single consideration for logical or meta levels at all. For him, the problem in beliefs and decisions are the pictures and the self-talk. That's all.

Now inasmuch as he refers to a 2019 book, *Thinking on Purpose*, I bought it and, again, the *only kind of thinking that is addressed there is representational thinking*. That's it. Nothing else. As if there is no additional kind of thinking! Now true enough, in 1975 when NLP was first introduced, the idea that we think in pictures, sounds, sensations, and words was *revolutionary* and led to many processes that can quickly resolve therapeutic and personal development issues. But that's only the beginning.

Without an awareness of the whole *meta place of the mind*, and the unique meta-level structures of the thinking landmarks there (beliefs, values, memories, anticipations, identities, metaphors, intentions, etc.), you can only update and improve the quality of thinking at the representative level and not at the meta-levels.

Overall, I'm delighted that one of the founders of NLP is slowly coming back to the true nature of NLP and the Meta-Model— *it is actually a thinking model*. I began suspecting that when Bob and I wrote *Figuring Out People* (1997) when we detailed *the thinking patterns* which we call meta-programs. So at least Bandler is moving in the right direction. And who knows, maybe he will stumble on the idea of the self-reflexive thinking that's within meta-states and then realize that there are many, many other kinds of thinking.

As a footnote: He and Owen also quoted much of what I wrote in *Communication Magic* (1997/2001) about the linguistic wars after Chomsky, but of course, not giving any credit (50-51). Another distinction to make; he always speaks about the "brain" and never the mind, and makes no distinction between them. Another thing he will need to learn.

