

Lifesong: Transformation...

NLP coach and songwriter Leo Lourdes talks with Caitlin Collins

Leo Lourdes is passionate about a lot of things, including yoga and NLP and music and song-writing and the psychobiology of mind-body interaction. He's especially passionate about his work as a coach and trainer in which he brings elements of these together to facilitate a client's transformation. His own path has led him to develop the Lifesong Process, applying NLP in an inspirational way to facilitate change through the medium of music and song-writing.

The power of song

'Long before NLP discovered anchors, there were simply songs,' says Leo. 'Songs can change your mood instantly.'

The word 'music' comes from the ancient Greek 'mousiké' meaning 'like the muses' – the goddesses through whose blessing humans could be inspired. The parents of the muses were Zeus and Mnemosyne, herself the goddess of memory. 'In combining NLP and song-writing, I'm particularly interested in music and memory, and how music and song can do more than help you to change your state – they can help you remember who you really are,' says Leo. 'Of course you can be moved by someone else's music, but your own songs take it to another level. Your own songs are about self-discovery, exploring what's going on in your world. This isn't so much about remembering the past, more about connecting to the core of your being.'

The power of music and song has been appreciated for a very long time, undoubtedly long before the first recorded use of music therapy – in 10th century Persia, where it was recommended for its therapeutic effects on the soul! As Leo explains, singing is therapeutic in many ways. The human voice can create an extraordinarily rich diversity of sounds. Sounds are primary, preceding the meanings of words: if we listen to a song in a language we don't know, we can still pick up the emotion expressed in the song. Singing can help to restore personal power, re-vitalising the energy centre in the belly or hara. It's a way to get in touch with and communicate our feelings

authentically. When we talk, we can use words in ways that are not true to our feelings – NLP students learn early in their training to look out for incongruence between words and body language! However, in singing, we have to be congruent for the song to work. And singing and song-writing harmonize the two sides of the brain: the ability to sing is a right brain activity while the ability to understand language is a left brain activity.

Creating Infinity

The Lifesong Process arose out of Leo's own experience. 'My own compositions are about generating spaces or 'soundscapes' that are open ended so that people can apply their own meanings and be uplifted and inspired,' he

Music and song can help you remember who you really are

says. 'The magic began with a wonderful wand I received in 2001 – NLP Master Practitioner training, which enabled me to become Director of Coaching at Futuremind in Harley Street. I found myself becoming fascinated by the use of lyrics and music in songs and how that could be combined with NLP. When I went through some personal challenges in 2004, I started to write what at first seemed like poetry. I thought it was my unconscious expressing my emotions in words. Then I started waking at 3am with melodies in my head. I would sit at my window writing first by moonlight, and then on into the dawn with the sunrise. What a great way to start the day!'

Leo did not have a background in music. 'I had no musical training – the closest I'd got to playing an instrument was using my iPod! However these melodies were coming to me and inspiring me – and I knew that I had to follow the advice I'd give my clients to get

out of the way to let the ideas shine through and keep the flow moving. The words I was writing started to merge with the melodies. I don't know about you, but I love the process of taking planning into action. It's one of the greatest ways to know you're not just living but truly alive! From these words and melodies has come a 13-tracked album called Infinity!'

Transformation

The Lifesong Process can guide people to deepen their understanding of their own emotions and of their larger questions about life. 'Change is a major concept in NLP,' Leo explains. 'It's also a greatly over-used word. What I'm interested in is greater than change. I'm interested in transformation. I'm talking about when change happens as an evolution of elements, when the gritty stuff of life is used to bring about something creative and meaningful. This is a familiar concept in NLP: for example, when we do parts work, we work with aspects that might be considered not so good, and we find out how to understand how beneficial they really are. It's about embracing all of life, not rejecting anything. You can do this through song-writing: it's a way to delve into the unconscious, and the understanding will come out in the song, and there's the transformation. Helping a client write their own lyrics and find melodies that express how they would like to feel enables transformation to take place in an empowering way. The music is then not about memories but about the present and the future. It's helping the client access their potential and awaken dormant creative reserves and through their music evoke and store empowering states. And what's really great is that the song is not about somebody else's experience that they're relating to, but is a unique expression of their own feelings in their own creation.'

Leo points out that psychotherapy and coaching are generally 'talking cures' in the sense of relying heavily on language. 'I'm a firm believer in conversational changes,' →

through Music and Songwriting



→ he says; ‘and you can pack lots of linguistic change patterns into song lyrics – positive language, anchors, visual imagery, phonic and punctuational ambiguity, clean language, questioning and so on. But I like to think that the Lifesong Process is about the client singing solutions rather than talking cures, and in the process creating something tangible.’ Literally so: Leo and his music producer Jason Emberton provide all the technical back-up needed to enable clients to create their own soundscapes in their own recordings, whether of one song or an entire album.

As Leo puts it: ‘We take great care in helping our clients – actually our artists – to create something unique that will change their lives. I believe that the greatest use of NLP is not purely in running NLP courses – it’s in applying it to what inspires you.’ ●

Leo is offering a 10 day NLP and Yoga retreat exploring song and movement in August and September 2009, in the Maldives. For more information about this and the Lifesong Process, please visit www.futureminded.co.uk

LEO'S LIFESONG TIPS: LYRICS, INSPIRATION, FOCUS, EXPRESSION, STYLE, OBLIQUE, NARRATION, GLOW

Lyrics: Lyrics are the DNA of your song. Think relevancy and simplicity; also prosody – metre, rhyme and stress. The best lyrics are those that are memorable and strike a chord.

Inspiration: Get into the zone and your writing will be beautifully unconscious with no effort. If it feels contrived, allow yourself to be inspired by getting in the right state. Try looking through old diary entries or photographs or go for a walk in nature – get lost and find a song!

Focus: The music is where most of the meaning is felt whereas the words are where the song is understood. What instruments would you like? What feelings would you like your song to evoke? If you close your eyes, is that feeling a thumping

drum or heightened violins? You want to get the core melody right and build outwards from there.

Expression: Writing a song is an invitation to express yourself more authentically. Many people fear public speaking and many more are scared of being heard singing – though most of us sing in private. Releasing your voice by singing beyond the shower, you’ll find your confidence and vitality growing.

Style: What soundscape of feeling would you like the song to create? If your song were a place, a person or a time in your life or history what would it be? What genre will best suit your song?

Oblique: Lyrics are poetry. As Emily Bronte said, ‘Poetry enters the mind obliquely’. The best songs are those which allow the listener the freedom to create their own meaning.

Narration: The song should unfold as it tells a story, evoking an emotional state of your choice (ideally a peak state). Think of a particular mood or experience to inspire you as opposed to making it too general.

Glow: This is where you shine. Through your realised voice and your own authentic song, you can create something that glows, warming you up and enthusing listeners. Glow means the song is an expression of the source, which is and always has been YOU.