

ACUITY

Enhancing and Advancing
**Neuro Linguistic
Programming**

.....
A New Anthology of Shared Findings and Learnings
Published by the ANLP

April 2011
.....
Promo Copy



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Neuro Linguistic Programming

A New Anthology of
Shared Findings and Learnings
published by the ANLP

Promotional Edition

ACUITY

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This promotional copy of Acuity includes
two articles from:

ACUITY Vol.1, No.1

The full journal includes the following:

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Editing Notes: When Giants Sang

Once upon a time, not only did the Giants of NLP walk the earth, but they also sang to each other across and around the world. They expanded their fields through sharing articles in journals like NLP World and Anchor Point. They thrived on exploring and applying NLP models and developing new concepts and ideas.

But then one day the publications stopped.

Whilst the NLP Giant population grew, many of the Giants formed their own personal sites and people were welcome to visit if they could find them. Every so often, some of the Giants would walk the earth and meet to share their ideas and developments with the people. Although the Giants shared their ideas, their songs were rarely heard.

Having enjoyed the Giants' songs, one person missed the joy of the journals and the sharing of giant ideas. And one morning he woke up with a positive intention and a well-formed outcome, determined to hear the Giants sing again. A new journal... with new articles... perhaps a new legacy for NLP. And so, in partnership with the ANLP, *Acuity* was conceived.

Acuity is designed to sit between *Rapport* magazine and the *Current Research in NLP* journal. The aim of *Acuity* is to provide an opportunity for authors and innovators to advance the field of NLP in sharing their findings, learnings and developments: new models, techniques, applications, refinements and new perspectives to old themes.

I wish to thank the panel: Steve Andreas, Robert Dilts, L. Michael Hall, James Lawley, Robert Smith and Lisa Wake for their time and their support. And I wish to thank the contributors without whom the journal would have been an empty experience.

Like some of you, I am an outcome- oriented creature and for years I wanted a journal. Now, with the help of some fantastic people, here you are.

Enjoy, be brilliant and shine on.

Joe Cheal
Editor of *Acuity*.

Words from the ANLP

“The whole is greater than the sum of its parts” – a phrase often used in NLP and indeed, Richard Gray even refers to this in his article.

This is certainly the case for Acuity, which makes this a great anthology, because every article is already ‘great’ as a standalone piece. So to have them combined into a collection of insights into NLP and Coaching is truly remarkable and a testament to all who have contributed.

The other thing regularly alluded to is the need for greater collaboration in the field of NLP. Robert Dilts talks about Generative Collaboration and Acuity is definitely an example of that. Acuity was conceived, nurtured and delivered with a true spirit of collaboration, and we had no idea when we started exactly where we would end up, because the small ideas developed into bigger plans, nurtured by a shared enthusiasm and passion for NLP.

I would especially like to thank Joe for his commitment, drive and enthusiasm in creating, co-ordinating and editing Acuity. Thank you to our full review panel, who have embraced this concept with conviction and a commitment that enabled us to take Acuity and transform it into a reality. And as Joe says, thank you to the contributors because of course, without the enormous part they play, there would be no Acuity.

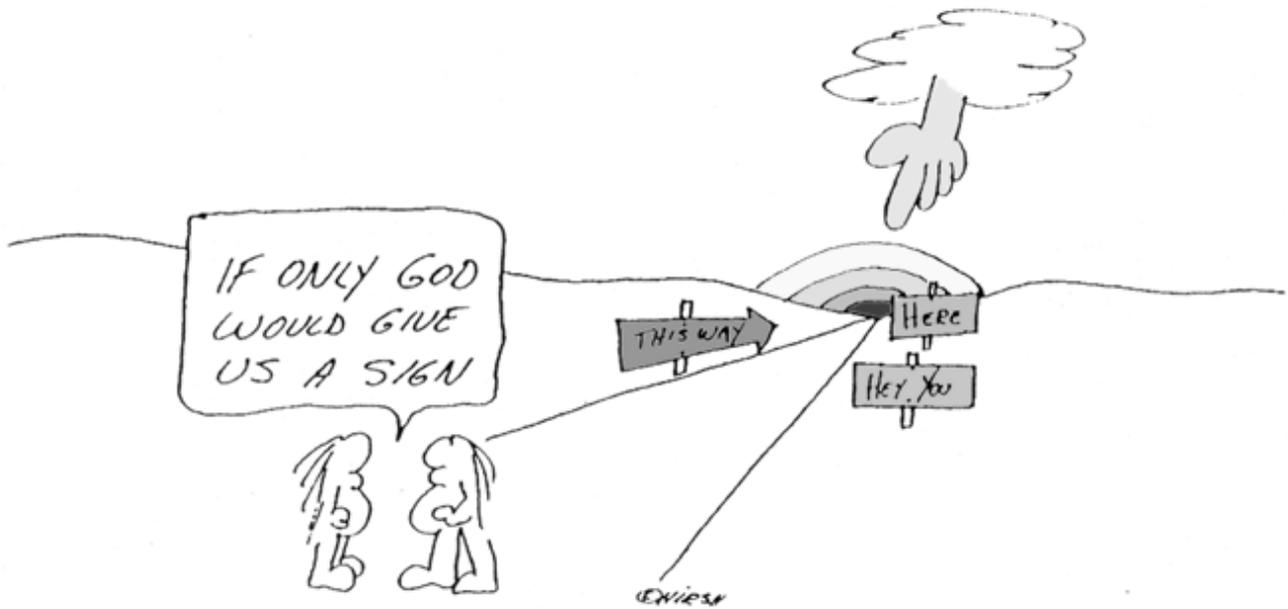
Please do continue to generate informative and innovative articles, so that we can continue to develop a strong body of works for the field of NLP to enjoy.

Karen Moxom
Managing Director
ANLP

'If only God would give us a sign'

The Role of Meta-Comments

Penny Tompkins and James Lawley



Cartoon reproduced with kind permission of Allan Hirsh,

author of *Relax for the Fun of it: A Cartoon & Audio Guide to Releasing Stress* www.allanhirsh.com

David Grove, the originator of Clean Language, was an astute observer of his therapy clients. He was the first to alert us to the importance of clients' comments which do not follow on from the previous statement and which appear incongruous. Grove called these comments *non sequiturs*. We extracted the *non sequiturs* from a number of verbatim client transcripts. We noticed that most of these remarks were a more or less thinly disguised comment about what was happening for the client in the previous moment – hence we called them *meta-comments*.

We define a 'meta-comment' as a verbal or nonverbal expression which refers to what has just been experienced. These self-reflections range from the fully conscious and explicit to the completely unconscious and implicit.

Apparently Michael Palin used the term 'meta comment' when he was part of Monty Python's Flying Circus. The Pythons used them to comic effect when an actor would refer to the situation their character was in. For example in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, following Sir Galahad's discovery of the Castle Anthrax, Dingo is telling the sad tale of her life:

"Oh, wicked, bad, naughty, evil Zoot! She is a bad person and must pay the penalty...

... she turns to the camera:

"Do you think this scene should have been cut? We were so worried when the boys were writing it, but now, we're glad. It's better than some of the previous scenes, I think..."

This is analogous to when clients meta-comment. They interrupt what they are doing to pass a judgment, reflect on their knowledge, give notification of a change, or in some other way reveal something about the current state of their inner world. To understand meta-comments you need to extract them from the flow of normal speech and recognise that the client is commenting *on* their in-the-moment experience. Because they are embedded in the client's narratives, meta-comments are somewhat hidden and easily ignored. But to ignore them is to miss out on some of the most important signposts for how best to proceed with facilitating *this* particular client at *this* particular moment.

The following example is from a client who was struggling to come to terms with her new role as a mother.

It's got a new quality about it. It's a very new thing. It's ... What I'm finding out with the mother role which I love, and it is true I have somehow taken to it naturally, I'm aware that what's creeping in is this sort of more negative side where I will more easily lose myself, the bit that I do know is me which comes through when I feel free, which is quite interesting. And before it goes too far where ... I don't want to become in some ways like my mother did, which was really putting her life on hold. And giving in to exhaustion. And I can, I know I have that in me to do. And eventually I think, you know, that's what killed her, you know with the cancer, the stuff just ate her up. So ... I am strong. I am quite a strong person and I ... that works against me sometimes, because I will do things to exhaustion. And then I collapse. There's a negative aspect which comes through as resentment. Because I can be so resentful as well because I can take on things but I'm not, I'm no saint. You know, I will go, 'oh, what about me?'

Did you notice any meta-comments? What alerted you to them? What did they point to? And what would you ask as a result?

Penny noted “which is quite interesting” was a meta-comment on “the bit that I do know is me which comes through when I feel free”. The meta-comment indicated that the client’s attention was attracted enough by what she had just said and thought for her to interrupt her narrative and pass comment. As a result of this signposting Penny used Clean Language to ask:

And what about me? And there’s a bit that you know is me that comes through when you feel free. And when you feel free and you know that bit is me, where is that bit?

In case you are interested, the client replied:

On my shoulder, sort of here [right hand gestures to right shoulder]. Like a conscience, but not a conscience. Yes, it's a knowing, yeah it's a knowing. That's interesting. It's funny identifying a place because now I can remember when I have ... m-m-m, now *that's* interesting. I've, I've, I've heard this before but not known the locality of it.

Below are some more examples of client’s meta-comments:

This is important.
 That’s a new option.
 There must be a place that knows.
 I realise I need to decide which way to go.
 God knows.
 No, that's not what I meant. [self-correcting]
 Do I want to go there?
 That’s a hard question.
 Oh look, there’s no green in the rainbow.
 Does that make sense?
 Phew, I’ve gone all hot.
 I know I shouldn't say this but ...
 ... so anyway ...
 It's obvious that
 It just occurred to me ...
 I can't believe I just said that.
 Now let me see ...
 [A tap of a watch]
 [A hand over the mouth]

The key to understanding the role played by meta-comments is to model what the client has had to do with their attention or perception to have made this particular comment.

Meta-comments indicate a momentary shift in perspective (and possibly perceiver) from a more descriptive narrative to a statement with a degree of self-reflection.

Because we are remarkably consistent beings and we cannot not be ourselves, the structure of what we do in the micro (seconds) is often isomorphic with what happens in the macro (days, months, years). In this way meta-comments in the session can be seen as fractals – vignettes that when scaled up retain a similar organisation to how we experience our 'real life'.

From a facilitator's viewpoint, meta comments can be considered as orientation pointers and as messages from the 'wisdom in the system'. In broad terms they can be taken as a directive to:

- Continue attending to the current perception (to stay put)
- Attend to something else
- Not attend to something
- Change your way of facilitating (e.g. slow down, speed up, etc.)

Since meta-comments are about the client's *relationship with their interior landscape* they often reveal something about the degree of significance or insignificance the client attaches to a part of their experience.

Why 'Meta'?

The notion of 'meta' and 'levels of communication' was extensively discussed and utilised by the groups that formed around Gregory Bateson at Stanford University in the 1950s and at the Mental Research Institute at Palo Alto, California in the 1960s. Strangely, although Bateson regularly mentions meta-communication, metalogues and metalinguistic messages in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, we could not find the term 'meta-comment' in the book.

Robert Dilts and Judith DeLozier have attempted to clarify the plethora of meta-this and meta-that in their *Encyclopedia of Systemic NLP* [pp. 718-720]:

The term *meta* is a Greek word meaning 'over', 'between' or 'above'. In English it is also used to mean 'about'. A 'meta model', for example, is a model *about* other models.

'Metacognition' is the awareness of one's own cognitive processes, i.e. cognition *about* cognition.

'Meta messages' are messages *about* other messages, which provide frames or context markers that influence the meaning of those messages. Meta messages are typically nonverbal and give emphasis or provide cues for how to interpret a verbal message.

'Meta communication' is communication *about* communication. For instance, a meta communication is often a verbal statement that sets a framework around a communication situation in the form of rules, guidelines and expectations. A study of the communication patterns of effective leaders revealed that almost half of the leaders' communication was actually meta communication.

It is important to distinguish meta communication from meta messages. Meta communication is a more macro level process from sending a meta message. A meta message operates as a kind of subtext that emphasizes certain aspects of a message. If a person says, "YOU weren't respecting the rules" it marks the communication as directed to the 'who'. Saying "You weren't respecting the RULES" shifts the emphasis of the message to the 'what'. Meta communication, on the other hand, would be saying something like, "Let's talk about what the rules are, and why we have them."

Meta-comments are another member of the above family of Meta's. They can involve metacognition, and they can be a meta message or a meta communication. Typically they are short and interspersed within ordinary speech. If they go on for too long they cease to be 'meta' and become a comment in their own right. Their primary function seems to be a communication to self and secondarily a communication to someone else. It is like the person is externalising their internal dialogue without realising it.

Meta-States

Meta-comments signal a *momentary* shift to a meta-perspective. L. Michael Hall's model of *Meta-States* covers a similar but wider territory than is relevant to this article:

In a Meta-State, conscious awareness *reflects back* onto itself (i.e. *self-reflective consciousness*). Thinking-about-thinking then generates thoughts/feelings at higher logical levels so that we experience states-*about*-states. Rather than referring to something "out there" in the world, Meta-States refer to something *about* some previous thought, emotion, concept, understanding, Kantian category, etc. In this way we layer thought upon thought. [2000, p.4]

Examples of meta-states are: Worry about worrying; reasoning about our reasoning; anger at self for being too emotional; etc. While working with meta-states opens up all sorts of possibilities, we have found great value in simply regarding a meta-comment as a pointer to what is happening for a client and a guide for how to work with their process.

Congruence/Incongruence

Because all forms of meta -communication, -messages, -states and -comments operate at a different *level* to that which they are referring to, they can be perceived by the facilitator as either congruent or incongruent. While incongruence can be considered as evidence that the client is operating with incompatible behaviours, desires, values or beliefs, from a systemic perspective if you go to a high enough level you'll find that a functioning system is *always internally congruent*. If you cannot see the congruence in what they are saying and doing that's a signal that there is more for you to model.

Categories of Meta-Comments

In everyday conversation meta-comments rarely become the topic of conversation and an inexperienced listener will barely be aware they have been said. It's like the viewers of a videoed basketball match who are so intent on counting the number of passes they don't notice a man in a gorilla suit run onto the court. However, once you start to look for these particular gorillas you'll see them everywhere.

To model the way clients use meta-comments we took the first 20 minutes of eight verbatim transcripts each with a different therapy client and picked out all the meta-comments. This resulted in over 120 different examples (excluding repetitions). On average that's one meta-comment every 45 seconds. We categorised these examples into the following broad headings:

WAYS OF KNOWING

- The first thing that comes to mind is
- I'm guessing it must be just a kind of ...
- I'm imagining ...

COMPARISON

- Scale
- Judgment/Preference
- Change/Persistence
- It's a big deal for me.
- That's odd.
- Actually in some ways that's new.

TIMEFRAME

- At the moment ...
- I'm at the stage where...
- I feel that's the end of it.

LANGUAGING

- Let me rephrase that.
- I can't verbalise it.
- The question is ...

CATEGORIES OF EXPERIENCE

- That's the pattern.
- I've no new ideas.

CONDITIONAL/POTENTIAL CONTEXTS

- My outcome is ...
- I would like that to be true.
- If only I could get some new insight.
- I *might* do something about it.

TO FACILITATOR DIRECTLY

- No, that doesn't actually feel right.
- Let me think about that.
- Bear in mind ...

NONVERBAL

- [Laughter at]
- [Tears about]
- [A sigh]

For a full list of the meta-comments by category see:
www.cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/articles/192/1/

Pattern-level comments

There is an additional category of meta-comment that rarely occurs in the first 20 minutes of a client's first session but which warrants special attention. These are comments at a *pattern-level* of organisation:

That's like my whole life.
 I'm back to square one.
 I can't stop running round in circles.
 How long am I going to complain about this?
 I realise it's never going to work.
 Here I go again.
 It's the same problem in a different guise.

Comments like these are especially important because they mark out that *the client* is perceiving at a pattern level. With skilful choice of questions you can facilitate them to stay at that level. By transcending and including the multitude of lower-level components and examples they are working strategically. And when the pattern changes the effects will filter down so they think, feel and behave differently across a range of contexts – some of which may never have been mentioned.

Common signals for meta-comments

Careful observation suggests that there are behaviours that often mark out a meta-comment from other language:

The person's body often moves slightly backwards or upwards.
There is a change in their tonality.
There is a discontinuity in the flow of their sentences.
The comment has an 'about-ness' to it.

You may also notice a subtle internal sense that something different – a kind of mismatch – has just happened. This will be you noticing that the client's meta-comment has changed the frame for a second or two. With practice you can sensitise yourself to notice these cues and increase your ability to choose whether or not to respond to the meta-comment. To develop these skills we recommend you review a transcript, highlighting the meta-comments only. One indicator of a meta-comment is to consider whether the client's description makes sense without that comment. If you were to remove all of the meta-comments from a transcript and hand it to someone else they wouldn't know anything was missing. This, however, does not mean they are unimportant.

Working with meta-comments

Most of the time you can just note a client's meta-comment and use it to update your model of their model of the world. This will help you attend to what the client is attending to, and be a guide to where it would be useful for the client's attention to go next.

Hearing a client meta-comment can alert you to consider: What just happened? How did they *do* the shift? What happened just before the shift?. By 'reverse engineering' what the client has likely had to do with their attention you can get an embodied sense of how their thinking is organised in that moment.

Occasionally, however, you may decide to utilise the meta-comment more directly.

David Grove suggested that meta-comments have "a short half-life". They decay quickly and soon disappear from the client's awareness unless they are attended to. So if you are going to refer to them you need to do so immediately after they have happened. Below is a simplified framework for doing this

1. Notice/recognise the meta-comment.
2. Model the comment in relation to the current organisation of the client's interior landscape and context of the session.
3. Consider whether to:

- i. Utilise the comment directly
 - ii. Follow the direction suggested by the meta-comment
 - iii. Deliberately *not* follow the direction implied by the meta-comment.
4. If you decide to pursue one of the options in 3, we recommend you first check that *your* intention to utilise the meta-comment relates to *their* desired outcome. Then you can choose *how* you are going to do this. For example, using Clean Language, you could respond to a client who says:

Client: I've just realised I need to decide which way to go.

Facilitator:

- i: And what kind of 'realised' is that 'realised'?
- ii: And then what happens?
- iii: And where could the 'need to decide' come from?

Ways Meta-Comments can be utilised

Once you have decided you are going to make use of a meta-comment you have lots of choice about how to do that. Below we list some examples to give you a flavour of how we use Clean Language to utilise verbal and nonverbal meta-comments.

Any meta-comment

- Repeat only the meta-comment and pause.
- Or ask: And is there anything else about that [client's meta-comment]?

"There's something else I can't quite grasp."

- Do nothing, and wait to see what happens.
- Or ask: And then what happens?

"I'm trying to do this in bits."

- And how many bits?
- And what kind of trying is that trying?

"Both elements are important."

- Make sure that both elements are explored.
- Or ask: And how do you know both elements are important?

"I know this pattern."

- And when you know this pattern then what happens?
- And given you know this pattern, what would you like to have happen?

"If I'm honest ..."

- And what happens just before you're honest?
- And where does being honest come from?

"[Laugh] I've been here before."

- And what kind of [laugh] is that [laugh]?
- And what could that [laugh] know?
- And where could [laugh] come from?

"I kind of know that I want something, but [sits back] I don't know what I want."

- And what's the difference between [indicate them sitting forward] and [indicate them sitting back]?
- And whereabouts is that know that you want something?

A meta-comment that suggests something new just happened.

- Interrupt and ask: And what just happened?

When there are a lot of meta-comments

- Repeat back a list of their meta-comments and ask: And is there anything else about all that?
- And what happens just before you [list a few meta-comments]?

Attending to their own meta-comments is likely be an unusual experience for a client. While it can encourage them to become even more adept at self-reflection and open up areas that were out of their awareness, if overdone clients are liable to become self-conscious. Therefore you need to be selective and to calibrate how useful the client's responses to your questions are to them – given their desired outcome.

Conclusion

People meta-comment more frequently than you might expect. In our small survey clients averaged more than one per minute. While some people habitually comment on what is going on, others rarely do – but when they do it usually signals something significant has just happened. Despite their frequency and significance meta-comments are all but ignored by most facilitators. In so doing vital information about the current status of the client's model of the world can be missed.

In this paper we have identified several ways to make use of meta-comments, the most common being:

- Utilising the logic of the meta-comment
- Directing attention to the meta-comment itself
- Moving time back or forward using the meta-comment as a marker

Note, our way of utilising a client's meta-comments needs to be distinguished from the technique used by some schools of therapy where *the therapist* meta-comments on a client's behaviour, often their non-verbal behaviour.

On reflection, perhaps the most significant kinds of meta-comments are those that indicate the client is operating at a pattern level or that something has just changed. When you detect one of these cues we recommend that you put on hold anything else you were thinking of doing and keep the client attending to the pattern or the change.

Finally, while you can utilise any particular meta-comment, we suggest their main value is to keep you informed about what is happening for the client, and to point to how you can support the next step in their unfolding process.

Biography

Penny Tompkins and James Lawley have both been UKCP registered neurolinguistic psychotherapists since 1993. They are also supervisors, coaches in business, and certified NLP trainers. They co-authored *Metaphors in Mind: Transformation through Symbolic Modelling* and a training DVD, *A Strange and Strong Sensation*. They are the founders of The Developing Company and creators of Symbolic Modelling which uses the Clean Language of David Grove. They can be contacted through their web site: www.cleanlanguage.co.uk

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The “How” Behind “The Secret”

Dr Richard Bolstad

The Biggest Mistake In The History Of Personal Development?

In many ways, the NLP students who attend my certification courses are a lot better prepared than students twenty years ago. But in the last four years, a small percentage of them demonstrate a child-like naivety that I did not see two decades ago. This small group resist investigating the “structure of success” and insist that success has no structure. They maintain that any questions which leave them feeling uncertain or uncomfortable about their success are best not asked. They consider systematically modelled processes to be a distraction from the one true source of success – a model called simply “The Secret”.

In this article I want to examine a personal development model (The Secret) with many superficial similarities to NLP. I want to give some of the reasons why I consider it the biggest mistake in the history of personal development since the invention of organised religion. And I want to urge its replacement by well-researched techniques modelled from those who actually demonstrate a *real* ability to “manifest their dreams”.

The Secret of Jack Canfield’s Success?

The film “The Secret” was released in 2006. The secret referred to in the film’s title is the “Law of Attraction” – that over time you will attract whatever you put your attention on (positive or negative). The level of joy you experience as you focus on something lets you know what kind of reality you are creating. The original DVD of “The Secret” is focused on the teachings of Esther and Jerry Hicks, who since 1986 have, they say, channelled a group of spiritual teachers collectively called Abraham.

As thousands of people worldwide grab on to “The Secret” as the final answer to success, new research shows that the more people believe in such a “law of attraction” the less they achieve. In this article I will show you how this happens, because the Secret aligns with one of the two key traits of high achievers (their focus on the positive) and contradicts the other (their focus on consciously planning action).

Firstly, what does "The Secret" tell you to do to put this "Law of Attraction" into practice? In the film, "Chicken Soup For The Soul" co-author Jack Canfield summarizes the film's message like this: "Decide what you want, believe you can have it, believe you deserve it, and believe it's possible for you. And then close your eyes every day for several minutes and visualise having what you already want and feeling the feelings of already having it. Come out of that and focus on what you're grateful for already and really enjoy it, OK. And then go into your day and release it to the universe and TRUST that the universe will figure out HOW to manifest it." He gives the example of his own first great goal – to earn \$100,000 in the next year, set at a time when he was earning about \$8,000 a year.

Canfield says that after he started visualising his goal "... all of a sudden I was in the shower and I was about four weeks into it, and I had a \$100,000 idea. It just came straight into my head. I had a book I had written, and I said "If I can sell 400,000 copies of my book at a quarter each, that'd be \$100,000.... And then, I saw the national enquirer at the supermarket. I'd seen that millions of times and it was just background, and all of a sudden it jumped out at me as foreground and I thought "Wow, if readers knew about my book, certainly 400,000 people would go out and buy it." And about six weeks later I gave a talk at Hunter College in New York to 600 or so teachers, and this lady comes up to me at the end and she says "That was a great talk and I'd like to interview you. Let me give you my card." I said "Who do you write for?" and she said "I'm a freelancer but I sell most of my stuff to the National Enquirer."

It sounds a lot like an NLP-style visualization process. It's a wonderful and inspiring story. But a quick glance at Jack Canfield's own life makes it clear that it is not the full explanation of his own success. Jack Canfield has a BA from Harvard, a Masters degree from the University of Massachusetts and training as a university teacher, a workshop facilitator, and a psychotherapist. His company Self Esteem Seminars trains educators and corporate leaders. Canfield has co-authored over 35 "Chicken Soup For The Soul" books since 1992 and says the first two books in that series alone took him two years each to produce. The authors talk in their preface to the second book (Canfield and Hansen, 1993, page xi) about needing a holiday "to unwind from the pressures of writing and speaking." and about valuing the emotional support they got "to persevere through what seemed like a totally overwhelming and never-ending task." Jack Canfield had written the book – a job that "seemed like a totally overwhelming and never-ending task" already. He was both trained as a teacher and an accomplished writer and he was willing to put in the extra time promoting his book at presentations and writing about his book... and writing the follow-ups. When he urges us, on the DVD "The Secret" to let the universe solve the "How", his statement needs to be read in this light. NLP has studied the "how" of success in a number of fields. High achievers frequently do not know themselves "how" they get

results, but that does not mean there is no “how” or that great results somehow magically “fall from the sky”. They certainly didn’t for Jack Canfield.

Virginia Satir, the first expert studied by the developers of NLP, said in her foreword to the first ever NLP book, “The Structure of Magic” (Bandler and Grinder, 1975): “Looking back, I see that, although I was aware that change was happening, I was unaware of the specific elements that went into the transaction which made change possible.... I do something, I feel it, I see it, my gut responds to it – that is a subjective experience. When I do it with someone else their eyes, ears, body sense these things. What Richard Bandler and John Grinder have done is to watch the process of change over a time and to distill from it the patterns of the *how* process.” (Satir, in Bandler and Grinder, 1975, p. viii).

The history of NLP is the history of discovering the “how” that makes success happen behind the apparent magic of intuition and synchronicity. Robert Dilts emphasises that in successful creativity, the “dreamer” state is followed by a “realist” state and then a “critic” state (Dilts, Epstein and Dilts, 1991). Since 1993, Professor K. Anders Ericsson of Florida State University has conducted scores of studies and collated research from round the world about this question. He examined such fields as business success, medical practice, sports, musical aptitude and chess playing (Ericsson, 2003, 2004). His first major conclusion is that nobody is great without sustained work. It's nice to believe that if you find the field where you're naturally gifted, you'll be great from day one, but it doesn't seem to happen. There's no research evidence of top world class performance without approximately ten years experience or practice. The more hours put into that experience, the higher the success. That includes the apparent exceptions – people such as golfer Tiger Woods (whose father had him practicing golf since he was 3 years old).

“The Greatest people In History”

So how did the producers of “The Secret” get the idea that the “how” doesn’t need figuring out? There are three types of people quoted in Rhonda Byrne’s book as experts in The Secret, from whom she learned “The Secret”. They are:

- Exponents of “New Thought”, a movement that began in the late 19th century, continued through the early 20th century, and produced a number of writers of “think yourself rich” books.
- The people those writers claimed to model; historical figures who were actually highly successful including inventors, philosophers and scientists.
- The living “teachers” of The Secret, who appear on the DVD.

Byrne explains at the start of her book that she was first introduced to *The Secret* in 2004, when her daughter Hayley gave her a copy of Wallace D. Wattles' book *"The Science of Getting Rich"*, originally published in 1910. In her book and DVD, Byrne mentions several other people from the "New Thought" movement of that time, a period which gave the world its first wave of "get rich quick" books. Byrne goes on to claim, "I began tracing *The Secret* back through history. I couldn't believe all the people who knew this. They were the greatest people in history: Plato, Shakespeare, Newton, Hugo, Beethoven, Lincoln, Emerson, Edison, Einstein." (Byrne, 2006, p. ix).

Journalist Karen Kelly has checked out this history of *The Secret* a little more carefully. She identifies Wallace Wattles as one of a series of wandering speakers and writers advocating "The Secret" in early twentieth century America, often under the name "New Thought". Wallace Wattles himself never attained the success that his teachings promise though. Wallace Wattles, explains his daughter Florence, was poor and fearful of poverty most of his life, and in his last years, his family survived on the meager earnings that his lectures on "The Secret" gave them. He was also physically very frail, and he died in 1911, just one year after publishing his book *"The Science of Getting Rich"*.

Wattles is not such an inspiring personal example, perhaps. But maybe those "greatest people in history" were really the masters of using the secret, and Wattles and his fellow writers were merely the publicists. Unfortunately, Karen Kelly's research shows that most of these successful scientists, industrialists and philosophers openly ridiculed "The Secret". Here are a few examples.

- Byrne quotes Winston Churchill as a master of *The Secret* because he said "You create your own universe as you go along." (Byrne, 2006, p 36). Actually, Kelly points out, that quote is taken out of context. Churchill was making fun of "The Secret". The context is this (quoted in Kelly, 2007, p 172) "You create your own universe as you go along. The stronger your imagination the more variegated your universe. When you leave off dreaming, the universe ceases to exist. These amusing mental acrobatics are all right to play with. They are perfectly harmless and perfectly useless."
- Byrne quotes Einstein as saying "Imagination is everything. It is the preview of life's coming attractions." (Byrne, 2006, p 91). Kelly checked with several experts on Einstein's quotations and found that this quote may be attributed to him, but he never said it. In fact, in 1936 he replied to a question about whether he believed in prayer by saying "Scientific research is based on the idea that everything that takes place is determined by laws of nature, and therefore this holds for the actions of people. For this reason, a research scientist will hardly be inclined to believe that events could be influenced by a prayer, ie by a wish addressed to a Supernatural Being." (Kelly, 2007, p 176).

- Inventor Thomas Edison is listed as one of The Secret's masters by Byrne. Kelly counters with Edison's famous quote "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.", and his own simple explanation of what caused his success "I work 18 hours daily – have been doing this for 45 years. This is double the usual amount men do." (Kelly, 2007, p 169).

The third group of people quoted in "The Secret" are the living teachers that Byrne sought out, whose professions are mostly "metaphysician" and "author". Physicist Fred Alan Wolf is an exception. As a bona fide scientist, he is used in the DVD to add scientific credibility to "The Secret", and quoted in the book explaining the notion in quantum physics that "mind is actually shaping the very thing that is perceived." (Byrne, 2006, p 21). He has since complained that most of what he said was edited out of the film, and that "I did not say the law of attraction is based on physics. There is absolutely nothing in physics that says just because you desire something you will attract it into your life." (in Kelly, 2007, p 101-102).

Medical doctor Ben Johnson is also quoted repeatedly in the film. He expresses grave concerns about the way his ideas are presented there, and criticises the "... be all and end all idea that all we have to do is think, ask, believe and whatever we want will fall out of the sky. No matter how much positive thought or warm and fuzzy stuff we put out, you cannot discount the rule of three: it takes three times as long, costs three times as much, and requires three times as much energy to get anywhere you want to go." (in Kelly, 2007, p 53-54).

Best-selling author John Gray, also quoted in the film, expresses strong disagreement with Byrne's claims, for example the idea that you can eat MacDonald's fast food and lose weight if you think positively about the Big Mac. He says "There is legitimate criticism of that idea. When people eat bad food, they should feel bad. Another version of her weight-loss line of thinking is that if you shoot someone, have a positive thought in your head while you are doing it, so it won't be a bad thing. Obviously it is. And putting bad food in your body is like shooting yourself." (in Kelly, 2007, p 29).

It seems that no-one has really been keeping "The Secret" secret for thousands of years. In general, the people that Byrne suggested have been keeping it secret, as well as the people she featured in her film, just didn't believe in it. The person whose book inspired the whole concept for Rhonda Byrnes was physically unwell and economically impoverished. There is plenty of evidence to prove that our clients' expectations and hopes, while they don't create everything, can radically alter their results. This in itself is miraculous, magical, and makes life a delight. How this works is the subject of the rest of this article.

However there is no sense in, and no need to claim that *all* our clients’ results are generated by their expectations, let alone to claim that this is the one truth that accounts for the advances of human history.

The Real Secrets of Success

Successful goal-setting, as we generally use it in NLP, is a process designed to produce action, not to replace action. The “Secret” is based on a completely different understanding of how goal-setting works. The purpose of goal-setting is to motivate you to actually achieve what you want in life. It is not to motivate you to avoid problems, and it is not to distract you so you avoid thinking about the problems. It is to motivate you to act! Recently, there has been some dramatic new research about what enables goals to work. This research suggests that the two most common **unsuccessful** choices people make in goal-setting are:

- 1) Paying attention to what they don’t want all the time, instead of what they do want.
- 2) Fantasising about having achieved what they want, instead of planning action.

Unsuccessful Choice 1: Focus on the Problem. This part of the research supports an idea accepted by the secret. Focusing on problems and what we don’t want is paying attention to the past. It feels very different to focusing on the goal, outcome or solution to those problems, and it has very different, and less useful, results. In 2000, Dr Denise Beike and Deirdre Slavik at the University of Arkansas conducted an interesting study of what they called “counterfactual” thoughts. These are thoughts about what has gone “wrong”, along with what they could have done differently. Dr. Beike enlisted two groups of University of Arkansas students to record their thoughts each day in a diary in order to “look at counterfactual thoughts as they occur in people’s day-to-day lives.” In the first group, graduate students recorded their counterfactual thoughts, their mood, and their motivation to change their behaviour as a result of their thoughts. After recording two thoughts per day for 14 days, the students reported that negative thoughts depressed their mood but increased their motivation to change their behaviour. They believed that the negative thoughts were painful but would help them in the long term.

To test out this hope, the researchers then enlisted a group of students to keep similar diaries for 21 days, to determine if any actual change in behaviour would result from counterfactual thinking. Three weeks after completing their diaries the undergraduate students were asked to review their diary data and indicate whether their counterfactual thinking actually caused any change in behaviour. “No self-perceived change in behaviour

was noted," Dr. Beike told Reuters Health. Counterfactual thoughts about negative events in everyday life cause us to feel that we "should have done better or more," Dr. Beike said. "These thoughts make us feel bad, which motivates us to sit around and to feel sorry for ourselves." So what does work? The study found that "credit-taking thoughts", in which individuals reflect on success and congratulate themselves, serve to reinforce appropriate behaviour and help people "feel more in control of themselves and their circumstances." (Slavik, 2003).

So far, the research seems to agree with the Secret. And in one area of life, this is often the deciding factor. The body, being fully under control by your mind, is actually one place where visualising IS action, and therefore produces results. This is due to what psychologists call the ideo-motor and ideo-sensory responses of the body (ideas are inevitably linked in the body to actions and sensory experiences). Harvard University psychologist Ellen Langer, has done considerable research on the effect of imagination inside your body. In February 2007, Langer reported the results of another fascinating study of health results and expectations (Crum and Langer, p 165-171, 2007). Langer studied 84 housekeepers working in seven different Boston hotels. The women in four of these hotels had their health pretested and were told that their job cleaning 15 rooms a day was providing healthy exercise which met all the requirements for an active lifestyle. The women in the other four hotels were merely pretested. After four weeks, the women in the second group had the same health statistics. The women who believed that their lifestyle was healthy had on average lost two pounds of body weight, reduced their body mass index by 0.35 and dropped their systolic blood pressure by 10 points. It is likely that these improvements continued further over the following months.

An at cause ("proactive") style of coping with stress is associated with enhanced activity by the body's immune cells (Goodkin et alia, 1992). That is to say, when someone is in a state where they feel in charge of their life, and as if they are making choices about their future, a check of their immune cells (T lymphocytes to be exact) will show that these cells are more actively protecting the body from infection, and eliminating cancer cells. In fact, people who adopt a more "optimistic" approach to life live 19% longer, according to a 30 year study at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota (Maruta, Colligan, Malinchoc, and Offord, 2000). Mayo clinic doctor Toshihiko Maruta says "It confirmed our common-sense belief. It tells us that mind and body are linked and that attitude has an impact on the final outcome, death." However the fact that your thinking influences your body does not mean that thinking can replace action in more general terms.

Unsuccessful Choice 2: Fantasise About The Solution. The rest of the research on goalsetting tells a very different story to the Secret. Although focusing on the problem you have had does not lead to success, neither does merely fantasising about the future success. Lien Pham and Shelley Taylor at the University of California did a study where a group of students were asked to visualise themselves getting high grades in a mid-term exam that was coming up soon. They were taught to form clear visual images and imagine how good it will feel, and to repeat this for several minutes each day. A control group was also followed up, and the study times of each student as well as their grades in the exam were monitored. The group who were visualising should, according to proponents of "The Secret" DVD and the "Law of Attraction", have a clear advantage. Actually, they did much less study, and consequently got much lower marks in the exam (Pham and Taylor, 1999).

This result is very consistent. There are now a large number of research studies showing that "The secret" or "The law of attraction" (visualising your outcome and then letting go and trusting that the universe will provide it) impedes success. Gabrielle Oettingen at the University of Pennsylvania has done a number of studies showing the same result. In one study, women in a weight-reduction program were asked to describe what would happen if they were offered a tempting situation with food. The more positive their fantasies of how well they would cope with these situations, the less work they did on weight reduction. A year later, those women who consistently fantasised positive results lost on average 12 kilos less than those who anticipated negative challenges and thus put in more effort (Oettingen and Wadden, 1991). Oettingen followed up final year students to find out how much they fantasised getting their dream job after leaving university. The students who fantasised more reported two years later that they did less searching for jobs, had fewer offers of jobs, and had significantly smaller salaries than their classmates (Oettingen and Mayer, 2002). In another study she investigated a group of students who had a secret romantic attraction, a crush, on another student. She asked them to imagine what would happen if they were to accidentally find themselves alone with that person. The more vivid and positive the fantasies they made, the less likely they were to take any action and to be any closer to a relationship with the person 5 months later. The result is consistent in career success, in love and attraction, and in dealing with addictions and health challenges (Oettingen, Pak and Schnetter, 2001; Oettingen, 2000; Oettingen and Gollwitzer, 2002).

Richard Wiseman (2009, p 88-93) did a very large study showing the same result. He tracked 5000 people who had some significant goal they wanted to achieve (everything from starting a new relationship to beginning a new career, from stopping smoking to gaining a qualification. He followed people up over the next year, and found firstly that only 10% ever achieved their goal. Dramatic and consistent differences in the

psychological techniques they used made those 10% stand out from the rest. Those who failed tended either to think about all the bad things that would happen or continue to happen if they did not reach their goal (what NLP calls away from motivation, and what other research calls counterfactual thought) or to fantasise about achieving their goal and how great life would be. They also tried to achieve their goal by willpower and attempts to suppress “unhelpful thoughts”. Finally, they spent time thinking about role models who had achieved their goal, often putting pictures of the role model on their fridge or other prominent places, to remind them to fantasise. These techniques did not work! And the most successful people did not waste their time doing them.

Wiseman warns that visualising what it will be like to have achieved your goal has become a popular tactic. “This type of exercise has been promoted by the self-help industry for years, with claims that it can help people lose weight, stop smoking, find their perfect partner, and enjoy increased career success. Unfortunately, a large body of research now suggests that although it might make you feel good, the technique is, at best, ineffective.” (Wiseman, 2009, p 84). This is because, as Wiseman notes, whether you achieve your goals is primarily a question of motivation; of getting yourself to do certain things. Fantasising that everything has already been done reduces motivation.

Goal-setting

The complete inventory of successful strategies that Richard Wiseman’s research found fits neatly into my NLP-based SPECIFY model for outcome or goal setting (Bolstad, 2002).

Sensory Specific: Firstly, the most successful people did imagine achieving their goal, and were able to list concrete, specific benefits they would get from it, rather than just say that they would “feel happy”. They had what Wiseman calls “an objective checklist of benefits” and made these “as concrete as possible”, often by writing them down. He notes “... although many people said they aimed to enjoy life more, it was the successful people who explained how they intended to spend two evenings each week with friends and visit one new country each year.” (Wiseman, 2009, p 91- 93)

Positive: Secondly, they described their goal positively. Wiseman says “For example, when asked to list the benefits of getting a new job, successful participants might reflect on finding more fulfilling and well-paid employment, whereas their unsuccessful counterparts might focus on a failure leaving them trapped and unhappy.” (Wiseman, 2009, p 92)

Ecological: That’s about as far as the research results coincide with the “Secret”. For example, one surprising result of the research by both Gabrielle Oettingen and Richard Wiseman is that it pays to think about challenges you may face in achieving your goal (even though that may feel unpleasant at the time). After thinking about the positive benefits of achieving their goal, the most successful participants would “spend another few moments reflecting on the type of barriers and problems they are likely to encounter if they attempt to fulfil their ambition.... focusing on what they would do if they encountered the difficulty.” (Wiseman, 2009, p 101) Oettingen trained people to do this process, which she calls “doublethink” and NLP would call checking “ecology”. She was able to increase their success dramatically just with this step.

Choice Increasing and Celebrated: Related to this NLP concept of ecology is the fact that successful goal-setters made sure that they felt as if their progress was bringing them rewards rather than limiting their choices and creating work. They did this most of all because “As part of their planning, successful participants ensured that each of their sub-goals had a reward attached to it” so that it “gave them something to look forward to and provided a sense of achievement.” (Wiseman, 2009, p 93)

Initiated by Self: Successful goal-setters have a plan. They do not leave their goal up to “the law of attraction” or to someone else who will save them. Wiseman notes “Whereas successful and unsuccessful participants might have stated that their aim was to find a new job, it was the successful people who quickly went on to describe how they intended to rewrite their CV in week one, and then apply for one new job every two weeks for the next six months.” (Wiseman, 2009, p 91)

First Step Identified: Wiseman found that it was particularly important to break the goal down into small steps and manage one step at a time. “Successful participants broke their overall goal into a series of sub-goals, and thereby created a step-by-step process that helped remove the fear and hesitation often associated with trying to achieve a major life change.” (Wiseman, 2009, p 90-91)

Your Resources Identified: In NLP we encourage people to identify both internal and external resources. Wiseman’s research studied only external resources, most especially friends, colleagues and family. “Successful participants were far more likely than others to tell their friends, family and colleagues about their goals.... Telling others about your aims helps you achieve them, in part, because friends and family often provide much needed support when the going gets tough.” (Wiseman, 2009, p 91)

Summarising

Since the release of the film "The Secret" in 2006, it has become popular to believe that success in any field can be obtained simply by visualizing having what you want, and then trusting that the universe will create it. Contrary to the claims of the film, there is little evidence that high achievers from politics, business, science and philosophy have held onto this belief, and scientists quoted in the film have explicitly stated that this interpretation of their statements is erroneous. The writer whose book inspired the film was impoverished throughout his sadly short life. Such visualizing does have effects on internal body processes, but by itself does not, from the research, adequately assist people to achieve success in other areas of life where external action is required. In the last 5 years there has been research on how goal-setting works, and some consistent conclusions have emerged:

- 1) The two activities most strongly correlated with failure to achieve stated goals are a) focusing on past problems, and b) fantasizing that one has already achieved success. The secret recognizes the first danger but not the second one.
- 2) A number of mental processes are strongly associated with goal achievement, and most of these are not referred to in the Secret. They can be summarized with the mnemonic SPECIFY:
 - Sensory Specific measurable and detailed descriptions of the desired result.
 - Positive description language
 - Ecological checking of challenges and undesired side effects of goal achievement and preparation to manage these issues.
 - Choice enhancement and Celebration of successful steps on the path.
 - Initiation of real world action by the person themselves.
 - First and subsequent smaller steps planned towards the final goal.
 - Your resources identified, including others whose encouragement will support action.

Biography

Dr Richard Bolstad is an NLP Trainer and author who teaches on several continents each year. His book "Transforming Communication" is a text used in many degree courses and his book "RESOLVE" gives a broader description of a research-based approach to NLP.

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Appendix: Setting A "Well-formed" Outcome – A Research Based Worksheet

1. Sensory Specific

- (a) "What date do you intend to have this outcome by?"
- (b) "Put yourself in the situation of having it. Step into your body at that time. What do you see, what do you hear, what do you feel when you have it?"

2. Positive Language

This question need only be asked if the person says "I DON'T want..." or "I want it NOT to be like..." at any time. In that case, ask: "If you don't have *that* [i.e. the thing they don't want], what is it that you *will* have instead?"

3. Ecological

- (a) "What will you gain if you have this outcome?" "What will you lose if you have this outcome?" (If there are things which they would regret losing, ask "How can you create new ways to get what is important to you AND reach this goal?")
- (b) "What situations do you want this outcome in?" "Are there any life situations do you not want it to affect?"

4. Choice Increases and is Celebrated

- (a) "How can this outcome *increase* your life choices?"
- (b) "How will you celebrate the improvements it brings?"

5. Initiated By Self

"What do *you* personally need to do to achieve this?"

6. First Step Identified

"What is a first small step which you could take in the next 24 hours?"

7. Your Resources Identified

"What resources do you have to help you achieve this outcome?" (This includes external resources such as time, money, and people to support you. Even more importantly, it includes internal resources such as the feeling of confidence from past experiences where you achieved goals which had a similar challenge). "Who will you tell about this goal?"

Replicating Excellence by Benchmarking

L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.

If the core of NLP is modeling, how can we translate that to working in business as an NLP coach, consultant, or trainer? How can we use this central focus of NLP when we consult, train, and coach? The answer is that via NLP modeling we can facilitate business leaders as they benchmark best practices in their industry. That's because of what benchmarking is and why it's important.

What Benchmarking is in Business

Short and sweet, benchmarking is the ability to set marks by which you can then measure an experience, skill, or value. It is the process by which you create a scale, establish a value or standard for that scale, and then use it to provide a measurement as you get feedback or give it.

Benchmarking is essentially an investigative process—a process of inquiry into the complexity of the creative processes; it is a process that seeks to identify the structure of an experience. Spendolini (1992) says that with benchmarking, the focus in any given company or corporation extends beyond the scope of *the finished product or service* to concentrate extensively on *process issues*. In benchmarking you ask, "How does this work?" Benchmarking moves the focus of the leaders and managers from the surface perspective of what a company produces to *how* it is designed, manufactured, marketed, and serviced. It moves your attention to the processes that result in the final product.

Like modeling in NLP and in the cognitive sciences, benchmarking focuses on the dynamic structure of the processes that enlivens the skill. Both benchmarking and modeling, as investigative processes, inquire into the inner structured processes that explain a given expertise. Because benchmarking seeks to identify best practices in business and then discover the processes for replicating that excellence, benchmarking can take a business to a whole new level of success and effectiveness, and that brings us to *the why*.

Why Benchmarking is Important in Business

The very beauty of benchmarking is that it provides a way to accelerate learning and development. You find a best practice, identify the steps, factors, and variables within that practice, and detail a procedure for enabling others to step up to a much higher level of performance.

By marking and measuring an experience, by scaling where it is in its evolutionary development, you can diagnose where a person (or group) currently is and enable the person to set realistic goals that can be measured. Do that and you create for everybody (the learners and those investing in their development) a solid sense of the experience's *validity and credibility*. You evidence the reality and the value of detailing the inner and outer processes of the best practice.

Conversely, if you cannot mark and measure an experience, how do you know that it is a real experience? How do you know that you have not been secretly hypnotized? Maybe you are just hallucinating an experience! If there is a real experience and you want to fully own that experience, you will need to discover its variables and model it for replication. That is benchmarking.

And in my opinion, if anyone ought to be leading the corporate world in the art of benchmarking, it ought to be those who are NLP-trained. After all, isn't our business the business of modeling the structure of experience?

A Benchmarking History

At the very time when NLP was being birthed (1970s), the corporate world was learning about benchmarking. They learned that once they found a best practice, they could benchmark it and thereby accelerate the learning curve in that organization. And that gave them a competitive advantage. They learned that they could go out, find top producers and experts and through benchmarking, detail out the variables and the structure of that experience of excellence.

Modern benchmarking, as we know it today, began in the Xerox Corporation in 1979 which enabled Xerox to improve its quality and become a cutting-edge company. Motorola was next in 1985. It introduced benchmarking into its processes using benchmarking as a way for bringing measurement into the learning, training, and development process.¹

The business world now has several decades of experience in seeking out the highest and best and discovering the inner secrets of a best practice. By benchmarking, people in business look around at their people and those in competitors in a new way — *here is human capital!* Here is the intellectual and the creative capital that can give us a competitive advantage! And with that realization came the question, “Can we identify the best practices of this new capital, the critical elements that comprise it, and then replicate it in the rest of our people?”

Today businesses benchmark cutting-edge models, practices, and skills to accelerate the learning curve in a learning organization and to increase the competitive advantage. Today also almost any product that hits the market only has a few days or a week or two of dominance. Within days, others will reverse engineer the product and have a competing product on the market! There’s a reason for this. It’s not the content of what is done any longer, it is the culture of a company that can use that content. Once upon a time benchmarking might have been legitimately accused of being a form of corporate espionage. But no longer. It is the way corporations do business.

Actually benchmarking offers a perfectly ethical way to identify and replicate the key factors that come together to create that qualitative difference. Hronec (1993) describes benchmarking as a structured method of measuring processes and products against others—as the metrics of best practices (p. 14). As such, benchmarking is the continuous process of measuring products, services, and practices against the best competitors or industry leaders to close the performance gap and leapfrog over the competition.

Benchmarking can be used to close the gap between what you are currently doing and those who are the best-in-the-world. Bhote (2002) describes benchmarking as a process which provides an external stimulus so that as you learn about the best methods of other companies, you can measure that gap, close it, and then become “the benchmark company” (p. 195).

The Magic of Benchmarking

Does all of this remind you of modeling as we know it in NLP and Neuro-Semantics? Excellent. It should! And that’s why I think NLP-trained people should be leading corporations in modeling the structure of excellence in those at the top of their game.

Yet there is one significant difference. Benchmarking since the 1970s have focused almost exclusively on tangible, external practices. It has seldom focused on the best practices of intangible things like leadership, coaching, listening, giving quality feedback, etc. Now

this is great! It means there is a tremendous opportunity for us to enter this area and offer the next step..

I began to work on this next step in 2002 when I launched the Meta-Coaching system. After selecting the seven core skills that comprise the heart of coaching, the very next question was, “How do we benchmark these intangible processes?” And that led to an extensive study of the benchmarking process itself.²

Here is a more extensive description of benchmarking. To benchmark you have to do several things:

- *Identify an experience that is highly meaningful and important and model the component variables within it as the critical factors that comprise that experience.*
- *Create a scale for that experience whereby you can empirically measure it from when it does not exist, to its early stages of development, and on to its highest stages of expression.*
- *Distinguish the degrees of the development of that experience, skill, concept, or value. Present those degrees as an analog scale and encode empirically in see-hear-feel terms in order to provide behavioral indicators that thereby give tangible and measurable measures of an intangible quality.*
- *Use that scale for giving and receiving sensory-based feedback in order to shape yours or another person’s responses for the purpose of facilitating, developing, and unleashing higher levels of performance in that experience, skill, or value.*
- *Model the experience, skill, or value dialectically in terms of both quantity and quality thereby making it easy for others to develop the described competence.*
- *Communicate the experience, skill, or value with linguistic precision so that the description operationalizes the procedures with sufficient detail so that it can be replicated in the lives of others.*
- *Describe the experience, skill, or value with sufficient systemic specificity so that it can be understood and even visualized as a system of precise responses.*

Now a question arises. “Isn’t this just modeling? What is the difference? Is benchmarking as aspect of modeling or is modeling an aspect of benchmarking?” And the answer is that modeling is the larger and broader skill with benchmarking one aspect of it. In fact, after we have modeled the structure of an experience, we can then benchmark that experience. We can identify specific behaviors that are equivalent to the experience.

Say we model visionary leadership within an organization. We can then identify all of the required skills and then take each one and create a list of the prerequisite sub-skills. If one sub-skill is “framing,” then we would explore *how does a leader set frames?* If one way is

through asking questions, then we could detail that into open-ended questions (“What would you like to see this company contribute to our community?”), confirmation or testing questions to get buy-in (“Are you ready to fully commit yourself to this goal for this year?”), well-formed outcome questions (any of the ten distinctions in the NLP pattern), etc.

Then for each of these sub-skills, we could model when the competency is at the excellence or expert level and note *the qualities* that facilitate that: the leader’s face, countenance, voice, tone, demeanor, state, etc. and benchmark from low to medium to high levels of asking the particular kind of question.

The NLP Advantage

If there’s any one skill at the heart of benchmarking, it is the NLP skill of *de-nominalizing*. This means that the experience you seek to benchmark will be coded as a nominalization and so will need to be de-nominalized. So you begin with this nominalization which describes a process for connecting the over-generalized words and terms with specific sensory experiences of behaviors. This makes the verbal expressions of various processes actionable and precise. Now nominalized terms can be operationalized:

Equality described as experience means being listened to and her words used.

Respect may be described as being looked at while he is speaking.

Care may be described as the experience of being silent when expressing a strong emotion and not corrected or given advice.

Next, check for the semantic environment in which the nominalization is used. What Cause-Effect or Complex Equivalence structure does it occur within? De-nominalizing can occur by simply asking the Meta-Model questions for these distinctions:

What does someone listening and repeating your words cause you to feel?

What happens when someone listens but doesn’t repeat your words, when someone paraphrases? What does that mean to you? How do you interpret that? Does that happen every time? With everyone?

Do you always look at people when they talk? When you look away and do something else, can you still be respectful?

What else can a person do to show respect to you?

The Challenge

If modeling the excellence that people demonstrate in best practices is important for business leaders and companies who want to be competitive in the marketplace, then benchmarking is important and a great way to introduce modeling. And that offers a tremendous opportunity to people trained in NLP and Neuro-Semantics. It offers a significant opportunity for entering and making a positive difference in the quality of an organization.

End Notes:

1. See the books by Robert Camp and Stephen Hronec. See below in the book references.
2. See the chapter on benchmarking in *Coaching Change, Meta-Coaching Volume I* (2005).

Biography

L. Michael Hall, Ph.D. has been modeling “experiences of excellence” since 1992 when he modeled resilience and discovered the Meta-States Model in 1994. The book, *Benchmarking: Making Tangible What’s Intangible* is scheduled for publication in early 2011, the eighth book in the Meta-Coaching series with Prefaces by James Lawley and Dr. Angus McLeod.

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The Landscape of Experience

Joe Cheal MSc

The purpose of this article is to explore the nature of our internal experience, particularly the realms of physiology, emotion and cognition. By having a greater understanding of our inner landscape, we should be able to make positive changes more easily and effectively.

The article is divided into three parts. Part one will give a brief overview of theory and research into the connections between body, mind and emotion. Part two will introduce the Landscape of Experience model and part three will then expand on the model providing examples and applications for resourceful state management.

Introduction: The 'Moving Train' Metaphor

Sitting on a train... gazing through the window. What do you see? As the world goes by, you might notice the foreground whizzing past whilst the background drifts so slowly it appears to be stationary.

Now imagine a different landscape which is not the view outside, but instead your internal world. By turning inward for a moment you are able to gaze through an inner window and across your 'landscape of experience'. There you will find your physiological experience... the body, touch, pressure and other physical sensations. There is also your emotional experience... the feelings that move you. And then there is your cognitive experience... the thoughts, language and evaluations. Just like the landscape seen through a train window, this inner landscape also has its own foreground and background.

At each moment in time, we experience all three domains, consciously and/or unconsciously: the physical sensations, the emotions that affect us and the thoughts that go through our minds. Although we may think of the physical, mental and emotional as three distinct domains, we may also notice that they are systemic, crossing over and impacting on each other.

Part One: A Brief Overview of Theory and Research

What are Emotions?

When it comes to the physiological and the cognitive aspects of ourselves, there seems to be a reasonably clear distinction. The physiological can be measured physically through the body and its functions. The cognitive can be measured in terms of our thoughts and the language we use. But how do we measure and define our emotions?

There continues to be a range of definitions of this commonly used word "emotion". Much has been researched and written in the last thirty years or so on the nature of emotions and emotional intelligence. Some argue that emotions are like prime colours and then there are blends of these 'prime emotions' which give us a rich variety of emotional experiences at different intensities (e.g. Plutchik 1980, Mayer & Gaschke 1988, Huy 2002). Other theorists propose that emotions are difficult to categorise and that there may be no 'basic emotions' in the same way that there are prime colours and blends (e.g. in Eckman & Davidson 1994).

One of the challenges of studying emotions is in trying to measure them objectively. Eckman (2004) has carried out extensive research into facial expressions around the world and there do appear to be some commonalities for example in the expressions of disgust and shock. However, this is the behaviour of an emotion rather than the emotion itself. It could be argued that the range of emotions we experience is simply down to the language that we use, giving labels to things that may not necessarily be that easy to label. Ultimately, the experience of emotions is subjective. According to Fine (2007, p36), some theorists go so far as to suggest that all emotions have the same physiology but that "it is the thoughts that go alongside your emotional arousal that enable you to distinguish between one emotion and another." She goes on to suggest that: "Emotion = Arousal + Emotional Thoughts" and arousal is the same whatever the emotion – it varies only in intensity.

Goleman (1996) defines emotion in broad terms as referring "to feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and a range of propensities to act." Averill (1994, 379) argues that "'feeling' is one of the vaguest terms in the English language... feelings are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for being in an emotional state." Indeed, it seems to make sense that someone may have an emotion without feeling it, but it seems unlikely that they could truly feel an emotion without having it. Cameron Bandler & Leabeau (1986, p28) also argue that "emotions are not the same as the judgements we make about them, and neither are they the same as the behaviours they help to generate." The 'judgements we make about' emotions would fall into the category of meta-states (Hall 2008).

Is emotion a thing (e.g. Ekman 2004) or a process (e.g. Scherer 1994)? Or is it perhaps (in a quantum-like manner) both thing and process? When emotion is a thing, it is like a nominalization, which may create a 'stuckness' in the experience. However, if the emotion is 'denominalized' to a process of emoting, this may help generate some freeing up and moving *through* (particularly on a linguistic level).

For the sake of reference in this article, we might say that an emotion is "a short term internal process experienced at a particular intensity that tends to move us in some direction."

Emotional vs Rational

When someone is in an emotional state, what happens to rationality? For most people, it 'goes out the window'. In this sense, when the balance tips over into emotion or we 'lose it' to emotion, we become more irrational. It could be said that emotions act like lenses, distorting what we experience and the way we think. And what happens if you try to deal with an emotional person in a rational way? Usually it acts like pouring petrol onto flames in an attempt to put out the fire. Indeed, Fine (2007, p44) suggests that "our decisions, opinions, perception and memory can all be set adrift by our emotional undercurrents – often without our even noticing that our anchor has slipped."

Would it help us if we were purely rational? Perhaps not, as this may equate to a state of depersonalisation, a loss of sense of self. Following this train of thought leads to the inevitable analogy of being like logical robots, with no genuine motivation, no creative spark, no evolution, no 'joie de vivre'. Perhaps this is a debate for the philosophers, but it suggests that we require both rational *and* emotional domains, working in balance and harmony with one another, both informing the other.

Caruso and Salovey (2004, p70) argue that "the idea that there is passion on one hand and reason on the other represents a false dichotomy that may encourage us in the mistaken belief that somehow feelings are neither rational nor informative." Janov (2007, p124) also argues that there is no clear distinction between the emotional and rational, adding "paradoxically, it is the feeling centres of the brain that remain rational while the so-called rational thinking brain is often irrational." Ryback (1998, p58) agrees that the duality of emotions and intellect no longer holds, suggesting that "emotion and intellect are better seen as paired in a combination that enhances intellect to a more successful level of application than if it were isolated from emotion."

To blur the distinction further, some emotions appear to require some cognitive ability in order for us to experience them. Niedenthal et al (2006) refers to 'self conscious emotions' that rely on having some cognitive sense of self, for example envy, jealousy, guilt, shame, embarrassment and pride. For an NLP perspective on the nature of reflective emotions, see Hall (2007).

However, despite the blurry distinction, the emotional and the rational *do* seem to be of a different 'order'. As Goleman (1996, p8) suggests: "knowing something is right 'in your heart' is a different order of conviction... than thinking so with your rational mind. There is a steady gradient in the ratio of rational-to-emotional control over the mind; the more intense the feeling, the more dominant the emotional mind becomes – and the more ineffectual the rational."

Mood, being of the same 'order' as emotions, also appear to act like lenses to the rational. Ekman (2004, p52) states that "moods narrow our alternatives, distort our thinking, and make it more difficult to control what we do." Goleman (1996, p73) adds that "Thoughts are associated in the mind not just by content, but by mood. People have what amounts to a set of bad-mood thoughts that come to mind more readily when they are feeling down. People who get depressed easily tend to create very strong networks of association between these thoughts, so that it is harder to suppress them once some kind of a bad mood is evoked."

LeDoux (1999, p69) proposes that "emotion and cognition are best thought of as separate but interacting mental functions mediated by separate but interacting brain systems." The introduction of the brain (and hence the body/physiology) into the equation invites some discussion on the relationship between emotions and the body.

Emotions and the Body

It seems fair to say that emotions have a physiological as well as a rational connection (whether this refers to the neurology and chemistry of emotions or to the actual experience of having an emotion). Although Fine (2007) reports that all emotions may have the same physiology (from the perspective of emotional arousal), Eckman's (2004) research on facial expressions would suggest a significant difference in the experience of emotions. Goleman (1996, p6) agrees that there is a physiological difference: "With new methods to peer into the body and brain researchers are discovering more physiological details of how each emotion prepares the body for a very different kind of response."

Goleman (1996) and Janov (2007) reference LeDoux's work in establishing the role of the brain in emotion and cognition. Janov (2007, p59) uses this work to propose 'three levels of consciousness'. Although this is a gross simplification, Table 1 summarises the different parts of the brain that appear to have a role in the *experience of* and *reaction to* emotions.

Table 1: *Types of experience and their place in the brain.*

Type of Experience	Area of the Brain Responsible
Cognitive	Neocortex, prefrontal cortex
Emotional	Limbic system, amygdala
Physiological	Brainstem

The amygdala appears to play an essential role in the experience of emotion, acting as an emotional memory bank and as a scanner for new information coming in via the senses. If it perceives a threat (which could be an old 'anchor') it sends an alarm to all parts of the brain. Depending on the type of situation, chemicals are secreted and the brainstem is requested to create a facial expression and to set off a series of other physiological reactions. Goleman (1996, p15) suggests that it is the amygdala that gives meaning and significance to events and that: "life without the amygdala is a life stripped of meaning."

The amygdala does not have free range however. The prefrontal cortex can control and modulate the signals sent out by the amygdala (and other limbic centres), acting as an editor. The left prefrontal lobe has the ability to tone down negative surges of emotion. According to Goleman (1996, p26) it is as if: "the amygdala proposes and the prefrontal lobe disposes." The prefrontal lobes appear to serve a polar purpose, with strong right frontal lobe activity being associated with negativity and 'bad moods' and strong left frontal lobe activity being associated with positivity and good moods (e.g. cheerfulness and enjoyment). Indeed the left frontal lobe is also connected to feelings of self-confidence and engagement in life.

If the prefrontal cortex has a role of 'rationalising' the amygdala, what other connections are there between our cognitive and physiological domains?

The Body in Cognition

It would appear that language and thought is informed by our physiology and in turn our physiology is affected by our language and thoughts.

a) Language affecting physiology

According to research by Iacoboni (2008), when observing someone else carry out an action, there are certain sets of neurons that will fire *as if we were carrying out that action ourselves*. These ‘empathic’ neurons have become known as *mirror neurons* and even if we *think about, hear or hear about* an activity, mirror neurons fire as if we were carrying out that activity. The only condition is that we need to have practised that action ourselves first in order for the mirror neurons to fire. There is also some evidence to suggest that *reading* a word linked to a body part lights up the ‘motor’ neurons linked to that body part. Hence a metaphor like ‘pain in the neck’ lights up the respective neurons. Iacoboni (p. 94) suggests that: “It is as if mirror neurons help us understand what we read by internally simulating the action we just read in the sentence.”

From an NLP perspective, we might relate this to anchoring. When we hear, think or speak a particular word, a specific set of associated neurons in the brain will ‘light up’. If the brain experiences the word “neck” and “pain” enough times (or strongly enough) in connection to a person/thing/event, the pain, neck and person/thing/event may become anchored together. Hence we experience a physiological connection to a thought.

Our language is full of ‘somatic metaphors’, ‘organ language’ and ‘bodily phonological ambiguities’, for example: keeping one’s hand in, face the music, keep your hair on, a head for heights, the game’s afoot, keeping abreast of the situation and ahead of the game. However, do these metaphors used in everyday language really have an impact on our physiology (and emotion)? According to studies cited by Giles (2009) it would appear so, for example:

Language/Metaphor	Physiological effect
○ Warm feelings towards others	People holding a hot drink rated others more favourably than when holding a cold drink.
○ Cold shouldered, ○ Frozen out, ○ Out in the cold	Thinking about being socially excluded can make the room feel around 3 degrees C cooler.
○ Clean thoughts ○ Dirty mind	People reading about unethical acts rated cleaning products higher than those reading about ethical acts.

According to Carpenter (2011, p40), such studies referred to above and their results “imply that our brains do not really differentiate between our physical interface with the environment and high-level, abstract thought.”

Further evidence for the cognitive-body connection is cited by Wiseman (2007) when writing about a phenomenon called ‘priming’. According to Wiseman, research carried out

by Bargh and colleagues had two groups of people putting scrambled sentences into correct order. One group worked with phrases which were 'old age' related containing such words as 'wrinkled' and 'grey'. The other group had more youthful oriented words in their phrases, for example 'smooth'. The people who read and worked with a list of 'old age' related words for a period of time then took longer to walk to the exit than did the people who had read fresh invigorating words. In another study cited, blonde women who read 'blonde jokes' then performed worse in IQ tests than blondes who did not read the jokes first.

If language affects our cognition and perhaps overall wellbeing, we might benefit from using and reading resourceful language more often. Appendix 2 is designed to give you a starting point.

b) Physiology affecting language and cognition

Perhaps the most obvious physiological link to language is when we describe literally what we are experiencing in our body. For example, a pain in the head is described as a 'headache'. It is interesting to note that we may at other times distort the word 'headache' as a metaphor to describe other situations, e.g. 'my job is a headache'. However, in order to make 'sense' of the metaphor 'my job is a headache', we need to have experienced a head, an ache and/or a headache at some point in our life.

Of course, the body is our most immediate reference point with the world. We cannot really create meaning from something outside the body without our physical senses. Even if we put ourselves in second perceptual position (i.e. the perspective of someone else) or third perceptual position (i.e. the 'meta' perspective or the 'fly on the wall'), we are still perceiving through the same sensory systems, i.e. our internal representations (VAKOG). Carpenter (2011, p41) suggests: "That the mind relies heavily on the body for information should not be surprising. After all the body is our only real tether to the world – all the knowledge you acquire, you get through your senses." Lakoff & Johnson (1999, p77) argue that: "Mental structures are intrinsically meaningful by virtue of their connection to our bodies and our embodied experience. They cannot be characterised adequately by meaningless symbols." Bickle (2010, p50) agrees: "A lone brain is not enough to create consciousness – it needs the body."

In terms of research showing the impact of physiology on our cognition, Strack, Martin and Stepper (1988) had people evaluating the humour level of a cartoon whilst holding a pen between their teeth (which forced a grin), between their lips (forcing more of a frown)

or in their non-dominant hand (as a control group). Those that held the pen between their teeth (forced grin) tended to judge the cartoon as more humorous. Whilst this has an emotional element to it, the research appeared to demonstrate the effect of facial expression on the evaluation of something (in this case the humour level of a cartoon).

A further piece of research by Sanna et al (2011) set out to establish if being physically elevated had any bearing on virtue and generosity. They found that people who had just ridden up an escalator were more likely to donate to charity than those who went down or were walking on flat ground. They also found that people carrying out activities on a raised stage were likely to be more generous and helpful to others than those not elevated. Again there is likely to be an emotional connection, however, it may be that being physically raised in some way leads to different decision making than if we are lowered or staying level.

We might also chunk down to the chemical level of our physiology and note how that affects cognition. For example, Masicampo & Baumeister (2008) found in their study that people with lower blood glucose levels were more likely to be distracted and influenced by inferior options when decision making. Those that drank lemonade with sugar were more focussed on the key options.

Although outside the scope of this article, the notion that the body is instrumental in our language, thinking and emotion is part of the philosophies of 'embodied cognition' (e.g. Wilson 2002, Shapiro 2011) and 'cognitive linguistics' (e.g. Evans & Green 2007).

The Mind-Body-Emotion System

Can we really separate out the cognitive, emotional and physiological aspects of ourselves? Hall (2004, p145) would suggest not, stating that: "We can't have [emotions] apart from the rest of the mind-body-emotion system."

Theorists suggest that both our cognitive abilities (Carpenter 2011) and our emotions (Giles 2009) piggyback on existing neural systems that handle basic sensory perceptions. This would suggest why emotions and our language are often linked and compared to physical sensations.

And so we return to the systemic nature of our experience; where the mind, body and emotions crossover and impact on each other. However, for the sake of working with our 'Landscape of Experience' for better state management, we will distinguish between these three domains whilst knowing that in reality they are intrinsically linked.

Part Two: Your 'Landscape of Experience'

Foreground, background

In a previous article (Cheal 2010), I suggested that emotions sit in the foreground of our experience whilst moods sit in the background. I would now propose that further in the background is our *temperament*. Here we are referring to the level of personality and identity and here we find such traits as optimism and pessimism. Kagan (1994, p40) defines temperament as the “stable behavioral and emotional reactions that appear early and are influenced in part by genetic constitution” and proposes four temperament types: timid, bold, upbeat and melancholy. It seems that relative to a lifetime emotions whizz by, moods come and go, but temperament is much longer term.

This is not the complete picture though, because we will also be experiencing foreground, medium-term background and longer-term background with all three domains (physiological, emotional and cognitive). In the physiological foreground-background for example, when you drink a glass of water, you may have a quick physical sensation as you touch the cool surface of the glass, followed by another sensation of your arm moving and the weight and solidity of the glass, followed by the water pouring down your throat. More in the background is the sensation of sitting in the chair, that you might only feel when your awareness is drawn to it. As you shift your attention further into the background, you may become aware that the *sensations* move into *conditions*, how the water quenches your thirst and how your body feels ‘generally’ (e.g. vibrant, tired, alert, achy, strong). And as you go further still, you might use such terms as physical wellbeing or *health*. This would include your overall constitution, physical resilience and long term fitness.

The cognitive foreground is in your *thoughts* which are comparatively fleeting and fast (e.g. your conscious and unconscious internal dialogue). Then further back might be your *interest*, i.e. where your focus lies. Your interest will affect what you think about most and could be resourceful (e.g. learning to play an instrument) or non-resourceful (e.g. a conflict with another person). Further still would be

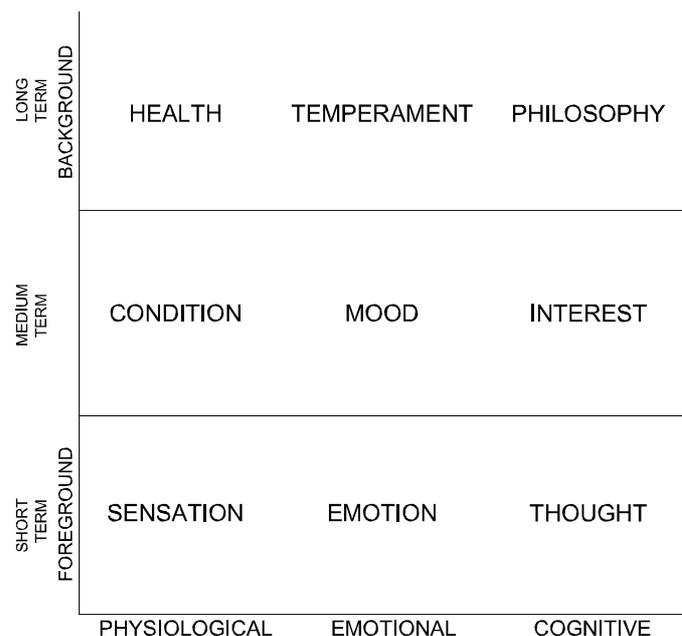


Figure 1.

DOMAIN

your life *philosophy* which is how you filter/categorise the world and how you conceive of such things as reality, identity, 'life, the universe and everything'. Your philosophy would include your systems of thinking and your long term beliefs and values. Also here we would place Bandura's 'self-efficacy' which according to Goleman (1996, p89) is "the belief that one has mastery over the events of one's life and can meet challenges as they come up. Developing a competency of any kind strengthens the sense of self-efficacy."

By combining the three domains of physiological/emotional/cognitive with the foreground/background, we get the 'Landscape of Experience Model' (see Fig. 1)

This foreground-background analogy leads us to a kind of 'parallax of experience', where the foreground moves quickly and the background appears more stationary. Unlike the view from a moving train however, in our own personal 'landscape of experience', the background and foreground will actually influence each other. And in this particular landscape, the background is likely to have more influence on the foreground than vice versa. For example, a mood is likely to have a significant impact on the emotions that are felt. An overall background mood of sadness is likely to inspire more short term sad feelings and it would have to take an extreme happy moment to change the overall mood. In this sense, the background appears to be a 'higher order' than the foreground.

It is worth considering that the domains and foreground/background do indeed impact on each other. In this sense, the landscape of experience is systemic. A significant change in one area will likely impact the rest of the system. Our thinking affects our physiological and emotional domains and our physiology does the same to thinking and emotions. Each is intrinsically linked to the other.

Often, the problem associated with 'negative' moods and unresourceful states is that an individual may get themselves into a negative feedback loop (or vicious cycle), where mood affects thinking which affects physiology which affects performance which affects mood etc. In the same way, temperament may affect philosophy which may affect health etc.

Given that these cycles can happen, how can we turn the whole thing around to create some positive feedback loops (virtuous cycles)? For example, a healthy diet can help temperament which in turn can have a positive impact on a person's overall outlook on life which makes it easier to exercise and eat healthily. Of course, the landscape of experience is systemic and hence more complex. Some people may find a healthy diet less than easy due to other conflicting factors in their landscape. So how can we use this as a model to make a real difference?

A Summary of the Landscape of Experience

The Landscape of Experience is a model designed to give someone a fuller picture of their overall wellbeing. The model helps an individual explore their life position allowing them to understand issues, blocks, resources and outcomes and then generate interventions. It also helps individuals to gain a context to their moment to moment feelings and states.

The model works on the principle of three domains: Physiological, Emotional and Cognitive each of which has a foreground (shorter term) and background (longer term).

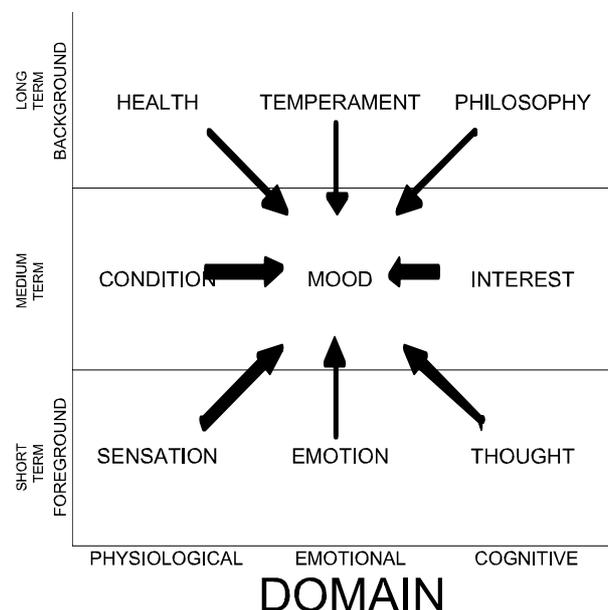
There are four key concepts that drive the model:

- 1) The model is systemic, meaning that every aspect in the model has a relationship with the other aspects. In this sense, there are connections between domains as well as within. This allows the 'explorer' to step into other areas outside the presenting problem (e.g. for resources).
- 2) The background is at a different level to the foreground, and a change in the longer term background is likely to have a stronger impact on the foreground than vice versa.
- 3) It needs to be remembered that the Landscape of Experience has a temporal factor. The model appears like a snapshot in time, but it needs to be considered dynamic. Our experience changes moment by moment and hence we can consciously make a positive difference to our own emotional states.
- 4) Working with the model allows the individual to 'go meta' to their situation, gaining new insights into the overall Landscape and/or into specific areas. It also allows the individual to utilise their physiological, emotional and cognitive resources.

Part Three: Working with the Landscape of Experience model

When working with others (or ourselves) perhaps it is useful to bear in mind that changing a state at any given moment in time is easier when the background condition-mood-interest has also changed. If we want to feel good more often, we need to work with our medium and long term background experiences.

The advantage of working with the Landscape of Experience model is that is



gives us many ways of improving our overall wellbeing. For example, if we want to change our mood, we have a range of approaches (see Fig. 2). A dramatic positive emotion may help to 'collapse the anchor' of the old negative mood. Reframing may help to change the thinking and focus that perpetuates the mood. New sensations or things to think about may help to distract a mood. Please note that mood is simply an example here as the model can be used to enhance any and all nine areas.

Landscape of Experience: Activity 1

1a) Exploration

Considering an issue or goal, lay the Landscape of Experience on the floor and walk from one space to another. As you step from space to space, get a sense of how this area helps and/or hinders you in your issue or goal. Are there any tensions/conflicts between or within areas? (E.g. I try to eat healthily but then I eat junk food when I get in a bad mood.)

As you feel moved to, step outside the Landscape at different places, going meta to your Landscape and getting different perspectives and angles. Again consider what helps and hinders in the Landscape.

- What do you notice?
- What resources can you bring from out here?
- What messages would you like to give yourself in the Landscape?

Allow yourself to move around, stepping in and out of the Landscape, gathering information as required.

When you are ready, step into the Landscape and wrap it around you re-associating back into your own personal reality experience. (Or, if it is more appropriate, step out of the Landscape and pick it up ready for later.)

1b) Changes

Having explored the Landscape, decide on a change that you would like to make.

- What is the current state that you would like to change?
- How would you like to feel different now? (Desired/Outcome State)
- What & where are the resources that will help you? (Remember that resources may come from within or outside the Landscape.)

Using the Landscape model, step into a location of resources, associate to resources and whilst experiencing them, step into the area where you want to make changes.

Alternatively, find areas of the Landscape where you would like to make changes and utilise any appropriate NLP technique. For example:

- For Health/Temperament/Philosophy:
 - Change personal history
 - Reimprinting
 - Core transformation (Andreas & Andreas 1994)
 - Change beliefs
 - Reframing beliefs
 - Values elicitation and shifting
 - Metaprograms elicitation
 - Trance-work
 - Fast phobia cure
 - Engage with NLP Presuppositions

- For Condition/Mood/Interest:
 - Reframing – Sleight of Mouth,
 - Submodality map across
 - Sedona Method (not strictly NLP but connected – see Dvoskin 2003)
 - Metamodel and well formed outcomes
 - Scrambling strategies
 - Cartesian co-ordinates
 - Chaining states

- For Sensation/Emotion/Thought:
 - Reframing
 - Anchoring
 - Pattern interrupts
 - Submodality change

Please note that the NLP techniques above are not limited to the category they have been placed in - these are suggestions only. Also, remember that this model can be combined with timeline techniques to gather resources from future and past.

Conclusion

The Landscape of Experience model is designed to be tool for exploration. Being able to understand the bigger picture of our own landscape, particularly its systemic nature, must certainly be a competency of emotional intelligence. The model is actually a meta-tool, allowing an individual to see where interventions may be useful. Other techniques and processes will then fit into the model. The power of the tool is in shifting an individual's awareness outside of themselves and the problem for a moment, in order to make positive changes and re-associate back into an improved landscape.

The Landscape of Experience is internal to the individual and hence is within the control and influence of the individual too. In this sense the model is liberating as it allows people to see that there are usually a range of options available to them when they are able to see their current state in a bigger context.

Biography

Joe Cheal has been working with NLP since 1993. As well as being a master trainer of NLP, he holds an MSc in Organisational Development and NLT, a degree in Philosophy and Psychology, and diplomas in Coaching and in Ericksonian Hypnotherapy, Psychotherapy and NLP. He is also a licensed EI practitioner.

Joe is a co-founder of the Positive School of Intrinsic Neuro-Linguistic Psychology (www.psinlp.com) and a partner in the GWiz Learning Partnership (www.gwiztraining.com), working as a Management & Organisational Development Specialist.

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APPENDIX 1 - The ALE Model and Healthy Expression of Emotion

The ALE model is a method I have developed and used in teaching people how to handle their emotions. In this model, emotions are treated as information that is better released than bottled up. It may seem simplistic, but I have encountered hundreds of people who struggle to feel, understand and express their emotions appropriately.

A lack of 'feeling awareness' is not really a case of emotional stupidity! It appears that some emotions 'redirect' so that it is not clear in the body what emotion has led to the effect. For example, when a child is angry there is a parental distortion which associates the anger with tiredness or hunger. If a child is consistently told they must be feeling tired when they are angry, this may install a life-long program that makes them feel sleepy when they get cross. Being told they 'must be hungry' may lead a person to eat instead of expressing anger.

ALE stands for: Acknowledge – Label – Express:

- Acknowledge: Own/realise that there is an emotion. "I am feeling something."
- Label: What is the emotion? "It is X"
- Express: Say and/or write down how you are feeling and about what. "I feel X about Y"

Acknowledge

Not everyone is aware of their emotions or that they are feeling an emotion at a given point in time. Although 'acknowledge' may seem an obvious step, a person cannot express an emotion if they do not know they are having it. Sometimes it is possible to identify that we are experiencing an emotion by the impact it is having. It may be that our behaviour changes (e.g. becoming more short tempered) or we experience tiredness, stress and/or tension in the body. I have found personally that there are times I have to 'back-track' from the effect of emotion and start with: "I am feeling something."

Label

There are various models for the exploring the range of emotional labels, of which I would recommend Plutchik's Circumplex. There are plenty of examples of this model on the internet.

Express

It seems that the natural, healthy outcome of an emotion is to be expressed rather than suppressed or bottled up. However, expression doesn't have to be a catharsis or an 'acting out'. Simply saying or writing down: "I feel X about Y" is a form of expression Or you can be descriptive (without judgement) about what happened then add: "and I felt X because Z". Research has shown (e.g. in Gaschler 2007) that simply writing down a 'negative' experience including how we felt about it tends to disassociate us from the negative feeling. They also found the same was true for positive memories too, that writing the experience down with how we felt tends to create a sense of disassociation. This raises an interesting question of whether it is unhealthy to bottle up 'positive feelings'. Finally, it seems that it is not necessary to express emotion directly to the person that 'caused' it. Talking it through with someone else or writing a 'letter-you-never-send' is perfectly adequate. And of course, sometimes it is equally useful to let someone know how you feel about their behaviour!

(Gaschler, K. (2007) "The Power of the Pen" *Scientific American* Aug/Sept Vol18 no4 p14-15)

APPENDIX 2- The Positive Adjectives List

If the words we see and read directly affect our neurology and hence state, here are a list of positive words to uplift and enhance your state.

Happy	ecstatic	comfortable	tender	stylish	astute	self-reliant
grateful	lovely	relaxed	fantastic	hopeful	rejoicing	nourishing
determined	entertaining	soft-spoken	jolly	affable	philosophical	thankful
professional	inspired	casual	whimsical	excellent	beneficent	positive
helpful	decent	loyal	defined	chic	privileged	systematic
sincere	helpful	alive	immaculate	intuitive	established	handy
authentic	pragmatic	charming	diplomatic	courteous	grand	considerate
content	witty	receptive	bright	caring	important	valiant
focused	convincing	good looking	vigorous	fine	resolute	romantic
extraordinary	beautiful	mannered	wonderful	logical	radiant	likeable
delightful	resplendent	shrewd	alluring	tranquil	deliberate	appropriate
imaginative	sexy	liberal	companionable	virtuous	flexible	adorable
reverent	assured	grounded	reflective	attentive	reliable	refined
successful	progressive	truthful	credible	thoughtful	terrific	poetic
heroic	comedic	gorgeous	elated	cerebral	sharp	attractive
cheerful	felicitous	practical	impressive	jubilant	democratic	sentimental
inventive	accessible	industrious	playful	affectionate	impressive	ambitious
unique	commendable	brave	intelligent	forgiving	sweet	visionary
upright	sensual	perfect	superb	mindful	charitable	lively
tidy	sublime	hardy	original	understanding	productive	prudent
open-minded	empathetic	innocent	devoted	fruitful	willing	vivacious
blissful	compatible	upright	pleasant	social	awesome	ethical
tough	influential	enchanted	warm	elegant	sincere	tender
glad	efficient	athletic	powerful	masterly	clearheaded	dignified
desirable	humorous	noble	fabulous	fertile	dependable	agreeable
valiant	engaging	diligent	gracious	great	prompt	heavenly
fair-minded	civil	gregarious	altruistic	tolerant	splendid	dutiful
ingenious	believable	responsive	affirmative	free	sophisticated	encouraging
courageous	gentle	precious	direct	daring	prolific	rosy
profound	lucky	satisfied	goodhearted	deserving	worldly	gallant
adaptable	knowledgeable	deep	wise	polished	energetic	versatile
worthy	serene	cosy	philanthropic	real	amicable	amiable
colourful	earnest	agile	robust	admirable	discerning	moral
joyful	adroit	restrained	convivial	blessed	generous	speedy
laudable	faithful	healthy	consistent	independent	sunny	balanced
cute	exultant	just	dedicated	compassionate	fashionable	concise
delectable	gleeful	creative	persuasive	artistic	light	well-rounded
dependable	sparkling	meritorious	amazing	genuine	reasonable	purposeful
remarkable	cordial	learned	calm	amorous	priceless	enthusiastic
confident	appreciative	right	nimble	blissful	suave	passionate
funny	spontaneous	approachable	desirable	smooth	forthright	benign
ready	fascinating	harmonious	studious	spry	hilarious	accountable
magnetic	brilliant	kissable	confident	complex	respectful	moderate
enlightened	natural	benevolent	decisive	scholarly	spiritual	captivating
authoritative	keen	lucid	peaceful	easy-going	appreciative	strong
enterprising	merry	fun	brainy	autonomous	precious	active
righteous	eloquent	bold	discriminating	accomplished	steady	distinctive
luminous	spirited	rich	responsible	special		

(Source: adapted from: <http://thehappinessshow.com/PositiveAdjectives.htm>)

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