

rapport

A close-up portrait of Paul McKenna, a man with glasses and a slight smile, wearing a dark blue shirt. The background is a solid orange color.

ISSUE EIGHT

SUMMER 2007

Paul McKenna

On NLP and Thought
Field Therapy

NLP in a Clinical Setting

A GP's view

Time on Task

NLP Training for Teachers

Christina Hall

Working from the heart

THE MAGAZINE FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

SUBSCRIPTION ONLY



Welcome to the Summer Issue

of Rapport. We are looking forward to a fantastic summer so whether you are reading this on a warm sunny beach, or on an equally warm tube train, we know you'll find something in this issue that inspires you and warms your heart.

My friend was recently telling me how her father had reacted to news he had received from his GP. Dr Susan Elton, a GP in Leeds tells Eve about her experiences of using NLP to enhance communications and patient care in her busy surgery.

We all know the challenges faced by teachers. Joanna interviews Roger Terry and Richard Churches about their brilliant programme, 'NLP for Teachers'. They offer practical advice which will empower and support both teachers and their pupils.

Christina Hall, who was in the UK earlier this year, talks to Andy about her values and her experiences in the world of NLP. What an amazingly inspiring trainer!!

Leadership and Horsepower? Caitlin gives a touching and honest account of her day spent with Paul Hunting, a leadership coach who inspires his clients with a little help from his mare, Maddie. She was so impressed that Rapport readers have now been given the chance to experience Maddie for themselves.

Paul McKenna shares his views on TFT, as well as giving us some insight into what makes him tick.

Joe Cheal writes a thought provoking article on Robert Dilts Logical Levels; Lisa Wake explores the challenges (or opportunities?) facing the NLP community; and Sharon Sullivan exposes the inside story of training with Tony Nutley and UKCPD. I am always inspired by the trainers I meet, so thank you Tony, for inviting me to share the fun filled final day...and night!

And if you have any free time over the summer then you may just find a course or workshop of interest listed in our diary. Whatever you are doing this summer, take time to enjoy the sunshine.

Wishing you well...

Karen Moxom

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How many years did you study at university to be able to do this?

In a recent Dragon's Den on BBC in the UK, one of the proposals was based upon using NLP as part of an overall solution. Turning down the proposal, one of the Dragons (potential investors) asked the question about qualifications. Andy Coote asks some people inside and outside of the NLP community if NLP needs to embrace a higher standard of qualification to be credible

Introduce the A word – Academia – into the NLP community and the responses are quite polarised, as I found when I asked this question recently. Michael Beale expressed a point of view at one end of the spectrum. “We all coach people anyway and in our day to day interactions with them we cannot fail to have an effect. So NLP can help you to do what you already do, but better and with more impact.”

Christine Miller and Lisa Wake, on the other hand, have both experienced the problems that arise when, as Christine Miller puts it “people get into challenging states whilst training and need intervention from the trainer. When we are working with people’s minds, we need to take great care.” Lisa Wake comments that “I have encountered three individuals who were going through a psychotic process because of interventions by well-meaning NLP practitioners.”

Nicole Bachmann, a coach who has no formal training in NLP, recognises the problem. “Much of NLP at the techniques level is powerful and works well. But some people seem to get a missionary zeal for NLP and try to convert people to it. If they lose sight of the person, it can become manipulation.” Christine Miller is also concerned about the glibness of

claims made for NLP by some practitioners which, she feels, can lead “to a snake oil” reputation” for the wider community”.

Training for NLP is generally organised in a hierarchy of qualifications, but are they clear and are they consistent? What, for example, does NLP Practitioner mean and what can

“When we are working with people’s minds, we need to take great care”

one do with that qualification? Michael Beale suggests that “Practitioner is about you. Basically it deals with you as a person and allows you to try out the techniques on yourself. It would be ethically wrong to use techniques on others that you haven’t experienced yourself.” Christine Miller points out that, as a result of the organic growth of the NLP community there are many versions of practitioner training

“from 21 days to some accelerated courses lasting 7 days, some with pre learning at home and some without.”

With several of the contributors, I explored the possibility of differentiating between using NLP for personal change, coaching and therapy. In reality, as Nicole Bachmann points out, NLP is used, but often not named, in a lot of management training, so, maybe personal use is already catered for. Once you use NLP with others, no matter that it is simply an extension of what you do naturally, as Michael Beale suggests, there is a danger that something simple could trigger a bad reaction. At the very least, several contributors agreed, there needs to be training in how to stabilise and refer if the situation gets out of the practitioner’s ability.

Michael Beale sees Practitioner as the starting point of a journey. “People who are good at NLP go to lots of practitioner courses and to master practitioner courses because they know that they will learn something new at each”. The NLP model is that of master and apprentice and an apprentice in one relationship becomes a master in another, thus passing knowledge and expertise directly from person-to-person. “Good people will become assistants and do lots of courses, thus themselves





becoming teachers.”

This model does seem to have served the NLP community well thus far.

In my interview with Christina Hall (this issue) she describes how she became a master trainer of NLP by just this approach.

So what might change things? Competition and external pressure are two possibilities. There seem to be four stages to the regulation of an industry from no regulation through to individual initiatives by companies and groups (which give competitive advantages) to cross-industry self-regulation and then to external regulation. Related disciplines are already well down this route. Lisa Wake points to the work that UKCP and BACP are doing to create an industry accreditation scheme for counselling and psychotherapy. During her time as chair and deputy chair of UKCP, she was involved in developing a White Paper setting out the approach. “The UKCP and BACP are working to bring coaching into the counselling and psychotherapy regulation system. I can see that NLP, especially where it is used for clinical support, could also take its place here.”

Lisa Wake is also working, for her own training company, with a UK university to develop an MSc where NLP Practitioner and NLP Master Practitioner modules are worth 30 credits at level 4. The MSc also requires some research with a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, a dissertation and 450 clinical hours of practice. There are also courses being developed at NVQ level 3 and 4 for Life Coaching, NLP and Hypnotherapy. Nicole

Bachman adds that “The National Coaching Federation and CoachU have been proactive in developing qualifications that are based on practice including the documentation of 2000 hours of coaching. If the market demands qualifications, more will follow.”

Why might the market demand such approaches? Nicole Bachmann suggests that larger companies may lead the trend as they have done in other areas of standardisation. “Two to three years ago, coaching was a booming market but the market is consolidating and buyers are becoming more discerning. Companies will want ways of making better buying decisions and the industry faces a dilemma. If Individual organisations and groups continue to create their own qualifications there will probably be confusion in the minds of the consumers as to the value of the qualifications that are presented.” Self-regulation is a way of ensuring that the industry speaks to governments and to the buyers with a single and clear voice.

There is one other powerful force at work in an increasingly litigious society, insurance. Darren Jarmin is an Insurance Broker who works with a number of professional bodies to offer professional liability cover. He sees advantages to practitioners to be accredited by their professional bodies. “At present, because there is no regulation in this industry, it is always difficult for us to accurately assess what training is ‘good’ and what is not. This is why we predominantly provide discounted schemes for associations such as ANLP, BACP, UKCP etc, as these organisations know far more about their particular field than we would, and as a result they will set guidelines, codes of conduct, ethical standards etc that all members have to adhere to - This in turn means that the insurers are happier to take on the risk knowing that set standards are in place. In return for providing the insurers with a lower risk, they will offer

the policy at a reduced rate, so I guess you could say that it is encouraged as it reduces the exposure to the insurer.”

Is it possible to find common ground between the parties to this debate? Michael Beale sees problems in making NLP a pure academic subject because “NLP is about exploration not about academia.” Christine Miller is also keen to ensure that qualifications are based on practice as well as research and learning. “I don’t necessarily believe that research has to be ‘scientific’ as there are effective ways of using qualitative research. We can have valid and reliable results without huge samples and without ‘double blind’ testing. In counselling, masters and doctorates are based on reflective practice. That is looking at our own practice and our own self and how far the espoused theory matches with what you actually do.” The MSc that Lisa Wake is developing certainly stresses practice as much as research. ANLP is also taking on board the principle of reflective practice with their new online CPD programme. “It is a reflective outcomes based record and it will be available to all members by the beginning of June” comments Karen Moxom, “it may just provide one solution to this debate.” It seems that there really could be a ‘third way’ for NLP. ●

We’d like to hear from our readers on this topic. Is it important to the future of NLP or are there alternative ways to move forward? Have you encountered negative attitudes towards your NLP qualifications? **Contribute to the debate at <http://www.anlp.org/forum/default.asp>**

The Participants

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Working from the Heart

Christina Hall knows NLP and has trained many thousands to use and teach it. She began working with both Grinder and Bandler. She remains as fascinated by people, language and creating change now as she was in 1977. She talks to Andy Cooté about her experience and her values

Some people can make you feel at ease in a moment. Christina is one of those people. As someone who wants people to ‘walk their talk’ she is certainly congruent with that aim herself. We spoke in late February after she had presented the first half of a Trainer training with Leicester-based Salad.

In 1977, Christina was a therapist with a Masters in Family Therapy and a PhD in Psychology and Language. Experiencing some challenges working with a particular client, she and the client went to visit her supervisor for his help “My supervisor did some amazing things with the client, like nothing I’d learnt in my graduate work, and I saw some amazing changes happening with my client – and, to an extent, with me. I asked my supervisor “Where did you learn to use language like that? You didn’t use any techniques that I was aware of.” It was her first encounter with NLP.

Her interest engaged, Christina went to a workshop in Los Angeles on the use of language to make changes and found it “unique and unorthodox”. She was intrigued. “I went to everything I could go to after that. I was interested in change and what it means to someone to make changes and what was happening when those changes were being made. Richard Bandler and John Grinder were amazing together. The rest is history – I was hooked”

In the early days there were no practitioner programs, just a lot of experimentation and exploration. Within a year or two though, Practitioner trainings had begun. Christina took as many practitioner programs as she could, often working in support of the trainers. “I always learned something new – always expanded my learning.” Christina found herself becoming a trainer. “I didn’t get into NLP to be a trainer. I was quite terrified by being in front of groups but in a way, training chose me.”

Working with Richard Bandler could be an unpredictable experience. “Just after I moved to Santa Cruz in 1981, Richard called and told me that a trainer had dropped out of a workshop the following day. “You’re coming with me” he said and hung up. I didn’t even have the chance to say yes or no”.

The development of the Swish pattern was part of a series of innovations that came “out of paying attention to how people perceive something and what it means to them and then asking ‘how can that be useful’ and experimenting until we could answer that question.”

Returning from training, Christina’s colleague “was talking about some challenges he was having. He said that it was ‘all blown out of proportion’. Still on a high from the training, I took him literally and asked him if he saw it as a picture ‘up close and in your face’. He replied that it was and that it was unmanageable, that he couldn’t do anything about it – it was so overwhelming. I asked him to try something as an experiment. I asked him to shoot the picture away from him until it was a small dot – the further away, the better. He did that and he told me

that he could manage like that. I asked him to blow it back up again and he again found that it was unmanageable, so we made it small again.”

“I called Richard and explained what had happened. He felt that it could take NLP to a new level, so we spent some time developing it and called it the Swish pattern after the sound the picture made as it shrank into the distance.”

These days, Christina travels the world, teaching NLP at a variety of levels and across many cultures. She takes the time to meet up with trainers and former students to “talk and explore”. Teaching is, she feels, “an opportunity to explore and to push the boundaries. I like to expand the range of people’s thinking – to help them achieve more change, more quickly than they thought possible. Change is a process that can lead to WOW moments – and I like those moments.”

There is no question that NLP has some great techniques, but, Christina feels, it is much more about purpose – both that of the practitioner and of the client. For example, “Rapport is an ongoing process, not a single event, but some people feel that all they have to do is to do a few matching techniques and you have rapport and you can do anything after that. You have to work from the heart, walk your talk and behave congruently.”

“ Change is a process that can lead to WOW moments - and I like those moments ”



Outcomes are important but not at any cost. What matters is whether “the outcome is worth achieving in the context of the client’s purpose”. Christina views the use of NLP techniques for entertainment on the stage or TV by their purpose and ethical framework. “It depends how they do it, on their ethics and their purpose and whether it is simply to make money or impress. If it is purely manipulative, I can’t support it. NLP is not something done to someone, it is something done with them. I want people to be able to impress and inspire themselves by what they find they can do for themselves and not feel bad about the experience.”

Training, too, is always a shared experience. “I have learned a lot from training and a lot from people. We are all shaping this process. The trainer is part of the system and not separate. You don’t train or lead in a vacuum. When the trainer stops learning, they’ve changed jobs without knowing it.”

Christina spends a lot of time in travel around the world. She enjoys observing how “cultures shape people and people shape cultures”. Different cultures seem to share many values. “They include connection, a sense of belonging and love. Doing work that they really enjoy and where they feel that they are making a contribution, seem also to be shared values”. When she first took her workshops to Japan, “people told me that the Japanese wouldn’t do my exercises but with good pacing and observation, I found that they were happy to get involved and learned equally well as people from other cultures. It became clear to me that some of those comments were projections of the speaker’s experience of the culture and not the culture itself.”

In one part of the world, Christina was able to work with others to make a major difference using NLP. During a training in Switzerland, discussions centred on the trauma and tragedy that was taking place in Kuwait during and after the Iraqi invasion. Christina, along with Dr Dr Sybille Roskother, Robert Klaus and Ulrich Götzen, put together a package of solutions for psychological and therapeutic support for victims of the conflict to be pitched to the German Government. In the event, the package was not adopted for Kuwait, but did get used for victims of the war in Croatia.

In 1991/2, Christina and her colleagues were away for two weeks in every six working with a group of professionals – including some

Bosnian refugees - chosen by the German government. “We trained the professionals in a variety of skills and techniques so that they could go out and train people on the ground to use them – thus achieving a multiplier effect. There were some terrible things happening in that conflict and I’m extremely proud and humble to have been able to have taken part – it was a great opportunity to help people.”

Christina believes that practice is crucial to skills development. Planning also plays a major role. “People are sometimes surprised to learn that I plan every workshop in some detail. They seem to expect me to wing it. Even when I plan, I find that the reality of a workshop is that I’m winging it a lot of the time. Without the planning – and years of practice – I wouldn’t be able to do that. As Grinder once said, “you only have the luxury of winging it if you have done your homework”. With practice, skills, like driving a car or playing piano, can become unconscious competences. Even when you are highly competent, you should still practice and be open to new ways of approaching old tasks.”

During an awards party in 1991 following 15 consecutive days of training, with several colleagues, Richard Bandler announced that he had a special award “for somebody who had given more to the field than most.” It was a new level of award – Meta Master Trainer. “When he called out my name, I was totally shocked. I appreciated the words from Richard and took them as meaning that he respected and appreciated that I continued to experiment and explore. That my attitude was one that he approved of.”

Need anyone say more? ●

Christina Hall will be back in the UK in 2008 with Salad.

NLP Trainer program
Part 1 - 4-10 February 2008
Part 2 - 5 – 11 July, 2008
Location – Leicester
More at www.saladltd.com.

More about Christina at her website
<http://www.chris-nlp-hall.com/>

Reinventing the Wheel (of life)

by Eve Menezes Cunningham

Founder and CEO of Life Mastering, Birgit Semundseth, is passionate about helping people define and achieve their goals. She says, “We have created a couple of tools to help people do this. We were the first in the world to create a Wheel of Life and Vision Board online.”

As a homeopath, Birgit had been treating patients for several years before becoming ill. By the time doctors told her that she’d be on medication for the rest of her life, she was ready to try anything. Then she found a lump on her throat.

Birgit says, “After I had been ill for six years, I decided to test out a couple of methods which I knew were scientifically proven. I cut out a picture of a woman who had a beautiful throat, replaced her head with mine and wrote ‘I am 100% healthy’. It looked funny to other people

but helped me. I put it up on my bedroom door and watched it consciously and unconsciously. After five months I started to

“ It makes goal setting more fun and this makes it more effective ”

feel much better. I reduced the medicine and then quit completely. It’s supposed to be impossible,” but after 3 years, Birgit says she’s in “perfect health and, as anyone who’s had a chronic illness will understand, I am very thankful and grateful.”

It made her wonder: “Why hadn’t anyone created a tool with all these proven methods for going from where you are today to

where you want to be?

Goal setting works.

And the more clear you are about what you want to achieve, the higher your likelihood of

achieving it.” An American study also found that sharing goals with other people raised the intention and made success even more likely.

So Birgit and her team created a Vision Board tool. She says, “People can go in and choose from more than 1000 pictures to find one that symbolises their goal. Then they upload their own personal pictures and add their written statements. It makes goal setting more fun and this makes it more effective.”

As any coach knows, it’s not enough to know what you want. You have to identify and take the practical steps that will help you get there. Birgit’s online tool allows people to identify the actions they need to take and obstacles that may crop up. It also schedules everything into a timeframe. She says, “We have created email reminders and most people choose to receive an email every week.” These emails keep them accountable to themselves.

Birgit says, “We also have a Hall of Achievement.” When most people achieve their goals, they move on too quickly. Birgit’s tool means that, “When you achieve your goal, you click and it becomes part of your Hall of Achievement. It’s so important to celebrate yourself, your small and bigger victories. People like the fact that when they’ve defined their visions and goals, they can share them by email with their coach or

someone else who’ll keep them accountable.”

Birgit’s tool encourages people to “describe the feelings they’ll have when they reach their goal. The last section is about focusing on what you want to create. You can print out written statements and make them into wallpaper or a screensaver for your computer.”

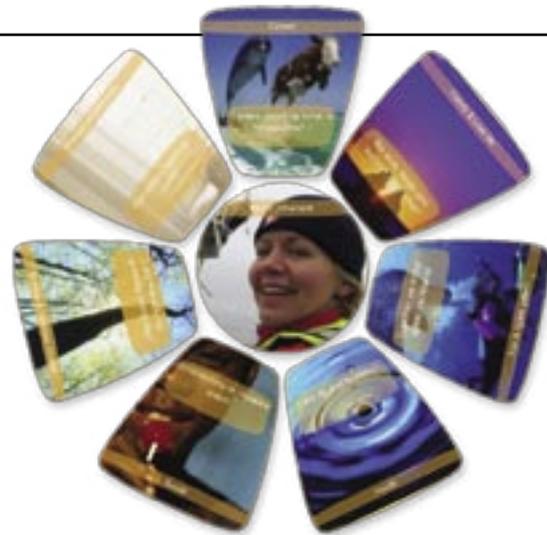
Birgit still uses the online tools herself. She says, “When I set goals for myself, it can be hard to think ‘How can I achieve this?’ It helps to sit down and think about the steps and I have a coach, too.”

One of the biggest benefits of Life Mastering is that it can help lots of people more cheaply than individual coaching. Birgit says, “we want to reach as many people as possible and help them to create positive changes in their lives.”

They also work with coaches to deliver tools which can make the coaching process easier. Birgit says, “We want to be on the coach’s team. We offer affiliate schemes so they get paid 30% of what the licence costs. In Norway, several coaches have used our tools with companies, too.” This is known as Business Mastering. Birgit says, “We have set a big, big goal to help a lot of people at low cost.” ●

SPECIAL RAPPORT READER OFFER

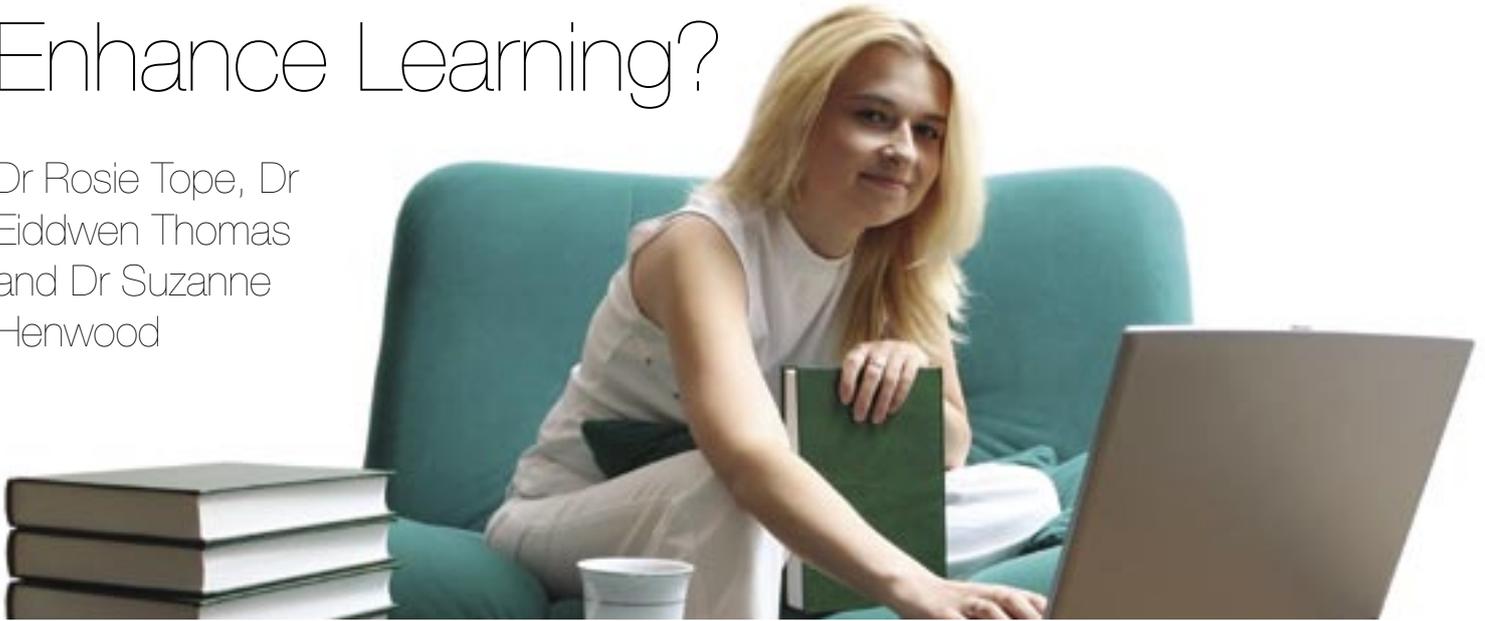
If you’d like to try these tools, you can register for a free trial. And if you buy via www.lifemastering.com/anlp, you’ll pay for one year and get your second year free.



Can Reflective Diaries

Enhance Learning?

Dr Rosie Tope, Dr Eiddwen Thomas and Dr Suzanne Henwood



The impact on subsequent practice of a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) seminar is reported rarely.

Evaluations tend to focus on whether participants enjoyed the event overall and how they rated the quality of the facilitators, venue and refreshments.

Following a recent communication seminar (see full report on <http://www.anlp.org>) and with the imminent introduction of the new ANLP on line reflective portfolio for recording CPD activities, it is timely to share the results of our evaluation. This demonstrated that following attendance at a two day communication seminar, twenty four nurse practitioners found that keeping reflective diaries had enhanced their learning and helped them to apply the knowledge gained during the event into their practise.

At the end of the seminar an information pack including a reminder of the seminar objectives, guidance on how to complete a reflective diary and questions which would aid reflection was given to each nurse. They agreed to write a diary over a four week period, two months after the seminar took place. They were asked to reflect on events or situations and identify whether, and if so how, they were still using the information they had gained during the weekend. More specifically, they were asked to record how information gained during the seminar influenced their interactions with patients and their families and with their professional colleagues. The nurses were asked to include specific examples of where they recognised they had acted differently in planned or unplanned situations. The diary remained

the personal and confidential property of each nurse.

Approximately three months after the seminar we conducted prearranged individual in depth face-to-face interviews. The nurses were asked to provide examples of changes in their practice and to share their thoughts and reflections of recorded events. Every nurse reported not only had the seminar improved their knowledge and skills in communication but that the very act of keeping a reflective diary had enhanced this learning which had a positive impact on their practice.

Specific examples given by the nurses of enhanced practice included:

- improving listening skills and an ability to use silence effectively
- ensuring clients/patients understand what is being said and the exact meaning of any words used which might be open to different interpretations
- enhanced awareness of body language in communication
- personal reassurance and an increase in confidence leading to a willingness to try out new tools and techniques to aid communication
- patient and family empowerment, helping to deliver truly patient centred care
- working more effectively within their own team and with other teams
- managing their own time more effectively
- moving their own practice forward
- sharing of ideas and best practice with others
- positive impact on self and attitude to work and learning

Several participants admitted that they would not have thought so much about their own performance and communication unless they had kept a reflective diary, nor would they have revisited the seminar's learning outcomes. Participants claimed that keeping a reflective diary focused their minds on the content of the seminar and encouraged deeper analysis and further insight into their communication skills and practice. Several claimed that this would not have occurred had it not been for keeping the diaries and the thought of a follow up interview.

Some nurses had been so impressed with the concept of keeping a reflective diary that they intended to continue the practice.

Conclusion

It is worth considering the potential value of reflective diaries following CPD activities, even if they are not formally reviewed by trainers. The on line reflective portfolio being developed by ANLP will support members to reflect and review their learning over time.

It may also be of value to contact individuals after training events to explore its impact on practice. Our experience suggests that the anticipation of an impending interview also enhanced the reflective process. This would also serve to provide an evidence base from which to demonstrate the effectiveness of NLP training.

We hope our results inspire both trainers and students to keep reflective diaries following a CPD activity. ●

Why talk to a guru...

...when you can whisper to a horse?

Caitlin Collins meets leadership coach Paul Hunting and a mare called Maddie

I'm not here to make you happy. Nor am I remotely interested in whether or not you like me,' says the fierce old man, scowling down like a thundercloud from his exalted position on a high throne. Sitting in the front row, I am terrified! I can't imagine anyone not caring whether people liked them or not. The lama pauses, surveying the quaking rabbits in front of him; then continues more gently: 'I'm here to help you to realise your own true nature. That's what's important.'

This episode took place in a Buddhist temple some 20 years ago. I was reminded of it recently, meeting big black Maddie in a session of horse-assisted transformational coaching with Paul Hunting.

Sensitivity

Expressing our true nature requires us to step outside the conventional barter system of trying to please and wanting to be liked, the learned hypocrisy that prevents our truly honouring either ourselves or another person. Horses are extremely sensitive to human incongruence or hypocrisy; they don't like it and they will tell us so. They have an extraordinary capacity to respond purely to others' intentions. Maybe this comes from the fact that as prey animals, their survival depends on their ability to perceive the intentions of a predator. Wild equines such as zebras will continue grazing calmly as a lion strolls by within a few yards; they know the lion is just out for a walk. The same zebras will bolt instantly from a lion they perceive to be hunting. And, as social animals, all equines greatly value the qualities of herd-leaders who can help them to stay safe.

The world of personal development coaching has begun to recognise the significance to humans of the equine response to others' intentions and leadership qualities, and a number of horse-assisted coaching systems have come into being. Paul Hunting has been developing the system he calls Horse Assisted Transformation (HAT) for fifteen years: he believes it is 'the biggest development in personal development since NLP – it's applying the essence of NLP, accelerating, enhancing, and bringing it alive on many levels.'

Leadership

Horse-assisted coaching does indeed take us into a different dimension, out of our familiar repertoire of resources and reactions. You can't be anything but fully present when in a small space with a very large animal with hair-trigger reactions! You'll

“Horses don't care about your income, your beauty, your achievements, your cleverness or your ancestry; they are interested in your trustworthiness right here and now”

be highly motivated to find whatever it takes to stay safe and be effective; and that means finding the leadership qualities within you that will enable the horse to relax and be confident in your ability to direct him or her properly. It's fast, it's effective, and it's exhilarating. It's also egalitarian: horses don't care about your income, your beauty, your achievements, your cleverness or your ancestry; they are interested in your trustworthiness right here and now.

Resources For Change

As with any interaction, there are outer and inner aspects to a horse-assisted coaching session. On the outside, the client is learning how to handle a horse effectively on the ground and how to be present with the horse in such a way that both can enjoy each other's company. On the inside, he or she is learning to find the resources that allow for such effective interaction: qualities such as awareness, trustworthiness, positive intention, empathy, warmth, patience, confidence, respect, emotional stability, authenticity, and flexibility.

Maddie And Me

All this brings me to the present experience of standing in a field in the Cotswolds with Paul and Maddie one bright Spring morning. I've arrived somewhat distracted: I'm in the process of trying to sell a house. I've found another house I want to buy; however my purchasers are delaying exchanging contracts and not only do I risk losing the house I want but I also feel responsible for letting down my vendors; I feel out of control of the situation and my stress levels are rocketing.

Paul Hunting usually works in the corporate sphere, helping people to discover and develop the leadership skills they need for effective management. I'm lucky to have him all to myself for the day. An engaging, humorous chap with a knack of extracting the essence, Paul has already helped me identify the specific issue I want to work on today. It's one that's probably common to many self-employed people: I put a lot of effort into my business, for too little return; I also let the admin pile up and get in the way of creative, productive stuff (we are talking about, um, two years of un-filing!).



I want to find a way to unlock blocked energy in my work and elsewhere in my life.

Now Paul assigns me a task that is to act as a metaphor for my issue. I am to lead Maddie away from the other horses and into the round pen. But something strange starts happening as we are talking: the three horses are moving around and forming patterns; at first Maddie comes forward, then she withdraws behind the others. I feel oddly out of control of the situation. Maddie is not wearing a halter, so I can't just 'lead' her in the obvious way, with a rope. What to do? I start trying to entice her, making the sort of chirrupy noises that a horse might like to hear, trying to get her to like me; but she just flattens her ears at me. I switch tactics and try chivvying her, getting behind her and flapping my arms; she simply walks behind her friends so I can't get at her. Looking about for inspiration, I spot a stick with a string attached to it; I put the string around her neck and pull. Maddie braces against me, but I drag her along regardless and oblige her to accompany me to the round pen. Whew! We're there at last. Now for the feedback. There's no getting around the uncomfortable observation that first I tried to entice, then I tried to bully, and finally I forced Maddie to do what I wanted. This leads to the equally uncomfortable question: Is this how I normally treat other people?

We move on to the next step: I am somehow to lead Maddie into moving around me in the round pen. I fiddle about a bit, getting increasingly hot and bothered, while the mare ignores my efforts. Eventually I ask Paul to demonstrate. He and Maddie engage in the most delightful dance, in perfect rapport, with Maddie walking, trotting, cantering round, changing direction, changing canter-lead, happy and confident, responding to subtle shifts in Paul's energy and body-language. It can be done! I try again. But Maddie is moving reluctantly, as little as possible, while I'm running about a lot! I seem to be working very hard, for small results. Paul reminds me that the task is not important – what's important is my learning – and I start to relax: my energy comes down from the head, down into the hara or belly-centre; I stop running around and take up a strong, steady stance; I open up physically and emotionally, allowing and inviting Maddie to move around me. And suddenly she is moving and we are dancing, and I am enjoying being here in the sunshine in harmony with this marvellous mare. Later, Paul asks me to close my eyes and identify the moment of change: it was when I stopped doing and

began being. He elicits from me the description of what's going on: 'I'm standing strong, allowing, inviting, and enjoying!' and we anchor that state with posture and words. Other words are also coming up: trust, love, rapport, connection, spaciousness, stillness, openness. We are straying into the realm of the spiritual here; this is like the sort of meditative experience a yogi might strive for years to attain. Wow!

Results Happen

Well, the wow continues. Changes have happened on outer and inner levels. A couple of days after our session, the apparently immovable house-chain shifted; I'm now sitting in the office of my new home on Exmoor as I type this article. More work has been coming in; however I'm still managing to find time to explore the moor as well as enjoying sorting out the house. I've also noticed that I'm becoming more alert to my old habits of trying to get people to like me and placating and pressuring others to get what I want. And the filing? That's been done; it was easy! In fact it's amazing how much can be achieved by simply 'standing strong, allowing, and inviting'!

The Horse Assisted Transformation system uses the model of the true self and the conditioned self. The conditioned self lives by the duality expressed in such concepts as right and wrong, praise and blame, attachment and aversion; it's a limited level of being that masks the deeper truth. Horse Assisted Transformation can help us in a direct, powerful way to discern the falsehood that has been masquerading as truth, transcend it, and step into the truth we can live by: our true nature. And, importantly, the benefits would seem to be reciprocal, for it is only when we stop seeing a horse as an inferior 'other' to exploit, and start genuinely connecting with deeper, shared levels of being that the magic happens; and surely the horse can appreciate and benefit from that communion just as we can.

Paul Hunting has recently brought out a book entitled 'Why talk to a Guru? When you can whisper to a Horse', in which he presents his ideas, describes his coaching methods, and explores the power of traditional spiritual metaphors that point towards the 'Holy Grail' of the authentic leadership that we can learn to find and express with the help of horses. See the Book Review section in this issue for more details! ●

For more information visit Paul Hunting's website: www.horsejoy.com