

# NEURONS

## 2009 Meta Reflections

This is the third year for the series of *Meta Reflections*. I write these short articles each week throughout the year and send them out every Monday to *the Neurons egroup* of Neuro-Semantics. I write them as I entertain various reflections throughout the week as I go about my business of modeling some facet of human potential, as I have the exquisite privilege of interacting with people around the world, and I as present trainings internationally.

The *Meta Reflections* are designed to share the insights I come upon in my readings and research and to spread around some of the most inspiring, challenging, and humbling ideas that touch me. I hope that they inspire and challenge you also and that they facilitate the unleashing of yet untapped potentials within you. The *Meta-Reflections* also function to help myself and others in Neuro-Semantics to keep refining and honing the field of Neuro-Semantics as a cutting-edge approach to self-actualization of individuals, organizations, and communities. This occurs as we apply Neuro-Semantic NLP and Self-Actualization to various aspects of life.

To your highest and best  
L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.

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**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #1**  
**January 5, 2009**

*Preparing for a Meta New Year*  
*Part I*

## **HAVE A META NEW YEAR!**

On January first I sat down with a sheet of paper and wrote out a list of my dreams, my goals, my resolutions, my aims, my intentions, and my purposes for 2009. On that day also I received emails from half a dozen people who sent me their list—the things they wrote down that they were committed to make happen in the new year. Three other people, Neuro-Semantic trainers and Meta-Coaches also wrote and told me that they reviewed their Matrix Business Plan on January 1<sup>st</sup>.

It's natural that people do these things as a new year begins. It's even more natural for people committed to the unleashing of their potentials to do this. It is especially appropriate that people in NLP and Neuro-Semantics do this. Why? Because they have been trained in the power and elegance of the *Well-Formed Outcome Pattern*. This pattern is generally taught on Day One of NLP Practitioner (and *Coaching Essentials*) and of course, we also use it on Day One of *Coaching Mastery* (ACMC) for developing the competency of creating effective KPIs.

If you know the SMART goal distinctions, the Well-Formed Outcome expands and enriches those distinctions: Specific (detailed, concise), Measurable (quantifiable), Achievable (realistic, feasible), Relevant (high value, profitable, desirable, practical), Time-based (timely, finite). I've included the ten criteria of the Well-Formed Outcome at the end of this article.

Would you like to have a *Happy Meta New Year*? You can. Begin by accessing your meaning-making powers, and especially your intentionality, to design your life with a robust sense of purpose, direction, and focus. Now if I were your fierce-conversation coach for a day, here are some of the questions I'd explore with you.

*1) What results do you want in 2009?*

What results do you want in your health and fitness? In your business and career? In your skills and competencies? In your finances and investments? In your relationships? In your hobbies and recreations? In your contributions and legacy?

As you consider the results that you want to achieve in this new year, do you experience these results as lofty, noble, challenging, and energizing? Quality control them in terms of these four attributes. How lofty are the results that you want? Are they lofty enough to create an inner

excitement? To enable you to stretch forward and transcend your current life? How noble are the results you're going after? Are they noble enough to get your ego out of the way? Is your goal compelling? "The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark." (Michelangelo).

2) *What results are you getting now?*

What performance indicators are you using now to evaluate and measure the results you are currently getting? What have you been doing that has resulted in the current conditions of your life?

The fact is—you are getting results now! You are getting results in your health and fitness, your body weight and strength. But what? Look in a mirror and you'll see some of them! Ask someone who will be honestly candid and you'll discover others. What relationship results are you now getting? Communication results? Love and affection results? Are you financially independent or are you still working for money? Are you a slave to monthly bills? Will this be the year that you begin to create a foundation of wealth so that you can stop serving money?

3) *Have you assumed complete responsibility for your results?*

Who is responsible for your health? Your financial well-being? Your sense of love and affection? Who's responsible for finding your passion and living passionately?

If the answer that immediately comes to your lips is not, "I am!" Or if it does not immediately come with a sense of celebration and excitement, "*I am!*" then will this be the year that you assume complete response-ability for your inner powers? Will this be the year that you'll stop passing-the-buck or playing the blame game? Will you step up to be a fully response-able person?

4) *Do you have a clear and specific target for the results you want?*

How clear and precise are your goals for the new year? Are they measurable? How will you measure them? How will you know that you have achieved the results that you want and that you can now "check them off?"

Vague and ambiguous goals without a time-line or a measurable scale masquerade as goals, but are not well-formed goals. They are more wishes—things you want and hope for, but for which you don't have a well-formed outcome. Is this the year you'll stop fluffing around in dreamland and come down to reality by making your goals precise and specific?

5) *Do you have a clear and specific strategy for how you will achieve the results you want?*

How will you achieve your goal? What will you do? When will you start? How often will you implement the strategy? Do you have your action plan written out so that you can use it as a checklist of activities that will bring you the desired results? Is your goal actionable? Can you take action on it?

Those who are high performers have a strategy. They have a well-desired plan that they can follow and implement. They also have it written out. Trying to keep the strategy in your mind

seriously reduces its effectiveness. The neuro-muscular activity of actually writing it down puts muscle into the goal and enables it to get into your muscles as muscle-memory. Mark Twain said, "The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks and then starting on the first one."

6) *Have you identified sabotages that could wreck the success of your desired results?*

Are you unstoppable? Could anything stop you from fully and completely achieve your goals? What? Do you know the things might seduce you away from the results you want? What's your plan for dealing with those sabotages?

Top performers know that it's unrealistic to assume that merely setting a goal will make it happen. There's lots of things that can recruit you away from implementing your goal. Do you know the things that can get your way? What structures will you put in place so that you will not be taken away from your highest objectives?

7) *What are the key success factors for you to achieve peak results?*

What are the critical pieces in your plan for achieving the highest results? Do you know them? What will you have to do to find them? What are the most important steps?

Getting the results you want requires certain actions on your part. Some are absolutely critical and essential, others are good and supportive. Do you know the difference? What are the implementation steps that you cannot skip on? Have you prioritized the necessary and sufficient steps from those that are extra and add to the execution of your strategy?

8) *How intense is your focus on your desired results?*

If you were to gauge the intensity of your ability to concentrate on the goal, how high is your intensity? Is it high enough? What will you need to do to increase that intensity? Can your focus be broken or interrupted? What would sabotage your focus?

Focus is a matter of intention and purpose and it grows from the meaningfulness of the objective. It also is a matter of prioritizing so that you know first things. And it's a matter of competency in being able to step in and out of a highly focused state, a genius state. Is this the year that you'll get to an APG training to develop a fully functioning genius state? "Once I am set on a goal, it becomes difficult to deflect me." (Albert Einstein).

9) *What feedback do you want or need that will support you getting the results you want?*

What feedback on your actions would enhance your competency and shape your take skills to the next level? Who will give you that feedback? How often will you seek that feedback? How open are you to that feedback? How quick will you act on that feedback?

You need feedback, all peak performers do. Feedback is an incredibly important secret ingredient for accelerating your learning and shaping your competencies. But it takes a lot of ego-strength and a strong sense of self to be able to look at your behaviors straight-on without defensiveness.

10) *What benchmarks will you use for measuring when you get your desired results and knowing when to check it off?*

How will you measure your results? What measurements will you use? How will you know to check off the goal as “Achieved!”?

This is the whole point of getting a KPI (key performance indicator) and making sure that the KPI is specific, precise, and measurable.

11) *Who will you need on your team to actualize your desired results?*

Who will support you? Who will hold you accountable? Who will you work *with* and *through*? Who will be a collaborative partner with you? Whose help do you need to achieve your goals?

Top performers don’t go it alone. They are not “lone rangers,” but help and are helped by others. They collaborate with a win/win attitude.

## **Criteria for a Well-Formed Outcome**

1) *Stated and represented Positively:*

State what you want, not as what you do *not* want. Represent what you will be *doing* and *thinking*. Create a movie in your mind of life beyond or after the challenge or problem.

2) *Sensory-based or empirical:*

Stated in sensory based terms in the hear and now so that your internal movie will be close and immediate. Benchmark the specifics in see-fee-hear actions and behaviors.

3) *Contextualized:*

Describe the contexts of the outcome, when, where, with whom, how often, etc.

4) *Actions steps and stages:*

Represent the outcome in terms of processes, the specific steps and stages, and behaviors which will move you to achieving your goal. Use verbs rather than nouns and nominalizations.

5) *Self initiated and maintained:*

Describe the processes and behaviors that within your own control, that you can initiate and maintain.

6) *Resources specified:*

Describe the resources you will need to achieve your outcome, how will you do this?

7) *Compelling:*

Describe the outcome in language that you find compelling and motivating. Use the client’s actual words and language.

8) *Ecologically balanced:*

Describe your outcome in a way that you recognize as balanced and ecological for all the contexts and relationships of your life.

9) *Forecasted in a time frame:*

Locate the specific actions of the goal on your time-line and its final achievement.

10) *Evidence Procedure:*

Identify an evidence procedure that will let you know when you have achieved your outcome.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #2**  
**January 12, 2009**

*Preparing for a Meta New Year*  
*Part II*

## **HOW TO FIND OR DEVELOP A LIFE PASSION**

We all know the secret to success, greatness, and happiness, do we not? Haven't we been told and seen studies and read the research that the way to success, greatness, and happiness is *to find and follow your passion*? Yes, of course! That's the secret! Now that you know the secret of life, have a good one!

What? There's something else? What? Oh the how; you want to know "*How to find and follow your passion*?" Ah, that's a different question and one that's not so easy to answer. But there is an answer.

### ***1) Find your Passion***

For many the answer is to simply begin to notice how you answer the following questions: What makes you feel most fully alive? What naturally and inevitably excites you? What do you dream about doing, experiencing, having, or giving? Or you could begin to recover those dreams that you had as a child or a teenager. What did you continually dream about in those early years? And even if you didn't talk about it aloud or discuss it with others, what captivated the inmost places of your heart?

Now if you, like so many people, have had the dreams of youth extinguished, if parenting, schooling, "being realistic," or the hard knocks of life have knocked all the dreams out of you, you might give yourself to some self-discovery for recovering an awareness about yourself and what's within. Or if you, like so many, have had self-knowledge and self-awareness tabooed so that you're not allowed to go there, then begin to giving yourself the permission that's been taken away. Then you too can begin the odessey of discovering and "knowing thyself."

Finding your passion will, more often than not, mean discovering your natural talents and dispositions. But you knew that, didn't you? Surely you've heard that a hundred times. "What are you good at? What do you do with ease that others find difficult? What are some of your natural dispositions?"

Generally speaking, your *passion* will be inside your natural "strengths" as your innate talent or

disposition, which if you give yourself to the effort and discipline of learning, you can cultivate into a skill, then a competency. And if you stay with it, you will turn it into an expertise and after some more years, into a mastery. No one is born an expert; everybody has to learn. No one is born a master; people become masters in a given field after years of commitment, discipline, and effort. Howard Gardner documented this in his work, *Creating Minds* as he explored the biography of seven geniuses of the twentieth century, one corresponding to each of the seven intelligences of his Multiple Intelligences Model.

Now if you find any of the words in the previous paragraph shocking or disappointing, that might very well explain your challenge in finding your passion. *Passions have to be developed.* They have to be cultivated. They do not just land in your lap full-grown. “The Myth of the Easy Passion” is precisely what discourages many. When they come up against the effort, discipline, and challenge of developing their passion, they experience a disillusionment as if they had been betrayed or sold a bill of goods.

“I have to work?” “I have to put out effort?” “Why can’t it be easy?” “Why does there have to be set backs, challenges, discipline? If it was really my passion, it would all come easy, right?”

Perhaps the Myth begins with the word “find.” I suppose *find* could suggest or imply that you will just *happen upon* it, and then, “Lo, and behold, There it is!” But *find* can also imply a search, a hunt, a digging around as in a gold mine, filtering through all of the rock and dross to find the gold. *Find* can suggest that you have to look here and there, turn over this rock and that, until you discover it. And this search may take years and lots of experimenting to find your passion.

## **2) Create your passion**

So what if you can’t *find* your passion? What then? Well, the next choice is to *create* it.

“Create it? I can do that? Just create it? How is that possible? What does that mean?”

Don’t let the idea that there is a passion for you—somewhere, some time, and that you have to spend your whole life off on some Indiana Jones adventure trying to find it—deceive you. You don’t. Don’t be deceived into thinking that you can’t start living, being successful, experiencing greatness, enjoying happiness until you find it. That’s a Myth also. And it’s a dangerous myth at that. It encourages passive waiting, procrastination, and path-of-least resistance living.

Because passions never come to you full-blown and at a red-hot temperature, they have to be developed. But there’s more. *We have to develop them and we also have to be developed for them.* This is true for both the passions that you find in your natural talents and gifts and for those that you choose to create. So how do you just “create” a passion? There are several steps.

First, *take interest in something.* Anything. In fact, if you look around to see it, you will find human beings highly interested in all kinds of things. And many, many of these things are things that you might scratch your head wondering “How in the world could anyone be interested in *that?!?*” Take anything and you’ll find someone somewhere is interested in it! Take anything and someone finds it absolutely fascinating and interesting! Now isn’t that fascinating?

Don't write that off as a pathology. That's our usual tendency, isn't it? That's what I often do. But when I'm at my best I know that this strange fact that *anything and everything can be interesting to human beings* is a gateway to finding and creating passions. This realization first struck me a few years ago and when it did, I made a trip to the dictionary to find out what the word "interest" really meant. And that's when I discovered a jewel—a real jewel.

Interesting enough, the word *interest* is comprised of two words— *est* (to exist, to live in) and *in* (to be inside of something). So *interest* means to exist inside of something or to put oneself inside of something.

Wow! Did you catch that? We typically talk about something "getting" our interest, "catching" our interest, or of something as "being" interesting. And when something is *interesting* to us, we get involved. We get inside it. We are inside it. And we want to be more inside it! After all, we're interested in it. Yet the word itself reveals the secret of why and how you find something "interesting" or "boring." And what is the secret? *The secret is whether you put yourself into that thing or not.* If you do not put yourself into it and live there, you will find it boring. If you do, then you are *in-ter-est-ed* in it—you yourself will be inside it!

Think about something that you find interesting and notice how you think about it. You probably have a movie playing in your mind in which you are involved with it, you are *inside* the movie seeing, hearing, and feeling. Compare that now to something that you consider "boring" or uninteresting. Do you have a movie or just a snapshot? And is it in color or compelling? Typically you represent one so that it is colorful, close, and that you are inside it whereas boring things are black-and-white, at a distance, and you are just observing it.

Now we have the key question for creation a passion: *Are you willing to put yourself into something and to live in it?* If you are, you will begin to become more and more interested in it. In fact, most things are like this. Think about all of the things in your life that you are not interested in that you had to *learn how to take interest in it.* You had to learn the distinctions, the rules of the game, the key factors.

So what would you now like to take interest in? What would you like to create a passion out of? I remember when I first got involved in real estate. I say "involved" because I was not interested. So why did I do it? One reason. Because I figured it was something that I could do on the side to build some equity and create an investment. And why did I do that? Because I was sick and tired of debt and of living paycheck to paycheck. That aversion pushed me kicking and screaming into real estate. Not exactly a passion, right?

But today, these many years later, real estate has become a passion for me. Ask my friends. I'm always talking about it. Always asking questions about real estate in various places, reading books on it; taking workshops on it; watching real estate channels on television! You'd think I'm a nut about it, and I guess I am. It has become a passion. I created it as a passion by taking more and more and more interest in it.

Second, once you've begun with an interest, *develop a strategic plan for cultivating your passion in that area*. With real estate, I began with one rental property that was an owner-carry loan and I put in a lot of physical work cleaning, painting, repairing, etc. Then I got burned. I didn't select the right people. So I had to learn how to get them out. Then I got burned again. I selected more wrong people, again! Now I was getting interested. One facet of the rental business really got my attention and interest: How do you select the right people? Knowing NLP, I began asking, "How do I 'read' people and their meta-programs to pick a responsible person who will be straight-forward from one irresponsible and refuses to be held accountable?" That's what I wanted to know. And that drove me to figure that one out, which I eventually did and briefly wrote about in the book, *Figuring Out People* (1997/ 2007).

I developed my passion in that area by attending workshops, reading lots and lots of books, and setting out a plan for buying one investment property a year. Doing that, in turn, cultivated my interest in that. It is not my biggest passion, but it is one. And definitely one that I was not born with nor a natural gift.

As you cultivate your passion, be sure to constantly check that you have given up the non-sense and stupidity of waiting for a moment of magic when some passion hits you up against the head and gets your attention. It does not work that way. You have to go after it.

### **Summary**

There's no need to miss the joy and meaningfulness of a life lived passionately. You can create one. A life passion can be found and if not discovered, it can be developed. And passion in life is not merely nice, it is essential. It is especially essential for living life fully and with vitality. It is essential for joy, ecstasy, and meaningfulness; it is essential for unleashing your potentials.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #3**  
**January 19, 2009**

*Preparing for a Meta New Year*  
*Part III*

## GOAL OR DIRECTION?

To move forward you first need aspirations—aspirations that you can act on. We call those “goals.” And goals are important because we hardly ever outperform our aspirations. So if you’re committed to making this a good year for yourself, a meta-year, in terms of your health, relationships, career, finances, passions, learning, and skill development, then you’ll want to set some goals that will enable you to move forward in the direction that’s important for you.

When I mentioned this the other day to a client, she asked,  
“But which is more important? Is it goal-setting so that I have some exciting goals to aim for or is it setting a general direction for my life?”

What’s the difference a goal and a direction? The difference is that specific *goals* will give you stepping stones for your *direction*. Within a specific goal you will have a precise *activity* so that you can *do* something about what you want— your aspirations.

One of my goals for 2009 is to write and publish two more of the books in the Meta-Coach Series. And the specific activity I did today to is making this real is that I read another four chapters on leadership and took notes. After that, I spent time working out the details of a self-actualizing culture in one of my chapters.

*Direction* has more to do with the vision that you have about yourself and your life. *Direction* has more to do with the path that the *goals* put you on and presuppose.

For me, the direction that my writing goal puts me on has to do with fully documenting the Meta-Coach Training System and creating credibility for the models. And so that gives me a direction. It puts me on a particular path that I will transverse over 2009— a path of study and interaction with coaches and coaching, and ongoing research with companies and organizations.

Goals fit into a pathway of activities and so they both create and manifest the direction that you set for your life. Goals make the direction real and grounds the pathway so that you have specific stepping stones. *Direction* occurs at a higher level and gives you the vitality and energy, the excitement and passion because it makes the specific goals meaningful and significant.

“Which is more important?” That’s hard to answer because each is equally important, but important for different purposes and functions.

*Direction* is more comprehensive and encompassing. With direction you are able to step back and rise up to a meta-level that allows you to see *the why*. Why is this path and this direction important to me? Direction encompasses all of the goals you set, and all of the small steps you take each day. Direction describes your transcendent purpose. Direction enables you to question yourself on the meaning scale:

- Is this the direction I want to go?
- What does it mean to me to go in this direction?
- Does this direction enhance my life and empower me as a person?
- Will this direction facilitate me getting to where I want to get to?
- What meanings can I add to this to make it richer and more robust?

*Goals* are more specific, detailed, precise, action-oriented, and feedback sensitive. With a goal you are able to step forward to do one specific thing that advances you along the path to the larger desired outcome that you want. Goals answers the question of *how*—how can I move myself step-by-step toward the outcomes that I want to achieve? Goals enable you to question yourself in a different way, on the performance scale:

- What are my goals for today that will inch me forward to my desired outcome?
- What specific actions will I take today and how will I know I can check it off?
- When and where will I take this action?
- What resources do I need to make this goal happen?

One of the directions that I have for myself is the *direction* of putting Neuro-Semantics and NLP “on the map.” That is, to get international attention to the models and community that we have.

Two of the *goals* that I have for this year are these:

I will write a series of 8 books on the Meta-Coach Training System, books on the models of Meta-Coaching that will substantiate and legitimize Meta-Coaching.

I will sponsor the NS/NLP Trainers’ Training this year in order to develop the trainers and leaders to help us get international attention and put Neuro-Semantic NLP on the map.

Sometimes when a goal isn’t sufficient to excite you (doing 100 sit-ups; writing a business plan; spending 30 minutes a day on administrative activities), ask some direction questions:

“Will completing this goal be one step forward in the direction that I want to go?”

“Is this goal putting me in the right direction?”

Here’s to your highest direction and your best goals to fit that direction in this New Year!

**From: L. Michael Hall**

**2009 Meta Reflections #4**  
**January 26, 2009**

*Preparing for a Meta New Year*  
*Part IV*

## **GOALS YOU CAN'T PURSUE DIRECTLY**

I've been writing about the direction and the goals that will enable you to achieve the outcomes that you find exciting, highly meaningful, and that brings out your best, unleashing all kinds of new potentials. But now I want to present a warning: *Be careful what you go after. There are some things you can't get by going after them directly.*

In terms of goal-setting, some things are counter-indicated as legitimate goals to pursue. That is, there are some goals you should *not* go after, If you do, your pursuit will backfire on you. In fact, your very pursuit may even actively prevent you from attaining your objective! It may set you back so that it would have been better not to have sought it in the first place.

- What are some examples of these kinds of goals?
- What would fit into this kind of shocking category?

I'll call these are goals that evaporate with directness *paradoxical goals*. Setting your intention on them and going after them directly causes them to burst. They go "poof." When you pursue them, they blow up, leaving you nothing.

For example, suppose you set a goal to sleep better. Yet what happens when you go after sleep directly? Suppose you use the well-formed outcome pattern and set out to get sleep as your desired outcome.

- 1) *Stated and represented Positively*: I want to sleep quickly when I go to bed and deeply and wake up refreshed.
- 2) *Sensory-based or empirical*: I will lie down on my bed, pull the covers over my head.
- 3) *Contextualized*: My bedroom and bed.
- 4) *Actions steps and stages*: I will lie down on the bed and try really hard to go to sleep. If it doesn't, I will urge myself more intensely to sleep, "Sleep now." If not, I will tell myself to not worry, but put more energy into trying to sleep. And tell myself how important it is, and what will happen if I don't. When I realize I'm thinking about things that are making me more awake, I tell myself to not think about them.
- 5) *Self initiated and maintained*: Yes.
- 6) *Resources specified*: bed, quiet room, time set aside for sleeping, desire, realization of value.
- 7) *Compelling*: Yes, I want to sleep and tell myself about all of the healthful benefits of getting a good sleep.
- 8) *Ecologically balanced*: Yes, will help with health, mental alertness, be less grumpy in the morning, etc.
- 9) *Forecasted in a time frame*: Every evening.

10) *Evidence Procedure*: I wake up naturally before alarm clock rings, notice that I immediately start thinking about the things I get to do during the day, and feel excited.

Of course, as you well know, using that strategy to reach the desired outcome of sleep will not work. In fact, the more you try, the more you demand, the more you expect it—the more it will escape you. Why is that? Why is it paradoxical? It's paradoxical because it violates that nature of the desired experience.

*Sleep* is an experience that results from the *need* to sleep. It does not respond to being commanded because it is not something that operates volitionally. Sleep is rather a derivative response to certain activities and states. It is derived from other things—sleep happens easily and naturally if you are physically tired and when you are mentally relaxed. So if you have expended physical energy during the day, exercised, and have a way to release the worries of the day prior to going to bed, you will typically sleep well.

How then do we set a goal for better, deeper, and more healthful sleep? First set *the direction* of healthful sleep by doing things that will create a good physical tiredness, set aside sufficient time for sleep (7 to 9 hours), and then create a ritual of non-stimulating activities prior to bedtime. With that direction, you can now set a goal for these things: perhaps set a goal for spending twenty minutes listening to quiet music, or light reading, or watching a silly sit-com, or soaking in a bathtub, or getting 30 minutes of exercise during the day. Set a goal for some reflective thinking at the end of the day, checking off the things you achieved, and writing a to-do list for the next day for setting specific activities, and then you can release all of that, drink a glass of milk, and get ready for bed.

Doing these things will then give you the conditions and the reason for sleeping well. Doing such is working intelligently with the nature of sleep. Conversely, if you set your intention and goal for sleep directly, the frame-by-implication of the goal is that sleep functions volitionally and can be commanded. This is false-to-fact.

“Okay,” you say, “sleep is like that. I can see that. But what else? What are some other goals that are paradoxical in that way so that going after them directly is counter-productive?”

Primarily happiness! And that's why I titled this series of Meta Reflections, “Have a Meta New Year” rather than “Have a Happy New Year.” As an experience, happiness is derivative rather than volitionally responsive. Sure we can “act” happy, we can put on a happy face, we can smile and see if the world will smile back at us, but the inner experience of feeling happy, delighted, and joyous *results* from other things— from doing the things that give us *a reason* to be happy. So in pursuing happiness, it is best pursued indirectly rather than directly. In fact, pursuing it directly tends to lead to a passive “Entertain me!” mentality.

Viktor Frankl, *The Will to Meaning* (1969), speaks to this in these words;

“Attaining the goal constitutes *a reason* for being happy. In other words, if there is a reason for happiness, happiness ensues, automatically and spontaneously, as it were. And

that is why one need not pursue happiness, one need not care for it once there is a reason for it.” (p. 34)

To the extent that you make happiness the objective of your intention and motivation, you make it the object of your attention. And with that then you become self-conscious of your emotional state and then, paradoxically, the more self-conscious you are of that— the less aware and focused you’ll be on the external factors that can make you happy.

“Success and happiness must happen, and the less one cares for them, the more they can.”  
(35)

Happiness is peripheral. As an emotion it comes and goes. It is dependent primarily upon your *reason* to be happy. So, what is your reason to be happy? Why be pleased with something? What’s your mental map about it? And what is the experience that’s validating it? Since we need a reason to be happy, a cause whose effect is pleasure, what is yours? Happiness comes from a job well done as you reflect on that accomplishment and what it means to you. Happiness doesn’t come from searching for happiness, it comes in service to others, contributing to making a difference in the world, succeeding at a highly valued task, and so on.

All of this explains why it is inherently self-defeating to pursue “happiness.” And for that matter, almost any “emotion.” Emotions are derivative rather than volitionally responsive. While we can anchor a state and use our body to elicit an emotional response, emotions generally are functions of the relationship between our mental maps about things and the experiences we have. And that will be the subject of the next Meta Reflection.

To your Meta New Year!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #5**  
**February 2, 2009**

*Preparing for a Meta New Year*  
*Part V*

## GOALS AND EPIPHENOMENA

In the last Meta Reflection, I noted that there are some goals are *not* to be pursued—least not directly. That’s because some experiences are not responsive volitionally to our goals and intentions (e.g., sleeping, happiness). I mentioned happiness because happiness is an *epiphenomenon*, that is, a by-product of doing and achieving something of importance. So what other goals could you set that are actually epiphenomena?

When a goal is a result of something else and only emerges after you first achieve certain conditions, it’s *those conditions* that you should set as your goals. About this Maslow mentioned this insight in his study of self-actualizing people:

“The only happy people I know are the ones who are working well at something they consider important.”

So to effectively pursue happiness, set as your goal that of *working well at something important*. You’ll then more likely experience happiness. So set a goal to work with more excellence at the things you do. Or set a goal to improve your ability to give importance (meaning) to things so that you make they become more important to you. The emotional epiphenomenon of happiness will more likely then come your way. Searching for happiness directly is inherently self-defeating because you are going after something but missing the conditions that actually create it.

If this is the case with goals, what other goals should you not go after directly? I hinted at another whole range of goals when I mentioned the foolishness of pursuing any “emotion” in the last Reflection. This is how I ended that Reflection:

“Emotions are derivative rather than volitionally responsive. While we can anchor a state and use our body to elicit an emotional response, emotions generally are functions of the relationship between our mental maps about things and the experiences we have.”

Another experience that is an epiphenomenon is *confidence*. Too many people simply want to feel confident as if that is a legitimate goal in and of itself. It is not. Confidence without competence is fool’s goal. Even if you were able to get yourself to “feel confident” at will, if you are not competent about the desired skill, the confidence will be wrong-headed and patently false. You may feel good, but your good feeling will be empty and when you attempt the skill you’ll look like a fool. In fact, it will only be a matter of time when you’ll be seen for your foolishness. Plus, there are too many incompetent people already on the planet who foolishly think they are competent in some skill when they are not! Yet because they *feel confident*, they don’t sense any

need to continue learning and development! Talk about a feel-good stuck state!

To pursue confidence, first identify *the skills* necessary to be competent in your chosen area. What competencies do you need in order to successfully operate in that domain? Then set your goal to learn and practice those skills—set your goal to accept and be with the discomfort, awkwardness, stress, and strangeness. Those feelings are just epiphenomena emotions of your incompetence state and are the stepping stones to competence which will later reward you with legitimate feelings of confidence. So similar to Richard Bandler’s comment that “confusion is the gateway to learning,” feeling awkward and uncomfortable are the stepping stones to confidence.

When you become competent in your skills, you’ll feel confident. Confidence will be the reward of your development. It will result from achieving the immediate goals of targeting a skill-set that will enable your performance.

Goals like these—seeking happiness or confidence are “paradoxical” because they are legitimate only when they result from certain conditions. Skips the conditions and you create shallow and empty version. That’s why the inner game alone is insufficient. Imagination is important, but not more important than action. Mere imagination creates the inner game, but if you don’t act on it, it is just a dream, just fantasy.

Several years ago I made several presentations at various bookstores in the central business district of Sydney Australia. It was a promotional tour for one of the new books and for some trainings that we were doing in Sydney at the time. At one bookshop the subject was Wealth Creation and I mentioned the inner game of having a good strategy as your game plan and talked about vividly imagining it. When time came for questions and answers, a backpacker asked, “If I can create a great mental movie in my mind of the end result of creating wealth, imagining myself on the beach, reading and talking with friends, and enjoying myself and then step into that movie and fully experience it, why then go to all the bother of actually following the plan? Why not just enjoy the mental movie and feel great?”

When people do pursue such paradoxical goals directly, typically they find upon reaching their goals, the experiences are empty. That’s because the emotion of happiness or confidence will be a pseudo-expression and not substantially grounded on something that will give a solid sense of these emotions.

So, what do you want? What’s your goal? Is it a real and legitimate goal or is it an epiphenomenon of a goal, a secondary effect that comes from reaching your goal? Merely to experience an “emotion” is the simplest and cheapest thing. You can get that through drugs. Or hypnosis. Or a shallow use of NLP. And it’s fast. And it saves you all of the work and effort and discipline and planning and development and growth and learning and unleashing of potentials! Just take the drug, get hypnotized, or anchor a state. But, of course, the “emotion” will not be as legitimate expression as what you’ll experience if you meet the required conditions for confidence and happiness in your area of excellent.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #6**  
**February 9, 2009**

*Preparing for a Meta New Year*  
*Part VI*

## **GIVING UP THE FUTURE**

Since the first of the year I've been writing to specific how to use the NLP processes for setting effective goals. I then wrote about the more comprehensive level of *the direction* that you want your life to be going so you can use your intentionality more intelligently. As I've been writing about the art of creating your future meanings, the purpose is to make sure that you seek your objectives intelligently. If you've done all of that, then you are ready to let all of that go and release the futures you've created.

“Release my future? I thought I was creating my future with my well-formed outcomes in order to hold on to my direction and focus?! What gives?”

Do you also find this contradictory? Confusing? Good. Now that I've induced a good state of confusion, let me see if I can now pull apart another distinction that operates as one of the factors for personal success. The paradox here is that to effectively reach your goals you have to *give up the future*.

Why? The reason is that after you set your direction and goals, releasing those very goals is what allows you to *come back to the now* where you can perform the actions that will create your future. Releasing the future enables you to use the power of sensory awareness to be *all there in the here-and-now*. Otherwise you will miss the now— which is the only time you have for creating your future and reaching your goals.

Want an example? I will use the experience of listening to illustrate. One of the goals of any effective Coach and Professional Communicator is to be a good listener and to be an active and deep listener, to listen with a third ear. This is *the first competency* we train in Meta-Coach Training and the first competency that we benchmark. “Can you listen? Can you *really* listen?” If you can't, that's the first thing to work on. If you can't listen, you won't be able to coach yourself out of a paper sack!

So let's say you set that as your goal:

“I will become an active and deep listener to catch the specific words of the client, to see his or her gestures and bodily expression, and to listen for the meta-levels of belief, value, and other frames.”

Now after you define this goal and set this direction, and detail the specific processes by which you'll train yourself for this goal, suppose you don't release it. Suppose you don't give up that future. What then happens is that when you are supposedly listening, you will actually be focused on your goal! Then while listening, you will be checking on yourself,

“Am I listening? How do I know? How well am I doing? Hey, I just repeated back with precise his specific words, Right on!”

*You'll be listening to yourself. You will not be listening to the other person!* During all of this self-talk—you will not even be able to listen! To listen you have to give up the goal, release it, let it go ... and be in the moment actually doing what you set your goal to do—listening.

Consciousness of the goal *while* engaging in the very activities that makes up the goal counter-acts the process for achieving the goal.

Maslow (1998 *Maslow on Management*) spoke to this when he wrote:

“In order to be able to listen totally, in order to be able to immerse oneself, to be all there in the here-now, one must be able to give up the future in the sense of being able to enjoy, to loaf, to saunter, instead of purposefully walking, to take one's ease, in a word—to play.” (220)

Now to give up your future—to release your goal or goals in the moment requires facing numerous fears and accessing a particular kind of courage. *To achieve this will require the courage to trust yourself to the moment as you give up “control.”* And what actually prevents you from releasing the need to control the future? The lack of trust in yourself. Conversely, the self-trust and courage that you can improvise when the future changes is what allows you to be more effective. Maslow spoke about this in terms of being “afraid of the future” and at the core of that is distrusting yourself. Then you become so obsessive and compulsive about following your plans that you end of trying to force the future—force your goal. Obsessively needing to reach your goal will precisely be what prevents you from reaching it!

The solution is flexibility. The solution is learning how to ride the whitewaters of change as the future keeps changing. And if the latest economic downturn teaches us anything, it is how fast and unpredictably the future can change. It can turn on a dime. Only a flexibly creative person who can change course as the situation changes and invent it as he or she goes—can adapt to changes and effectively face a continuously changing future.

So what does this require of you? It requires that you view your *plans* of goals and outcomes as heuristic scaffolding that you can then cast aside easily without regret or anxiety when things change. Again, this is why *direction* is a higher level than a *goal* and more important. Maslow wrote about people who do not do this — those obsessing about their goals.

“It's as if they cannot change their minds, as if this throws them into anxiety, into a panic. Of course, this kind of scheduling of the future, of geometrizing the future, of making everything arithmetical, exact, predictable, controllable and so on, this is all a big set of defenses against the anxiety which comes to such people from having to meet something unexpected, something they are not prepared for.” (2000, p. 245)

So on to the future. In the next Meta Reflections I want to address the subject of the Coming Future and how you can develop a *your future self* that can resiliently and creatively handle that future.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #7**  
**February 16, 2009**

## **META-GOALS FOR A META-YEAR**

In these Meta Reflections I have been talking about *goals*, the time has now come to talk about *meta-goals*. And what is a meta-goal? Using Maslow's distinction between lower and higher needs, first level goals have to do with reaching and achieving the lower needs—money for surviving, paying the bills for food, shelter, etc., materialistic goals for safety and security as well as for your social (love and affection) as well as your self-value goals. So a *meta-goal* would be outcomes that enable you to reach your higher needs, your self-actualization needs and *being-needs* and values.

Obviously, “the good life” begins with the lower needs and the goals that you set for surviving well, coping with financial, career, relationship, and status objectives. Yet these needs are also the basic “animal” needs—needs that we share with the higher intelligent and social animals. And, if this is all there is, it makes our way of life, our direction of life, our goals of life, and our definition of “success” in life wholly materialistic.

That frame sells human nature short. It treats human beings as merely intelligent animals and ignoring the unique human needs. We need both. To enjoy the good life, we first need to fulfill our lower needs so that we can then move to the higher self-actualization needs. There our need will be for expressing and resolving our unique identity and fulfilling our *being-needs*.

*Meta-goals are the meta-values of the higher life*—the aspirations of living for something more than just materialistic matters. The meta- or being-values include truth, excellence, order, unity, perfection, beauty, caring, meaningfulness, contribution, legacy, and so on. These occur at the peak of the pyramid and it is here that truly meaningful human life begins.

Now in tough times, in times of economic turndown and recession, *meta-goals* (in addition to all of your basic level goals) is what will give you a special power to thrive—the power of resilience to keep a robust sense of bounce within you.

- What meta-goals have you set for this year?
- What meta-goals do you need in order to effectively survive the current economic downturn?
- What meta-goals would enrich your work and career?
- What meta-goals would make everything you do richly meaningful?

Are there some meta-goals that would especially be valuable in tough times? Yes I think so. Consider the difference that *resilience*, as a meta-goal, would make. What if you set a meta-goal for developing a *never-say-die resilience* this year? Would that make a significance difference in your business, in your health and fitness, in your relationships, and so on? Would that contribute to the quality of your life? Would that provide a richness and robustness within your attitude and spirit and person?

Or consider the meta-goal of *flexible adaptability*. Would that *being* experience create a richness and competence in the face of the changes that are occurring and that will occur? If you made the ability to improvise and adapt in a creative and innovative way within yourself your meta-goal, what effect would that have when you listen to the news? When you face an old way of doing business that no longer works?

Or suppose you made *fresh-eyes of appreciation* your meta-goal. In Maslow's modeling of self-actualizing people, he noticed that this was one of the elements that characterized them. They were able to keep the child-like freshness of wonder and amazement and so did not discount or desacrilize things. Instead they were great sacrilizers—seeing things through the eyes of eternity so that they could see their value. And again, would that enrich your life? Would that take the quality of life to a new level?

As you can tell, meta-goals as *being-goals* and *being-values* concern your inner development—your identity and character. It makes you rich on the inside and creates the basis for inside-out wealth. So if you are thinking about up-skilling this year (Meta Reflection #54, 2008), meta-goals are precisely those that you will want to focus on developing.

And there's more. Meta-goals are valuable as end-goals, valuable in and of themselves, rather than merely being instrumental goals, goals designed to take us to the next step. And so as end-goals, meta-goals are themselves moments of peak experience. For Maslow a "peak experience" was any experience that give you a rush of joy and meta-pleasure, a sense of ecstasy so that you stand out from yourself and transcend yourself. And when you have them sprinkled throughout the days of your life, it gives life itself a new and higher quality.

So what meta-goals would you like to set this year? What meta-state experiences would take you to a new level and quality of life? Yes, meta-goals are also meta-states—the higher level states that emerge from the meta-stating process. Perhaps now is the time to get the new book on *Meta-States* (2008) or register for a Neuro-Semantic training somewhere around the world (like APG).

To your Meta-Goals!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #8**  
**February 23, 2009**

## **META-GOALS AND GETTING WHAT YOU REALLY NEED**

After writing the last Meta Reflection I had several conversations that made me realize that I have not yet distinguished goals and meta-goals as sufficiently as I want to. So I'll give it another go. One reader asked the following which helped me realize that a person could set a meta-goal and then seek to fulfill it through a lower level need.

“Suppose I seek excellence and beauty through designer clothes? Would that be a meta-goal? Suppose I set justice and perfection as a meta-goal and seek it by becoming a dictator and impose my will on others?”

I'll answer by once again navigating the subject of our human needs, the level of needs, the issue of satisfying the needs—adequately satisfying with true satisfiers, the conditions of satisfaction, and the nature of the *being*-values as meta-goals. This will involve distinguishing goals and meta-goals, basic needs and higher needs. This also reveals one of the ways that many people cut off their possibilities of self-actualizing: they semantically load a lower-level goal mis-perceiving it as a meta-goal.

The powerful point of Maslow's Hierarchy of Prepotent Needs model is this: *Needs come in levels*. All needs are not the same; some are more fundamental than others. Others emerge over time as the foundation is developed and this explains the relationship between needs and their satisfiers.

### **Needs and Satisfiers**

While your “needs” drive you and create *the biological impulses* that you feel within, they can be “satisfied” along a range of satisfiers. “What will satisfy your need?” The answer to this is, Satisfiers occur along a range. You can adequately satisfy the needs and you can inadequately satisfy it. You can partially satisfy it and try in vain to satisfy them with things that will provide no satisfaction.

Maslow noted that at the lowest level, the range of satisfiers is very small and sometimes just the thing itself. The need for oxygen can only be satisfied by oxygen. Our need for trace salts, vitamin B or E, etc. can only be satisfied by one thing. For the need for sleep—only sleep will work. Yet as you move up the levels, the range of things that can satisfy a need increases. To satisfy the thirst need, you can use water, orange juice, coffee, Pepsi, etc. Many things can operate as a true satisfier for thirst. But there are things that will not satisfy that need. Trying to

satisfying thirst with a jar of dry peanut butter will not work. Nor will dirt, sand, rocks, or plastic wrap used in packaging— such are not true satisfiers of thirst.

Here we can be wrong—we can make a cognitive mistake and think something will satisfy a need when it will not. The false-satisfier may even create harm, damage, death. And as Maslow noted, at the higher levels, it creates pathology— meta-pathologies.

At the survival needs level, there's a close relationship between need and satisfier. But just move up the next level and the needs become more and more affected by meanings. What will satisfy your need for safety and security? Having locks on your doors, being able to know what neighborhoods to walk and which to stay clear of, having a gun hidden in your coat, having three insurance policies, having a roller-dex of names of people you could call in an emergency, knowing a marshal art?

What will satisfying your need for love and affection and all of your social needs? Being told that you're pretty, having a favorite bar you stop by each evening, being in relationship, having your entry on facebook, knowing how to manipulate others to like you, etc.? What will satisfying your need for self-value and self-esteem? Driving an expensive car, having a six-figure job, wearing the latest fashion, etc.?

As you can see, moving up the levels expands the degree to which the need is semantically governed. This explains why you can take almost any commodity—almost any product or service and semantically-load it. Beginning with a need, you can now semantically load it with meta-goals to thoroughly confuse yourself. As you come to believe that clothes give you social likeability, or raises your self-esteem, or makes you feel safe and secure—you can load the latest fashion of clothes to these goals and then “shop till you drop” trying to get more love and affection, sense of security, and self-value.

Once you link the commodity to a goal, you could even link it to a meta-goal, to one of the *being*-values. You could link “wearing new fashionable clothes” to completeness, beauty, justice, fairness, contribution, and so on. Doing that not only creates a thorough confusion, it can even disorder personality. As “fashion” now becomes “the meaning of life.” Now you load designer clothes with so much semantic meaning that when you lack such, you are devastated.

In the past few weeks, we have had several cases of suicides in the US from the turndown of the Wall Street stock market. Losing “money,” and “investments” were so semantically loaded that the loss *meant* “life is not worth living.” It meant loss of status, loss of self-value, loss of hope, loss of purpose.

In human life, our first needs are our “lower needs” which are based on our biological needs as intelligent animals. We share these needs with the higher intelligent animals. These are the needs to survive, to be safe, to be social and have a social reality, and to be valued and have a place in society. Maslow put these needs into an hierarchical order and showed how that each next level of need emerges in awareness as a need is satisfied.

The higher needs are also biological (wired into our being) and emerge as the lower needs are satisfied. What makes this hierarchy a bit difficult to comprehend is that every day we move up and down all of the levels. At any time, we can be sent all the way to the bottom with our need for food, water, air, etc. As biological creatures, we will always *need* these. And every day we need them again. Yet along with these needs we also experience the higher needs —meaning, justice, understanding, beauty, order, contribution, etc.

The higher needs takes you into the human dimensions of experience. This realm of meaning creates inspiration and value for you, a reason to live, a why for doing what you do. It is the realm of *being*—being who you are and *being* rather than just *doing*. This is the realm of the being-values.

So to confuse money or fashion or food or status or a house or an investment with the *being*-realm confuses, disorients, disorders, and distorts human personality. So what are so many people trying to get with fashion, food, cars, etc.? A purpose for living. The meaningfulness of life. They are trying, but they can't.

The point? *Self-actualization is not a commodity*—you can't get it on the blue-light special at K-Mart; nor can your stock broker get it for you on the stock exchange. Self-actualization is an inner experience of the *being*-values that arise from meta-goals. Ah yes, the meta-goals— the higher goals that enable you to transcend yourself, your egos, your materialistic needs —to expressing your unique contributions that add to the beauty, justice, meaningfulness, richness of life for others.

So answering the question, your lower needs require the things that satisfy them and can be used to fulfil the meta-goals. Food is nourishment, clothes are for covering and warmth, and to overload them leads to psycho-eating, psycho-spending and so on. Then our attempt to use them actually mis-uses them.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #9**  
**February 27, 2009**

## **PSYCHO-ECONOMICS**

I was surprised by the downturn in the economy during 2008. For me, it came as a surprise. I really did not expect it. At first I figured it was just the natural ups-and-downs of the market. But then at the end of 2008 it seemed to explode taking the markets really down and then in Dec. and January came all of the shocking surprises about just how deep and pervasive was the downturn. I suppose I can take some comfort in that I was not the only one surprised. It seems that almost everybody everywhere was equally surprised. What began as an economic downturn in the US with the sub-prime mortgage market now seems to be pretty much a worldwide economic downturn.

Since the 1970s, futurists have been telling us that the world is changing, that the change itself is changing, and that the changing change is also accelerating. And much of this change is how the world is getting smaller. When I first read Alvin Toflin in the 1970s (*Future Shock*), it seemed like science fiction, but no longer. The predictions that life on this planet would one day be like a village, a global village—that day seems to have arrived. Thomas L. Friedman calls this “the flattening of the world” in *The World is Flat* (2005). In that book he identifies ten “flatteners” beginning with the fall of the Berlin Wall to the introduction of Windows to open-sourcing, outsourcing, offshoring, insourcing, and so on.

The world is not only smaller, it is faster. News today occurs on thousands of cable and internet channels—24/7 / 360 days of the year. News today travels around the world not merely in hours or even minutes, but in seconds. In moments, information about political crisis, armed invasions, tsunamias, earthquakes, Britany Spears, the price of oil, a suicide bomb explosion, etc. can be in our email inboxes and on hundreds of news programs. So today we have the “soft” science of economics is governed by other “soft” sciences (psychology, linguistics, wealth, etc.) that is now influenced and affected by more and more variables. And that means the world is becoming more and more systemic.

As a *soft* science, economics is influenced as much by beliefs, frames-of-mind, representations, interpretations, emotions, values, states and meta-states as it is by anything tangible like houses or mortgages. What is the value of a house? Above and beyond the materials that go into the construction and its cost, the supply of houses, the demand for them, the value depends on what people think, how much they want them, how much sellers think they can ask for, etc. It depends on fallible human states and meta-states. That’s why they can be so over-valued that they can mess up the economy.

Similarly with the human decision to lend money to a buyer for a mortgage. It depends on the criteria they set for determining who they can trust to be dependable in repaying the loan. And once a mortgage company creates a subprime loan for people with no or little down payment, who don't have the financial resources, but who believe that the value of the house will increase at such a rate that it will have, say \$100,000 equity in 12 months, and then someone sells these high return loans to Wall Street who then offers them on a world market ... then people can *believe* and feel *confident* about returns, and borrow more money on the *assumed value* of the increased and increasing equity and somewhere along the line we all move to La-La land assuming that if we believe it or think it, it will happen.

Then reality hits. The balloon payment on the loan comes due and people begin to default on their loans. This lowers the *confident* feelings of others about the loans, which is communicated by the sensational bad-news "News" organizations thereby creating more fear and worry about the home mortgage market, then a negative spiral begins and suddenly market value drops around the world. And the nature of the world— smaller, faster, and more systemic is amplifying all of this.

There's now one more quality. It is more psychological. Did you notice the number of states and meta-states in these descriptions? How many did you notice? We call all of this economics, yet it is actually *psycho-economics*. The *psycho-* part is the role of people's assumptions and interpretations of value or dis-value, their emotional states of confidence or fear, of optimism or apprehensiveness and how these states play such a critical role in economics.

Apparently the banking industry has lost a trillion dollars worth of value and the US Congress has voted to spend more than a trillion dollars to deal with it. A trillion dollars! How much is that? On one program someone said that if you had a trillion dollars in one dollar bills, it would be 67.8 miles tall (over 100 kilometers). Or if you went out on a spending spree — and you could spend *a million dollars a day* (a million!!) — and you started today, it would take you more than 2,000 years to spend it.

Okay, so if the economy or the banks lost a trillion dollars, *where did all of that money go?* Who got it? The weird thing is that much of it didn't go anywhere. Much of it existed on paper as a record of the way people were thinking, expecting, valuing, feeling confident or worried, etc. One day *people* made certain evaluations about their trust and confidence in certain homes, businesses, markets, and futures and presto— there was a trillion dollars of value. At a later time, they lost confidence—and a trillion dollars of value disappeared.

What is this downturn about? Perhaps it is just a market correction, perhaps it is another aspect of the flattening of the world, perhaps it is a call to recognize the role of our meta-states in creating our social realities. Whatever it is, it is a call to your resilience, state management, and ability to know that your highest asset is your ability to add value.

I think it is also a call for a belief in *responsible abundance*. That is, if our psycho-economics play such a crucial role in all of this, we now have to resist the temptation to play into the hands

of the negative press. It is the psychology of the press to sensationalize whatever they can and turn facts into negative catastrophes. After all, if in the small, fast, systemic, and psychological world—our beliefs, fears, worries, hopes, optimism, resilience (and many other states and meta-states) are now *key factors* determining whether we set in motion a negative downward spiraling or an upward positive spiraling —then we have to be more responsible to fear-mongering, fear-spreading, negative-forecasting and more committed to intelligent optimism that fosters resilience, persistence, and hope.

What's needed is an army of people committed to actualizing their own potentials and those of others. What's needed is a community of people who believe in an abundance of possibilities and potentials—if people are given a chance. What's needed are a global village of people who will resist the negatively-oriented media and do their part to unleash more and more possibilities.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #10**  
**March 2, 2009**

## **NLP ON STEROIDS**

I'm always surprised when people are surprised to discover that NLP is essentially a communication model. There's one question that stumps the majority of NLP people. It causes them to either go-blank and enter into an unconscious state of stupidity or to begin a career in stuttering. The question is, "What is NLP?" Ask most NLP trained people and their eyes either go into a state of dread, or a zombie state, or an aggressively hostile state, or initiates a flow of gab that will last for hours. Okay, well maybe I'm exaggerating a bit.

The other day someone asked me what NLP is and I answered as I usually do very succinctly, "NLP is a communication model."

"A communication model? That's what it *is*? Are you sure? That's disappointing; I thought it was something much more powerful and dynamic than that!"

"Yes, I'm sure. And actually that's what makes it so incredibly powerful! NLP arose from the communication distinctions in Transformational Grammar that John Grinder brought to the language patterns that Richard Bandler, as a young collage student, happened upon in the therapeutic languaging of Fritz Perls and then Virginia Satir."

"I don't get it. How is that incredibly powerful? It sounds like you're talking about therapy or psychology or linguistics or something academic like those topics. What's so incredibly powerful about NLP if it is just a communication model?"

I then asked, "You really want to know?" and when I was convinced that he did, I began an extensive explanation. I explained that NLP arose as a Communication Model first by identifying *the specific language patterns* of Fritz and Virginia because when Richard was fooling around and repeating those patterns with a "class" he had put together, and surprisingly, people got better. They made changes in their thinking and feelings and that surprised him. He didn't expect that.

Once Richard told me that when he first picked up a book on Gestalt therapy and read about people hallucinating their mom in a chair and yelling at her, or becoming the different facets of their dreams, "Okay you dreamed about a yellow cat clawing out her eyes. Become the yellow cat. Be the eyes." he thought that this was great stand-up comedy stuff. He thought that maybe the books were really joke books.

Yet yelling at invisible people in chairs and becoming the bits of your dreams led people to work with the constructions of their mental maps as "maps" and recognizing that somehow the language patterns were facilitating generative change, Richard asked his linguistics professor

about it. “What’s the power or ‘magic’ in these linguistic patterns?” John Grinder didn’t know, but was also fascinated that the questions and directions that Fritz used could be that powerful. So with his background in the Cognitive psychology model of Transformational Grammar (TG) that Noam Chomsky had created, John related the communication patterns and they eventually (with their group) created “the Meta-Model of language in therapy”—the foundational NLP model.

They created this with a small group of a dozen people (Robert Dilts, Judith DeLozier, Leslie Cameron, David Gordon, Terrance McClindon, Frank Pucelik, Byron Lewis, etc.). Together they began playing around with the verbal and non-verbal facets of communication. Those were the “*Wild Days of NLP*” as Terry McClindon related that beginning in his small book by that title.

NLP, as a Communication Model, powerfully provides a detailed way to identify the structure of our experiences. Certain premises determined this: There is a structure or form to our experiences. Identifying the dynamic structure enables us to change our experience. Sometimes it is in changing your words that the experience changes— this is what both Fritz and Virginia did a lot. Sometimes it is in changing the non-verbal gestures or tones that changes the experience. This is what Virginia did with her “communication postures” (stances) and family reconstruction exercises.

Another premise within all of this is that the component pieces of our communications are also the component pieces of experience and personality. *We create our reality by our inner communications*—how we talk to ourselves, make pictures in our mind, step into our mental movies and re-experience them again, use these communications to keep experiences with us, etc. What this meant is that the NLP Communication Model is at the same time a description of human functioning—how we operate, how we construct our reality. Now are you beginning to understand the power in this *mere* communication model?

Ah, and that was a major contribution to psychology. Actually, NLP didn’t create that, it was already in the air, in fact, it was part and parcel of the Cognitive Psychology Revolution that George Miller and associates and Noam Chomsky had been creating. Dated from 1956 the Cognitive Psychology model was changing everything during the 1960s and 1970s and giving psychology a whole new focus. And NLP was just one expression of it. This explains why the NLP modeling focus relied so heavily on Miller, Pribram, and Gallenter’s 1960 work, *Plans and the Structure of Behavior* where they got the TOTE model and enriched it with the representational systems.

This led to using the Communication model of how we humans function (think, feel, represent, go into state, create meaning, anchor states, etc.) for modeling experience. The idea was to use the finer distinctions of “thinking” (the representational systems and their cinematic features, the meta-modalities that they mis-labeled as sub-modalities) to find *the code* for any experience. And along the way they added the *meta* distinction in the Strategy model, but it was mostly a small little addition and poorly described. Later Robert Dilts mapped it out further when he started thinking about some of the levels that could be meta to a strategy (beliefs, values, identity,

mission, spirit).

It wasn't until 1994 when I was modeling resilience that the full role of the meta-levels became evident (*Meta-States*, 2008). That's when I first identified the distinction between a primary state and a meta-state and began mapping out that distinction. This introduced the Meta-States Model to NLP, it introduced Meta-State modeling (in the book, *NLP Going Meta*) and it modeled the special kind of consciousness that human beings have, self-reflexive consciousness. While NLP had modeled consciousness and especially representational consciousness (what and how we represent information using visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc. modalities), NLP had never mapped out the recursive nature of "mind," our self-reflexivity. Meta-States did that. And in doing so, *Meta-States* put an already very powerful communication model on steroids.

That's what a NLP trainer told me several years ago. After reading the book *Meta-States*, he wrote and told me that "NLP on steroids is the Meta-States Model." When I asked him about that, he went on:

"What *Meta-States* has done for me is to give me the ability to use NLP mindfully, intentionally, and with awareness of what I'm doing, when I'm doing it. Now I understand how the magic works. Your article about the layers and layers of frames as meta-states in the 'Phobia cure' pattern finally explained for me how that pattern releases a person's phobic states. My internal image is that NLP is a strong and powerful body builder; Meta-States I see as Arnold Schwarzenegger."

Try that one on— *Meta-States is NLP on steroids!* Knowing and being able to use the meta-stating process regarding how your mind jumps logical levels and sets up layers of thoughts and emotions as your frames-of-reference which then become your higher frames of mind (or beliefs) enables you to see meta-states everywhere. This opens your eyes to how Meta-States describes the "magic" of NLP and especially how it creates transformations in human reality. So for some real power, add Meta-States to NLP, shake well, and then stand back — far back. It's going to rock your world!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #11**  
**March 9, 2009**

## **UPGRADING TIME-LINES TO META-STATES**

I told someone this past week that I very seldom use the old NLP time-line patterns and they said they were seriously surprised. “Why not? You wrote a book on time-lines!” And true enough, Bob Bodenhamer and I did write a book on Time-Lines. In fact, *Time-Lining: Adventures in Time* is the only NLP book that is exclusively devoted to time-lines. Even the original book in the field of NLP on time, *Time-Line Therapy* by Tad James and Wyatt Woodsmall, was not exclusively about time-lines. Half of that book was devoted to Meta-Programs.

So why don't I use time-line patterns very often? Primarily because I don't need to. Nor does Bob. When you know the Meta-States Model and what you can do with it—you don't need to go through all the trouble of accessing a person's representations of time, get them to visualize a time-line, ask them to float above it, or use the hypnotic or semi-hypnotic processes of time-lining. Instead, you can use a few meta-questions, discover the person's frame (or matrix of frames) and then meta-state them directly or indirectly, explicitly or covertly to set frames that change the experience. That's when my questioner asked,

“Well, how would you meta-state someone who had something very negative happen to them in the past?”

I usually just set some frames conversationally that gives the person new resources. It's much simpler. Do you have a specific instance in mind? I asked. The person did. “Okay, you be that person and I'll respond to you.” He was game for an exchange.

“So you've gone through something pretty negative in the past and somehow it is still influencing you?” [“Yes.”] “What are you experiencing today?”

“I am afraid of rejection. I hold back and don't ask for things. I don't do anything that might bring on criticism. In fact, I'm real sensitive to criticism.”

To ground the experience in today's reality, I asked some grounding questions. “Are you afraid of rejection this very minute ... with me? [“No, I feel comfortable with you.”] So when do you feel the fear and with whom?” [Current versus past frame]

“When I think about a girl, you know, a woman.”

“Yes they are very scary creatures. I often hear the suspenseful music of a horror movie, you know—a dark, rainy night, and I have the sense of being in a cemetery late a night when

warewolves and aliens are out. Sometimes I hear the Jaws' music. But that's me, what do you find so fearful about females?" [Humor frame]

"[Smiling] Well, when I think about talking to one, or asking them out, I get nervous and I start sweating, and then I know that I'll stumble over my words and remember how my dad used to make me feel so small and inadequate and would laugh at me."

"So how old do you feel as you say that? Are there any movies flickering on in your mind as you are speaking?" [Self-creation frame]

"Yes, of my dad and then of some times when I got nervous around women. ... I think I am feeling about 6, and then like 13 or so."

"Okay, so you know how to scare yourself and get your body all worked up in fear. Good for you! How skilled are you in doing this? ... Are you a master at scaring yourself?" [Experience accessing as a skill frame]

"Hmmm. Well I am pretty good at it." [Smiling]

"So do you like this? [No.] Well, have you had enough of this? Maybe you need to do this for another five years? [No, I've had enough.] But are you sure? [Decision and personal choice frame] Maybe you need this to protect yourself from scary women and all the terrible things they can do to you! Sure it starts with holding hands and kissing, but then it could work up to touching and love making. Horror of horrors!" [Humor frame]

"[Laughing] Yes that would be terrible. ... Yes I'm ready."

"Are you ready to face those fears and stop taking counseling of your fears as if experiencing that emotion is the worst thing in the world? Are you ready to just accept the fear, welcome it in, examine it and notice if you need to listen to it or not?" [Acceptance and Exploration-with-curiosity frames]

"You mean just accept it?"

"Sure. What else do you now just accept as something to put up with that once upon a time you might have fought and worked yourself up about? Maybe like just accepting the traffic?" [Accessing acceptance frame]

"Yeah, I used to get really angry and frustrated when there was a lot of traffic and now I just listen to some music and tell myself, 'There's nothing you can do about it anyway, just relax and don't work yourself up.'"

"And you just accept it...? [Yeah.] And as you recall that right now, are you feeling the sense of acceptance ... and notice your breath ... of acceptance and muscle tension ... [Yeah.] Okay, so as you are with that feeling ... feel it while you think about your fear of females ... okay, and just notice what happens." [Application of acceptance frame]

"Well, nothing. I just feel concerned."

"And how much fear is there now? From 0 to 10 where are you? [A 3.] So with a 3 can you now face the fear and take the actions you need to take to say hello and have a calm conversation

anyway?" [Gauging intensity of an emotion frame; saying Hello frame]

"Yeah."

"What other resource do you need? I feel very generous today, so if you'd like playfulness, curiosity, respect, appreciation, confidence, courage, or boldness, I'm willing to let you apply any of these to your fear-of-speaking-to-females state as well." [Resource or humor frames]

"Actually I think just accepting the fear is enough."

"What about your dad? What about feeling 6 or 13 years old? Will any of that stop you?"

"No."

At that point we stopped the role play. He said he got it, "Frames are truly powerful, aren't they for creating transformation?"

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #12**  
**March 16, 2009**

## **:A WORLD WITHOUT CONSUMERISM**

When the banking–and–housing crisis began in the United States last year and then when the economic downturn started in the end of the year and into 2009, I began thinking about the role I play when I am a consumer, about the process and experience of consuming stuff and about the sickness of *consumerism*. It wasn't the first time. Over the years, I had entertained such thoughts before especially when I was researching and presenting the Wealth Creation Training. But only fleetingly. With the recent turn of events, I have been thinking about it in a much more often.

We all *consume stuff* because we have our Maslovian “lower needs” for surviving, being safe, social, and having a sense of importance in ourselves. And we need “true satisfiers” for these needs—the things that actually gratify the requirements for life, health, and well-being. That's what the lower needs are all about. And as I've written many times, when you gratify the lower “animal” needs, the needs go away.

But this is where we humans have such a fabulous way of messing up mother nature, distorting human nature, and creating perversions of our possible natures. Whenever we try to reach a “higher need” *through* a lower need and *endow* the lower need with *the meanings* of the higher self-actualization needs —we begin the *psycho*-processes. We psycho-eat, psycho-spend, psycho-sex, psycho-drive, psycho-consume, etc. We use these basic gratifiers of eating, spending, sexing, driving our cars, and consuming for the higher psychological needs of meaning, significance, order, power, beauty, etc.

Consuming is natural. It's a requirement for life. Being a consumer is inevitable as long as we are fragile human beings in bodies that are dependent on so many things (food, water, sun, rest, sleep, safety, boundaries, companionship, personal significance). *But consumerism is not natural, not required, and not inevitable.* We could create a world without consumerism.

*Consumerism* is consuming stuff for the sake of consuming because we have over-valued the process of consuming. The more stuff you can consume, the wealthier you are; the more important you are; the more hip you are; the more .... (you fill in the blank). *Consumerism* confuses the higher needs with the lower and ultimately treats us as nothing more than an insatiable animal. You know that *consumerism* has you if you *have to* consume more and more stuff; if “shop until you drop” is your mantra, if you have to rent a storage unit to store more and

more of your stuff because you don't have room for it at home. *Consumerism* has you if you keep replacing your current stuff just because it is not as cool, new, different, or unique. *Consumerism* has you if you define yourself by your stuff—by your clothes, cars, home, furnishings, toys, etc.

For some, imagining a world without consumerism strains the brain. I presented this to one person a few weeks ago and she said, “Well, why would you want to work then? Why earn money if it is not for all that stuff?” And another person who overheard our conversation said, “You're too idealistic; it wouldn't work. The economy couldn't work, it is based on consumerism. Plus, it would change everything about business.”

“I agree that it would be a radical change, maybe a revolutionary change. Yet the highest expressions of human nature, of self-actualization, is the *being dimension*. It is to *be*—to find and *be* what one is within and therefore to express one's talents and gifts. Trying to live by getting and consuming is not our highest and best.”

After more accusations of being too idealistic, I suggested that it is *consumerism* that is not only filling up our garbage dumps with stuff that won't fully dissolve for a thousand years, but worse, it is using up and wasting so much of human mind, emotion, energy, speech, and actions on the low level of mere consumption. A world without consumerism would focus us not only on recycling, intelligent stewardship of the earth's resources, but also on creating lasting products. That would get us beyond the planned obsolescence of building things to quickly wear out and to be thrown away.

So what would we do and how would we live in a world without consumerism? We could focus on the higher needs, the *being-values* —truth, justice, equality, contribution, meaningfulness, music, beauty, order, and so on.

Last week at Starbucks I had a conversation about the economic turndown. A small group of business people all agreed that the so-called “stimulus package” that the US congress passed is not really a stimulus package, but a spending package and one that will probably create more dependency on government. Most of the conversation revolved around how to stimulate more commerce. Most agreed that the market needed to be as free as possible and most know that 80 percent of all new jobs come from small businesses, not major corporations.

After debating the pros and cons depend buying and selling, I decided to play devil's advocate and really stir things up.

“I think we are attempting to solve the wrong problem. The so-called solutions that we have been offering is actually creating the very problem in the first place. Are we not assuming that we need more commerce, more buying-and-selling? *What if that's the problem?* What if consumerism itself is the problem? What would an economy be like, how would business operate if we didn't make ‘consuming more and more stuff’ our objective?”

The way our world works right now is that we engage in “business” to create products and

services. We do this to create *value* to people's lives. And when sales slow down, we invent new reasons and motivations which we promote through marketing and advertisement so that people will buy more of our stuff. When we reach that limit, then we add some new feature to the product or service, re-package it as "new and improved" and set out to market the "new" product and service. And when that reaches a limit, we try to innovate some other improvement or difference. All of this is designed to get more and more people to buy more and more stuff.

Often in this consumerism we consume more and more stuff simply because it has been packaged and marketed as "new, improved, and different." And how often do we buy stuff, consume services, and purchase entertainment simply for the sake of the consumption? How often do we make *consuming* the goal itself? We feel blah, or bored or restless so out to the Mall or the downtown shopping area and *shop* for no other reason than just to shop. Have you ever done that? Or, what about the consuming we do impulsively? We go into a store for one thing and because of the packaging or the display, we end up buying things and mostly just because it was there and it somehow appealed to something in us.

Five or more years ago in Sydney, I was walking in the city to the place of a training and a pretty lady with a microphone stopped me. Her camera man was next to her and she suddenly approached and asked, "Can I ask you a question." I was daydreaming about some NLP pattern (!) and accidentally said "yes."

"What do you think about retail therapy? Do you believe in it? How often do you engage in retail therapy?"

Shaken from my reverie, the word "therapy" cued me to think about the healing of wounded hearts, so I went into a therapeutic mode of mind. But then there was that strange word, "retail." And in that moment, on that sidewalk, in the early morning, I just couldn't connect the two. "Retail therapy?" I was searching my data banks— Gestalt, cognitive, behavioral, Ericksonian . . . but retail? Is that a guy's name? Is retail like reframing?"

I supposed that I looked lost, so the lady said, "You know, shopping." Talk about a shock. So out of my mouth came what I was thinking:

"Shopping? Shopping? Are you kidding? What does shopping have to do therapy?"

"It makes you feel better! That's why!" She said with a huff and in a tone dismissing me. Guess I just didn't fit her world. And to propose a *world without consumerism*, well, that would have given her the need for some real therapy!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #13**  
**March 23, 2009**

## **POLITICS**

### **AND THE ECONOMIC TURNDOWN**

We are all talking about the economic downturn these days. It's on everyone's mind and affecting just about everyone on this planet. And what's behind it? What are the key factors that has caused or contributed to it?

Last week I wrote about one factor, *the culture of consumerism* and the wild and crazy idea of a world without consumerism. I don't know if it is the key factor, but it is one factor. And until we base *the purpose of our existence* on something other than consuming, the economics of up-and-down will continue to cycle as it has for decades. We will define success and the purpose of life as getting more and more stuff and there will be periods of over-valuing with periods where the markets readjust. As long as consuming more and more is the way we evaluate "the good life," "winning," "feeling successful," "being a somebody," etc. the economics of consumerism will be driving things.

Behind individual consumerism are yet other factors: businesses and governments are organized to promote more and more consumerism. This current political policy in both business and government sets up as the way these systems operate. So not only do individuals want more and more and more, so do groups (corporations and governments) so that *the goal* at all levels is always *more*. And because this is the *game of life* on Planet Earth, we operate within the politics of scarcity, polemics, self-interest, dis-information, mis-communication, demonizing opponents, etc. And all of that prevents us from having real conversations, true collaborations, honest confrontations, and the ability to changes these things.

In other words *we as the human race* are still operating at the lowest levels of the Hierarchy of Needs—in the animal needs, in "the Jungle" as Maslow called it. And what are the frames by implication from that? There's not enough so we have to compete against each other as opponents, as enemies. That then undermines trust, respect, cooperation, and all of the other things that makes for a healthy human community. Then, seeing each other through the eyes of competition of opponents, we aren't open or forthright; we keep secrets, hide information, put out false information to disorient, and so it goes.

I wish I could say that this does not occur in my country, but it does. And in fact, we are among the leaders in this! And as I watch how Washington is trying to solve the current downturn, I find it very disappointing. While I had hoped more for our new president, it seems that in Washington, it is "politics as usual."

The first thing the Bush government decided to do and then the Obama government continued is the “stimulus package,” first 700 billion, then 816 billion. Three weeks ago, the 816 billion dollar stimulus bill was quickly written and then *rushed* through the senate and house of representatives. When I say *rushed*, it was rushed through in *hours*. Not weeks, not days, but hours. And why? The thousand-page bill was delivered in the evening and the Obama administration only gave the legislators a few *hours* to read it and know what they were voting on! Give me a break. What was that all about?

Obama had *promised* to go through bills line-by-line to make sure that there would not be pork and wasteful spending. But no. It was rushed through in just a few hours. Then it sat on his desk for 3 days before signing. Hours to read and vote on—which means no one knew what they were voting on which we’re now discovering. This is not the way to bring change to Washington and not the way to solve problems. If you and I made decisions for life choices and spending like that, we would be considered crazy and out of our minds. And I bet that none of those politicians handle their own finances that way!

Last week Obama signed a spending bill with nearly 9,000 earmarks of special interests in it. And that’s costing taxpayers, 9 billion dollars! This is not good. And he did that in spite of all of his campaign promises that he would not do that. This is not the “change that we can believe in,” but the same old politics that has been ruining things in the first place. And it’s the same old vested interests that’s driving this.

Two things make this even worse. One, when confronted about saying one thing and doing another on this, Obama gave his “reasons” why he had to. I say “even worse” because in my book this reveals the lack of courage to stand by one’s convictions. It was easy to say one thing when out with one’s crowds and supporters, it is much harder to follow-through in the challenge of the day. Second, even worse, both Republicans and Democrats put those vested interests of earmarks into the bill! Can they not help themselves? Can they not think of the larger good?

Then last week there was the 165 million stimulus plan dollars distributed as bonus pay to the top executives of AIG. They took the “bail out” money to prevent bankruptcy and gave it to themselves as million-dollar bonuses. Here’s corporate leaders at their worst. People losing jobs and homes, and the fat cats at the top behaving as if they have some divine right to fatten their purses while their leadership created the problems!

*All of this shouts that we need new frames of mind and meanings, new politics, and new leaders.* Current politicians and corporate executives act as if their election or placement means they are special, god-like, un-accountable to anyone, and can splurge to their hearts content. What ever happened to *the servant leader* who considered public service or leadership as a special honor for *servicing* people? Until we move beyond the lower levels, until we stop the semantic overloading of the lower needs, until we move into the self-actualization needs of our higher nature, until we unleash our potentials for the human level, we won’t have self-actualizing leaders, companies, and politicians. That’s what we need— leaders who operate way above self-interest, scarcity, and competition. Now is the time for a new vision.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #14**  
**March 30, 2009**

## **SELF-ACTUALIZING LEADERS MORE RADICAL THAN EVEN I ANTICIPATED!**

In the past week I have an the privilege of presenting the idea of *Self-Actualizing Leaders and Companies* in several different contexts, TV and newspaper interviews, a business luncheon, a presentation to lecturers and professors at an University, and of course at the *Unleashing Leadership— Coaching Self-Actualizing Leadership* workshop here in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I have had these opportunities thanks to a visionary Meta-Coach, Tessie Lim and her business, “World Center of Personal Excellence.”

Now having presented these ideas numerous places, to a great many people for the past two years, and in many articles, in two published books and the one that will be published this year (*Unleashing Leadership: Self-Actualizing Leaders and Companies*) I think I had become too used to Self-Actualization Psychology. I think I had gotten so familiar with it and around so many people who share a vision of living life at the highest level—the self-actualizing life, that I had forgotten how radical these ideas are, especially to most people on this planet.

Several events during the past week have awakened this realization in me. They have stabbed me awake. They have sounded all of the alarm bells and sent the inner lights flashing on and off signaling me to just how radical is *self-actualization* as a vision, an idea, and a way of living. They have sounded the trumpets to the paradigm shift that this makes in companies and business.

In the past week I have had several wonderful debates and arguments about whether self-actualization in leaders, organizations, managers, and employees is even possible. One top executive challenged me as directly as anyone.

“That’s all nice and good, but let’s use some common sense now. There are people who won’t do what they are told and you just have to dictate to them! That’s just common sense.”

Of course, the nice thing about being a neuro-linguist and even more a neuro-semanticist is that *I can hear frames in the very language* that people use. And that really gives an NLP and Neuro-Semantic person a tremendous advantage, even an unfair advantage on the battlefield of ideas.

“‘Common sense,’ you say? *Common* to who? *Sense*—what sense? What ‘sense’ are you talking about—what pictures, words, sounds, sensations, smells, tastes? If you have a ‘sense’ about people, human nature, people taking on work, people working with passion,

and so on, what is the basis of the way you are now ‘making sense’ of the idea that human beings want to learn, grow, develop, be engaged in their work, achieve, have fun, and all of the self-actualizing components? Isn’t that just, as you say, ‘common sense’?”

It’s interesting the way a new radical, paradigm-shifting idea can upset the status quo, challenge the way people have done business, treated other people, and the semantics meanings that they develop about such concepts as power, control, authority, hierarchy, bureaucracy, rules, and so on. I also find it fascinating how we as human beings can try to defend our minds against entertaining ideas that take us out of the box of our conventional thinking. Later I said,

“The words ‘just’ and ‘only’ are edge-of-a-person’s-mental-maps words. They indicate the place where meaning ends. ‘It is *just* this and it means nothing more.’ So the phrase, ‘It is *just* common sense’ powerfully sets a frame-by-implication. It essentially says, ‘All of your fancy and complicated talk about levels of human drives, needs, and impulses is find and good, but irrelevant in real life; what is actually real and relevant is how *I am used to doing business*, that’s ‘common sense.’ So let’s drop ideas about human psychology and just deal with people as they are.”

Of course, making the covert frames explicit robs them of their power. So once you are able to hear frames and to detect frames—everything changes. Detecting frames opens the unseen, invisible structures of the mental and emotional boxes that we live our lives in. Recognizing the frames-by-implication (the FBI frames) above and beyond the content of a person’s words enables us to see behind the curtain and the Wizard there pulling the levers and making the presentation of “the great and wonderful Oz” at the content level. Now you are able to get to *the heart of things* and facilitate transformative change—sometimes in moments. I love it.

“So you’d rather remain ignorant of know how human nature works, of the mechanisms that drive yourself and others, of the highest possibilities of human nature? You would rather keep doing what you’ve always done which you already know doesn’t work in the long run?”

I asked that of one gentleman who took me on privately. He said, “Well, no, not when you put it that way.”

“Okay, then what shall we do? Shall we get beyond the shallow and superficial excuse about ‘the way we’ve always done it,’ the ‘common sense’ psychology of our primitive great, great grandfathers, and use the most transformative understanding of the bright side of human nature?”

Yes, he was willing to do that. Later he came back to say, “I have so many other old beliefs, old ideas, old experiences that keeps getting in my way. What do I do about that?”

“That’s great? You’re now fully ready for the next section on ‘suspending meanings.’ And if you like, you could use the Crucible pattern to unlearn as you take those old formulations of meaning and let them melt down and transform them into more dynamic and empowering beliefs.”

With the entire group at the training, the old ideas were so much in the way for many that I

provided a challenge.

“Right now these ideas are getting in your way so you can’t even clearly hear what I’m saying. Is that right? Yes? Okay, so let me ask you to put all of this on the side for a moment (gesturing to their past) and at the end of this training during the last hour, let’s return to this subject and see where you are then. In this way you will be fully informed and able to make a comparison between your current thoughts on command-and-control leadership and self-actualizing leadership.”

Everybody agreed. And on the last day, at the last hour, I invited a return to that question. But no one wanted it then. They had been experiencing the processes of actualizing their best leadership style, leadership level, in their kind of leadership and so the old debate had become irrelevant, had become redundant.

In a country where there is still a strong tradition of old command-and-control leaders and organizations, in a country where equality of people is not yet the foundational assumption, where there is not a belief in the deep democracy of all people, of equal rights, of freedom of speech, or the right to criticize the government —here self-actualizing leaders and companies are really a radical paradigm shift. Revolutionary.

And considering all of that, I say, *let the revolution begin!* Let there be a new and true discovery that there’s *one race* on this planet, the human race; and that the human species have a higher nature and that the design of Neuro-Semantic NLP is to push for the highest values and vision in human beings so that you and I can experience and deliver our best performances and ways of relating. That’s my vision. If you share it, come *join the self-actualization revolution!*

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #15**  
**April 6, 2009**

## **SELF-ACTUALIZING LEADERS**

For the past two years I have been modeling leadership. I wanted to extend and expand the work on self-actualization, as Maslow did, to business, to leadership, to companies, to wealth creation to politics. So the modeling has not been about leadership generally, and especially not to the old unhealthy ancient military leadership of command-and-control. Instead, my focus has been on *self-actualizing leaders and companies*.

*This special kind of leadership actually describes true leadership*, rather than the false images of leaders that have been so common in human history and even today in much of the current research on leadership. Now I know that is a bold statement—an audacious statement—and one that you probably will want me to explain and defend before you just accept it. So I'll give that a go in this Meta Reflection.

### **False Leadership Images**

False images of leaders— are images of Command-and-Control Leaders that lead because they have “power.” And how is this a false image? Because if a person has “power,” has authority to order and command, then there's no need to *lead* and have people *follow*. Actually, there's no leading-and-following because there's actually power-to-inflict-pain-and-punishment-if-there-is-not-compliance. When someone orders me to do something when I have no real choice except to accept pain, punishment, severe consequences, the person is not a leader, but a Commander or General. The person is not leading, the person is dictating. In such a case, there's no real choice to follow. Anyone with a brain, and who doesn't want punished, will comply. But he or she will *comply* with their fingers crossed and with their teeth gritted. They may *behaviorally* go along, but they are not *following* in their mind or heart. That's not leadership.

Another false image of a leader—someone arbitrarily put at the top of an organization. Yet merely conferring a title or role on a person, giving them a corner office, putting CEO or Vice-President, or any other title on the door, does not a leader make. That's having *position authority* conferred and given the right to use one's status or office to *make* people follow *or else*. And it is that *or else* that falsely defines such as leadership. It is not leadership. Not real leadership.

*Real leadership involves the free choice to follow*. Where there is not that freedom, there is not the possibility of *leading* and *following*, just accepting orders, complying, and choosing to avoid pain. I love how John Maxwell has defined leadership.

“He who thinketh he leadeth, but hath no followers is simply out for a walk.”

If you are a true leader, then take the *leadership test*. Turn around and look behind you. Is

anyone following you? Who is following you? Where do they think you are going that they want to join and be a part of your journey? If no one is freely following because they love your vision and the meaning of your journey, then you are out for a walk—regardless of your titles.

False images of leaders—assuming leaders are born, that they have certain traits or attributes, and that once a leader, always a leader. Ridiculous. No one is always a leader! Leadership is situational. The leader in any given context is the person who knows that area and can lead others in it. That’s why there are so many different kinds of leaders—thought leaders, hero leaders, administrative leaders, visionary leaders, moral leaders, orator leaders, political leaders, entrepreneur leaders, corporate leaders, and so on. No one is a universal leader who is always looked to for guidance!

False images of leaders—leaders a great, charismatic, charming, powerful people, above and beyond “regular” people. This is the myth of inborn greatness that makes the leader so special, so mysterious, so mythical, so much higher and beyond the masses. Again, ridiculous. Leaders are human beings with plenty of fallibilities, flaws, and foibles. Every leader is fallible and has weaknesses. None are perfect. Leaders often succeed in leading in spite of their idiosyncrasies and sometimes because of their weaknesses.

### **True Leadership**

These are some of the key false images of leaders that has misled us and that continue to misled us about “leadership.” When Morpheus first met Neo, he asked him if he wanted to know what the Matrix is. “Do you want to know what *it is?*” And with that question, the adventure of discovering, escaping, and mastering the Matrix began.

How about true leadership? How about *self-actualizing* leadership? “Do you want to know what *it is?*”

A self-actualizing leader is a man or woman with a meaningful vision that he or she has already begun to experience regarding some need or want and who wants to share so that it helps others to reach their full human potential. A self-actualizing leader effectively collaborates with others to actualize an important vision that enriches people and makes a difference. A self-actualizing leader sees a situation in which he or she can add value and facilitate the best in those who follow so that together they can do more than they can individually or apart.

The power or authority of true leadership is not in the office, the status, the title, and so on, it is in the person. People follow willingly and freely because of what the leader offers—the value of meaning, vision, and solution that the leader offers. Leaders are leaders because they add value to people. The leadership is not *about* them even though it is *through* them. Self-centered leaders who are prima donnas who like being dictators, demi-gods, and make everything about their status, memory, image, etc. are not real leaders. They are too insecure to be humble and focus on others. That’s why we need true leaders today more than ever—that’s why we need self-actualizing leaders at every level in every organization, business, and government. Here’s to your development as a self-actualizing leader and to your coaching of self-actualizing leaders!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #16**  
**April 13, 2009**

## **TRAPS PREVENTING BECOMING A SELF-ACTUALIZING LEADERSHIP**

I talked with a senior manager this past week about self-actualizing leadership and he said, “Well, that sounds easy.”

I was shocked. Really! My thoughts were, “How could he have heard the presentation I made and all of the discussion that shook people up, and walk away thinking that?!” So we talked. We talked for a long time, and as I slowly got through his over-confident, over-optimistic, and impulsive filters, he finally began to “count the cost” of what it would mean to becoming a self-actualizing leader. That’s when he asked for a list, a complete list of all of the traps that typically sabotage leaders and prevent them from becoming fully a self-actualizing leader.

Well, I did not and still do not have a complete list. But I have a beginning one. So what are the traps that catch, defeat, and undermine leaders from becoming self-actualizing leaders? What thought viruses infect leaders so that they get stuck at a particular level of leadership and do not develop fully as a self-actualizing leader?

### **The Power Trap**

Self-actualization is not about getting power but using it and empowering others as you help them find their basic personality powers and developing them fully. And so the goal of self-actualizing leaders is not to gain power, but to push power and decision-making down to the touch-points of a business. This means giving up “power” and “control” and ceding it to others. (I told you self-actualizing leadership is far more radical than I knew and that most people suspect! Meta Reflection #14).

Self-actualizing “power” is not power *over* others, it is power *with* others and power *through* others. The joy of such a leader is in seeing people grow, develop, find their gifts, express their gifts, and excel. But of course, that requires a grown-upness, a maturity, and a secure sense of self. Those who are insecure can’t do that; those who’s ego is ill-formed and always in the way can’t do that. Those who are insecurely competitive cannot do that. It takes a mature leader who is him or herself living a self-actualizing life.

Nor can a fearful leader do that. The fearful or paranoid leader who thinks, “If you give your power away, the employees will take over!” will not be able to support the development of another and groom others to be leaders.

## **The Ego Trap**

The distortion of toxic leadership is best seen in the so-called “leader” who is self-absorbed, who is driven solely by self-interest, who misunderstands and thinks that leadership is about them, their brilliance, their charm, their charisma; who acts like a *prima donna* and wants to get his or her way regardless. But leadership is not about the leader. It is about the vision. It is about the people who are enriched and benefitted by the vision and mission. It is about what value that the leader can give.

The self-focused leader thinks that leadership means having people serve them instead of the privilege of serving people. This leads to dictatorial leadership, to leaders becoming little demi-gods, to leaders abusing people and using it for their own self-aggrandizement.

Some of the “leaders” in AIG come to my mind as I write this. They drove their company to bankruptcy and they still want million-dollar bonuses?? They want a million-dollar reward? For what? For their business failures? What were they thinking? And to justify it by saying that the 160 million is just a fraction of 700 billion— what are we talking about? The percentage is irrelevant. It’s not their money in the first place (but tax payers) and if anything, perhaps they should take no bonus *and a pay cut for their poor performance*. Isn’t that they way a meritocracy is supposed to work? Do they given outrageous bonuses to their employees?

The radical paradigm shift regarding a self-actualizing leader is that *the ego has to be completely out of the way*. The leader leads to a desired outcome or experience by activating the powers of his or her people for the purpose of a group success in creating and giving value that creates monetary value in a society. Again we see the importance of the leader’s own self-actualization and personal development. Without that, the leader is a dangerous wild-card likely to *use* people for his or her own agendas.

## **The Time / Speed Trap**

Then there is the trap of being busy— *busy, busy, busy*. Too busy. It’s an occupational hazard for high performers, for intelligent and creative people, and people of vision. We take on too much. We fill up our calendars and desks and then prioritize between all of the good things drives up our stress and makes us ineffective, indecisive, and incapable of healthy reflection.

As a result, leaders tend to fall back on taking back the power and control that they “say” they have given to people and in a rush to get things done use command-and-control methods, dis-empowering those below them. As a result, they rush around in their busyness and fail to bring many things to completion or closure. As a result, they listen with half-an-ear, cut people off, and leave conversations hanging. As a result, their stress rises and they have less and less time to step back to refresh the big picture and keep the vision before themselves and their company.

All of that prevents self-actualization in both individuals and organizations. Self-actualizing leaders prioritize, make hard decisions between good choices and great ones saying “no” to good choices so that they can say “yes” to great ones, and control their contexts so that they can maintain a calm reflective mind about the choices that they make.

There's many other traps, but these three are some of the biggest traps to watch for. If you are a leader, CEO, senior manager, entrepreneur in your own business, or if you train and coach leaders — developing self-actualizing leaders means, in part, identifying the traps so that they can be avoided. And how do we do that? By facilitating the unleashing of potentials in people so they can self-actualize.

To your self-actualizing!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #17**  
**April 20, 2009**

## **THE SCOOP ON EGO**

In the last Meta Reflection I wrote about “getting the ego out of the way,” an under-developed ego, and in other Reflections, I’ve written about a “strong sense of ego,” “weak ego,” and “ego-strength.” A couple readers wrote and asked if I would write more about all of this. A Meta-Coach from South Africa, and one of our Team Leaders, Antoinette Ehmke insightfully posed the following questions:

“How do we humans progress from having an ‘ill-formed’ ego, to developing a ‘healthy ego,’ and from there to getting the ego ‘completely out of the way.’ Is this a naturally occurring developmental process, or is it something we have to choose and learn consciously? And how does it work?”

I’ve organized my answer by making the following seven statements about *ego*.

1) *First, the term “ego” is simply the Greek term for “I” or “me” or “myself.”* In this, it is a neutral term. If you open up a Greek New Testament, Jesus used it all the time. “Ego eimi ho poimen ho kalos.” “I am the good shepherd.” In itself, there’s nothing negative or bad or untoward in the term “ego.”

2) *We are all born without an ego.* We are born ego-less in that we do not have a sense of self and don’t even know that we are a “self.” Babies don’t have the mind or consciousness to know that they are separate from another, so the differentiating process begins with birth actually takes several years. And when a little child ventures out into the big wide world at 3 or 5 or 7, his or her ego is weak, only in the formative stages, and so under-developed.

3) *We are also born without any ego-strength.* Freud defined ego-strength as the ability to consciously face the world, to face life on life’s terms without falling apart, or caving in, or having a stress reaction of fight or flight. Our ego as our ability to think, understand, reason, and therefore to choose ways of coping and eventually master the challenges of life, we develop the inner strength so that we can handle life. With ego-strength comes resilience—the power to bounce back after we have been knocked down.

4) *A healthy ego is a health sense of self.* This includes a sense of one’s value and dignity— one’s self-esteem. And this is healthiest when it is unconditional. It is the sense, “I am valuable, significant, and have worth because I am a human being.” Being loved and valued unconditionally by parents is the ideal; then later in life as an adult, you can make that same appraisal of yourself and everyone else. Next comes self-confidence— your sense that you have “power” or “control”

to be able to *do* something that you can take pride in and that you can *trust* yourself to accomplish. Self-confidence is healthiest when it is conditional— you earn it by becoming competent in whatever area that you have developed skills to know and do. Next is your self-identity, your self-definition, how you define yourself in your roles and relationships. Here, if you accept your fallibilities and embrace your strengths, and keep defining and updating your definition as you keep growing, you'll have a healthy sense of self.

5) *An ego that is ill-formed, under-developed, or distorted by mis-understandings and mis-beliefs is an ego that is loud, boisterous, and constantly getting in the way.* Without a solid sense of unconditional value, your ego keeps getting in the way because you keep having to “prove” yourself. You constantly feel insecure and needing support and attention. If your value, worth, and dignity is evaluated as “low” or “high” then it goes up and/or down according to whatever criteria you're using to judge it: looks, strength, money, degrees, who you know, status, car, house, brand clothes, etc.

Now whatever you do, your ego is always likely to get in the way—because you are using your clothes, status, degrees, money, position, etc. to *prove yourself*. This undermines your leadership, your ability to connect with people, and everything. If you're a public speaker, you make it about you, about your image, intelligence, charm, not your audience. If you are a coach, you make the experience about your success with the client. If you are a CEO, entrepreneur, business person, you make things about what your success or money not the value that you add. In all of these instances, the ego is in the way.

6) *Ego-investments is the way the ego gets in the way.* It all begins normally as we expand our sense of self by bringing things inside our ego-boundaries. We do this when we define some idea, belief, way of doing something, possession, status, or whatever as “ours” and invest ourselves in it by identifying with it (“my house,” “my wife,” “my lover,” “my child,” “my project,” “my job,” etc.). This is normal but dangerous. It is dangerous because it is a small step to *over-identifying*. Then you get your ego in the way and interfere with your growth.

7) *To get the ego out of the way requires developing a healthy sense of self.* You are unconditionally valuable just because you're a human being and simultaneously wonderfully fallible and mortal! By asserting that your dignity and lovability is a given, you don't have to prove anything, but you get to express everything. You have incredible potentials within to unleash (but not the “new age” idea of “unlimited” potentials!). You are a limited human being. You have a fallible brain, heart, and body. It is not eternal, it is made of flesh-and-blood. You are from dust to dust. And you are also made of the star-dust of the universe.

*Fully accepting, appreciating, and standing in awe of yourself as a human being gets the ego out of the way.* That's why we begin on Day 1 of APG with meta-stating self pattern (and it is in several of the books, *Secrets of Personal Mastery* for example). When you meta-state your *doing self* with appreciation, you focus on what you can do and contribute. When you meta-state your overall self with acceptance, you embrace life as it is and the cards dealt you. And when you meta-state your *being self* with awe or esteem, you settle the question of your value.

We say in Neuro-Semantics: It takes a lot of self-esteem to be humble and modest. This frees you from having to prove yourself or to become a somebody. You begin with the declaration that you are a Somebody, and now *you get to find and express your somebody-ness!* This is what we do in Day 1 of “The Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshop” as we focus on becoming “Meaningful to the Core.” Do that and you become *free*. You become free to explore, to experiment, to make creative mistakes, and to kick up your heels in a joyful ecstasy of your right to be human.

Now, go experience the full unleashing of an ego set free from needing to be right!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #18**  
**April 22, 2009**

## **NEURO-SEMANTIC ADVENTURES IN JAPAN**

I have just completed my first Neuro-Semantic adventure in Japan. Junichiro Takano, the only *certified* Meta-Coach (ACMC) in Japan and NLP trainer invited me to train the Self-Actualization Workshop in Tokyo this past weekend. I say that he is the only *certified* Meta-Coach because he has a group of Meta-Coaches in training. Jun has been running a Meta-Coach Foundation Chapter as well as a Neuro-Semantic Practice group and has a crew of other people who have studied numerous books on Neuro-Semantics and who are well informed about Neuro-Semantics and Meta-Coaching.

My first presentation consisted of a *Meta-Coaching Introduction*—describing what it is and then demonstrating it by doing two coaching sessions that you’ll eventually be able to watch (well, you’ll understand my part; the clients obviously spoke Japanese). So in this country a single Meta-Coach, Dr. Takano, has started a Meta-Coaching Chapter practice group. And he has been inspiring and awakening lots of people in Tokyo about Meta-Coaching—a long time before I came and did a Meta-Coaching Introduction to a group of Coaches, NLP Practitioners, and NLP Trainers.

From my limited experience, NLP is seems well and alive here in Japan—I’ve been told that there are a hundred trainers or more in Tokyo and that means a lot of people training NLP here. Of course, the usual divisions and conflicts of NLP are here also. That part is not so good. And yet the people drawn to Jun and to Neuro-Semantics here, as everywhere around the world, are those who have a higher vision, who want to see NLP become more professional and ethical, and who also recognize the value of the Meta-States model as the model that can make that happen.

So I was impressed with the quality of questions that people asked questions, questions that presupposed that they knew Meta-States, that they knew about meta-modalities (as the update on sub-modalities), and so on. And of course, the Japanese idea of kaizen was so well integrated among the participants, that “feedback” and continuous improvement was just considered a given, and not something special. I loved that.

As I travel around, I often find that “the pseudo-expert phenomenon” occurs. This is the phenomenon that the further from home I go, the more of an expert I become! So while at home I get no respect, if I travel thousands of miles and many time-zones away from home, then suddenly, I’m special. I’m an expert! It’s amazing. By a simple geographical shift of location on the planet, and my identity changes from “one of the guys,” to very important person and so

I'm treated(!). And while it is a wonderful and silly and fascinating and intoxicating and stupid psychological factor, it is so regular and dependable, I suppose I need to have a good think about it and write something about it—well, one of these days.

How I typically handle the VIP attitude is to tell stories of my own poor humanity and joke about how impressed my ex-wife would be with their adorations, and how they ought to have a talk with my daughter! While it's nice to get the VIP treatment, it does have to be left at that level, and not interpreted as meaning anything more than an acknowledgment.

Anyway, by the second day things warmed up and people loosened up and relaxed with me so that the typical kind of humor, laughter, and playfulness that occurs in the trainings began to emerge. What prevents the humor and fun is the sense of respect, and the Japanese certainly have a highly developed ability to put a high value when they so choose. In terms of self-actualizing, that can be useful. After all, at the heart of meaning-making is *sacrilizing*—giving rich and wonderful and special meanings to anything and everything.

One thing that threw me for the first day or two was the reserved and conservative and expressionlessness of many of the participants. I literally felt myself trying to activate my calibration skills as if trying to turn up the calibration lever 5 times normal; 10 times normal. At first I couldn't tell. Are they with me or not? Are they enjoying this or not? Are they getting it or not? At that point, I relied on my typical way of loosening up an audience, I pulled out my big guns. I pulled out my Peanuts Cartoons. But that didn't work. No laughs. "What gives?" I didn't know.

In the end I discovered in conversations with Jun and others that it was the cultural frames and that it just takes some time for people to feel comfortable with someone new—well at least with me. And yet when that happened, many of the people really opened up and even began to feel free to challenge me. It was great.

So the Neuro-Semantic adventure has been going on in Japan. Since 2004, Dr. Akihiko Uechi in Osaka has been the sole Neuro-Semantic trainer in Japan—a linguistic professor at the University there. Now 30 have been introduced to Neuro-Semantic coaching (Meta-Coaching), and another 40 to the Self-Actualization Quadrants and Model. Yoko Yuile was there to translate along with Tamara Miller. And Yoko has just completed translating *Mind-Lines* into Japanese (the third Neuro-Semantic book in Japanese). It will probably be retitled, *Frame Change*. I have also been impressed by the trouble Jun and Yoko took in creating the training manuals, which those of you involved in translating will appreciate. They created each Training Manual so that the left side of each page was in English and the right side in Japanese. They did the entire *Self-Actualization Workshop training manual* like that!

This year and next, Jun will be conducting some Neuro-Semantic trainings that he will be calling, "Frame Change." And then next year (May 2010) I will return to present *Meta-States (Accessing Personal Genius)* and *Creativity and Innovation* to further the Neuro-Semantic Adventure in Japan.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #19**  
**April 27, 2009**

## WHY ALL OF THE TEASING?

A Neuro-Semantic wrote to me a few months ago and told me that one of the participants in his trainings had bought some of the CDs and DVDs of Neuro-Semantic NLP Trainings from Tom Welch ([www.nlp-video.com](http://www.nlp-video.com) or [www.ns-video.com](http://www.ns-video.com)) and had watched me train various programs. Afterwards she came to a training and asked the trainer, “I don’t understand why Michael Hall teases so much in the trainings? Can you explain that?” The trained told me what she said, but then asked, “Is that right? And, by the way, why do you?”

Ah, yes, the neuro-semantics of teasing. What’s that all about? Why do that? What’s the purpose?

*Teasing* is an interesting relational interaction and state. It is playful, light, questioning, explorative, and curious. *Healthy* teasing requires that you respectfully tease, and let the person that you are teasing have the sense that you are teasing. So you wink, or lift up your eye-brow, or put a lilt in your voice or something to let them know, “Hey, I’m just jesting with you. I’m playing around; will you play with me about this?” That’s the feel of teasing—*playfulness*, respectful playing around with an idea, experience, understanding, and so on.

And yet, with teasing, we are able to get to the heart of some “touchy” things, sensitive things, and address them. We can do it with teasing whereas a serious or direct approach might offend and make the exchange far too serious. That explains some of my teasing. With teasing, I generally tease about a number of experiences:

- Capacity — “Can you do that?” “Are you man enough to do this?” “You?!”
- Decision/Choice — “Will you do that? No, forget it.” “Do you *really* want this?!”
- Determination — “Nay, you can’t do that! You’ll forget.”
- Identity — “You’d be too powerful. The world’s not ready for you this resourceful.”
- Resilience — “You’ll make excuses and quit!”

I do this in order to provoke, tease, challenge, urge, and test a person so that the person *begins to fight for what he or she wants from the inside to the outside*. I do that because I know that to integrate and solidify a change, a new way of operating, a new choice for transformation, the person has to fully own the choice. It must not be mine, or even facilitated by me to them, but truly and uniquely *theirs*. So to enable that, I tease. I play with them in order to invite them to Choice Point.

“So with this new belief (or decision, understanding, principle, definition of self, direction, meaning, etc.), you are going to keep this? You like this?”

“Yes!” [the validation frame that accepts and welcomes it in.]

“Really? You’re going to do this? *You?*” [Teasing frame, pushing, challenging.]

“Yes, I am!” (The “yes” validation frame again.)

“Nah, not you. *You* won’t do it. You’ll quit.” [Teasing, challenging frame.]

“I will *not* quit. I’ll show you!” [Determination frame, competitive frame.]

“Well, I’m going to take it away from you!! You’re not ready for this!” [Teasingly pushing even more to see how much determination the person has.]

“No you can’t. It’s *mine!*” [ownership frame]

“No, I led you to this, it is mine. And I don’t think I’ll let you have it. It’s mine and the world is not ready for you!” [Testing the ownership frame]

“Try it! You can’t take it away from me!”

And so it goes. Tease, tease, push, challenge, provoke—all in the spirit of playfulness and respect and all designed to enable the person to choose, to take ownership, to integrate, and to map out the pathway from this point out in the world and into the future when I won’t be there. Has the new meanings that the person has mapped out—will those meaning frames last, sustain, persevere? Will the person persist and bounce back resiliently when he or she encounters the challenges of others, of life, of reality?

Playful teasing also does something else. It lightens things up and transforms an overly-serious attitude into a lighter one. And that’s important. “Why?” you ask. Because typically when we humans get serious, we get stupid. Isn’t that true of you? It’s certainly been true of me. And all you have to do is take a close look at any fundamentalist of any brand —religious, political, psychological, etc. Anyone who thinks that their map of the world is the real one, the true one, the one and only one is on their way to thinking that their thoughts and beliefs are infallible. And when that happens, they are one step away from think that they know God’s inner plans and so they are ready to play God with the lives of others. And the step after that is that they become an inquisitor of those who disagree.

Humor, playfulness, and teasing saves us from the god delusion and from fun-**dam**-mentalism (as Dr. Bob likes to pronounce it!). So that’s why I like to tease. It’s transformative. It’s creative. It’s human and humane. Oh, yes, there’s another reason, *it’s fun!*

To the unleashing of your Fun with Clients!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #20**  
**May 4, 2009**

## **A META- HIGH-FIVE TO THE CANADIANS**

The *Canadian Association of NLP* is celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> year anniversary this year! So for 20 years the Association (CANLP) has been around as a collaborative association for NLP-ers. For 20 years, they have been hosting an annual Conference bringing in leaders in the field of NLP and apparently no other Association anywhere on the planet has been around that long doing that. So a big congratulations to all of the men and women who, over the years, has had the vision, commitment, and persistence to make this possible.

For the first time in many years I returned to the Canadian Conference. The last time I attended was in 1999 or 2000 when Bob Bodenhamer and I attended the CANLP and presented “The Shocking Discovery that Sub-Modalities are not *Sub-Modalities* at all” which launched the book *Sub-Modalities Going Meta*. This year I presented the Keynote on Friday morning and then I did do a two day training on “Transformational Coaching.”

What I was really delighted to see and experience was *the high quality of people* at the Conference. In fact, it is the quality of the people there that gives me tremendous hope and excitement for the future of NLP in Canada and around the world. As a movement, we seem now to have passed on beyond the days when there were so many attracted to NLP as a tool to use for getting their way with others, manipulating, and controlling people—learning NLP to use it for the dark side. What I now see everywhere around the world is a passion to empower people, to contribute to the health and goodness of the world, and to make a positive difference.

I used the Keynote to offer an explicit definition and description of NLP (5 descriptions of what NLP *is*), and from that I identified the greatness in NLP (5 *excellences* that are within the NLP model ) that we could unleash. Then finally came five suggestions for how we as a community could release the greatness of NLP. This presentation will soon be posted on the Neuro-Semantics website ([www.neurosemantics.com](http://www.neurosemantics.com)) under “new articles.”

While I thought that my words and ideas might be a bit audacious, I discovered that they were not all that bold at all. As it turned out, what I was saying out-loud, in that context, most everybody had already thought and had already said. For me this highlights the fact that there’s a new generation of NLP people arising and a new spirit of collaboration and professionalism emerging—one that is less self-promoting and more aware of the importance of working together.

In the Keynote I noted that in the United States there is not a single NLP Association left and not a single NLP magazine or journal; that what the Canadians have done in collaborating, working

together, keeping things going, holding annual conferences, etc., we Americans have not. It really is a shame.

For some that was new information and so then came the questions: “Why is that? What explains that?” I got those questions a lot. The answer is that Richard Bandler’s 1996 90-million dollar lawsuit against “the field of NLP” nearly wiped out NLP in the United States. That was the lawsuit that caused hundreds of people running Training Centers to hang-up their NLP Certificates and stop conducting trainings. It triggered many others to simply change the name from NLP to something else. And it caused even more people to make a decision to never use the three-letters of NLP again to define what they do. If Bandler had wanted to sabotage the movement that he had co-created and had hired a crew of strategy experts, they would not have come up with a more excellent process!

What I find sad about it is that some 8 years after the lawsuit ended (which Bandler lost), and after NLP was declared in public domain both in the United States and in the UK, there’s only a handful of very small NLP Training Centers in the States. And yet, just to our north is an Association that continues to pioneer new ways to collaborate and to keep the larger vision alive. Just to the north is a great example of NLP people working together, collaborating, and keeping an Association alive and well for 20 years. What a tremendous example!

So I say a big thanks to out-going president Jean-Stephen Gendron, Steve Whiteley, vice-president (who will be the new president for the next term), and the marketing team of Lise Valcour, Judith Spence, Ariel Garten, and Linda Ferguson as well as former president, Carol Ann Brazier. Elected for the next year is Steve Whiteley and David Kynan (a Meta-Coach) as the next president and vice-president and another Meta-Coach is on the new board: Anne Letourneau.

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Later this month I’ll be back in Canada — this time in Montreal to do two trainings:  
May 26-28 — The Neuro-Semantics of Health: Unleashing Your Health Potentials  
May 29-31 — APG: Accessing Personal Genius, introduction to Meta-States

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**From: L. Michael Hall**

2009 Meta Reflections #21  
May 11, 2009

## GRINDER'S OLD "NEW" CODE AND SELF-REFLEXIVITY

I have recently had several conversations with people from *the Grinder Camp of NLP—the “new” code people*. I usually begin by teasing them:

“How many years does something have to be around before you stop calling it ‘new’ and recognize that it is now ‘old?’ If the ‘new code’ was new in 1985 and it is now 24 years later, isn’t it about time to recognize that it is an old code?”

They usually smile and say, “Yeah, yeah, I know.” But one guy was persistent. “It is ‘new’ to the ‘classic’ code.” So I said:

“So the ‘classic’ code of 1975 was old by 1985 compared to the ‘new’ code of 1985? Ten years and it was considered ‘old.’ Hmmmm; interesting. So then ‘the newest code’ of Neuro-Semantics, 2008 now makes the ‘new’ code a former ‘classic’ code. Right?!”

He immediately entered into a deep trance and accessed his unconscious mind which, knowing everything, confirmed how right I was, so he did the alphabet game for the last time, and did an unconscious uptake on my meta-stating skills. And after that he felt compelled to go on a vision quest for identifying the highest meta-states of all...

Well, not really. But it would have been a nice ending. Actually I recently meet an intelligent and articulate NLP Trainer of the Grinder Camp in Toronto at the Conference and had a fierce conversation in which we both sought to get to the heart of things as quickly as we could. He said that Grinder’s point to me and Robert Dilts was singular:

“While the ‘third perceptual position’ is a higher logical level and a meta-state, the form of meta-stating is simply stepping back and bringing some thoughts and feelings to the first access and every other meta-state is the same thing, the same form, so there’s no need for all of the meta-states that you present, it is one form; nothing more.”

I really appreciated that he shared that perspective. I appreciate it because while it is wrong, in that short exchange I was able to discover John Grinder’s mistake and the false conclusion that keeps him from recognizing the Meta-States Model. John sees a single *form* in meta-stating, namely, stepping back and applying a next level of thoughts-and-feelings to a previous state. And because that’s all he sees, that limits him to a linear kind of thinking: **A** → **B** and the next level of meta-state, another **A** → **B** and then another **A** → **B** and so on. Just more and more linear thinking. And if that’s all that was involved in the Meta-States Model, he would be right.

But thank the angels of the higher levels, he is not. The Meta-States Model involved much

more—much, much more! Yes human self-reflexivity does involve  $A \rightarrow B$ , but after that it is not just more of the same, it then becomes more as it facilitates the *emergence of other properties and mechanisms*. As a person makes the first meta-jump to think **B** about **A** and then does that again, the next time **B**<sup>2</sup> is reflecting on *both* **B**<sup>1</sup> and **A**. With the next jump **B**<sup>3</sup> is thinking and feeling about **B**<sup>2</sup>, **B**<sup>1</sup>, and **A**. And so it goes, and as it does *simultaneity enters the picture*. When the next meta-jump occurs, all of the others are still occurring and being enriched and textured and in this complexity *gestalt states emerge*— states that are more than the sum of all of these factors.

This shifts the richness of your state from linear thinking to *systems thinking and operating*. The Meta-States Model is not just about one frame or another frame— it is about all of the frames that we meta-state and which make up the largest gestalt experience— *the Matrix of all of our frames of meaning*. And this is systemic in another dimension. While all of this is going on cognitively, it is also going on neurologically, somatically, emotionally, and conatively.

That is, we are not only engaged in the feedback to ourselves layer upon layer, we are simultaneously feeding-forward into the body “energy” for emotions and then speech and behavior as all of this creates our states. The input that we use for feedback at various levels then become through-put which goes through the mind-body-emotion system and then becomes feed-forward or out-put (to introduce a bit of systems language).

And there’s more. As all of this is happening, so is *multi-ordinality*. Korzybski introduced this term to describe that the meanings we create at each level of our meta-stating (or abstracting, his term). At least level the meanings are different— even if they are encoded in the same term. “Love” at the first level (attraction) differs from “love of love” (infatuation) at the second level and from “love of love of love” (romanticism) at the third level and so on. “Fear” at the first level (sense of danger of something external) differs from “fear of fear” (paranoia) at the second level and differs from “fear of fear of fear” (agoraphobia) at the third level.

*Multi-ordinality* shows that meta-stating at each level is not “the same form” repeated endless as the ‘new’ code people would suggest. That is thinking in a linear way about human consciousness. When we think systemically, we begin to realize that it is not an either/or proposition, but that the higher experiences are *both/and* experiences.

With the creation of layers of meta-states about various subjects we call into existence the creation of our *frame unconscious*. This refers to the Matrix of frames that we live in as our canopy of consciousness that is mostly outside-of-consciousness. These operate as our current meta-programs and our unconscious interpretative schema for giving meaning to things and responding automatically as we do to most things. And if these are ill-formed, then they operate as dragon states to us, turning our energies against ourselves. If they are well-formed, then they comprise the structures of expertise and excellence.

John asked in his book, “Why the proliferation of meta-states?” I didn’t fully understand how he could not understand that. But now I get it. If he is thinking linearly,  $A \rightarrow B$ , and he thinks that

it all that *self-reflexivity* is and fully explains how it works, then yes I can see how he misunderstands the dynamic and systemic nature of meta-states and the other mechanisms involved when a person transcends and includes a state and does so level after level.

No wonder that “New Code” does not and cannot understand and adequately model the special kind of consciousness we humans have—self-reflexivity. No wonder the unique nature of human consciousness, having a self-reflexive mind, was never included or modeled in the original “classic” code of NLP or in the “new code” in 1985. It was not until 1994 when I introduced the Meta-States Model that self-reflexivity was finally modeled for the NLP model—which Wyatt Woodsmall immediately recognized as did the International Association of NLP Trainers.

[For more about this, see the exchanges on [www.neurosemantics.com](http://www.neurosemantics.com) between John Grinder and I that came from John’s questions and challenges about Meta-States in “Whispering in the Wind.” Also see the new article, “The Newest Code of NLP.”]

From: L. Michael Hall  
May 11, 2009

## A TRIBUTE TO ADRIAN BEARDSLEY

Joseph Scott in Tasmania Australia informed the Neuro-Semantic Trainers group today that **Adrian Beardsley** died this week after a short eight month bout with cancer. Adrian and his wife ran a business that trained NLP and Neuro-Semantics and used them for Coaching and Consulting.

Adrian was known for his kind and gentle manner, his humor and his heart. I think of him as a great example of the spirit and vision of Neuro-Semantics: he was professional in his dealings and yet caring, supportive, collaborative, and generous. He lived by the vision of always seeking to enable and empower people to be all that they could be.

By those of us who knew him— he will be genuinely missed and yet his contributions to this field will now live on after him. On behalf of the many people who loved and appreciated him, we send our love to his family and friends.

**From: L. Michael Hall**

2009 Meta Reflections #22  
May 18, 2009

## WEALTH CREATION IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

You would think that in times like these when the media has been hyping the “worldwide economic crisis” a workshop on Wealth Creation would be big. It would be relevant! It would get immediate attention and it would bring in lots of people. But that certainly was not what I recently experienced in France.

Two weeks ago I had the opportunity to present the *Wealth Creation Training* in Avignon France. And unlike last year in Moscow when so many Russians crowded into the auditorium that we had to turn away 50 people because it could only handle 250, this year we had a very, very small group of two dozen at the training. Trying to understand that, I turned to Gilles Roy, who sponsored the training, and the NLP and Neuro-Semantic trainer as well. He said that French people are unique about this subject—the subject of money, wealth, and wealth creation. That this subject is one “not talked about” openly, that it is not acceptable to do so even though there’s much interest in it.

Actually, I find that many people are like that. “Money” for them is a taboo subject. You’re not supposed to want it. To want it is to be materialistic, superficial, greedy, capitalistic, selfish, and so on. To seek money or financial success is to want something that is “the root of all evil.” Or it is to deny the spiritual life—giving and sharing with those less fortunate. Over the years I’ve met many, many people who had such frames in their mind that forbid and prohibited them from even exploring the subject or if they did, to feel highly conflicted.

But thank goodness, no one struggled with those particular frames in the Wealth Creation training in France. And yet there were vestiges of those frames and they created a bit of self-conflict about whether seeking to become financially secure or financially independent was right or was what we ought to do with our time. But mostly, the people who showed up simply needed to refine their strategy about *how* they would go about creating wealth.

Along this line several people asked me about my opinion about wealth creation and the current economic situation.

“What is new or different today in these times of economic stress and downturn about the creation of wealth? What shifts and changes do you need to make to create financial security or financial independence?”

This is where *the processes and principles* for creating wealth work equally well in times of great

economic growth and prosperity as they do in times of economic downturn and stress. The *principles* governing the stages and steps, the states and beliefs remain consistent in both contexts. In fact, in times of economic stress and downturn, they become all the more important. If anything, they are true with a vengeance when times are hard.

*And what is the heart of wealth creation? It is finding a good challenging problem and adding value by solving it.* Do that, and the money will follow. After all, what do we and everyone else spend money on? What do we use our money for? Is it not to *solve our problems*—we buy food to satisfy hunger, we go to a nice restaurant because we want to share it with loved ones or colleagues, we buy computers because of our need to communicate, get the latest information, stay in touch with others, see our favorite movies anywhere we go, etc. We spend money on products, experiences, and services. And when we create products, experiences, and services that people want or need, that satisfy human needs at any level of need on the hierarchy of needs. That creation brings us money. It adds value.

What this means is that *the engine for creating wealth* falls back to something simple and profound—in good times or bad times. It falls back to your talents and skills. If you can turn an interest, predisposition, or gift into a skill and if you can refine that skill so it becomes an expertise—and then find or create a market for the value that you add to the lives of people, then you have an economic engine for creating wealth. All you need to do then is to learn even more effective ways to use it. So learn how to manage yourself, your energies, attitude, beliefs, states, relationships, foresight and so on to do what you love doing to add more and more value.

*The more value you add, the more valuable you become, the more value will come to you.* This works whether you work for someone else or whether you are in business for yourself. It is not rocket science, but it does require focus, discipline, continuous learning and refinement, persistence, and resilience. It usually does not even require a lot of financial capitalization to get started, but it does require human capitalization—capitalizing on your intellectual and creative capital. It requires your personal and relational capital.

It also requires a plan. Well, it works much, much better with a plan. A plan enables you to focus and concentrate your human capital, to create your direction, and to measure your progress from week to week, month to month giving you a sense of succeeding and going in the right direction.

I spent six years fooling around with a singular investment property (a rental house) before I wrote my first wealth creation plan. That changed everything. Studying and modeling first-generation self-created millionaires I discovered how to focus step-by-step on creating a business that would let my money work for me. 7 years later I reached financial independence where I could then *choose* to do whatever I did because I wanted to, and not because I *needed* money.

The bottom line is that *wealth is an inside-out phenomenon* and it is a phenomenon that you can *unleash* in your life! That's what the Neuro-Semantic training on *wealth creation* is all about. While I don't have another training in this until next year in Montreal (2010), Tom Welch has some DVDs made some years ago ([www.ns-video.com](http://www.ns-video.com)) and who knows— perhaps some other

Neuro-Semantic trainers will be offering that training sometime this year or your organization might like one of us to offer it as a keynote in a conference.

In the meantime, *find a good challenging problem and add value to people's lives by solving it.* It is as simple as that and profound as that. So what frames do you need to think like a millionaire?

To the unleashing of your financial potentials!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #23**  
**May 18, 2009**

## **THE SELF-ACTUALIZATION DRIVE And Self-Actualizing Companies**

I recently re-read a classic in the field of business, management, and leadership— *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-run Companies* by Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman, Jr. Even though it's an old work (1982) and many of the "excellent companies" at the time of that research have lost their standing, I think the work is still highly relevant and significant for several reasons. From their extensive research, they identified eight basics of management excellence. "These eight attributes emerged to characterize most nearly the distinction of the excellent, innovative companies."

- 1) A bias for action, for getting on with it.
- 2) Close to the customer: they learn from the people they serve.
- 3) Autonomy and entrepreneurship: they encourage practical risk taking.
- 4) Productivity through people: treating people with respect and belief in their potentials.
- 5) Hands-on, value driven: grounded in clearly articulated set of values.
- 6) Stick to the knitting: stay with the basics and never acquire a business you don't know how to run.
- 7) Simple form, lean staff: to stay focused on core competencies.
- 8) Simultaneous loose-tight properties. (pages 13-15)

Above and beyond these keys to creating excellent companies, the authors emphasized the role of *people* in great companies. The excellent companies focus on people, they believe in people, they respect people, and they communicate and work to bring out the best in people.

"Rene McPherson says, 'Almost everyone agrees, 'People are our most important asset.' Yet almost none really lives it. The excellence companies live their commitment to people, as they also do their preference for action— any action — over countless standing committees and endless 500-page studies."

Peters and Waterman argue that "organization" and "people" are synonymous. (39) and "that's why every one of the eight distinctions that characterize the excellent companies is actually about people."

"Treat people as adults. Treat them as partners; treat them with dignity; treat them with respect. ... These are the fundamental lessons from the excellence companies research. If you want productivity and the financial reward that goes with it, you must treat your workers as your most important asset." (238)

Yet in spite of this focus on people, that is, on *human* capital, intelligence, creativity, and spirit, in their effort to identify a theory of management they skipped right over Maslow and McGregor. I didn't notice that years ago when I first read *In Search of Excellence*. At that time I had not read Maslow in depth and had not read McGregor at all. In their third chapter, they search for a theory about human nature. And while they mention McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y of management, and even later use *the content* of Theory Y to explain the excellent companies, they do not credit McGregor with that nor do they even mention Maslow once. Tragic.

And because they even mention know Maslow and show no awareness of Self-Actualization Psychology, they draw some conclusions about human nature that misdirect their conclusions from their research on the excellent companies and its application today for business, leadership, and management. So without understanding *the self-actualization drive* in human nature, Peters and Waterman conclude that human nature is irrational and full of paradox(!).

“People are not very rational. ... Man is the ultimate study in conflict and paradox. All of us are self-centered, suckers for a bit of praise, and generally like to think of ourselves as winners.” (55) None of us is really as good as he or she would like to think. We reason by stories at least as often as with good data. ‘Does it feel right?’ counts for more than ‘Does it add up?’ or ‘Can I prove it?’

“We desperately need meaning in our lives and will sacrifice a great deal to institutions that will provide meaning for us. We simultaneously need independence, to feel as though we are in charge of our destinies, and to have the ability to stick out. (56). We all think we're tops. We're exuberantly, wildly irrational about ourselves. ... the message that comes through so poignantly in the studies we reviewed is that we like to think of ourselves as winners. (57)

Highly irrational, emotional human beings — who want to be on winning teams and individuals who thrive on the camaraderie of an effective small group; creatures who want to be made to feel that they are in at least partial control of their destinies. They simply allow for and take advantage of, the emotional, the more primitive side of human nature. Stories influence us more than data. (60)

Now if you don't understand Maslow's hierarchy of needs and how we adult human beings are *simultaneously driven* by needs at all levels as filtered via our meanings— then you will conclude, as Peters and Waterman did, that we are irrational, crazy, in conflict, and that our nature is one of paradox. But if you understand *The Matrix Embedded Pyramid of Needs* and Self-Actualization Psychology, then there is no paradox here and no irrationality. There is the self-actualization drive. The key to this understanding involves two things:

First, *simultaneous drives*.

As biological beings, we are driven by the survival needs and as social beings we are driven by love and affection, belonging, bonding, connecting, etc., *and* as self-reflexive beings with a sense of self and transcendence, we are driven by meaning, contribution, making a difference, etc.— the *being* needs. And all of this is occurring at the same time! It is not an either-or experience, but a both-and one—a systemic experience. We want to be a part of a winning team *and* we also want to stand out in making our unique contribution. That doesn't equate to “irrational” although it may put us in internal conflict

if we don't understand our nature. And it is not a paradox once you have sorted out the different logical levels.

Second, *the meaning matrix embedded within the hierarchy*.

Given that Maslow missed meaning and only danced around the idea of symbolic gratifications (*Self-Actualization Psychology*, 2008), the Neuro-Semantic model of *the Matrix Embedded Pyramid / Volcano* connects our meaning-making powers as cognitive and self-reflexive beings with our drives. This explains how our drive for meaning and *meaningfulness* colors, textures, and qualifies our drives. It shows how that we can distort our drives and end up psycho-eating, spending, saving, sexing, etc. And it reveals how we can just as well use our psycho-logics for excellence so that we transcend and actualize our highest and best potentials, values, and visions.

And when you know these two keys — you also know how leaders and managers can create self-actualizing companies by tapping into the human assets of creativity and intelligence.

The bottom line is that to understand yourself, those you live with and work with, and people in general, you have to understand *the self-actualization drive*. Yet psychology grew up and developed in the twentieth century without recognizing this as one of our basic drives. It wasn't until mid-twentieth century that Abraham Maslow identified and began modeling this drive. Today we know that understanding the self-actualization drive is critical. If you don't understand it, then you won't understand yourself, or understand how human beings work and what they want and need, or how to adequately, effectively, and truly meet these needs. And if you can't do that, then you won't be able to effectively bring out your best or the best in others.

It is the self-actualization drive that motivates us to want to stand out *while* simultaneously being a part of a great winning team; why we all consistently over-rate ourselves as we want to be a somebody and make a difference. We are a species driven to actualize our potentials. We need to; we want to— or we diminish our humanity.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2009 Meta Reflections #24**  
**May 31, 2009**

## **THE SELF-ACTUALIZATION FOCUS**

I did an interview a few days ago for a radio program here in Canada and many questions were about self-actualization and the *actualization trainings* that I'm doing these days—the Unleashing of Health Potentials; the Unleashing of Your Wealth Potentials, etc. “What is Self-Actualization?” “Why Self-Actualization?” “What do you know that you have actualized a potential?” “What are the signs or clues of the self-actualizing life?”

Later another person at the training asked about the new series of Self-Actualization trainings. First he wanted to know what workshops were already available and their focus. Later when several others were asking the same questions, I thought it might be good to recapitulate the current workshops on Self-Actualization.

1) *The Unleashing of Potential: the Ultimate Self-Actualization Workshop*. The process of how we can unleash potentials through the Construct, the Crucible and the Zone. The design is to develop the ability to *unleash* at least one potential and to learn the process.

If you can unleash one and know how, then you can unleash many!

2) *Creativity and Innovation*. Self-actualization unleashes each person's creativity, first to create oneself and then to create one's expression of uniqueness in the world. Within a business or community, this leads to creative products and services. To facilitate that there's four conversations. It begins with a well-formed outcome, then a well-formed problem to creatively solve; then a well-formed solution, and finally a well-formed innovation.

3) *Unleashing Leadership*. Creative organizations do not just happen, they are led, they are created. Self-actualizing companies are created by self-actualizing leaders with a vision for self-actualization throughout the company at all levels by all people. Then the company becomes a great place to work and full of people tapping into their human capital of intelligence and creativity. And that will unleash the company from most of the problems that plagues companies today— low satisfaction, engagement, and retention by employees, little loyalty by customers or shareholders, poor quality of products and services, etc.

Next he wanted to know more about the self-actualization focus. Why this focus? Where will it lead? And of course, the answer goes back to the “secret” history of NLP as part of the Human Potential Movement—that the NLP Presuppositions that came through Satir and Perls originated with Maslow and Rogers. This means that self-actualization actually is the larger frame of NLP. So while I used to think that NLP was about “running your own brain” so that you could manage

your state, there's a much larger frame. Running our own brain is only one aspect of unleashing our potentials. There is much more.

Maslow's modeling of the *bright side of human nature* was the first modeling project of excellence in human beings from the psychological perspective. Forty-five years before Bandler or Grinder began modeling Fritz Perls or Virginia Satir, Maslow was modeling Max Wertheimer and Ruth Benedict and then hundreds and then later, thousands of self-actualizing people.

So why self-actualization? Because that's the ultimate objective of all NLP processes—to make real (actualize) our highest values, visions, and talents. And when we do that, we facilitate the process of making our lives richly meaningful and effective. The content is up to each person; the structure of *meaningful performances* and *performing meaningfully* is the heart of Neuro-Semantics and why both Neuro-Semantics and Self-Actualization fits onto the Meaning / Performance Axes.

So the self-actualization focus enables us to take any particular area and ask *the meaning—performance questions*. We can do this with creating wealth or health, we can do this with developing leadership or coaching skills, we can do with relationship or business goals. Think of anything and *the twin axes of meaning and performance* govern it being richly meaningful:

- What does this mean to you? What is the richest meaning you could give it?
- What actions enable you to live out these meanings fully?
- What's your vision and value in these actions?
- What is the next level of competency to develop that will give you even more ability to translate the meaning into life?

The self-actualization focus is the very focus of Neuro-Semantics because the bottom line is that of actualizing in performance the meanings (semantics) that we create in our minds. Are you ready to *do* what you *know*?

To your highest and best!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #25**  
**June 7, 2009**  
**What's New in Meta-Coaching– Part I**

## **AN ENTIRELY NEW SCHEDULE AND FORMAT!**

Just when you thought it was safe to come out and say, “Oh yes, I know the Meta-Coaching System!” the whole system has undergone a kaizen-refining and has emerged stronger and more profound than ever! While it is the same system of 7-models, we have now taken it to a whole new level integrating feedback from many people in many countries. In this and the next Meta Reflections I'll answer the question, “What's new in Meta-Coaching in 2009?”

- So, what is new?
- How has the system itself evolved and been refined?
- And why? Why these changes?
- And, what does it mean for previous Meta-Coaches?

The most radical change to the Meta-Coach Training System is the shift to making *the Science and Art of Facilitation* the unifying theme throughout the days. And along with this change we have established a daily theme of facilitating for each day.

- Day 1:*            *Facilitating Relationship:* Creating the coaching relationship through the core skills of Supporting and Listening and Receiving Feedback. Introduction to the Facilitation Model and how to use it to create your coaching space for the conversation like none-other.
- Day 2:*            *Facilitating Exploration:* Developing expertise in questioning and meta-questioning and giving feedback. Introduction to the invisible structures of meta-states, meta-programs, and cognitive styles and how to explore them through meta-questions as well as how to coach to meta-programs and meta-levels.
- Day 3:*            *Facilitating Performance:* Coaching for experience, execution, and implementation via State Induction, coaching emotions, and accessing one's personal powers. Coaching clarity and precision via a Matrix KPI that synthesizes meaning and performance.
- Day 4:*            *Facilitating Systems:* Coaching to the Matrix of any and every client's

meaning frames, develop the skill of “following the energy through the system,” and learn how to conversationally co-create an experiential matrix with a client.

- Day 5: Facilitating Change:* Coaching to the Axes of Change model and developing skills as a Change Agent handling the levels and dimensions of change. Developing change skills as you learn the eight-coaching change roles for performance, developmental, and transformational change.
- Day 6: Facilitating Self-Actualization:* Coaching self-actualization in people and companies by coaching to the Self-Actualization Quadrants that enables the unleashing of potentials in individuals and organizations. Facilitate the unleashing processes that synergize meaningful performances.
- Day 7: Facilitating Your Coaching Business:* Identifying your niche as a professional coach, your kind of coaching, and begin to develop the business skills so that you can work *on* your business as well as *in* it as you create a commercially viable coaching business. Create a Matrix Business Plan so you can bring out your best as an entrepreneur.
- Day 8: Facilitating Your Certification:* Step up to the worldwide community of Meta-Coaches as you meet the rigorous certification requirements, and are then licensed as a Certified Meta-Coach.

To the nine Leadership Team of Meta-Coach Trainers, I wrote the following to two weeks ago as part of the re-design of the Meta-Coach Training System. This articulates why we are doing this and why this is important:

- 1) *To create a new and thorough focus on the Facilitation Model as the heart of Meta-Coaching.*  
Each day there is the *facilitating* of one or more of the processes or facets of coaching. This puts the emphasis on a coach as a facilitator, and a special kind of facilitator— a coach facilitating a content-free conversation—a facilitator of the client’s expertise over his or her goals and life vision.
- 2) *To more thoroughly develop a consistent theme for each day.*  
Each day has a theme and focus. So if a Meta-Coach wants to re-visit a particular theme or focus, he or she can return for that particular day; and can do so year after year. Also it will enable the participants to work on that theme indepth in a thorough way for an entire day. This will also save us the repetition of coming back to the theme.
- 3) *To cumulatively build up the Meta-Coach processes.*  
The skills of the coach-in-training build each day becoming richer and more complex until it reaches the Certification day.

In 2007 I identified 10 of the *meta-processes* that a Meta-Coach would facilitate. That was the

first generation of a Facilitation Model. Yet I knew that was just the beginning of truly modeling the science and art of facilitation. And now I have it. “Will you share it here?” No, not yet. First, I’ll use 2009 as the year to share it in the actual Meta-Coach training, in Module III *Coaching Mastery* and I will do so in Stockholm, Sweden (Sept.), Auckland, New Zealand (Oct.), Pretoria South Africa (Oct.), and Sydney Australia (Nov.). And I think I can promise that you will be as delighted as you will be surprised.

And there is more to this new schedule. Previously, we were only able to schedule 12 full coaching sessions throughout the eight days. That meant minimally each participant would coach and be benchmarked on 4 full sessions, experience the client role 4 times, and watch the process and give feedback 4 times as the meta-person. With the new schedule we have pushed this to 18 full coaching sessions so that after day 1, every participant will coach a full session 6 days in a row, be client 6 times and step into the meta-role 6 times. This will provide a lot more experience, practice, and feedback from the benchmarking.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #26**  
**June 14, 2009**  
**What's New in Meta-Coaching– Part II**

## **AN ENTIRELY NEW SYSTEMATIC FOCUS ON STRUCTURE**

In the last Meta Reflection, I described the whole new schedule and format that we now have in how we will be presenting the Meta-Coach Training System this year. But that's now all, we also have a new and more profound way of teaching structure.

The campaign slogan that took George Bush, Sr. to the Whitehouse was, "It's the economy, Stupid!" Playing off of that, in Neuro-Semantics, we say, "It's the structure, stupid!" This phrase highlights *the most critical and profound factor in human experience—structure*. This was the insight of the founders (Bandler and Grinder) and grandfathers (Bateson, Korzybski, Miller, Gallenter, Pribriam, Chomsky) and original therapist communicators (Perls, Satir, Erickson) of NLP. This was the insight that I discovered when I first found NLP which captivated me from the first.

The phrase, "It's the structure, stupid!" captures attention that the power of NLP and Neuro-Semantics lies in identifying the leverage points of effectiveness, excellence, and change. When you know the structure of an experience, you know the form or process above and beyond the content. Then you can more efficiently and quickly replicate that form of expertise.

### **The Structure of a Well-Formed Outcome**

In NLP training, the first day always begins with the Well-Formed Outcome pattern. Traditionally in NLP this means identifying approximately ten criteria as factors that enable you to make your goal formed in a clear and precise way.

Years ago when I first began researching Coaching and modeling some highly skilled coaches, I observed Michelle Duval use the Well-Formed Outcome pattern in a Neuro-Semantic way that captured the spirit of that pattern in a very special way. What she did with that pattern and how she used it, in fact, enabled her to create a full coaching practice in six-months with a three-months waiting list. So, of course, we taught the structure of that process to every Meta-Coach thereafter.

In the last 18-months I've been revisiting that pattern and its relationship in co-creating with a client a KPI (key performance indicator). In revisiting the pattern, my focus has been on the syntax and order of the well-formed distinctions, identifying which to do first, then second, etc. And now, out of that, we have an even more powerful process for getting a KPI. In fact, combining this with the Matrix and the Self-Actualization Quadrants models, we now have *a Matrix KPI that synergizes meaning and performance*.

That was a mouth-full; did you get all of that? First there is the Matrix that defines and refines the KPI. Using the Matrix model, we distinguish the criteria of well-formedness so that we can see the energy of *setting a goal* in terms of state, meaning, intention and then self, powers, others, and time. And we do this to do two things—create an inspiring goal that's meaningful, compelling, and exciting that we can then actualize in specific behaviors. That puts the goal in Quadrant IV as the synergy of meaning and performance.

This gives the client a highly focused outcome of great specificity and the process itself of creating a well-formed outcome enables a client to move a good bit closer to his or her goal. It also fulfills one of the chief benefits of coaching—enabling a person to develop clarity about what he or she *really* wants. This aspect of coaching offers great value because knowing what you want—what you *really* want, isn't an easy thing to achieve.

So Meta-Coaching begins (and is sometimes completed) by coaching clarity— precise, crystal clarity about what you, as a client, want. And we do that with a *set of precision questions* that now facilitates a client to explore meaningful outcomes that will be actualized in performance. Using Matrix questions and Self-Actualization Quadrant questions we enable a client's capacity to create a goal inspiring enough to invest time and energy into and precise enough so that a client can embody the goal, innovate it into life, and then check it off as successfully “completed.”

If NLP introduced to the world a powerfully profound in the Well-Formed Outcome Pattern (see *User's Manual of the Brain, Volume I*), and if Michelle Duval used it in a Neuro-Semantic way to invent a process for contracting for coaching, then *the new Self-Actualizing Matrix KPI pattern* revolutionizes it one more time giving Meta-Coaches a new edge in getting to the heart of the matter and setting up a process for measuring and innovating change. And that's yet one more thing that's new in Meta-Coaching this year.

Would you like to know, or better, to receive a copy of the list of the Self-Actualizing Matrix KPI pattern? Great! Then meet me and the other Meta-Coach Trainers at one of the following this year:

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**

Meta Reflections #27

June 22, 2009

What's New in Meta-Coaching – Part III?

## AN ENTIRELY NEW APPROACH TO BUILDING YOUR COACHING PRACTICE

If there's *any one central problem* in the field of NLP, in the field of Coaching, and generally in the field of counseling, therapy, and personal development it is that many practitioners are really good with people and really poor with marketing and selling. As “people people” practitioners in these people-centric businesses, they know how to create rapport and help people through trying times or enable people to fulfill their dreams. But they are not so skilled in creating a commercially viable business. People skills— yes, they excel there. Business skills—well, no that's not where they are at their best.

Statistics from Coach U. a few years ago were startling— 80 percent of graduates would *not* even be in the business one year later. In one year, 8 out of 10 of the Coach Graduates would have given up and returned to their old jobs. Why? Because while they might have known how to work *in* the business, they did not know how to work *on* the business sufficiently to create a commercially successful business.

Sadly this has been equally true in the field of NLP and other forms of self-development. When I first discovered this, I was literally shocked. I not only did not expect it, it went against all of the expectations I had about NLP. After all, NLP is about modeling excellence, so surely, if an NLP person came up against something that he or she didn't know, a NLPer would simply search out some people who could do it and model them. Accelerated learning via modeling. Right? I thought so. But I thought wrong.

Anyway, Meta-Coaching from the beginning has taken a very different approach. From the first Meta-Coach Training in Sydney Australia— I always invite “expert” coaches to the training and interview them to discover their secrets. I figure that we could hardly do better than get a real-live highly successful “been there; done that” Coach and ask modeling questions to discover the secrets of the trade. And from the beginning also we have used the Matrix Model to detect the key *frames of mind*— beliefs, decisions, meanings, and intentions from the expert coaches.

By the way, this is one of the ways that the Meta-Coach Training System itself has continued to grow and evolve over the years. We have liberally stolen the highest and best ideas and practices from the experts and incorporated it into our training program! We have integrated their trade secrets into our training format, and we continue to do so.

And yet for all of this, the business part of Coaching has continued to be for many Coaches the

most challenging aspect. Now true enough, for those Coaches truly committed to their own success, there are some mentors who have stepped forward to offer one-on-one mentoring. There are also several Neuro-Semantic trainings focused on business: the Wealth Creation Training for how to use one's passions and potentials to set up a business and create wealth, the Unleashing Leadership training, the Business Genius training (the Games Business Experts Play), and so on.

As Meta-Coach Trainers, we know that we can do better. So to facilitate the business intelligence of Meta-Coaches, beginning in September this year, we will devote an entire day to the requisite Business Skills wherein which we will work on the Matrix Business Plan, model Expert Coaches, focus on coaching to the business competencies, and facilitate the development of each Meta-Coach's unique branding. We have some new exercises for developing the skills required for working *on* the business and a new meta-branding exercise.

In terms of business development, every business (even a business of one person) involves the following categories of activities:

1) *Leadership*: how you manage people—the human resources, capital, and creativity in your business and use human intelligence to innovate your products and services. This includes *you* managing *you* if you are a business of one (or of a few).

2) *Management of Operations*: how you administrate and deliver your product and services in a reliable way that creates a profitable business. How you handle the everyday details as you meta-detail from your vision and strategy.

3) *Management of Protections*: how you protect your business financially in terms of budgeting, cash flow, investments, negotiations, taxes, accounting, etc.

4) *Presentations*: how you market and how you sell your products and services as you identify your market, enter that market, qualify your clients, contact people, close, follow-up, etc. How you identify and create your unique brand, value proposition, and reputation in the minds of your marketplace.

Since business is all about adding value to people by solving problems—our focus in Meta-Coaching will enable you to identify your market niche—effectively articulate the value that you add and develop your edge that you can leverage in your market. To achieve this we will invite you to have a coaching experience of a *fierce branding conversation*. This will bring clarity as you both understand and express *what* you do and *why* it's important, and in doing that you'll learn how to *articulate it effectively* so that it becomes your “auditory business card.”

Understanding and expressing your business strategy is all about making your blueprint for how you couple your value proposition of what you offer so it will influence clients to choose you. All of this will enable you to create your brand as your story that you can then succinctly express in a memorable, compelling, engaging and emotionally moving way. And when you can do that, then *you* become your brand.

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #28**  
**June 24, 2009**  
Unleashing Your Health Potentials #1

## UNLEASHING YOUR HEALTH POTENTIALS

In May this year, for the first time ever, I delivered a whole training on *the Neuro-Semantics of Health*. While I had presented various presentations of Meta-States for Health at IASH in Denmark, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, this was the first time for devoting an entire three-day program on health.

*Health* is an interesting “state” or “experience” because it differs from those experiences that we normally call “a mind-body-emotion state” in that unlike confidence, joy, relaxation, anger, curiosity, fear, and so on, health is not a state that you “access, amplify, and apply.” Wouldn’t it be nice if it was? Wouldn’t it be great that when you are feeling tired, achy, fatigued, or down with a cold or flu—you could just accessed a state of health—remembered a time when you felt great physically or imagined what it would be like to be in a state of health like an Olympiad, and then amplified it—and then suddenly find yourself in an optimal healthy state?

But sadly, it doesn’t work that way. *Health* is not that kind of a state. The energy, vitality, the relaxation, the feeling of well-being, etc. *results* from a great many things: your eating, exercising, sleeping, relationships, career, finances, values, etc. It results from the genes you inherited, from your health or ill-health habits, from the accidents or diseases that you have experienced, from the care or lack of care that you’ve received from doctors, nurses, and other health practitioners. It results from the meanings in your life and the quality of the meaningfulness of your everyday life.

*Your body*, as a whole mind-body-emotion *system*, operates *systemically*. And that means that many variables of the system interact to create your level and quality of health. Your physical-mental well-being results from how well you are aligned in all of these factors. To effectively unleash your potentials for health and well-being you need to create a systemic congruency. To do everything well except one thing (perhaps not eating right, or not exercising regularly, or not having a passion to devote yourself to) and you can undermine your health.

In this, health is similar to wealth. Wealth also is a systemic experience that is not created instantaneously by merely “remembering a time” or “imagining what it would be like” and stepping into the state. It is created out of a whole set of variables over a period of time—development of skills, identification of a passion, devotion to a career, intentionality,

effective habits in handling money (budgeting, saving, investing), in handling work (fitness of skills to job), in handling relationships (creating rapport, caring about others, giving good service, selling, negotiation, etc.).

It is this very *systemic nature of health* that requires a whole different approach to it. It requires first of all that you think long-term and that, second, you think in terms of healthy habits. And of course, this means that you develop sufficient *intentionality* to be healthy in order to create sufficient self-discipline to get yourself to do what you know you need to do. This is especially true of eating, exercising, relaxing, and sleeping—the four biggest factors for your everyday long-term health.

And about each of these *you* probably already know lots and lots and lots of stuff that if only you could get yourself to regularly and consistently *do*, you'd be in much, much better health. Your weight would be well-managed, you'd have plenty of energy and a sense of vitality for the activities of your life, you'd wake up each day well-rested and ready for the day.

Now if by chance you happen to *not* know how to eat moderately and intelligently, or how to move your body and give it sufficient and moderate daily exercise, or how to relax after you expend energy, to stretch, recoup, and take care of yourself with rejuvenating activities, or how to give yourself 8 or 9 hours of delightful sleep— then there are hundreds if not thousands of books in your local library that will give you that information. Really! Go and look. Or, if you're too lazy to get to the library, on online and let your fingers do the walking to the thousands of websites full of this basic knowledge.

But my guess is that *knowing what to do* about eating, exercising, relaxing, and sleeping is not your problem. It's not mine. Mine like yours is *implementing what I know*. It is *integrating and executing* my knowledge. It is getting my neurology wired so that I transform what I know into unconscious habits. Then it becomes my way of moving through my days and through the world.

If that's your problem—then you may need some new frames for winning the outer game of well-being and vitality. So dust off your copy of *Winning the Inner Game* (2006, previously titled, *Frame Games* 1999) and develop the frames. Or get out *Games Fit and Slim People Play* (2001). Or if you want a whole book on getting yourself to do what you know —purchase the brand new book, *Achieving Peak Performance* (2009).

Or get yourself a Meta-Coach and have that Meta-Coach coach you through the Mind-to-Muscle pattern again and again until you can put "*Implementor of What I Know*" on your business card. When you translate what you know mentally into neurological patterns of your body (mind-to-muscle), you close the knowing-doing gap. Put that on your business card: *Closer — of the Knowing-Doing Gap*.

Unleashing Your Health Potentials #2

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #29**  
**June 29, 2009**  
Unleashing Your Health Potentials #2

## UNLEASHING YOUR HEALTH POTENTIALS

- Do you know that you have *health potentials*?
- Do you know or believe that your body knows how to heal itself?
- And even more than that, do you know or believe that your body also knows how to create and experience vitality and well-being?

What we know from all of the studies in medicine and the healing arts is that we are not the “healers.” Instead we are the *facilitators* of our mind-body system which *heals itself*. What doctors, nurses, the hospital context, and other health practitioners actually *do* is enable the body to heal itself. We clean wounds, set broken bones, apply medicines that reduce pain and/or infection, restore chemical balances, etc. Somehow the body has innate information so that it “knows” how to restore healthy functioning. The “healing” we do mostly goes into the category of cooperating with the working of the natural healing powers of the body.

Unleashing health potentials is therefore primarily a cooperative facilitative activity. We learn to work with and effectively collaborate with the mind-body-emotion *system*. It is in that way that you tap into the potentials of your mind-body-emotion system that releases well-being, energy, vitality, and meaningfulness.

In the last Meta Reflection I wrote about unleashing health potentials via cooperating and facilitating with our need for moderate eating and exercising and effective relaxing and sleeping. And when you do that, you generate lifestyle habits of health. You thereby *use* these experiences to generate and use the energy of your metabolism so that you have the “health” that supports your life.

Unleashing those health potentials requires that you get the mind-emotion part of your mind-body-emotion system on board with your health goals. And how do you get your mind-and-emotions *on board* so they work for you instead of against you? You use your intentionality to direct and govern attentions and you use your meaning-making powers to set the frames that allows you to see and live the important of eating, exercising, relaxing, and sleeping.

After you do that, then what? What comes next is the ability to use your *believing* in the frames

that you set so that you set up a self-fulfilling prophecy, a self-organization attractor, that will unleash more and more of your natural healing powers. In the field of medicine, this is called “the Placebo Effect” and for the majority in that field, this is a big mystery— an area of confusion.

“Anatomically the neural basis of the placebo is a mystery.” (Dylan, 2004, p. 72)

“Placebos are not only puzzles to be ‘solved,’ but—to the extent that they *elude* ready solutions—they also teach us how far we still are from closure on the question of what it will mean to create a science subtle and complex enough to encompass all that is entailed in being human.” (Anne Harrington, 1997, p. 8)

What is the big *mystery* of placebos? The mystery is the question about *what causes* the effect of placebos and how is it that they have such a powerful influence on our bodies for and/or against our health. If the word “placebo” is new to you, it originally meant “to please” (Latin, *placere*). Doctors would *please* patients by making them think that they were giving them something that would reduce pain or make them better. Then they would give them a little inert sugar pill or engage in some ritual (writing a prescription, tapping somewhere on the body, etc.) and surprise of surprise — it would often have a medicinal effect. That it, the person’s pain would go away or they would get better. While the pill or procedure had no medicinal or healing value in itself —and yet it would work! But how? How could that be? How could a non-effective pill or empty ritual have a medicinal value?

Today a *placebo* refers to any intervention that can be used to facilitate a patient *believing, expecting, and hoping* that something will have a positive value for health or healing. It can be a pill, an injection, a cream, surgery, diet, herb, or ritual. Somehow in some way the placebo facilitates a person to *believe* that something is going to be effective and somehow that “belief” itself—as a state of mind—influences or effects the body to make things better.

Now in Neuro-Semantics we have identified the structure of a belief as a meta-state of a *confirmation thought* about a first-level primary thought (*Sub-Modalities Going Meta*, 2005). I came up with that in 1996 and together with Bob Bodenhamer we co-developed *the Meta-Yes pattern* as a belief creation and belief change pattern [you can find this pattern in most of the Neuro-Semantic books and on the websites]. But don’t be deceived, while the pattern itself is simply; the structure is not. The structure profoundly transforms the “mind” and the matrix of frames in the mind.

Given this structure of what constitutes a “belief,” a *placebo belief* involves a person confirming his or her belief about a pill or procedure. At the first level, the person believes:

“This pill *is* medicine. This procedure will heal me. What the doctor is doing right now will reduce my pain.”

At the meta-state level, the person *believes* something else. He or she believes:

“I know this will work! Of course, this will work; no question. No doubt.”

In medicine, when a placebo works, it is called “the placebo effect.” Yet if the effective agent is

not the pill or the procedure, then what creates the positive results? Ultimately it somehow lies in the person's beliefs which activate the body's powers of self-healing. Placebos then become powerful agents of healing through belief, expectation, and meaning. Belief somehow generates hope that sets up a self-fulfilling prophecy into action. This creates *the placebo effect* which accesses some psycho-somatic mechanism or processes within the body that results in a cure or healthful effect.

- How does a placebo do all of this? What are the mechanisms involved?
- Can we access and utilize these mechanisms for health and healing?
- What processes will allow us to more effectively and methodically harness the placebo effect?

Ah, great questions. And the subject of the next Meta Reflection.

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #30**  
**July 1, 2009**  
Unleashing Your Health Potentials– Part III

## UNLEASHING YOUR HEALTH POTENTIALS

If “the placebo effect” is the result of something that has *no* medicinal value, *no* healing factor, *and yet it facilitates healing*, then how in the world does this work? And more importantly, how can we use it to unleash more of our health potentials?

The facts are even more strange in that almost anything can work as a placebo! Over the years, placebos have been substances, procedures, rituals, words, anchors, white coats, stethoscopes about the neck, reassuring words or touches, vitamins, organic supplements, and a great many other things. That so many things can operate as a placebo eliciting the placebo effect in people thereby mobilizing people’s beliefs in a way that somehow activates the healing powers of their autonomic and immune systems is nothing other than incredible. No wonder it is such a mystery to the medical community.

And there’s more. Placebos work on a pretty wide variety of illnesses, including arthritis, asthma, bleeding, and obesity. In this, they have a measurable physiological effect on the body and indicate what leading thinkers have been saying for decades about the mind-body connection.

About the effectiveness of placebos, Thompson (2005) writes:

“In clinical trials of chronic pain conditions, the placebo responses is 20 to 70 percent with a mean of about 45 percent.”

Placebo effectiveness ranges from 30 to 50 percent in depression (Brown 1992), 58% for insomnia, 54 to 56% for pain relief. (Brown, W.A., Johnson, M.F., Chen, M.G. 1992 “Clinical Features of Depressed Patients who do and do not Improve with Placebo.” *Psychiatry Research*, 41:203-214.)

Regarding the range of effects, placebos work on a wide range of things: pain, swelling, stomach ulcers, depression, anxiety, asthma, menopause, etc. What placebos have not been shown effective with are bacterial and viral infections, most forms of chronic degenerative diseases (Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease) and various forms of cancer (Dylan, 2004, pp. 63-64). The evidence that a placebo effect can lower blood pressure is mixed. If a placebo is substituted for an antihypertensive drug, the blood pressure remains lower than if the drug were simply stopped. (A.L. Suchman, and R. Ader, “Classic Conditioning and Placebo Effects in Crossover Studies,” *Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics* 52 (1992): 372-77)

In the field of NLP, McDermott, O'Connor, and Dilts writing about NLP applications on health have commented the following about placebos:

“The placebo is a blank prescription on which we write our beliefs and expectations, a blank cheque for health. . . . The placebo effect translates our beliefs about our treatment directly and sometimes surprisingly into material reality. It shows our natural healing powers at work. It directly contradicts the ideas that illness is only in the body.” (McDermott and O'Connor , p. 72).

“Another belief is called *response expectancy*. Response expectancy is what you expect to happen to you, either positively or negatively, as a result of the actions you take in a particular situation. The placebo effect illustrates an example of response expectancy.” (Dilts, 1990, p. 14)

### **Nocebos**

If the effect of placebos can actually activate your mind-body system so that it facilitates well-being and healing, it can also do the opposite. It can work in a dangerous way to undermine your health and well-being. In this placebos can “go over to the dark side.” And when they do, a negative placebo is known as a *nocebo*.

Nocebos are also based on beliefs and expectations, but a different kind of belief and expectation, one that fearfully anticipates pain. Mass fear, rage, and sickness often occur when one or more persons become afraid of getting ill and seem to become nauseous. That's when the fear spreads so that more and more people faint, vomit, or show other symptoms of illness.

Walter Cannon described the notion of voodoo death as “the fatal power of the imagination working through unmitigated terror.” He believed that voodoo death resulted from an over-reaction of the sympathetic-adrenal system to fear. (“Voodoo Death,” *American Anthropologist* 44 (1942): 169-81.)

Where nocebos most frequently occur are in doctor-patient communications and especially in medical diagnosis. For this reason, physicians ought to watch the language they use in diagnoses carefully—very carefully. The language of a diagnosis demonstrates the power of words and how words can operate as if a magical incantation. And when a doctor is not careful, but makes deterministic statements, a diagnosis can become a curse.

“If you have a medical condition, do not let the diagnosis become an identity. ... ‘I am a diabetic.’” (McDermott and O'Connor, p. 112)

Now one of the central factors of nocebos, a factor that makes them especially dangerous, is that they are more likely to be “heard” and “communicated” when a person is in a negative emotional state or mood. Mood can negatively influence health outcomes. Studies have shown that depressed people are 1.6 times more likely to have non-fatal ischemic heart disease. Cynicism, suspicion, and a pessimistic expectation that disease will occur can generate negative expectations and create a nocebo.

Now given that the placebo effect and the nocebo effect involve certain *frames of mind* (meta-states and layers of meta-states), not only do our states affect our health and well-being, but so do our meta-states. In fact, our meta-states do so to a much greater extent than do our primary states. This is good news and bad news. The bad news is that when we turn our negative thoughts-and-emotions (as mind-emotion energies) against ourselves, we not only create “dragon states” we also create nocebo effects that undermine our health. So what is the good news? If we can do that, we can also reverse it. And we can set more empowering and health-giving meta-states that will enhance our life energies. And, I’ll write about that next time.

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**

**Meta Reflections #31**

**July 6, 2009**

Unleashing Your Health Potentials– Part IV

## UNLEASHING YOUR HEALTH POTENTIALS

Having identified the strange and mysterious mechanism in medicine known as “the placebo effect,” and having described it as a “belief,” a mental state of an “expectation,” a frame of mind composed of our meta-states, it is now time to explore “the placebo effect” and our self-reflexive consciousness. It is time to ask some curiously fascinating questions about how our reflexivity plays a role with our health and well-being.

- So, what happens if you know that a placebo is a placebo? Will it still work?
- Will knowing that something is a placebo undermine and interfere with its effectiveness?
- And can we take control of our self-reflexive awareness so that we can intentionally activate “the placebo effect” to facilitate our own health and well-being?

The answer to these questions is that— it is relative. That is, it depends. Sometimes it does; sometimes it does not. It depends on the person and on the layers within any given person’s mind. It depends on how you respond (or react) to your awareness of your thoughts and to the beliefs that your belief are embedded within. And that’s another reason for learning the Meta-States Model and how to effectively manage the higher levels of your mind. [You know I had to throw in that commercial!]

What we have discovered is fantastic. Namely, *the mere fact that you know that an idea or belief is a placebo does not necessarily prevent it from working to create “the placebo effect.”* Now most placebos work because *you think* the placebo is real and has actual medicinal value, and so essentially you confuse the inert substance or procedure with a real one. You think that the placebo works because your beliefs and state of mind communicates a message, or order, to your nervous systems and body which thereby somehow activates a healing process. You *believe* it and somehow the belief itself *makes it happen*.

Yet there is now evidence that a placebo will often work in spite of our knowledge that it is just a placebo. The evidence? 1965 two researchers from Johns Hopkins University gave placebos to 15 patients, “We feel that a so-called sugar pill may help you.” 14 agreed to take it and 13 improved during the week of taking them. [Park, L.C. and Covi (1965). Nonblind placebo trial. *Archives of General Psychiatry* 12:336-345.]. This is so incredible, you just have to reflect on that for a moment:

They *knew* it was a placebo. They were told that it was *harmless, inert, and useless* as a

pill. *And* they took it anyway, *and* in spite of that, it still worked with the majority of them.

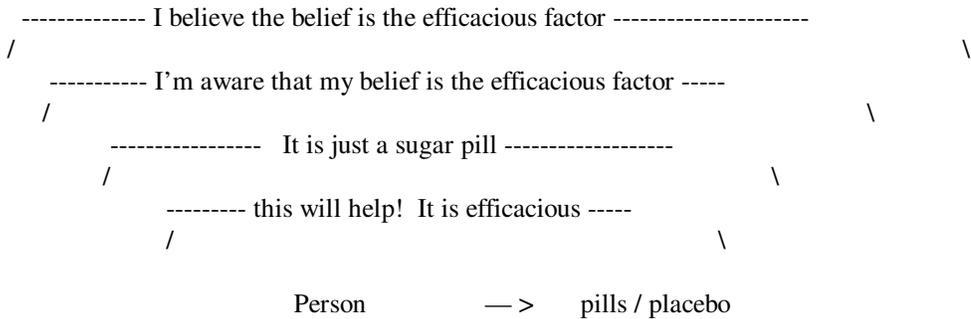
In other words, merely knowing that something is a placebo does not necessarily have to invalidate it. That means that at the first meta-level you can *know* and *acknowledge* that some pill or procedure is empty in itself. That means that you do not *believe* in it! At least you do not believe in it at the first meta-level. But what if you believe in it at the next level up?

What if, instead of a first meta-level belief in a particular placebo intervention, you believe in your belief itself as the efficacious factor? What then? Could that next level belief over-ride your awareness that it's just a placebo? Suppose that when you know that there is a power in your belief process itself. Suppose you believe in the power of your mind to set a strong expectations. Suppose that you believe in your ability to send messages to your body for your healing, energy, vitality, and well-being. Could that become a higher level placebo, a *meta-placebo*? If merely knowing at the first level that something is a placebo does not necessarily undermine or counteract the experience, what if you rise above that and set a meta-placebo belief?

It was this understanding that led me to experiment with a new pattern in Montreal in May. I chose the title of “Unleashing Your Placebo Power,” and then designed the process around a positive expectation. Comparing and contrasting it then against a weak expectation, a mere wish or hope then enabled us to find “the difference that makes the difference.” And finding that suggested how to code (or re-code) a belief so that we present it to ourselves as a strong expectation. And from there, setting the next level up meta-state, namely a belief in the expectation.

Our understanding is that placebos work by expectational beliefs—beliefs about what you expect. A strong *expectation* sets up an orientation, perception, and intention. What do you expect about health, aging, sickness, etc.? How strong do you expect this?

*Distinction:* we will explore the differences between two states: when you are in a strong expectancy state and when you are not.



From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.  
Meta Reflections #32  
July 13, 2009

## THE BALCONY AND THE DANCE FLOOR

I came across a great metaphor some time back in the book, *Leadership on the Line* (2002) by Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky:

“Let’s say you are dancing in a big ballroom with a balcony up above. A band plays and people swirl all around you to the music, filling up your view. Most of your attention focuses on your dance partner, and your reserve whatever is left to make sure that you don’t collide with dancers close by. You let yourself get carried away by the music, your partner, and the moment. When someone later asks you about the dance, you exclaim, ‘The band played great, and the place surged with dancers.’

“But if you had gone up to the balcony and looked down on the dance floor, you might have seen a very different picture. You would have noticed all sorts of patterns. For example, you might have observed that when slow music played, only some people danced; when the tempo increased, others stepped onto the floor; and some people never seemed to dance at all. Indeed, the dancers all clustered at one end of the floor, as far away from the band as possible.” (p. 53)

Here are two perspectives—a *balcony perspective* and a *dance floor perspective*. One arises from the middle of the action where there is lots of energy and emotion, the other rises from a distance where you see the big picture and the patterns of that energy. Both are important. What I appreciate about Heifetz and Linsky’s use of this metaphor is the point they make. It’s a point that we in Neuro-Semantics are constantly making—we *can do both at the same time*. In fact, the synergy of both perspectives is, in part, what defines “wisdom.”

“Achieving a balcony perspective means taking yourself out of the dance, in your mind, even if only for a moment. The only way you can gain both a clearer view of reality and some perspective on the bigger picture is by distancing yourself from the fray. Otherwise you are likely to misperceive the situation and make the wrong diagnosis, leading you to misguided decisions about whether and how to interview.”

The *in* and *out* perspectives—one from the balcony and one from the dance floor are just that—two perspectives *and* we can learn to move in and out of them at will, using each to enrich the other. Stepping *in* enables you to get lost in that moment, in the energy, in the emotion, in the experience. Stepping *out* enables you to witness, to observe, to access meanings, perspectives, and patterns. While both are important, each is important for different reasons and purposes. And both involve *associating*. That’s right. One associates into *immediacy*, the other associates into *observation*. In spite of what some NLP trainers and books say, stepping out of immediacy and into observation is not “dissociation.” That’s an entirely different process and dynamic. [The

opposite of associating into a particular emotion, state, or perspective is not dissociation, it is associating into *another* emotion, state, or perspective.]

The meta-skill I'm describing here involves the process of repeatedly stepping *in* and *out* that gives you the rich double ability of affecting and influencing what is happening on the dance floor *and* simultaneously observing the impact of that intervention in real time. And if you make this process iterative, then your intervention and feedback of the results enables you to effectively coach, heal, and lead. And the more skilled you become in this iterative stepping-in-and-out process, the more able you will be to give-and-receive feedback in the moment to shape new skills and expertise.

And doing this is part of what it means to think systemically:

“To see yourself from the outside as merely one among the many dancers, you have to watch the system and the patterns, looking at yourself as part of the overall pattern. You must set aside your special knowledge of your intentions and inner feelings, and notice that part of yourself that others would see if *they* were looking down from the balcony.”  
(p. 54)

This describes a practical integration of this higher or meta-level skill. Some call this *mindfulness*—a higher level awareness of the larger picture *while* you are in the midst of things. And since it increases the wisdom of getting and maintaining perspective in the midst of action. In the field of athletics, many (perhaps most) top athletes are able to do both at the same time—they can simultaneously play the game and observe it. They can observe their play while playing and adjust their skills and responses to increase their effectiveness. How about that! Isn't that magical? In the field of coaching, this is one of the unique skills that gives Meta-Coaches a higher level leverage in facilitating transformation.

This is also unique. Few people can do this. Few can see the dynamics of their lives in communicating and relating as they happen. Swept up in the action of the meeting, they simply do not notice patterns. They simply play their part. The observational challenge of the balcony view enables you to see the subtleties that normally would go right by you. Seeing the whole picture requires standing back and watching as you take part of the action. Taking a balcony perspective is tough to do when you're engaged on the dance floor, being pushed and pulled by the flow of events. It's tough unless you've been trained!

The balcony perspective can also provide you an inner sanctuary for your mind. You can use it to be a place of reflection for renewal, a place where you can listen to yourself away from the dance floor and the blare of the music. Once you have learned the skill of stepping in and out, you can then step out while even in the midst of a challenge to reaffirm your deeper sense of your self, your meanings, and your purpose. Would you like this meta-skill? You can get it via the introductory training to Meta-States— APG, or you can get it via working with a Meta-Coach. Here's to the wisdom of your synergistic dance floor—balcony perspective!

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #33**  
**July 20, 2009**

## **NEURO-SEMANTICS AND PHYSICAL FITNESS**

During the past couple months the subject of physical fitness seems to repeatedly keep coming up in conversations. It naturally and obviously came up in the *Unleashing Your Health Potentials* in Montreal in May. After that came up in a couple of radio interviews as I've been asked about my energy level and how I maintain it in trainings and in traveling. It has arisen as I've been talking with several trainers who training or are planning to train "Games Fit and Slim People Play."

Then this last week it came up in a corporate setting on several occasions. It arose both when I was talking to the senior managers and then when I presented to the whole company about becoming a self-actualizing company. How did it come up in that context? It came up on one of the first characteristics of a self-actualizing company. First of all leaders and managers have to "take care" of their people, that is, meet their basic needs (e.g., survival and safety needs). Companies generally do this with salaries, perks, and the compensation packages. And if you want to know why that is important, it is *if* because survival and safety needs are not met, employees will be operating from a level of stress (worry, apprehension, tension, preoccupation) preventing them from being fully present and engaged in their work.

That's why leaders in self-actualizing companies focus on creating *an environment* that is conducive to the health and well-being of their people. If the company is large enough and has its own cafeteria then it aims at not merely feeding people, but creating a context of nourishing food in a pleasant and relaxing context. Google has eleven gourmet cafes on their campus, along with tennis courts, a fitness center, walking trails, and so on.

In speaking about these things, I asked the people of one of the firms I was working with recently to imagine a *Vitality Meter* at the front door when they came to work. If they stepped onto the Vitality Meter each morning when they arrived and each afternoon when they left, what would it register? If you step on to the Vitality Meter, would it indicate that you are full of energy, health, vitality, inspiration, and passion? How much well-being and vitality would it register from 0 to 100?

If in arriving at work your vitality is low, is that your personal problem, is that a system issue due to the structure of the work and work place, or is that a relational problem with a manager, supervisor, or colleague? If upon leaving your work at the end of your day, your Vitality Meter indicates that your vitality and well-being has been extinguished or devastated, what does that say about you, your work, the work context, the relationships there?

A self-actualizing work will not feel like “work” in the sense of effort, drudgery, or being hard, or life draining. It is full of effort but it is more the effortfulness that a child puts into play. You are fully there, you are fully engaged, you are giving it your all and the tiredness that comes is a good tiredness. And you have the sense of accomplishing, “A job well done!” So a self-actualizing company gets the right people on the bus, then into the right seats for them, and then supports and takes care of those people so that they are energized by their work.

Physical fitness is important in all of this because our states are *mind-body* states. It is never just a matter of thinking right, thinking positively, having a good attitude, understanding things, operating from good principles—it is just as equally a matter of feeling good, taking care of your health, eating good food moderately, exercising regularly, and sleeping well. To actualize your highest and best requires that you have the *energy* to do so and that means strength in your muscles, cardio-vascular system, and flexibility in your movements. All of this comes together to define your level of “fitness.” And fitness endows you with the energy reservoir that you need to be a fully functioning person.

A disciple and student of Maslow, Robert Carkhuff wrote *Toward Actualizing Human Potential* (1981) and included physical fitness in his descriptions in a way that Maslow did not.

“All actualizers maintain rigorous fitness programs. However they do not make a fetish out of it. ... the real question for the actualizers is: Fitness for what? They draw upon their physical resources to serve other more important purposes in their lives. They value their fitness highly because they recognize it as a necessary but not sufficient condition of their life purpose.” (p. 55)

“The effective helper must develop a high energy level that enables him or her to be strongest at the crises of life; a high level of motivation to accomplish a mission that directs and sustains him or her throughout life.” (p. 67)

Regarding the physical factors in self-actualization, Carkhuff set out levels of functioning. He even put numbers to the levels in the scale: 1) Sickness, 2) Survival, 3) Adaptability, 4) Intensity, and 5) Stamina. This was the vertical scale. Then along a horizontal scale he had four dimensions of physical functioning: 1) Cardio-respiratory functioning, 2) Endurance, 3) Strength, and 4) Flexibility. With this matrix, you can then identify your level of functioning in each of these dimensions.

“The fitness level based on exercise will ultimately influence the fitness level of application. Whatever a person’s reservoir of energy initially, over an extended period of time, the level of fitness will relate to level of energy. ... High functioning people are able to mobilize energy when needed.” (p. 74-75)

How is your fitness level? Do you wake up each more ready to go? Do you look forward to the activities of the day? And throughout the day, do you have enough vitality and strength to handle the challenges before you? At the end of the day, do you have a good tiredness of mind, body, and emotions and have a sense that the energies you devoted to your tasks resulted in “a job well-done?” To be fully engaged in life, to *fully play* at the things that are important to you, and have a good time doing so requires energy. It requires that you have the strength, stamina, well-being, and flexibility to handle it. How can you actualize your highest and best without physical fitness? How much potential are you ignoring, sacrificing, or wasting by not having the physical fitness

that you need? May your Vitality Meter be at the top in the red zone more and more often!

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #34**  
**July 27, 2009**

## **RE-BRANDING RICHARD BANDLER**

### **Or, Epiphanies by Owen**

If, as Richard Bandler says, “It’s never too late to have a happy childhood,” then all Richard himself would need is a bit of the Change Personal History pattern and a new writer to create a new brand for himself. And if you want to read the results, try *Conversations with Richard Bandler* (2009). Now while you may think the book is written by Bandler because his name is boldly presented on the front cover, it is not. It is written by Owen Fitzpatrick. And it is also mostly about Owen, his “world tour” stories, his occasional talks with Richard, and his constant epiphanies! While the sub-title is: “Two NLP Masters Reveal the Secrets of Successful Living” the book is Owen’s reflective insights from his constant epiphanies.

And what do these epiphanies cover? How about everything! A short list includes freedom, choice, power, trance, success, change, goals, perspectives, humor, self-image, perfectionism, love, loneliness, friendship, spirituality, hope, problems, solutions, wealth, financial freedom, eating disorders, failure, rejection, world peace, death, lost of a loved one, intimacy, etc.

Personally I think the book is a conspiracy. I think it is Richard and Owen’s attempt to reframe Richard and create a new brand for him— to portray Richard Bandler as a loving, kind, congruent, gentle, concerned, caring, ethical, and spiritual person. Bandler, according to Owen, is “the most ethical change worker I have ever experienced” (p. 34).

Really! That’s what he says! Don’t laugh. If a person read this book without having any prior knowledge of the history of NLP or Richard Bandler and did not let that information influenced him or her, you would walk away thinking that here is a misunderstood genius, “the Einstein of the mind,” (p. 16), “the creative artist” on the order of Gandhi, saving the world from the sources of human misery.

“There’s way too much violence on TV. I don’t think we should censor it. I think we should beat it with something better.” (p. 66)

Owen presents Richard as a model of friendship (honestly and loyalty (p. 233), loving relationships (pp. 248-251), and even committed to one woman for 30 years (p. 249). Here Richard says, “I don’t put up with self-indulgence. I don’t put up with it in myself, and I don’t put up with it in my clients.” (p. 149). Now get that smirk off your face. Pretend that you don’t know any Bandler history, then you’d be impressed, really impressed! Of course, some of us know that history. Later he brings up the subject of gurus and writes a chapter about gurus. So

when he asked Richard about gurus, Richard said:

“Gurus have followers. People have said to me, ‘Are you a guru?’ I’m not, because I’m not that social.” (p. 284). “I ‘m not sociable enough to be a guru. I don’t want people following me. I don’t mind if the visit me from time to time...” (296)

But then Owen ended the book with words that seem to treat Richard as a guru, even calling him “Dr.” when Richard never earned a doctorate, but only a Masters Degree from the University of California at Santa Cruz. Yet Owen perpetuates that misunderstanding throughout the book.

“I owe an awful lot to my friend and mentor Dr. Richard Bandler. His genius enables me to have the wisdom to make a difference. I always had heart. He has given me a mission upon which to focus that heart. There is no better person to lead us into a heaven on earth.” (339)

*Leads us into a heaven on earth!* Really?! So that is “NLP according to Owen!” Silly me, and I thought it was a Communication Model based on Transformational Grammar distinctions, General Semantics map/territory difference, and the language patterns of Perls and Satir. All my years in NLP and I didn’t know it was it was really about! Owen, where can I go to make amends to the guru who will lead us into a heaven on earth?

### **Good Stuff**

While I’m being a bit facetious, there are things I like about the book. This was expressed very well:

“NLP should be used first to ensure that nobody could affect your emotional state in a negative way. We learned about how to control the way we interpret our experiences more usefully and respond to the world more effectively.” (p. 34)

And this is an excellent statement:

“NLP focuses on helping people realize that it does not matter *why* they do something, it only matters *how*. Sigmund Freud got some things very, very wrong. Its not what happens to you; it’s how you deal with it. The cause is not the event that happened. It is the way you think about it.” (p. 40)

### **Hidden Meta-States**

And there were all of the meta-states in the book, but always *unacknowledged* meta-states so that neither Richard nor Owen seemed to be aware of what they were saying at the structural level:

“Once we become aware [*a state*] of how we formulate our thoughts [*about another state*], we gain the ability to change them. ... the trick is to begin to be aware of how you make images when you are feeling bad and to change how you represent the images.” (p. 47-48)

Owen asked Richard, “How do you help people who feel sorry [*primary state*] for themselves [*a meta-state about one’s ‘self’*]? Richard responded:

“Well, to feel sorry for yourself, you first have to ‘feel sorry,’ which is a complicated set of sensations. Then you have to know when to do it, and then you have to make a set of

pictures that blame your problems on other people.” (p. 138)

When asked about what he thought about the concept of self-esteem, he said,  
“Well, I think it’s just a stupid concept because it’s self-referential.” (141)

And, of course, that is to a great extent why Richard Bandler cannot acknowledge the Meta-States Model. Owen wrote this about meta-states without apparently understanding meta-states:  
“This whole notion of feeling bad *about* feeling bad causes [*a meta-state structure*] many people massive problems. People who suffer from problem such as panic, actually panic at the thought of panicking [*a meta-state structure*]. It’s the thought of the problem that feeds the problem. In other words, the biggest problem is not the original problem; it is the problem you have with the problem.” (p. 148)

Thinking about this, Owen presented this to Richard:

“... [P]eople’s problems are not the problem; it is their problem about the problems. I worked with a client who was depressed because he was depressed, and yet he had the NLP skills to get himself out. How do you help people like this?” (149)

Then Richard responded by saying:

“That’s just meta-stupidity. I mean, to begin with he was lying. He didn’t have the skills, because he wasn’t using them. ... they’re saying, ‘I have these skills, but I can’t use them on myself.’ Well then, they don’t really have the skills.” (p. 149)

Then later he is “if you are not using a skill, you don’t have it. You only have skills when you use them because if you are not using them, they are not there.” (151)

Really! And silly me, I thought that learning about a skill and developing it was one step, and that *applying* your learning to implement was another. I always thought a person could *know* and *not do*, that there could be a knowing-doing gap. Actually, that’s why I designed the Mind-to-Muscle pattern. Foolish me, I was assuming that they knew and had the skill but somehow were blocking themselves from implementing the skill.

But wait. In the next paragraph, Richard contradicts himself again.

“Sometimes, I felt that these skills were just sorting things out at the surface level, and I needed to deal with the problems more deeply. So I began to write out everything I could about a problem and what I needed to do. Once I engaged in this exercise I found myself feeling comfortable with being able to use all the skills and mantras because I had deal with it as fully as possible.”

Okay, so what is it?!! A person does *not* have a skill *because* he or she does not use it; or a person does and they just have to “write out everything” and then feel comfortable using all their skills?

## **Over-Simplifications**

One challenging aspect of the book for me was the over-simplified statements that abound in the book, over-simplified statements like these:

“NLP was originally a reaction to the field of psychology which failed to present effective ideas to help people change.” (p. 15)

Really and I thought it arose from modeling several psychologists and psychotherapists who were effective in helping people to change— like Virginia, Fritz, and Milton!

“To be free you have to be moral, because then you won’t have dilemmas about what’s good and bad.” (p. 29)

Hmmm, so that’s it! No more dilemmas! Just “be moral.” Why didn’t I think of that?!

“Very few people realize the importance of attitude and beliefs in any kind of change. They think the technique is what is important.” (p. 61)

Really, that’s the problem with people who work in the field of change? They don’t “realize the importance of attitude and belief.” This is not something they ever write about, speak about, or address? That’s amazing! Someone should tell them to notice attitudes and beliefs!

### **Ridiculous**

Then there are some other things that just have to fall under the category of the ridiculous, things like forgiveness. When asked about forgiveness, Richard said:

“I don’t deal with the concept of forgiveness. I don’t have to forgive people for what they do because I either forget about it because they’ve stopped and are doing other things, or I remember it so I don’t get taken again. ... I think this whole forgiveness things comes out of Christian nonsense.” (P. 239). “I think that’s wrong that I have to say, ‘I forgive you,’ so that they can feel okay when they screwed me.” (p. 240)

Hmmm, forgiveness is for people to “feel okay when they screw” you. I didn’t know that. And what about when you do the screwing? Oh, perhaps that explains why you never ask for forgiveness.

Then there is the thing about emotions “spinning” and intentionally “spinning” emotions (whatever that means). Richards says that when feelings are a problem, simply “spin the feeling” in the opposite direction and create an altered state (p. 145). (I wrote about this non-sense about spinning emotions, which comes out of DHE or Hypnotic Repatterning in the article, “Reviews of Richard Bandler’s 2008 Books.)

“You have to learn to take your good feelings and spin them around inside your body, so they don’t spin off into space.” (p. 131)

Oh my goodness! My good feelings are in danger of spinning off into space? By God we better “anchor” them down to the earth, and quick! I certainly don’t want my good feelings spinning off into space!

“When you are doing worthwhile things you should feel good, but they make up a bad feeling and start spinning it inside themselves till it becomes a habit.” (142)

## Doubtful

Then there are the things I really doubt very much. For example, toward the end of the book, Richard said:

“I met Fritz perls, Virginia Satir, Abraham Maslow, Moshe Feldenkrais, and the top physicists on the planet.” (288)

Well, Fritz Perls died in Jan. of 1970 and Maslow died in June of 1970. So given that Perls had moved from Esalen in June/ July of 1969 to Canada where he died. One website gives Bandler’s birth as April 1950 and another Sept. 1950. So in 1969 Richard would have been 18 or 19 when he met them. And what was he doing at 18-19 years of age? Just beginning his first years of College. And that was before Dr. Robert Spitzer of *Science and Behavior Books* hired him to transcribe the tapes of Perls. It was after Perl’s death that tapes of sessions were sent to Spitzer and later he hired Richard to begin transcribing them which was Richard’s first exposure to Fritz, probably 1971.

There is Richard’s claim to have been a musician. “When I was a musician.” (p. 228). Hmm. I wonder when that career was supposed to have taken place? That’s like all the stories in *Persuasion Engineering* when Richard spent years in his profession as a Car Salesman!

When asked about being happy, Richard responded in part:

“I’ve seen people switch from having prestigious jobs where they were running corporations to become a school janitor and be happy for the first time in their lives.” (307)

Really? Like specifically who? What CEO in what company became a school janitor? I never heard about that one. Who did that specifically? When? In what company? Will one of the co-developers of the Meta-Model tell us *specifically who*?

Then there was Bandler on scarcity:

“People ask me about the different NLP trainings out there. People need to move away from scarcity. Instead of saying we have one pie, and we can divide it up, what we really need to do is to create more pies. Everybody should really go through twenty-five practitioners.” (324)

That’s great! But, oh by the way, why is every book by Bandler, including this one, only mention his books in the bibliography and never mentions anyone else’s? Is that abundance or scarcity? It’s a little hard to swallow the stuff about abundance from a book that claims to be the only source of pure NLP!

Anyway, if you’re looking for something new in NLP, anything new, you won’t find it in this book, well, except for the re-branding of Bandler into a Gandhi like genius leading us into a heaven on earth.

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #35**  
**August 2, 2009**

## UN-INSULTABILITY

“You hurt my feelings when you did that!”  
“Well, you hurt my feelings when you said that!”  
“You should apologize to me!”  
“No, it is *you* who should apologize to *me*!”

I overheard that exchange in Starbucks the other day. And it went on and on as they argued about who hurt the other one the most! Finally one stood up, pushed the chair into the table with a big thud and said, “I’m not going to take this insult any more!” And with that, stormed out.

Whoaaa! That’s when my thoughts turned to the “Taking Criticism Positively” pattern. Early in NLP someone developed that pattern. And why not, if you’re busy doing anything significant or if you’re not doing anything, you are going to be criticized. Someone will take you to task for what you are saying and doing. How you then respond in your communications will then determine if you can come to an understanding of each person’s point of view and work things out, or not. And to respond effectively almost always requires that you say something, that you communicate with them. So that pattern was about how to think and frame “criticism” in your own mind so that you can “take it positively”— that is, look for the positive intent, match the person’s words and state, find out the validity of their point, and see what can bring a resolution to the situation.

The result of this suggests that to take criticism positively, you can do the following:

1) *Reframe “criticism.”* Change the frame so that you move it from meaning a threat or danger to you so that it means that another person simply has some negative thoughts about what you said or did.

2) *Recode criticism.* Notice how you represent the “criticism” in the theater of your mind and edit the cinematic features so that you see, hear and then feel it in a different way. How close or far are your images? How loud or quiet is the voice? What words are you repeating to yourself? What tone of voice? Any other sounds like music playing? How big is the person in relationship to you? What happens when the words sound like Elvis Presley singing? Or Bugs Bunny? Or Elmer Fudd? What if you edit the words so they are spoken in a sexy tonality? And what happens if you see the critic in diapers with a rattle in hand throwing a tantrum?

3) *Positive intention.* And what if you also know that behind every action is some positive intention? If you set that frame and operate from the intention of finding those intentions in others, then every “criticism” offers you a chance to engage in an exploration! You may have to scratch your head a lot and ask lots of questions to find out, and in the meantime the person’s “criticism” fails to push buttons or make you the puppet of someone else’s string pulling.

This is the basic NLP approach. In Neuro-Semantics we have taken this further. We focus on accessing a *meta-state of un-insultability*. This refers to accessing a state wherein you are *beyond insult*, un-insult-able. What would you need to think, believe and feel so that there is no “insult.” Have you ever been in such a great state and someone tried to insult you and it just didn’t effect you at all? Suppose a drunk on a street corner said critical things to you as you enter a theater to receive an award? How much insult would you take then?

The process for un-insultability involves several things:

4) *Unconditional self-value.* What if you knew both in your mind and in your body that your worth, value, importance, dignity, and self-hood was unconditional? What if you set a frame of meaning that who and what you are as a human being is not conditioned upon any temporal factor like looks, money, status, degrees, clothes, etc.? What if you knew and felt in every fiber of your being that your esteem as a human being is that of a sacred and precious being and that it is above and beyond your actions, behaviors, experiences, thoughts, beliefs, emotions, relationships, etc.? Wouldn’t that be a great state to operate from?

5) *Self-Acceptance.* And what if you also operated from a frame of mind and state of acceptance of life as it is? That would end the fight. That would unplug the buttons that could “get” you. When you fully accept your fallibility, mortality, and humanity, then what “button” can anyone push to rattle your cage?

6) *Playfulness.* Now it can become a respectful and playful game of discovery rather than that of one-up-manship. First by making the button-pushing game fail, you can surprise the criticizer. Now some respectful humor can lighten things up. So if someone calls you “a son-of-a-bitch!” you can now playfully agree, “Yeah, I know. What kind of a son-of-a-bitch am I specifically today?” “And am I a loveable son-of-a-bitch or just a fun-loving one?”

The Boy Potential in *The Matrix* movie said, “There is no spoon.” Similarly, “there is no insult.” And that’s especially true for the person who lives in the Matrix of Uninsult-ability. So if you know *The Matrix Model* (2003) and have been trained in it, then you can use it to reload your Matrix and live in a world where there are no insults. “Insults” is a man-made experience only available to those who live in the Insult Matrix. Here’s to the unleashing of your uninsult-ability!

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #36**  
**August 9, 2009**

## **KNOWING AND BEYOND MERELY KNOWING**

At a Business Lunch this week, prior to the presentation, I went back to the book table and the event sponsor introduced me as the author of the books to a highly influential CEO. As he was looking over the Meta-Coach Series of books, I asked him what he was interested in. He said that the term “self-Actualization” had caught his attention and that’s why he was there. He flipped through *Self-Actualization Psychology* and *Unleashed* and then started to look at *Achieving Peak Performance*. That’s when I asked,

“So, what do you think?”

“Oh, I know all of this stuff.”

“Really? That’s great and surprising because while I authored it, I’m still learning heaps every day about it and feel that I only know a small portion of what’s in these books.”

“No ... [pause] ... that’s impossible. How can that be?”

“Well, that’s because there is knowing, and then there is knowing about knowing and then knowing in your body and well, many levels and dimensions of knowing.”

Well, that hooked him and off we went on a pretty intense conversation for the next five minutes. Part of what I shared with him are the following seven distinctions about “knowing.” Here’s to your knowing, to your knowing about your knowing (your meta-knowing) and your knowing holistically in every dimension.

As you know we now live in “the information age.” We entered into that age sometime in the mid-twentieth century. Since then information has been increasing at exponential rates and continues to. With the world-wide web, information has exploded via the internet. Information is not only growing at incredible rates, the inter-change of information is taking it levels previously unimagined. Now what once would have taken weeks or even months of study and research to find now takes moments at a keyboard and Google or other search engines.

Yet *information* isn’t our biggest need, more than that we need *knowledge*. Nor is that our biggest need, more than that we need *wisdom*. A dictionary is full of information, has very little knowledge, and absolutely no wisdom at all. “Knowledge” arises from the way we put information together and use it. Knowledge emerges from the structures that form and mold the data so that we can now “know” something in a given domain.

Actually, in terms of getting things done, in terms of taking effective action, in terms of using data for improving performance or moving it to the level of experience, information itself is often the

problem. Information itself can become a significant contributing problem to getting things done. How often do we may think that the solution to our problems, to releasing our current potential, to experiencing more effectiveness, is more information. Another book. Another training.

The actual problem may be *information incompetence*. That's because knowing more without knowing *what to do with that information* leaves you helpless. At that point, you are only one step beyond ignorance. Actually this is a form of information incompetence. Knowing more without the ability to translate that knowledge into action leaves you *knowing-what*, but not *knowing-how*. And that can actually create confusion in you. *Confusion*, after all, refers to the *fusing together* ("con") of things that need to be distinguished. You "know" something and confuse the knowing of some particular *what* with the practical knowledge of *how* to implement and how to execute.

If there is such a thing as information incompetence, then is there an opposite? What is it? Is it possible to develop *information competence*? Is it possible to expand your "knowing" to other dimensions to make it more holistic? How do you develop that? What does that involve?

### **1) Distinctions of Relevance**

This is the awareness of what information is needed and relevant. With anything and everything there's lots of information that is simply irrelevant. There is information that doesn't make any difference and that only clutters up your desk and your mind. In the area that you're working with, what distinction/s do you need to order and structure the information? What patterns and categories will help classify the information? What is relevant? How do you know? What criteria are you using to make that determination?

### **2) Accuracy**

This refers to the quality of the information that you experience and it comes in many different degrees. Is the information accurate? How accurate? How distorted? Distorted in what way and to what degree? How much accuracy do you need? How much looseness of information can you tolerate? Since information like other things is always changing, how current is your information? What is new or different with the information that you're using and relying upon?

### **3) Contexts**

Context refers to the environments and places where you will use the information. Information is relevant and accurate according to various contexts. In what context do you need information? What information do you need in that context? For what purpose?

### **4) Know-how knowledge**

Some information is about content, other is about practice and application. *Know-how* knowledge is information regarding how-to apply the information to a specific situation and in a specific application. What know-how information do you need? How much of that know-how knowledge do you already have? What strategy do you already know? What information is missing that you need? What know-how knowledge would you like

to have that would make a transformative difference?

### **5) Embodiment**

We usually call the information that's we have in our head "intellectual" knowledge. It is the *know-about* information that we learn academically. When you develop the ability to translate what you know in your mind into muscle memory, you close the knowing-doing gap. You then transform the information into intuitive knowledge so that you know it in your neuro-pathways and can *perform* the knowledge. Now your body "knows."

### **6) Implementation**

Once you translate information into your muscles for muscle memory, now you have the ability to apply that information. You can now execute what you know and close the knowing-doing gap by taking appropriate and effective action. You now *actualize* the information in your everyday actions.

### **7) Monitoring**

Implementation is not the end of the story. The next step is to monitor the information that you have applied to see how well it works out. Is the information effectively translated into action? How well? What's missing? How are you monitoring it? What feedback mechanisms are in place to hold you accountable for the effective actions? When do you check it out? How often? With such monitoring, you can then continually refine and hone the information, keep revising it, and develop a continuous improvement loop or kaizen.

Since all of this refers to a core capacity—that of *information competence*, then how competent are you in turning information into knowledge and perhaps even wisdom? How skilled are you with taking the information that comes your way via television, radio, internet, books, magazines, conversations, and so on and competently *use, apply, embody, implement* and *monitor* that information? How much more would you like to be? For translating mind into muscle, meaning into performance, check out the newest book in the Meta-Coach series, *Achieving Peak Performance* (\$25 plus shipping).

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #37**  
**August 17, 2009**

## **SELF-ACTUALIZATION IS NOT ABOUT YOU!**

Of all the misunderstandings about self-actualization, the fact that because self-actualization begins with the preface “self,” has triggered some people to jump to the false conclusion that it must refer to or mean self-focus, self-absorption, and self-centeredness. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that self-actualization is not *about* you; it is *through* you.

Now therapy is *about* you. Consulting is *about* you, so is training, hypnosis, and the beginning of coaching. But effective coaching quickly moves beyond a focus on the self as it moves into self-actualization. And when it does that, it is no longer about you. It is *beyond* you to *what* you can actualize—*what* you make real in the world that contributes to others, that makes a difference.

The other helping professions is about you precisely because it addresses your inadequacies, deficiencies, lack, and what you need in order to solve your problems. We go to therapy for healing from the past, the development of ego-strength, and the reordering of personality powers that have been distorted. We go for training, consulting, etc. in order to learn what we need to learn to get on with our lives. And for the same purpose we begin coaching.

*But if and when we self-actualize, we get beyond ourselves.* Maslow defined the self-actualizing life as “transcending self,” as having “peak experience” moments when we sense the larger world, and the world of meaning. He said it requires a social context. Individual self-actualization is always and inevitably social. It always involves other people.

The higher needs requires others. This stands in contrast to the lower needs in the hierarchy of needs. Once you know how to cope with the lowers needs, you can *survive* by attaining the food and water you need, sleeping, etc. You can *ensure your own safety and security* by learning how to protect yourself and keep yourself safe. The exception, of course, is the social needs and yet even with the need for *love and affection*, while you need others to provide that, it is *about you*—it is about you being loved, being connected to other people, you being a part of a community.

Deficiency speaks about what *you* need and so the lower needs are all about you. Abundance is the difference that creates the different motivational nature of the higher needs. Unlike the lower needs where gratification makes the need disappear, the drive does not go away with the gratification of the higher needs. It grows. It becomes stronger. The more beauty you create, the more beauty you can create and need to create. So also with music, meaning, justice, etc.

The drive grows stronger and more compelling. That's because when you actualize your highest values and meanings and your best skills and competencies, it is not about you, it is your contribution and gift to others— a contribution that comes through you.

Now you know why *there are no self-actualizing hermits*. The hermit life is about the self. Yet as a social creature we first *need* others to become human, to enter into the human community, and to learn how to meet our needs. As social creatures also, when we move to the highest human needs—the self-actualization needs—we also need others. But with a difference. We need them *not* to gratify our drives, we need them to be the receivers of our gifts. We need them to love, to enrich, to contribute to, to offer the gifts of the *being*-values (justice, order, goodness, wholeness, aliveness, playfulness, contribution, excellence, etc.).

This is where inter-dependency enters. For human beings to accomplish great things inevitably requires inter-dependent actions. And that means it requires a community and that explains why we can have self-actualizing families, companies, groups, corporations, and even nations. So self-actualizing leaders and managers are self-actualizing to the extent that they are not self-absorbed or self-serving. If a person is a self-actualizing leader, it is *not* about him or her— it is about the vision that the leader is rallying a group of people to and the journey where the leader is taking them.

I wish we had a better term in English for self-actualization, a term that would indicate the complete realizing and making real of a person's full potentials for being the best version of him or her. Until we find or create such a term, we will have to keep clarifying what self-actualization meant for Maslow who introduced the term as the highest motivation drive— making your highest values and best performances real.

The transcendence inherent in a self-actualizing life means that you discover a purpose for your life beyond mere self-serving materialism. And that's also why a self-actualizing leader and manager in a self-actualizing company is not a self-serving person but a person serving the larger good.

Hey, someone ought to write a book about Self-Actualizing Leaders and Companies! Oh, yes, I did – and yes, the book will be available August 25.

**Unleashing Leadership: Self-Actualizing Leaders and Companies**  
**Volume VI — Meta-Coaching — \$25 plus shipping**

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**

## SELF-ACTUALIZATION IN BUSINESSES

In the past month I have been with hundreds of business people— leaders, managers, and employees. I have been with them in business meetings and in trainings within organizations. And while no one has asked the following questions in exactly these words, I find that when many people first heard the words “self-actualization” and business, they have certain questions about that:

“What does self-actualization have to do with business? Are you mixing oil and water? Work is about products and services, what does it have to do with self-actualization? Should people take care of that outside of work? And what about those who aren’t interested in self-actualization?”

The answer is that *self-actualization has everything to do with business because business is what people do and it is what people do through people*. So the quality of the people, the level of motivation at which they live, their intentions in their visions and missions, the values the company expresses, the culture that governs the organization—all of these are reflections of the development level of the people involved. And therefore the development level of the company.

Because self-actualization refers to people being at their best, unleashing their potentials, fulfilling what is richly meaningful, contributing *being-values* (order, beauty, excellence, goodness, quality, etc.) businesses thrive when leaders, managers, and employees are self-actualizing people. And conversely, when you have the opposite— fearful, rigid, non-creative, self-absorbed, self-serving leaders, managers, and people—business will suffer. These are the things that make business a jungle. There will be unethical competition, lying, cheating, stealing, and every other thing that makes business ugly. And that sabotage the business. These are the things that cause businesses to go bankrupt and CEO to be handcuffed and led off to prison.

*The quality of business depends on the quality of people*. The quality of the products and services we create in our businesses depends on the quality of the leaders, managers, and employees. And that’s why it begins with self-actualizing leaders who set a vision for a more human and humane organization. It begins with self-actualizing leaders who begin with the right psychology— Self-Actualization Psychology.

When we get our psychology right, then we can make leadership and management right. Maslow argued for this 70 years ago and McGregor put it into the language of Theory X and Theory Y of management. And while you may think that this is “old stuff,” it is only in terms of what we know. But in terms of practice— it is absolutely new and revolutionary! That’s because to effectively lead and work with people we have to know what drives them and how they effectively

gratify those drives. In Neuro-Semantics, that's where we have extended Maslow's hierarchy of needs in our *Matrix Embedded Volcano*.

What does that mean? It means that we humans do not merely have *drives* that motivate us, but our driving needs are informed by the meanings that we create about those impulses. That's why every single one of us have different experiences with the same driving needs within us. It all depends on how you think about, represent, belief, frame, decide, etc. about your needs. How you frame (or meta-state) your needs and what you understand about gratifying them transform them into healthy motivational energy or neurotic motivational energies. This is what Neuro-Semantic NLP uniquely offers to leadership and business development today.

Now you can discover why and how any person can distort his or her drives and end up psycho-eating, psycho-spending, psycho-sexing, psycho-securing, psycho-approval-seeking, etc. And when that happens, the *need* has you. The need distorts life. And the pseudo-coping skills cause you to become stuck at that level of need and unable to move up to the self-actualization needs.

Businesses work best when people are actualizing their highest meanings and values and making real their best potentials. Companies need people who are able to tap their human capital of intelligence and creativity. They need people living above the Jungle Needs (the first four levels of the hierarchy of needs)— people who live in the highest self-actualization needs. Firms need leaders who can lead people to new visions of possibilities, managers who can empower and coach people to bring out their best, and people who enjoy fully engaging their best efforts in creating valuable products and services. Such companies are self-actualizing companies.

The inescapable fact is this: *People at work in every role are still human beings*. We don't leave our humanness when we enter the front door of the office or the factory. Inside the business people are still driven by their needs and those needs are informed by their meanings and understandings. And the level at which they live and work determine the quality of their lives as well the health or sickness they bring to all their actions and relationships. Does a person live at the survival level? Then that person probably won't attend to safety concerns. Does a person feel unsafe and need security? Then that person will not likely to give much energy to how he or she treats others and feels connected. Does a person live at the social need level (love and affection)? Then that person will be unlikely to treat himself with dignity and worth.

It is only the person living at the level of the self-actualization drives and needs that's able to get the ego out of the way and effectively contribute without being self-absorbed. It is only when a firm has self-actualizing leaders and employees that people get beyond the deficiency needs that a firm can be organized in a way that makes the culture human.

### ***Post Script***

I'm please to announce that the book — *Unleashing Leadership: Self-Actualizing Leaders and Companies* has now been published and is available. It is 280 pages and \$25. I will be sending a follow up post to this one – giving details on how to order it.

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #39**  
**August 31, 2009**

## **WHEN CEOs ATTEND META-COACHING**

From the very beginning of Meta-Coach Training, we have had top leaders attend the trainings. We have had CEOs, Senior Managers, Entrepreneurs, and Business Owners. From Corporations and big Organizations, I think we have had more CEOs and people from senior management from Mexico attend Meta-Coaching *Coaching Mastery* (Module III) than from any other country. But that's because Omar Salom, as an Executive Coach in numerous multi-national corporations, has made executive development his central focus and niche and so they come for that.

When Michelle and I first took Meta-Coaching to South Africa, we had several CEOs present, two from First Rand bank and they were so impressed with the Matrix Business Plan and other features, that we later took Meta-Coaching into First Rand as the Internal Meta-Coach Training for 55 managers.

But why? Why have so many top business leaders including CEOs of major organizations attend Meta-Coaching? What do they get out of it? And why should CEOs continue to attend the modules of Meta-Coaching---- *Coaching Essentials (I)*, *Coaching Genius (II)* and *Coaching Mastery (III)*?

There are many answers. The first answer is that the best leaders use coaching as their methodology for leading and empowering people. This is what I've detailed in the book that has just been published, *Unleashing Leadership: Self-Actualizing Leaders and Companies*. If that's surprising, and it was to me when I first realized it, then consider what a true leader does and what effective leadership is actually about. It is about a vision of a future which the leader sees and passionately wants and which corresponds to what truly fits for people and which the leader then communicates in an inspiring way. In other words, leaders must first and foremost *inspire a vision of a compelling future*.

And surprising, or not so surprising, that's also one of the prime skills of a world-class coach and one of the basic skills of coaching. So the Coach, as an Awakener, asks, "What do you want? What really excites you and calls for your best?" The second skill is that of empowering people to actualize the vision. Vision without the power to achieve it is futile. So among the critical skills of an effective leader is the ability to enable, equip, and empower people by unleashing their potentials. And that's also the very methodology of a coach who specializes in unleashing the potentials of clients.

In short, the very skills of leadership are also the processes of coaching. The best skills of an effective leader is best developed and expanded by coaching methodology. So to inspire people, communicate effectively with both precision and inspiration, to give sensory-based feedback for performance enhancement, to call for the highest and best potentials to be actualized, to set up structures that make that possible—all of these are also the specific skills in Meta-Coaching.

Further, because a leader is, by definition, a change agent, someone who sees the coming changes in the markets, in the culture, and in the world and who then has the ability to facilitate cultural changes in organization and groups of people as they prepare people for that change, *leaders need change skills*. And, as it so happens to be, so do professional Coaches. And since both work primarily with psychologically healthy people, not people needing therapy, they need a model that enables them to work effectively with regular people for the purpose of developmental and transformational change. And in Meta-Coaching, this is where the Axes of Change model comes in. As the only explicit non-therapeutic Change Model, the *Axes of Change* is the model used exclusively in Meta-Coaching.

For leaders who want to be effective in their communities, organizations, and/or firms, Meta-Coaching represents *advanced training in communication*. In fact, for Leaders who may not be interested in a “Coach” Certificate, we provide another one—a Professional Communicator certificate. This is where Modules I and II of Meta-Coaching play such an incredible role—using NLP and Meta-States. The first one (NLP) provides the most cutting-edge Communication Model around and the second one (Meta-States) provides a model for the unique kind of consciousness that humans have—self-reflexive consciousness. This allows you to professionally get to the thoughts and feelings “in the back of the mind” and delve deeply into the overarching frames that govern a person’s “reality.”

All of these models and processes in Meta-Coaching enables a Leader to learn the art of personal influence and persuasion and in a context of ethical accountability. The way we use the Matrix Model in Meta-Coaching empowers a leader to be able to think and work systemically with the inter-dependent nature of an organization. The Benchmarking Model empowers the leader to figure out ways to measure the progress of intangible factors, especially the people factors in an organization. And the Facilitation Model enables the leader to truly *facilitate* the communications and actions between key people.

Finally, the Meaning/ Performance Axes of the Self-Actualization Quadrants puts the spotlight on how both individuals *and organizations* can actualize their highest and best. That means enabling Companies and Organizations to gain the full *engagement* of their people. What other Coach Training can do all of that? I know of none and proudly present *the Meta-Coach Training System* as the most cutting-edge, creative, empowering, and effective one of all. Yes, that’s a big statement, boldly audacious, and yet one that we keep seeing and finding everywhere around the world. Of course, the decision is yours— if you have not been to the *Coaching Mastery Bootcamp*— I’m so convinced that if you are not convinced, then here’s my invitation for you to come for a Day and try it out! See for yourself. If you’re not convinced, you will be the first in the world!

From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.  
Meta Reflections #40  
Sept. 7, 2009

## SELF-ACTUALIZATION— Hard or Easy; Natural or Supernatural?

Last week I got a call from a person in a highly agitated state who was quite frustrated:

“Self-actualization is just too much, too hard. It’s stress me out. How can I be a Self-Actualization Coach if I can’t actualize my own potentials?”

This call came from someone who had *not* been to any of the Self-Actualization Workshops otherwise she would not have framed things in that way. She would not have framed self-actualization as an either/or choice or made it a thing rather than a process. Anyway, apart from those cognitive distortions, the source of her stress was another one— she had semantically loaded the meaning of “self-actualization” and thereby over-exaggerated it so that it became far too much and far too big to reach. And that was the direction I immediately explored with her.

“So what do you think *self-actualization* is? When you say that you can’t actualize your own potentials, is there a particular potential that you are wanting to actualize but having difficulties with?”

Actually, I have noticed this in several people. The way they think about self-actualization is that it is something *more* than human, something *beyond* the everyday human experience. Yet it is not. The term *self-actualization* is actually a modest term. From the perspective of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, it is simply your higher needs—needs for that which is uniquely human: meaning, music, order, structure, contribution, giving love, fairness, excellence, etc. And just as the lower needs arise biologically as an innate and organic facet of your growth and development, so do your higher needs.

It’s for these reasons that we don’t have to elevate them to make them sound like something *more* than a person. Self-actualization doesn’t refer to something mystical or extraordinary. In fact, Maslow said that self-actualization is not a human being *with something added*. No. *Self-actualization is a human being with nothing taken away*.

When you begin living the self-actualizing life, you are simply being true to yourself—to your nature, to human nature, to your gifts and talents, and to your highest and best. You don’t need to glorify self-actualization as if it is just for the few; it is for everyone. Every baby is wired biologically to grow, to develop, and to actualize what is potential. Now it is true that most people have it beaten out of them by parents and teachers who skipped “Human Needs 101,” or

dampened by the way they are socialized, it is a possibility for all. And while it does have to be chosen and purposefully developed, it is for anyone who so chooses and acts.

I like to think about self-actualization as seeking to *fully and completely be* what you are capable of being. It is seeking to be fully alive, fully human. And yes, I do acknowledge that numerous forces and factors make this difficult. There are educational, cultural, religious, psychological, and political ideas and beliefs that divert us from this and would seduce us to be something else.

For human beings, *being fully human* is the challenge of our lives! Why? Because that means embracing our fallibility (we can be and often are wrong), our mortality (we are not immortals, we are mortals who are subject to accidents and illness and who can die at any time), and our spirituality (we need meaning to live and without significant meaning we lose heart and become dis-spirited). And knowing these things (that we are often wrong, we shall die, and we need meaning) requires a lot of ego-strength. Otherwise it activates defense mechanisms against that awareness. It activates denial and rejection. It looks to find something or someone who will save us from these frightening realities.

So instead of being fully fallibly and mortally human— we seek out all kinds of ways of hiding from the truth. We pretend that we perfect, above criticism, loved by all, approved by all, saved by knowledge, saved by religion, saved by money, saved by popularity, saved by atheism, etc.

It is tough being an authentic human being. Why? Primarily because being real or authentic feels vulnerable. When you are authentically really, you are authentically aware of being fallible, mortal, and spiritual. And that goes against almost everything you learn in being socialized. Our cultures teach us to be strong, knowledgeable, on top, successful! To acknowledge that there's things we don't know, things about which we're often wrong, that we make mistakes, misunderstand, misbelieve, mis-speak, misbehave, etc. violates our Self-Image and Social-Image.

Living the self-actualizing life is both easy and hard. It is easy in that you were born for it! It fits your inner nature. It brings out your highest values and visions about life and your best skills and competencies. But it is also hard. It requires that you know yourself, accept both your strengths and weaknesses, embrace your humanity, use your fallibility for ongoing learning and adjustments, and not get lost in your roles, personas, and social images. And that's why a commitment to truth— to reality, to being authentic lies at the heart of actualizing. Is it any surprise that truth lies at the heart of the Crucible Change Model?

When we ended the call, the lady had a new vision of self-actualization— it is not some big, mysterious thing, it is being an authentic human being. It is starting right now by facing the truth and then living that truth. It is creating meaning that you can live by— meaning that will inspire you to be a more compassion and real human being and then actualizing that in the way you live your life.

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #41**  
**Sept. 14, 2009**  
**The Fifth Discipline and Self-Actualization #1**

## **THE FIFTH DISCIPLINE AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION PSYCHOLOGY**

In 1990 Peter Senge published a book that has become a classic, a book that most people in leadership and management roles in business, most who consult or coach within organizations, and those who seek to stay on the cutting edge of business have read. I'm speaking, of course, about the book *The Fifth Discipline*. The theme and central focus of this book is on learning to think and work systemically.

Senge was convinced that the key to business success rested in five disciplines, which when synergized by leaders and managers, will launch an organization or business into a creative mode and take it to a whole new level of effectiveness. Like the five critical component technologies that came together in 1935 for the McDonnell Douglas DC-3 and which ushered in the era of commercial air travel— Senge argued that the five components he discovered would create *great companies*.

What are those five components? Systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning. Together “each provides a vital dimension in building organizations that can truly ‘learn,’ that can continually enhance their capacity to realize their highest aspirations” (p. 6). Then unlike most contemporary organizations that are reactive, companies can become responsive or even generative.

Now my first reading of *The Fifth Discipline* was in early 1993, and while I reread it again in 1999 for the “Business Genius” trainings, when I began my research on Self-Actualization Companies, I didn't even think about Senge's book. Then recently something reminded me of the book. So I re-read it again— but this time with the eyes and mind of self-actualization psychology. And in doing so I have discovered several fascinating things.

Senge focuses on enabling companies to become “learning organizations.” He writes about organizations going beyond the old traditional hierarchical structures to an enlivening vision, people collaborating and experiencing team learning, a whole new level of openness, and leadership that evolves beyond being politically power oriented. Now does that sound like self-actualization or the self-actualizing leaders and companies that I describe in *Unleashing*

*Leadership?* That's what I also thought! *The Fifth Discipline* is about self-actualization in organizations.

Yet because Senge did not use the term self-actualization or frame things in terms of moving beyond Theory X to Theory Y of management, I did not make the connection. In spite of not using the language, throughout the work *the vision and premises of self-actualization psychology informs his argument for the emergence of a whole new kind of organization— self-actualizing organizations*.

In fact, for Senge “systems thinking” and “personal mastery” are two of his expressions for self-actualization. What I suddenly now realize in re-reading *The Fifth Discipline* is that “personal mastery” in this model *is* what we call “self-actualization” in Maslow’s model! Here’s my evidence.

Senge described “personal mastery” as a high level of proficiency in an area that deeply matters to you. And to develop that level of mastery, you need to do two things: 1) Clarify what’s truly important to you and 2) See current reality more clearly. (p. 141). Senge says that personal mastery goes beyond competence.

“It goes beyond spiritual unfolding or opening, although it requires spiritual growth. It means approaching one’s life as a creative work, living life from a creative as opposed to reactive viewpoint.” (p. 141)

In an amazing paragraph where he described people of personal mastery, Senge’s description sounds very, very similar to how Maslow described self-actualizing people.

“People with a high level of personal mastery share several basic characteristics. They have a special sense of purpose that lies behind their visions and goals. *For such a person, a vision is a calling rather than simply a good idea.* They see ‘current reality’ as an ally, not an enemy. They have learned how to perceive and work with forces of change rather than resist those forces. They are deeply inquisitive, committed to continuing seeing reality more and more accurately. They feel connected to others and to life itself. Yet they sacrifice none of their uniqueness. They feel as if they are part of a larger creative process, which they can influence but cannot unilaterally control.

“People with a high level of personal mastery live in a continual learning mode. They never ‘arrive.’ ... Personal mastery is not something you possess. It is a process. It is a lifelong discipline. People with a high level of personal mastery are acutely aware of their ignorance, their incompetence, their growth areas.” (p. 142)

“People with high levels of personal mastery are more committed. They take more initiative. They have a broader and deeper sense of responsibility in their work. They learn faster. For all these reasons, a great many organizations espouse a commitment to fostering personal growth among their employees because they believe it will make the organization stronger.” (p. 143)

And systems thinking? Senge describes this as “contemplating the whole as a pattern,” being able to see the unity of snapshots of isolated parts and how they work together. He describes the building blocks of systems thinking as feedback loops and delays in the system and from there the recognition of patterns that arise that indicate specific kinds of systems (archetypes).

When we apply systems thinking to human beings, we recognize that our experiences are made up of multiple systems—our mind-body system, our meaning-making system, our neuro-semantic system. And within these systems are reinforcing processes, limiting processes, balancing (stabilizing) processes. And as in a business or political system, we also experience problems at various levels. Some of our problems are mere symptoms of the system rather than the fundamental causes. That’s why the symptoms keep resurfacing over time. That’s why “solutions” which work at one level or for the short-term, never actually takes care of the real problem.

So what do we discover when we “contemplate the whole” and look for patterns in human beings? We discover that there is within us an inner drive to self-actualize and that this is itself our most fundamental inner dynamic system. This is our primary system for growing, developing, and actualizing our highest meanings and performances. And Self-Actualization Psychology is the psychology that describes this whole.

From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.  
Meta Reflections #42  
Sept. 21, 2009  
The Fifth Discipline and Self-Actualization #2

## THE FIFTH DISCIPLINE THROUGH THE EYES OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION

For author Peter Senge (1999) “personal mastery” describes what we in Neuro-Semantics and Meta-Coaching call “self-actualization.” I described that in the last Meta Reflection (#39). So with regard to this, Senge asks this question: “If a leader is intent on fostering ‘personal mastery,’ what can a leader do?” As you look at his answer, notice how it is all about creating a self-actualization culture in the business.

“They can work relentlessly to foster a climate in which the principles of personal mastery are practiced in daily life. That means building an organization where it is safe for people to create visions, where inquiry and commitment to the truth are the norm, and where challenging the status quo is expected— especially when the status quo includes obscuring aspects of current reality that people seek to avoid.” (p. 172)

But there’s a problem with this. The problem is that of needy leaders (not self-actualizing leaders). The problem is that of leaders needing approval, power, status and all of the other values and gratifications of the lower needs. So Senge, quoting from Robert Swiggett, retired CEO of the Kollmorgen Corporation, includes this quotation about “power” as an interference to creating a self-actualizing culture:

“In moving from the traditional authoritarian, hierarchical organization to a locally controlled organization, the single greatest issue is control. Beyond money, beyond fame, what drives most executives of traditional organizations is power, the desire to be in control. Most would rather give up anything than control.” (p. 290)

While this is a problem for leaders living at the lower needs, it is not a problem for self-actualizing leaders. Leaders who live at the level of self-actualizing see “power” not in terms of power *over* others, but power *with* others. Real power is not dictator orders or micro-managing the actions of others. Authentic power *enables* others to work together toward a common objective and *equips* people for making that happen as a collaborative effort. Authentic power is being able to achieve one’s objectives through and with others.

What energizes a leader to persist is truly believing in the self-actualization vision. And specifically, they believe in pushing power and decision-making to the contact points— the points where “the company” (e.g., the front people) meet the customers.

“Unless they believe that the quality of learning, the ability to adapt, the excitement and enthusiasm, and the human growth fostered by localness are worth the risk, they are unlikely every to *choose* to build a locally controlled organization. That is why localness is unlikely to endure unless it is an aspect of the organization’s vision.” (p. 291)

If “localness” is a new or strange word for you, it is the word Senge uses to refer to pushing decision-making, “control,” and power down the levels in the organization to where the action is, to where the people who implement the vision or provide the service works.

“Localness means unleashing people’s commitment by giving them the freedom to act, to try out their own ideas and be responsible for producing results.”

“People learn most rapidly when they have a genuine sense of responsibility for their actions. Helplessness, the belief that we cannot influence the circumstances under which we live, undermines the incentive to learn, as does the belief that someone somewhere else dictates our actions. Conversely, if we know our fate is in our hands, our learning matters.” (p. 287)

So again, while Senge does not use the term “self-Actualization,” he does constantly refer to the values and premises of self-actualization, especially about supporting the full development of people.

“Learning organizations enter into a new compact ... with its members. The essence of this compact is the organization’s commitment to support the full development of each employee, and the person’s reciprocal commitment to the organization.” (p. 311)

And why do they do it? Self-actualizing leaders do it because of who they are—they gain a deep satisfaction in empowering others and being part of an organization capable of producing results that people truly care about.

So here we have Peter Senge, back in 1990, writing about Self-Actualizing Leaders and Companies even though he did not use that terminology. As a comparison between what Senge presented and what we have in Self-Actualization Psychology — the hidden psychology of NLP and the explicit psychology of Neuro-Semantics and Meta-Coaching, here is a summary:

### ***The Fifth Discipline Model***

#### ***1) Systems thinking***

Contemplate the whole as a pattern.  
Unity of snapshots of isolated parts.  
Recognizing, understanding, and using systems language including archetypes.  
Find leverage points in the system.

#### ***2) “Personal Mastery”***

High level proficiency in a given area that deeply matters to you. Developed as

### ***Self-Actualization***

#### ***1) Holistic thinking***

Transcending the elementalism of mapping things as parts, seeing mind-body as a system within systems, seeing the whole, and inter-relationships.  
Finding leverage points in the Matrix system.

#### ***2) Self-Mastery***

Unleashing your highest meanings and values and developing your best talents. Stepping

you clarify what's important to you and see current reality more clearly. Continually expanding your ability to create the results you want. Viewing life from a creative viewpoint rather than reactive. Use creative tension to energize activities.

### 3) *Mental Maps*

Assumptions in understanding the world. Using learning conversations to bring key assumptions to the surface. Developing generative learning through reflection and inquiry to articulate your thinking. Using "Left Hand" column to identify what you're thinking but not saying. Distinguishing "data" from assumptions and theories.

### 4) *Building Shared Vision*

Holding shared picture of the future that people care about, using the skill of envisioning, Inspiring vision that focuses energy. The vision must be personal, must emerge from participation. Choosing to enroll due to belief that we can truly shape our future. Acknowledging current reality. Deep listening to each other.

### 5) *Team Learning*

Using of dialogue for allowing meaning to flow through the conversation of inquiry and advocacy. Creating an aligned team. Developing team learning. Observing our own thinking by suspending assumptions. Enabling conflict to become productive. Creating safety for suspending defensive routines.

into the zone or "flow" state (the genius state). Actualizing your real authentic self. Being unleashed *from* interferences and unleashed *to* possibilities. Skilling-up for ever-new levels of competency and expertise. Identifying and developing your innate powers for personal empowerment.

### 3) *Meaning — Meaningfulness*

Your meaning-making power through meta-stating to set frames. Using meta-questions to explore the meta-levels of frames in the matrix of the mind. Using meta-cognitive skills to reflect and think about your thinking, identify cognitive distortions, and make thinking explicit. Distinguishing sensory-based and evaluative-based information.

### 4) *The Self-Actualization Vision*

Using the premises of self-actualization: people have a higher nature, are driven to meaning, responsibility, contribution, the *being*-values. Looking for the signs of a self-actualizing company: Engagement. Empowering for response-ability and accountability.

### 5) *Self-Actualization Cultures*

Designing companies and organizations for self-actualization values as values of the culture: participation, conversation, choice, empowerment, respect, colleagues, etc. Developing trust as the foundation for open communication.

From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.  
Meta Reflections #43  
Sept. 28, 2009  
The Fifth Discipline and Self-Actualization #3

## A SELF-ACTUALIZING LEADER SPEAKS OUT

While Peter Senge does not himself use the term self-actualization” in his book *The Fifth Discipline*, or even mention Maslow, what follows here is a long quotation in the book by a CEO who does. If there is one person that Senge quotes extensively throughout his book, it is Bill O’Brien, who was at that time the President and CEO of Hanover Insurance. In fact, Bill O’Brien not only mentions Maslow, speaks about the hierarchy of needs, self-actualization, but repeatedly through *the Fifth Discipline* described and argued for things that today we know as *the premises of Self-Actualization Psychology*. Here’s a sampling of quotes from O’Brien.

In speaking about the need for managers to redefine their job from the “old dogma of planning, organizing, and controlling,” he says they must realize “the almost sacredness of their responsibility for the lives of so many people. Managers’ fundamental task is “providing the enabling conditions for people to lead the most enriching lives they can.” (p. 140)

“The total development of our people is essential to achieving our goal of corporate excellence. ... we believe there is no fundamental tradeoff between the higher virtues in life and economic success. We believe we can have both. In fact, we believe that, over the long term, the more we practice the higher virtues of life, the more economic success we will have.”

“The ferment in management will continue until we build organizations that are more consistent with man’s *higher aspirations* beyond food, shelter, and belonging.” (p. 5)

He says that people with high levels of personal mastery are more committed. They take more initiative. They have a broader and deeper sense of responsibility for their work (p. 143).

“In the type of organization we seek to build, the fullest development of people is on an equal plane with financial success. This goes along with our most basic premise: that practicing the virtues of life and business success are not only compatible but enrich one another. This is a far cry from the traditional ‘morals of the marketplace.’” (p. 144)

“Early on we recognized that there is a burning need for people to feel part of an ennobling mission. If it is absent many will seek fulfillment only in outside interests instead of in their work. But we also discovered that stating a mission or purpose in words was not enough. ... people need visions to make the purpose more concrete and tangible.” (p. 224)

Finally there is a long passage from O'Brien. I invite you to read the following knowing what you now know about Self-Actualization Psychology and notice if this is not a great quote from a leader who thinks in terms of self-actualization.

“Our traditional organizations are designed to provide for the first three levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs: food, shelter, and belonging. Since these are now widely available to members of industrial society, our organizations do not provide significantly unique opportunities to command the loyalty and commitment of our people. The ferment in management will continue until organizations begin to address the higher order needs: self-respect and self-actualization.” [Aim for the higher needs, “seek the peak” to create loyalty and commitment.]

“This is the quest we at Hanover have been on for almost twenty years now— to discover the guiding principles, design, and tools needed to build organizations more consistent with human nature.” [The principles of self-actualization that accord with the best in human nature.]

“We weren’t focused on organization learning initially. We set out to identify and eliminate the diseases that afflict hierarchical organizations and make them inconsistent with *the higher aspects of human nature*.” [First, release the interferences to unleashing the highest potentials.]

“All of this was based on certain beliefs about people, as are all forms of organization. If you believe that people are most concerned with getting along and putting together coalitions to wield power, that’s a political environment. If you believe that once you’re on top the secret is staying on top, that’s a bureaucratic environment. If you believe, as we did, that there’s *an enormous reservoir of untapped potential in people* that can be channeled more productively than it is, you try to build a value-based, vision-driven environment.” [Beliefs about people create the organization’s culture— a self-actualizing culture is value-based and vision driven about the potentials in their people.]

“Now, I think that the human being has a deep drive to learning. So, as you create organizations that are more in line with human nature, you are building learning organizations. So, although we started in a different place, we ended up in the same place.”

At that point Senge asked a question about the timeliness of a self-actualizing company to today’s world (well, the world in 1987): “Why do you think that organizations more consistent with human nature are timely?”

“My personal view is that this has to do with the evolution of consciousness. Mankind’s nature is to ascend to greater awareness of our place in the natural order— yet, everywhere we look we see society in a terrible mess of self-centeredness, greed, and nearsightedness. In modern society, business has the greatest potential to offer a different way of operating. The potential of business to contribute toward dealing with a broad range of society’s problems is enormous. But we must show the way by example not by

moralizing. We must learn how to harness the commitment of our people— then our commitment to building a better world will have some meaning.” (pp. 347-348) [This is what Maslow discovered in 1960 and is even more timely today— we build self-actualizing companies to build a better world.]

I'll end with this quotation from Peter Senge himself:

“I believe our fundamental challenge is tapping the intellectual capacity of people at all levels, both as individuals and as groups. To truly engage everyone— that’s the untapped potential in modern corporations. This leads me to the notion of an organization as a learning organism.” (p. 350)

So while Senge calls it a “learning organization,” we call it a *self-actualizing organization* in Neuro-Semantics which I will address more in the next Meta Reflection. And you can read all about such in *Unleashing Leadership* (2009, \$25) as well as in *Self-Actualization Psychology* (2008, \$25), and you can learn all about it in the new trainings called — Unleashing Leadership.

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #44**  
**Oct. 5, 2009**  
**The Fifth Discipline and Self-Actualization #4**

## **LEARNING— A KEY SELF-ACTUALIZATION FACTOR**

In 1990, when Peter Senge wrote *The Fifth Discipline* he was looking to identify a frame or key factor for effective and successful organizations. He came up with five— which he then categorized as the five disciplines: systemic thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning. Like many before and after him, he knew that organizations had to change from the command-and-control model of authoritarian leadership, from the rigid, hierarchical, and controlling models of the past. And his solution was to create *the learning organization*. For him this meant an organization with people growing, thinking systemically, able to change their mental models, and even learn together through dialogue.

So in *The Fifth Discipline* when you read the term “learning” as in “learning organization” and “team learning,” this was his solution for the “learning disabilities” of organizations. He wrote, “Learning disabilities are tragic in children, but they are fatal in organizations.” And he commented that these learning disabilities (what we call cognitive distortions) are crippling in companies. Senge’s proof was that one-third of firms in the Fortune 500 group in 1970 were gone by 1983.

More recently in the world-wide recession that emerged from the housing and banking problems in 2008, we have seen a great many organizations collapse. We have seen major corporations fold; we have seen executives handcuffed and led off to jail. We have seen millions lose their jobs. We have seen millions of investors losing fortunes. Something has gone wrong. But what? And what can we do about it?

In Senge’s perspective the problem lies in how the people in the organizations are unable to learn, to learn together, to change their frames, to call forth the best in people, and to live at a higher level. He framed all of this as entirely a *learning problem*. For him, the “learning dilemma” (p. 23) in organizations is due because the “learning horizon” is so short; leaders don’t think long-term to the consequences of their actions. They have too short and small of a horizon for their thinking. This is especially true of top executives who move on to another firm before the consequences of their actions reach fruition.

As I have noted in the previous Meta Reflections, in my re-reading of *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge

was talking about self-actualization and in focusing on systemic learning he identified one key facet of a self-actualizing leader and company. So as he argued that the competitive advantage in these times of accelerating change is learning faster than one's competitors, since passionate learning is a facet of self-actualization, *self-actualizing leaders, peoples, and companies is the competitive advantage today.*

Senge connects *learning* to *personal mastery*. It takes “personal mastery”—“the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively” (p. 5) to develop the learning power to keep discovering things and translating those things to reality. It takes this self-actualizing development of clarifying the things that really matter to us. Here's a comment from Senge that indicates that when he speaks about “learning” he is speaking about self-actualization:

“Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we re-perceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life. ... this is the basic meaning of a ‘learning organization’—an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future.” (p. 14)

Recently I became highly conscious of the problem with the word “learning.” It happened while I was attempting to explain the power and magic of “learning” to a group of leaders. I could sense the lack of enthusiasm for “learning.” “Learning, yes, we need to learn. Yawn. Yawn.”

Later as I reflected on the experience, it dawned on me that the problem is that the word “learning” has suffered from the inflation of being over-used. The word has lost its power, its impact, and its ummph! In contrast, when I present the Matrix-embedded-pyramid model that updates Maslow's work with the NLP-Neuro-Semantic Matrix within the pyramid of needs, people catch a vision of the absolute uniqueness of learning. Seeing that we are instinct-less and not-knowing how to be, how to cope, how to develop ... *the human instinct of learning, to wit, to construct meaning, to wit, to figure out things* via meaning-making— suddenly people discover just how powerful and magical “learning” actually is. And they become excited.

Animals just know; humans learn. Animals have the knowledge inside (in-stinct); humans get the information from without. Animals have very limited ability to add to their knowledge base; humans have unlimited learning capacity. The gap of not-knowing which our lack of instincts creates simultaneously opens up a space for learning— for the creativity of defining what something is, figuring out how it works, deciding on its value to us, constructing theories of understanding, inventing new levels of knowledge, entering the semantic and symbolic world, and experiencing all of the uniquely human constructs of culture and civilization.

In Neuro-Semantics we think about “learning” in terms of creativity— creating and inventing all of the levels of meaning that are available to human beings. We call this domain *The Construct* and *The Matrix* and it is there that we live and from which we operate. It is there that our learnings construct our sense of reality as we map-out our understandings. And in this way we

can create life as a heaven or hell. And it is this *Constructed Matrix* that can even change how we experience our fundamental physiological needs and drives. That's why it is a Matrix-embedded-pyramid of needs. So when you read Senge, you can now read his words about "learning" as indicating one of the key facets of the self-actualizing life and see how *The Fifth Discipline* has a lot to say about self-actualizing organizations.

Interested in Self-Actualizing Leaders and Companies — then meet me at one of our "Unleashing Leadership" trainings!

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #45**  
**Oct. 12, 2009**  
**The Fifth Discipline and Self-Actualization #5**

## **THINKING SYSTEMICALLY FOR ACTUALIZING YOUR HIGHEST AND BEST**

There's no more extensive theme in *The Fifth Discipline* by Peter Senge than *thinking systemically*. For Senge, this is the secret for enabling ourselves and our companies to overcome the learning disabilities of the cognitive distortions. Senge devotes Chapter 2 to "the learning disabilities" in which he lists some key cognitive distortions to systems thinking. To clean up those distortions and disabilities, he presents in Chapters 3 and 4 about how to use systems models for thinking and working systemically.

For Senge, to think systemically is to think structurally. It is to ask, "What is the structure?" And while that's challenging enough with static structures—blueprints for houses, planes, pipelines, etc., it is a hundred-fold more challenging when we seek to understand and model *dynamic structures*. This refers to those structures that move, that involve movement, life, growth, and change. Senge defines systemic thinking as seeing the whole, seeing the inter-relationships and connections, looking to the consequences, thinking in circles or spirals, and mapping out how multiple sets of variables influence each other over time.

Senge also stresses that oftentimes it is the system itself that creates troubles and problems in organizations, and equally a system can also make it easy to create solutions. In a complex living system—"structure" is how we *form and structure* our thinking, feeling, deciding, relating, which is based on how we structure/ form our premises, understandings, beliefs— how we *construct* the way we create meaning.

Regarding human systems like organizations and companies, there are many subtle influences. These hidden and subtle influences often arise from our beliefs and premises about ourselves and human nature. Then they are normed into rules and policies— standard operational procedures that become a "system" of control. In Neuro-Semantics we call these premises and beliefs— *frames*— frames that create limitations, instability, and sabotage. And the subtlety also arises from the fact that we are part of the system— we're inside and often cannot see the system itself.

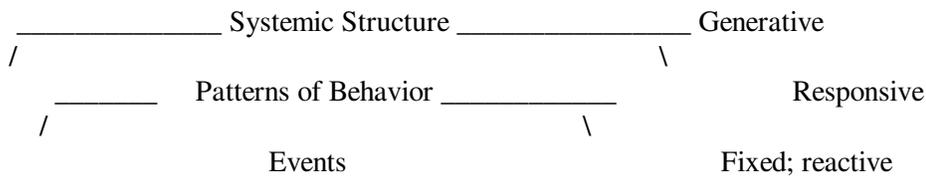
And of course, in Neuro-Semantics the most basic systems model that we use for coaching, training, and modeling is *The Matrix Model*. As a systems model, *the Matrix* enables us to see

the whole and the interconnectedness of our process and content information. It enables us to track our frames of mind and how they set up the governing factors for our emotions and responses. In Meta-Coach training, one of the “conversations” we teach is how to “follow the client’s energy” through his or her system. There are several skills involved in that. Central among them is learning to see and hear “frames” and bring them to a client’s awareness and to then invite the person’s self-reflexive mind to respond to it yet one more time.

When you can follow yours or another’s frames, thinking in circles or spirals, you can begin mapping out how the multiple sets of variables in the back of someone’s mind and how they influence each other. This will enable you to see how belief frames influence decision frames which influence understanding frames, which influence permission, expectations, identity, and so on. And this kind of systemic thinking and working plays a central role for anyone who wants to actualize his or her highest and best. It is essential for detecting our frames, getting leverage for change with those frames, and developing more empowering frames for unleashing potentials. All of this is very familiar for those who know the Meta-States and the Matrix Models.

What surprised me afresh was that Peter Senge actually created a meta-state like diagram, a diagram of meta-levels in *The Fifth Discipline* (p. 52).

**Levels of Focus**



If you start at the bottom of the diagram with “events” then we have three levels of focus and analysis.

1) *Event thinking*. This is thinking that is all about events— emotions, actions, etc. Here we make snapshots of things and create entities in our mind. Event thinking thingifies reality; that is, it creates *things* in our mental mapping that are actually processes, activities, and dynamic patterns of responses. This creates a false-to-fact static world that is not accurate, that is formulated by Either/Or thinking, and that creates a form of elementalism which breaks reality, problems, solutions, etc. into parts as if they are not a part of a system.

2) *Behavioral thinking*. At the level of “patterns of behavior” we move up to detect patterns. Here we ask, “What are the patterns?” Here we recognize patterns of instability and amplification, of boom and bust, and so on.

3) *Structural thinking*. To move up to the level above patterns of behavior thinking, we look for and distinguish the premises and presuppositions as the spoke or unspoken explanations. It is at this level we can now generate new possibilities and speak to the operating policies. And here we can learn to see the whole of a system and the inter-connections that make it live.

And all of that can enable you to work with human mind-body-emotion systems for actualizing potentials that emerge from the system as a whole.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #46**  
**October 14, 2009**

## **WHEN KIKIS META-COACH**

As you probably already know, this past week was the *Coaching Bootcamp of Coaching Mastery* in Auckland New Zealand and the fourth one in as many years. While it was technically “an international training” because at least 3 of us were from “somewhere else” on the planet (myself, Robert Were from Australia, and Wilkie Choi from Hong Kong), everybody else were from New Zealand. Not only that, but everybody with the exception of team leader and Neuro-Semantic trainer, Alan Fayter (from Christchurch) was Maori. And that created a very new and different experience— since we could say that Meta-Coaching was as much immersed in Maori culture and Maori culture was immersed in Neuro-Semantic culture.

Although, even as I write that, I think about the years that Colin Cox (Master Neuro-Semantic Trainer) and Lena Gray have been introducing Neuro-Semantics to Auckland and New Zealand ... certifying 200 to 300 people a year in APG (they call it “self-leadership,” which is Module II of Meta-Coaching, alias APG). They have been immersing people into the vision and mission of Neuro-Semantics. Anyway, it was a great experience and exceptionally transformational.

And when I say *exceptionally transformational*, that is not hype or over-statement. We saw many people making tremendous developmental changes mastering anger by meta-stating with awareness, acceptance, choice, respect, and so on— mastering fear, hesitation, poor health habits, etc. I was privileged to see one young lady develop a strategy and the frames for more robust states to handle some “crazymaking” by a mother-in-law that had been driving her to the bring of despair.

And it was *exceptionally transformational* outside of the sessions as well as within. That’s because a large portion of our group stayed at a Backpacker’s Hotel in the city, just a few blocks from the venue. And that was great, first of all, for the residential effect of the training— the collaboration, partnership, collegial relationships. Not to speak of the coaching that went on to 1 and 2 and 3 am most nights!

It was also great for the other inhabitants at the hotel! There were a lot of backpackers who got a lot of free coaching as our coaches-in-training were looking for people to practice on. And I’m sure the backpackers and later, some homeless people, heard a lot of strange language— “That’s your frame, bro! Have you had enough of that or do you need 5 more years before you step up to your potential?” And from what I hear, some of the backpackers even began to get use to the language. One Meta-Coach came back and reported that when he introduced himself (using his

Introduction of course!), the person said, “Hey, I’ve met other Meta-somethings around here.”

Actually we had a number of our group who were quite bold and outrageous— practicing their Introductions — “Hi, my name is ... and I’m a Meta-Coach, I specialize in ... and my style is...” And they were doing this in all of the three elevators that went up and down the 13 floors of the Mercure Hotel. Talk about literally perfecting your “elevator speech.”!

As I mentioned, while we sought to bring a cultural immersion of Neuro-Semantics to the participants of Meta-Coaching, we also experienced a cultural immersion in Maori culture given that only four of us were not Maori. So I saw for the first time an Axes of Change Haka. And how can I describe that? Each of our teams took on one of the axes on The Axes of Change and created a mind-to-muscle “song,” “rap,” “dance” with it. It was as mind-to-muscle as any pattern I could have invented and quite powerful in effect — even for an observer.

Another aspect of the Maori culture is the Taonga. I heard about it several times in coaching sessions when a coach would ask, “How do you want to remember this state or experience? How do you want to anchor it so you can keep this new robust frame of mind or feeling?” And they would talk about wearing something around their neck as a Taonga — a “treasure.” Colin and Lena tell me that they even introduce Neuro-Semantics as a Taonga (treasure) and as a term that carries special significance for those who wear a black or green stone which they receive as a gift around the neck. And that, by the way, is a way that the Maori people naturally anchor a state and use it for re-accessing it with ease. The training ended on Day 8 with a Neuro-Semantic Haka that was offered me which was especially moving and powerful, leaving me speechless.

And the new format for the *Coaching Mastery Program*? I congratulate *Lena Gray* on the exceptional job of co-training she did having to adjust to the new format and keep up with me and doing all of that *and* co-sponsoring the whole event. Meta-High Fives for taking on all of that! Meta High Fives also to *Antoinette Ehmke* from Pretoria South Africa who joined Colin and Lena on our panel of Expert Coaches on Day 7 to contribute to the business acumen of creating a commercially viable coaching practice. And also to *Joseph Scott* of Australia who showed up on Day 4, sat in and helped with the benchmarking of competency skills and then shared some of his experiences and insights having worked with leaders and companies as a Meta-Coach for some four or five years now. (Both Lena and Joe are part of the leadership team of the MCF — both in their internship for being signed off as a Meta-Coach Trainer.)

Every single person reached benchmark competency on the seven core skills; several are provisional due to needing to catch up on Modules I and II. We even had 2 people without any NLP (Module I) and Meta-States (Module II) who succeeded in an exceptional way. And for the first time ever we also had two teenagers graduate from *Coaching Mastery*! That’s right, two young people 18 years old. Now imagine their futures knowing this stuff! Imagine what your present future would have been like if you had been introduced and trained in those coaching/ leadership skills at 18! And then there were the visions that we heard on Graduation night —What wonderful visions of the legacy that will be left by Meta-Coaches in New Zealand! As I now fly to Pretoria South Africa for the next *Coaching Mastery*, I am impressed with the quality

of the new graduates in New Zealand and the foundational work that Colin and Lena are doing there— along with numerous other Neuro-Semantic Trainers and Coaches. Here's to the Vision of Self-Actualizing people, companies, and countries!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #47**  
**October 19, 2009**  
Part I

## **META-COACHING AS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

*What are the core competency skills required for effective self-actualizing leaders?* I've been looking for the answer to that question since I began my studies in Self-Actualization Psychology in 2003.

One core competency skill that a truly effective self-actualizing leader needs is an appreciation of the self-actualizing drive in him or herself and in all people. That was Maslow's and McGregor's primary contribution to this question. They both argued extensively and worked to enable leaders to make the paradigm shift from Theory X of human nature to Theory Y and Z. A leader who does not think that way, does not perceive, communicate, and believe according to Theory Y cannot be a self-actualizing leader, let alone an effective leader.

So that's one core competency. What else? A leader has to be self-actualizing him or herself. This is one area where incongruency and hypocrisy will completely sabotage the leadership process. The talk of self-actualizing has to be backed up by the walk. You can be the greatest orator in the world, but without actions to back it up, you will lack the personal power and authority to be credible. And that's why congruency, authenticity, and *being* real are part and parcel of the Neuro-Semantic Leadership criteria (on the website) as well.

Anything else? Yes! As a self-actualizing leader who can and does effectively *lead*, he or she facilitates the development of a future vision. Visioning is especially the one thing that an effective self-actualizing leader does. He or she will constantly be awakening people to their own self-actualizing drive and to self-actualizing with their lovers, families, companies, communities, and nations. To *not* do that is to not be fully in the process of self-actualizing. Self-actualization, as I wrote earlier, is not about you— not about your ego, your individualism to the exclusive of that of others, it is *through* you for the greater good. As a social creature, human self-actualization is entirely and inescapably social.

So is that it or is there anything else? Yes, there is more, a lot more. And here is a surprise that I've experienced in the last couple months as I've had the privilege of presenting *Coaching Mastery* on three continents— in Europe, New Zealand, and South Africa. If you want seven very powerful core competency skills of self-actualizing leadership— then you can do no better than to start with the seven core skills of Meta-Coaching! Surprised? I was. "Who'd think?"

And yet, the seven core skills of Meta-Coaching, the very competencies that we benchmark are also the very skills of leadership:

*Two competencies for creating connection with people for rapport, trust, and effective collaboration in a win-win spirit and which creates a crucible space.* Leaders who don't have a heart for people will not be able to lead *people*; perhaps they can manage *things, systems, or processes*. To lead people requires heart— care, compassion, even love. It's been said that people won't care to hear what you have to say until they know you care about them.

1) Supporting

2) Listening

*Two competencies for being able to effectively explore the thinking, valuing, and understandings of people so that the communication is as accurate and precise as it is in depth and probing to the beyond-conscious mind.* Leaders often face, and sometimes fall into the mistake of secrecy and turf protecting. But a self-actualizing person and a self-actualizing organization lives from an openness and abundance that knows that we empower ourselves and others through open sharing of information (rather than hoarding). People won't share information who live in an environment of fear and positioning.

3) Questioning

4) Meta-Questioning

*Two competencies for entering into an in-the-moment calibration that mirrors and shapes for the unleashing of potentials.* True enough, leaders live in the future but not all the time. They have to come back to the now, to this moment; they have to be present to people and to the events of this very moment. And when they do, and if they have a deep heart-felt connection, they can speak the truth of this moment. This is the fierce conversation that can free us from delusions, lies, and deceptions.

5) Receiving feedback

6) Giving feedback

*One competency for facilitating and enabling a person to fully experience what we talk about.* Leaders get results and they do that by focusing on implementation that executes the plans and strategies that we co-create. To get results, leaders have to have an action orientation. Results only come from actually translating from mind to body, from mind to muscle.

7) Inducing state

If a leader shows a high level of competencies in these skills, he or she can effectively lead others, or an organization, which unleashes people's potentials as it taps their potentials for intelligence, creativity, and innovation. And conversely, a leader who does not demonstrate high level competency and elegance in these skills has to rely on the old authoritarian command-and-control methods of manipulation, making him or her a boss, a general, a policeman, not a leader.

A leader with these competencies will inspire people to not only "buy in" to the vision of the organization or community, but become so engaged in their commitment that people will do whatever it takes to fulfill the vision. And when you have that level of engagement, any and all problems with motivation and retention disappear. And with a self-actualizing company, you will

have a company on the cutting-edge of creativity and innovation— the only way companies can survive in these days of accelerating change. And that means continued growth, return-on-investment, and branding of the quality value that you add.

So what does this mean? It means that *Coaching Mastery* is an intense eight-day bootcamp in *leadership development*! That's what it means. It means that when you develop these skills for coaching, you are developing your leadership skills for guiding and facilitating self-actualizing people.

It means that the Self-Actualization Psychology that you are learning and experiencing in *Coaching Mastery* gives you the most cutting-edge psychology/ philosophy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And because you are moving beyond the authoritarian psychology/philosophy of the previous centuries, you will have the ability to flexibly adapt to the trends and changes that are now inevitable in the marketplace. And given that “capital” is changing from things (buildings, real estate, money, etc.) to people's brains and hearts, you will be capitalizing on the only true capital that counts—and creating growth and value through people. But there's more! But alas, I'll pick that up in the next Meta Reflection.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**Meta Reflections #48**  
**October 26, 2009**  
Part II

## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT VIA META-COACHING**

I began Part I last week with the question: *What are the core competency skills required for effective self-actualizing leaders?* and commented that I've been looking for the answer to that question since I began my studies in Self-Actualization Psychology in 2003. Part I identified two core competencies for leaders and then 7 more as I related the seven core skills of *Coaching Mastery* to self-actualizing leadership.

But there's more. In *Coaching Mastery* we also train eight-skills as a change-agent working with psychologically healthy people. And in these eight-skills plus two-more that I'll add here, we have 5 Leadership Axes for when a leader is leading transformation for a group, organization, or nation. And these also are core competencies for effective self-actualizing leaders. If that interests you, then read on.

A leader first and foremost lives in the future. He or she then returns to facilitate the envisioning of that more compelling human future in the now. But to get there, change is required. People need to change their behaviors, communications, beliefs, values, understandings, frames, meanings, identities, and so on. And that requires that leaders be change-agents and know how to facilitate change and transformation processes. Do you?

What we introduced into Meta-Coaching several years ago was *the Axes of Change Model*. The majority of the distinctions of this model is now in the first book in the Meta-Coaching series, *Changing Change* (2004 by myself and Michelle Duval). Unlike therapy models of change (which assume people will inevitably resist change, relapse, lack the ego-strength to face change, are not wired for continual change with their self-actualizing drive, and "are" problems, rather than their frames are the problems), the Meta-Coaching model of change operates from very different premises.

For psychologically healthy people we used the premises of Self-Actualization Psychology to note four primary *mechanisms* that actually bring about change that we can believe in and fully experience. These are: *motivation, decision, creation, and integration*. To complement this for leaders leading organizations, I have added *solutions*. And using 5 meta-programs, this gives us 10 leadership skills or roles for facilitating self-actualizing change.

**Self-Actualizing Transformation:**

*There are two leadership competencies for leading the inspiration that energizes the motivation of followers to envision a more compelling future.*

This is based on the motivation meta-program of away-from dis-values and toward desired values. Leaders first facilitate seeing what *is* clearly as well as awakening a new vision of what's possible and then use the creative tension between them (Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*) for energy to forge a pathway to an exciting future.

- 1) Leader as Challenger
- 2) Leader as Visionary Awakener

*There are two leadership competencies for leading the creation of meaning that informs and invigorates followers with a robust sense of meaningfulness.*

This is based on the internal and external reference meta-program that facilitates the creation of meaning in two dimensions, in mind and semantics as the inner game and in body and neurology as the outer game. Leaders identify and transform the frames that govern the game and that open up new possibilities for an entirely new way to function and to be.

- 3) Leader as Framer
- 4) Leader as Activist

*There are two leadership competencies for leading the engagement for a full commitment to the vision and for signing-on mind and heart of the followers.*

This is based on the response style meta-program from reflective to active. Leaders first engage in town-meeting dialogues that begin the self-actualizing conversation and conclude by enrolling people for a decision and commitment. This takes the group or community to a collaborative engagement where we can achieve so much more together than alone or apart.

- 5) Leader as Collaborator
- 6) Leader as Enroller

*There are two leadership competencies for leading a clear understanding of the problems and the solutions that together the organization will create and innovate.*

This is based on the staging meta-program of pessimism and optimism which enables a leader to first clearly define the actual problem (and not a symptom, peripheral issue, semantic riddle, or self-reflexive paradox) and then focus in a visionary way on the solutions that resolve the problem that is blocking the future. Leaders facilitate conversations that generate well-formed outcomes, problems, solutions, and innovations.

- 7) Leader as Problem Definer
- 8) Leader as Problem Solver

*There are two leadership competencies for leading the organization's kaizen or continual learning and improvement in quality and service.*

This is based on the comparison meta-program of matching and mismatching where we perceive and sort for either sameness or difference. Leaders cheerlead by honoring, supporting, and celebrating every small success along the way so that they can then

challenge and refine what isn't working as well as it could possibly work. This generates the experience of kaizen in an organization.

9) Leader as Cheerleader

10) Leader as Refiner

So there you have it. *Ten additional core competencies for effective self-actualizing leaders.*

Where can you find more about this? Well, while it is not published in a book (yet), it is written in the training manual of the Unleashing Leadership workshop and it is part of the conversation we have with that leadership development program.

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #49**  
**November 2, 2009**

## MINING GREAT IDEAS

Nearly every week someone asks me about my writing, how I write so much or where I get my ideas. They ask:

“Where do you get your ideas? And how do you keep generating so many ideas for articles, trainings, new patterns, models, etc.? How do you write so much and how do you keep writing fresh ideas?”

And often the question comes in disguised form as when people ask how many hours I sleep a night, or *if* I sleep! Most are surprised to hear that I get a good seven or eight hours every night. And nearly every week I come up with some new way of responding! Sometimes I say something like—

“You think this is prolific? I haven’t started yet, wait till I grow up and decided that I am definitely going to become a writer!” Or, “So you want to know the secret? Okay, I steal. I read 2 or 3 hours a day and get great ideas from the great writers that I read!”

Several times recently this answer has not satisfy the questioner. They said that there had to be more. When I asked what led them to that conclusion, they talked about the synergy that I’ve created and wondered how that has come about. So if there’s more to it than just prolific reading, what is there?

Part of the answer goes back to a particular belief that I hold. *I believe in mining for the best ideas by going back to the foundational and seminal writers and thinkers in an area.* What is “new” is not always what is best or even what is actually new. Over the years I have found lots and lots of “new” things in Korzybski. They are “old” things if we date them from the time he penned them. And yet they are “new”—in fact, brand new—in terms of knowing the information, making the distinctions, and using them for increasing the quality of our lives. That’s why I am always out in the field *mining ideas* from those who have gone before. There are often incredible jewels left behind that no one has yet picked up.

When I first modeled “selling,” I first read every book in NLP, which are not all that many, then I headed to the library and had an “Oh my God” response when I saw the rows upon rows of books on sales. There were thousands of them! My next thought was, “Where do I start?” That was before everything became electronic and so at that time I could open up the back of a book and see how many times it had been checked out. Librarians back then literally stamped the date of every sign out inside the book. (And while that now seems really old fashioned, that was just back in the 1990s!) I could also look at the binding of the book to see which were the most worn. Beginning there, I would read the ones most often read and look for who they quoted

again and again. Who did those authors consider a seminal thinker in that field? I would then track down those authors.

That's when I discovered a principle that has proven useful again and again in discovering where to look for the gold. If you really want to know the current paradigm thinking in a field, find the key theorists leading that field and read them. When I first discovered NLP and took my original practitioner trainings, that's what I did. I made it my business in the first years to read everything Fritz Perls and Virginia Satir wrote. Then I read most of Milton Erickson's works. Yet even more formative were the actual theorists in the field of NLP— Gregory Bateson, Alfred Korzybski, and George Miller with his associates. And even later I revisited this by looking for and finding *the hidden history of NLP* (now in the book, *Self-Actualization Psychology*) and other places. And it was in tracking down the premises of NLP that I found myself right back to Maslow!

And as you might know, in 1990 after my first two readings of Korzybski's *Science and Sanity* I began writing about the missing linguistic distinctions of the Meta-Model as well as some patterns that contributed to the Neuro-Linguistic approach. I'm sure others had read Korzybski, but had not seen some of the things that I found. And why not? I think because of *how* I read Korzybski— I read his works slowly, reflecting constantly, and looking for other things in the text that could continue to contribute to NLP.

With seminal theorists like Korzybski I read slowly, and I still do, because the writing is so “heavy, thick, and semantically loaded” with ideas. I have now read Korzybski eight times and am planning to revisit that work yet again —each time with a notebook. I have done the same with Bateson. Actually, Neuro-Semantics arose from this very mining — and led to the workshops in London with Denis Bridoux, “The Merging of the Models: General Semantics and NLP.”

In the past three years, I discovered that behind Perls, Satir, and even Bateson was Abraham Maslow. He is the seminal theorist behind the whole new paradigm shift in psychology— the bright side or healthy side of human nature. More recently, moving to the application of self-actualization to business and leadership, I have been catching up reading the work of Peter Drucker. When I read his *The Effective Manager* I discovered where Stephen Covey got most of his ideas in *Seven Habits*, even many of his phrases like habits of effectiveness, first things first, etc. It was Drucker also who admitted that he was completely wrong about management and Maslow was right.

Over the past three years, I kept seeing references to Tom Peter's classic *Thriving on Chaos*. I had made a mental note to find that book. I finally got that book in September and read it, then re-read it slowly. And like other seminal thinkers, here is a classic book on self-actualizing leaders and companies—although not in those words. So as I did with Peter Senge's book in the past six Meta Reflections, so I'll be doing with Tom Peter's book *Thriving on Chaos*. It's a great book—far before its time, a book with great ideas that still need to be broadcasted as wide and as far as we can broadcast them. So look for the results of *mining* in that book in some of the

following Meta Reflections. And so now you know one of my secrets, which isn't that big of a "secret," but it is an ongoing source of discovery and one that so many in NLP have completely neglected.

To our ongoing research and discovery into the structure of experience and especially excellence!

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #50**  
**November 9, 2009**

## **IMPORTING NLP BACK TO AMERICA**

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, NLP dominated America more than anywhere else in the world. Once upon a time there were hundreds upon hundreds of training centers—several in every major city and half a dozen NLP Associations across the country. Then there were numerous journals, practice groups, and the talk of NLP was everywhere. But no longer.

Today there are a dozen or so centers left and all are much smaller versions of the former ones. And today there are no Associations left nor are there any magazines or journals. And if you are like most people when they hear this, they ask with astonishment, “What in the world happened?”

Also, once upon a time in southern California, NLP as a new model of human development arose that caught the attention of the field of psychology, psychotherapy, counseling, education, hypnotherapy, and many other fields. And it was based on some solid researchers and world-class communicators—people like Bateson, Korzybski, Satir, Perls, Erickson, George Miller, Chomsky, etc. And it thrived from the late 1970s through the 1980s. Then the movement began hitting some snags.

So what happened? Well, I think that the demise of NLP in the United States lies mostly in the hands of the very person who also did the most to create it—Richard Bandler. At the same time, he offered a new way to think about and perceive human experiences he also seemed incredible skilled at creating offense and disrespect for the model! When I entered the field, his murder trial in San Diego was just beginning. [Yes, that was quite an introduction to the field!] Prior to that was the lawsuit between him and Grinder; and after the murder trial, the lawsuit he filed against Tony Robbins. Then there was all of the drugging with cocaine and heavy drinking and so on.

Yet what really created the demise of NLP in the U.S. was Richard’s 1996 lawsuit for 90,000,000 dollars against eight people and “200 John Does” (that’s legal language for people to be named to the lawsuit), a lawsuit against the field of NLP. And given his reputation for playing nasty or hardball, that lawsuit scared a lot of people. Actually, it not only scared them, it scared the hell out of them so that scores of people began shutting down their training centers, they stopped using the letters “NLP” in their writings, presentations, businesses, and they distanced themselves more and more from the community (what was left of it). As a strategy for ruining a movement, for torpedoing a field, for throwing cold water on fans of the model— it was very successful! Of course, if you are wondering as I have heard so many wonder aloud and in writing, “Why would anyone in their right mind do that?” — well, that’s another question, and I can only guess at it.

The lawsuit was filed in 1996 and lasted till 2000 or 2001 when Bandler lost. He was then assessed some \$600,000 to be paid to Chris Hall (no relationship to me), NLP was declared in public domain, and he moved to Ireland. Yet in the past eight or nine years, the field has been very, very slow to recover. In fact, one of the strangest things now about the field of NLP— it is thriving and growing and doing very well almost everywhere in the world except the United States! It is exploding in Russia and the former Soviet countries; it is thriving and exploding in China and throughout Asia.

This is not to say that everyone helping with the spread is presenting high quality NLP or being ethical in what they are doing. Many are not. In this, the buyer truly has to beware and has to ask many, many hard questions. But that's the subject of another article.

Regarding bringing NLP back to the United States, it does not seem to be arising from within. There is some growth, but it is very small. We probably need solid NLP trainers in England, Europe, Latin America, Canada, even Australia and that part of the world to *bring it back and establish it on more solid grounds*. In fact, if you are a solid quality NLP trainer, there are dozens and dozens of major cities in the United States without any NLP training— cities of a million or more people and not a single training center.

And this is also true of Neuro-Semantics. At this moment, we do not have a Neuro-Semantic Institute in the United States —Mexico, yes. Canada, coming soon. But in the United States— no. Nothing. Zip. Zadda. I would, but currently my relationship to the States is that I keep flying back home to pay taxes. In terms of living, I mostly live everywhere else!

Why am I writing about this? Because here is a true opportunity for lots of people and because most people around the world don't know about this. Here is an opportunity for someone, or several someones, for people in Europe, Asia, Latin America or elsewhere make it their mission to *import NLP back to the United States*. What do you think? The opportunities are immense. With dozens of major cities with populations into the millions and with over 300 million across the country, the States offer a vast market. Who has the business acumen to create Training Centers or Event Companies and bring a high quality, ethical, and commercially viable business model to the United States? What Neuro-Semantic/NLP trainer will do that?

I train almost exclusively outside of the United States, but not by choice. I do that because that is where NLP is growing and where Neuro-Semantics is exploding. For myself, I would love to conduct the Meta-Coaching System on both coasts of the United States and a couple places in the middle, yet to do that, we need NLP trainers training NLP Practitioner and/or NLP Introduction courses. There also need to be Neuro-Semantic trainers running APG workshops on Meta-States.

Now that NLP is “in the public domain” in the United States and in the UK, and now that nearly a decade has passed since all of the commotion of the lawsuits and the bad press of NLP, the time has come for there to be a resurgence of NLP in the US. And now that the original hype and all of the new-age non-sense has passed, the time is ripe for a professional development of NLP and

Neuro-Semantics in the US. Those who know how to present NLP for business, for high quality communication, for modeling excellence and those who know how to present the higher ethical and professional standards of Neuro-Semantics and the vision of “walking the talk” —you have a wonderful opportunity. People need it. Who will rise up to take up the challenge?

From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.  
Meta Reflections #51  
November 16, 2009

## THE GLITZ AND GLITTER OF NLP

I first thought about the glitz and glitter of NLP the other day while out for a run as autumn was coming to Colorado. Earlier that morning, a person new to NLP had called and asked about trainings in NLP and Neuro-Semantics. Then, during the call, as so often happens, the caller asked my opinion about some of the other things being offered in the field of NLP.

“What do you think about past lives regression in hypnosis?”

“What do you think about brainwave technology?”

“What do you think about photo-reading?”

“What do you think about unconscious installation?”

“What do you think about hypnotic repatterning, DHE, huna, the Secret, etc.?”

The person who called most recently also wanted my opinion about some of the things being asserted by certain so-called NLP trainers. (I say “so-called NLP trainers” because they certainly have missed the foundational Cognitive-Behavioral principles of the field.)

He asked, “Isn’t all learning actually unconscious and doesn’t need to go through the conscious mind?” When I then asked, “Who in the world teaches that?” I was told. And I wish I could say I was shocked and surprised. But knowing the trainer that the speaker referred to, I wasn’t. And that was the saddest part of it.

“Of course all learning *is not actually* unconscious. In fact, every single skill of any complexity *must go through the conscious learning process in order to drop out of consciousness and be encoded in our neurology*— what we commonly call ‘the unconscious.’”

I thought that would settle it, but it did not. My caller actually found *my statement surprising and shocking*, so he wanted to know more about that.

“Okay, then consider. Could you *unconsciously install* riding a bicycle through whatever hypnotic repatterning or guided-fantasy process? What about the skills of dentistry? Or the knowledge of anatomy? Could we take a pre-med student and *install* what she would need to know and be able to do in order to be a surgeon or general practitioner? What about an astronaut? Okay, an automobile mechanic? Electronics guy? How about a person at the front desk helping customers? Name one set of skills, or even one single commercially viable skill, that you can *directly stick in a person’s unconscious mind*! Name just one. I’ll tell you that if you could do that, then Bandler, Grinder, James, and all of those “so-called NLP Trainers” would be billionaires! They put medical schools out of business. They would make business schools redundant. Yet the truth is that they do not

put those schools out of business, nor are they billionaires.”

*So all that glitters in NLP is not gold, nor does not create gold*— and that in spite of all the over-promises of instant competency, wealth and sex. The gurus of NLP (which in my opinion begins with Richard Bandler himself) and the want-a-be gurus all talk a beautiful, mysterious, captivating, and expensive talk, but in the end they over-promise and under-deliver. Now how can I make such an assertion?

Here are some facts. For years Bandler has been forbidding papers and pens in his trainings saying that he doesn't want conscious learning and that he will take charge of the *installing unconsciously* process. Now doesn't that have a ring of Jim Jones, David Koresh and other gurus who wanted *totally compliant followers* rather than thinking men and women who know how to ask hard questions. Why are tough questions not welcomed? And from Tony Robbins to all of the want-a-be Tonys—there is the mystic of the all-competent, all-knowing, all-wealthy leader who will tell you his secrets if only you sign up for the Master of the Universe Course for \$10,000 in the next 20 minutes. And you wonder why NLP has gotten a reputation of being “manipulative” in the negative sense of the word?!

Glitter, yes! Enriching? Again, yes— well, for the guru; but almost never for the compliant followers who have to attend yet one more training, now the Super-Masters NLP University course in Hawaii.

Now what got me thinking about all of this was the last question that my caller asked. “Well, if all of that is just superficial NLP glitter and not the real thing, then what would you recommend I do?”

I was tempted to say that I was just about to unveil my own new Mastery University myself in the Greek Islands of the Mediterranean for a select group of learners and only for \$9,995.00. But I didn't! Instead, here's what I said.

“What should you do? Refuse to let the gurus get by with their non-sense. Take pens and papers, record the things they say, challenge them, ask hard questions, give feedback, don't let them off the hook when they say that they don't take feedback (as one of the co-developers did in Switzerland at Briefer Formation) or that all feedback is “projection” (as one new age Huna NLP trainer says when someone attempts to offer him some feedback). Then ask even harder questions, ask for results, demand money back when the promises are not delivered. In other words, be a discerning buyer, beware of what you are buying; ask for evidence. Learn to be a smart decision-maker.”

Yes, there's a lot of glitz and glitter now in the marketing of NLP— bright shiny toys that seem to be the most wonderful things possible, like the special chocolate bar of Willie Wonka with the golden ticket. And some are real; but most are not. So, *let the buyer beware*. When you call for trainings, ask the trainer tough questions. Ask about results. Ask about sources. Ask about style and emphasis. As for contact numbers of people. Anyone legitimate will be more than glad to provide it. And most Neuro-Semantic Trainers will invite you to come to the first half day of the

training with full money-back guarantee. All you have to say after the first half day, “It’s just not for me.” And then with a smile and kindness, you’ll get all of your money back ... or not pay until you are convinced that it will be informative, life-changing, and loaded with value for you.

I’m not against glitter as such. Some is good to raise interest, excite, and create some buzz around the transformative nature of this field. But the genuine value of this field is not about the glitter, it is about the gold within— about the processes by which you can discover, access, and unleash your highest potentials and best values and visions. The gold enables *you* to discover *your powers* and to learn to run your own brain, manage your own state, and then not *need* the teacher. A good teacher (coach, trainer, consult, parent, etc.) always aims to work him or herself *out of the job!*

From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.  
Meta Reflections #52  
November 23, 2009

## DO YOU HAVE TIME OR DOES TIME “HAVE” YOU?

Some people live their lives in such a way that they feel *victimized by time*. How about you? Do you ever feel *victimized* by time? Have you ever suffered from *time victimization*? I’m amazed at how many people are, and how many feel, victimized by time. And *how* would you know if you have experienced this? Some of the signs of *time victimization* are statements such as the following:

- “I don’t have enough time.” “There’s never enough time.”
- “Time just gets away from me and I’m left running from one project to the next, doing things in a way that means that they are incomplete or far below the quality with which I want to do them.”
- “I need to balance my work and life. It is all out of balance.”
- “Time stresses me out and by the end of the day (or week) I feel drained of my vitality.”

I’m especially amazed by it when people frame their choice in terms of “work-life balance.” The very phrase *work-life balance* seems to fragment time into *either* work *or* life. And in doing so, it seems to generate the classic zero-sum game so that it puts a person on the horns of a dilemma as if a person has to choose one or the other. What if there are other choices about this?

Now, at one level, all of this is an expression of unsanity. After all, there is no such thing as “time” as an external force, let alone a force seeking to victimize you. Minutes are not vicious. Hours are not horrendous horrors that lurk around in the dark seeking to do harm. If no one else will speak up for minutes, hours, or even days, then I will. They have done nothing wrong. They have been blamed and scapegoated when all along they have been minding their own business and not trespassing on your responsibilities at all. So leave them alone!

The problem here is actually two-fold: first, your frame about time and second, your ineffective use of scheduling events.

While these, and many other statements, indicate a sense of being a victim of time (as if *time* was a thing and consciously chose to do things to people), they also indicate an *either-or thinking* that there’s a dichotomy between work and home life or relationship, and that the choice was one of either-or. The zero-sum game presupposed by these statements position work and life-outside-of-work as a see-saw— as one goes up the other goes down. More for one means less for the other.

One frame by implication here is that less of one is better for the other. No wonder this way of framing things inevitably sets up an internal conflict—personal life *or* work. One or the other. Which will it be?

There's a solution to this. Using *Self-Actualization Psychology*, the solution is to create a holistic synergy of the two. Instead of dichotomizing work and home (work and play) as opposites, we seek instead to create a synergy from both. In this case, we seek to think about work as an enjoyable part of a well-rounded life, and a well-rounded life including a way to express one's talents and competencies in one's work and source of wealth creation. Instead of viewing "time" as a scarce resource, you can create an integrated view that focuses on using your energies effectively for the people and the work you care about. And when you frame things in that way, you can now ask a whole new series of questions.

- How can I make my personal life more effective and satisfying?
- How can I improve the quality of both my relationships and work at the same time?
- How can I tear down the artificial boundaries between work and family?

Peter Drucker (1967/ 2006) in his classic *The Effective Executive*, says, "Effective executives do first things first and they do one thing at a time." (p. 100). About this kind of concentration he says we first need to focus on doing well one thing at a time. Drucker also comments that a busy person is an ineffective person.

"It is concentration in which all faculties are focused on one achievement. Few people can perform with excellence three major tasks simultaneously. Concentration is necessary precisely because the executive faces so many tasks clamoring to be done. This is the 'secret' of those people who 'do so many things' and apparently so many difficult things. They do only one at a time." (p. 103)

In September of this year (2009) I was back in Colorado for a few days and I heard a report on National Radio Broadcast of an interview with a researcher on multi-tasking. His primary discovery was that *multi-tasking impairs cognitive functions*. His research had shown that it actually lowers a person's IQ by 11 points. When you multi-task and make it a habitual way of operating, you become a sucker for irrelevant information and over time, it results in you become slower and slower in changing tasks.

*Time*— are you the master of it or does it master you? Is it your construct or do you just represent and frame it in a way that leads you to giving all of your power away to that idea? Time, as a human construct, is just that—something we invent and then forget that we invented it. If that describes you, then the first step to mastery over your sense of time is to realize that it is your invention. Do that and you can begin to change your orientation to it as if it is a real thing out there. Do that and you can begin to learn how to manage your concept, your representations, and your belief frames about "time." And you can do so with energy, playfulness, and vitality.

To your highest and best experiences in and with time!

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #53**  
**November 30, 2009**

## **MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT WHAT NLP IS**

In recent *Meta Reflections* I've written about the field of NLP which has brought lots of responses and with them a number of misunderstandings about what this field is all about. So *what is it all about?* For anyone who has read the original documents and followed it from the beginning, there really should not be any question. But many have not. So to offer some correction and clarity, here are some misunderstandings about what NLP is about.

1) *"NLP is too cognitive, it lacks sufficient emotional and spiritual dimensions.*

This one comes primarily from Europe and reflects mostly on the way that some trainers present NLP. This misunderstanding does not seem to arise anywhere else in the world. Everywhere else NLP is presented as not cognitive enough!

This statement also indicates a misunderstanding of the systemic nature of NLP about human nature. Modeled from the systems thinking of Korzybski and the Family Systems of Virginia Satir, NLP inherently involves a holistic approach. NLP is cognitive to the extent that we recognize that our mapping drives our emoting. "We operate on the world (the territory) by means of our mental maps." And our mapping is primarily a function of our mind—our understanding, perceiving, and meaning-making. And it then inevitably affects our emotions.

To say that something is cognitive is simply to say that it involves *thought* and that you have to use your thinking skills. So what would "too cognitive" mean? Does it mean "too academic?" Does it mean that it involves *concepts* and that it requires some abstract understanding of something? Does it mean that it involves some complexity? Does it mean that someone presents NLP by lecturing? By talking and talking and not using experiential learning methods? Effective NLP training always involves experiential learning that increases your emotional intelligence as well as your spiritual intelligence.

2) *"Everything is NLP."*

Well, no, everything is not NLP. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) as a communication model is about how we communicate—first to ourselves and then to others. It is a model of that identifies and uses *the components of thought*—the sensory representational systems (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and then words and language as the meta-representation system. Then through communication we induce ourselves and others into states—mind-body-emotion states.

And this Communication Model, in turn, gives us a set of modeling tools. With it, we can break

down the neuro-linguistic communication structure and so model any and every human experience. Now NLP can do that. We can use NLP to detect and create a structural format (or map) of any experience. Yet that's not the same as saying that "everything is NLP." Yes, using NLP we can take just about *everything* in human experience and replicate it. But to say that anyone in previous centuries or decades were actually "doing NLP" because they were identifying some aspect of some experience is to extend this line of thinking too far. They were doing something, but not NLP. What we do today, using NLP, may recognize that they were doing something similar. Similar, but not the same.

NLP arose from two movements. The first was the Cognitive Psychology and revolution of 1956. Historians use that date for Noam Chomsky's original work in creating Transformational Grammar (the particular grammar that John Grinder used to sort out the language patterns of Perls and Satir and then later Erickson). That was the year also that George Miller publishes his famous 7 plus-or-minus 2 paper about human consciousness. After that he along with his associates, Carl Pribram and Eugene Galanter wrote *Plans and the Structure of Behavior* (1960) and that was the basis for "strategies" in NLP.

The second movement was the Human Potential Movement which was spearheaded by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. And that goes back to the 1930s and 1940s when both were doing their original work. The movement blossomed in the 1950s and 1960s with the launching of the first human potential movement in California. It was primarily Maslow who created the paradigm shift in psychology from the sick side of human nature to the healthy side. It was he who put forth the idea that people are not innately sick, broken, or evil but have all the potentials for becoming fully alive and actualizing their best. And that's where Perls, Satir, and Bateson got their ideas about human resourcefulness.

### *3) NLP is hypnosis.*

Well, no, not really. Now, true enough, the founders of NLP, Richard and John modeled Milton H. Erickson who founded modern medical hypnosis as a form of communication and so added the Ericksonian language patterns to the distinctions of NLP. NLP is not hypnosis, but NLP has modeled the structure of the hypnosis as a communication phenomena. It is called "the Milton Model" as well as the "reverse use of the Meta-Model of language."

Yes, many in NLP have wandered far away from the original modeling emphasis in NLP and sadly, most training programs in NLP do not even present the process of modeling— strategies, elicitation of structure, pattern detection, etc. But that's more to the core of NLP than hypnosis or trance. All of the work in using trance states for developing new resources or applying in certain contexts is but one application of NLP.

### *4) NLP is therapy.*

Well, not exactly. True enough, the first models of NLP came from therapists —from world class psychotherapists who did "magic" in healing traumas and enabling people to get over the past and get ready for the future. But NLP is not a psychology of therapy although we have many patterns in NLP that deals with traumas, hurts, and limitations. Instead NLP is a psychology and set of

procedures about the structure and process—it is a meta-position of *how things work*. And this is true for things of excellence and things of disaster.

Experiences of heaven and of hell can be modeled and understood in terms of a person’s meanings, communications, and neurology. The content of NLP is about the workings of neurology, linguistics, and semantics in the mind-body-emoting system.

5) *NLP is new age.*

Ah, another misunderstanding! And certainly one of the biggest. No, NLP is not “new age,” even if it is used by people who believe in and practice various New Age things. Using that logic, we could also say that NLP is Christian, or Moslem, or Buddhist, or Hindu, or Jewish because it is also used by Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and Jews. Yet obviously, *who* uses it does not determine *what* it is.

As a cognitive-behavioral model, NLP is concerned about the structure of experience— as the sub-title of Robert Dilts’s classical work, “*Neuro-Linguistic Programming: The Study of the Structure of Subjective Experience*” (1980). In itself, NLP is not a new age phenomena although some NLP trainers have (knowingly or unknowingly) contaminate their presentation of NLP so as to wed the two and totally confuse themselves and others. As a result, they don’t even know what NLP is at its essence—at its sources—or the foundational groundwork of NLP in General Semantics, cognitive psychology, and the first Human Potential Movement.

*The Heart of NLP*

What I loved about NLP when I first encountered it was that it provided a way to find and work with *the structure of an experience*. And why? Because every experience has a structure. Every experience comes together within a person’s mind-body-emotion system through the way a person thinks, emotes, speaks, and behaves. And when you know that, you have in your hands some very powerful tools for change and renewal. And it is from this foundation that Neuro-Semantics arises. In fact, Neuro-Semantics specifically builds on this as it has contributed additional modeling tools to the NLP field —the Meta-States Model and the Matrix Model primarily. But also Neuro-Semantics has expanded the Framing model (Frame Games, *Winning the Inner Game* and *Mind-Lines*), created the Self-Actualization Quadrants (the Meaning—Performance Axes), and formulated the Benchmarking Model.

From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.  
Meta Reflections #54  
Dec. 7, 2009

## BEYOND THE BOOKS TO EMBODIED EXPERIENCE

After finishing the fifth training of *Coaching Mastery* in 2009 which we did in Sydney, Australia last week, I got two emails from opposites sides of the planet asking about the same thing. Each person was thinking about taking *Coaching Mastery*, the third module of Meta-Coaching for the ACMC credentials and each was essentially asking the same question. For brevity sake, I have summarized the questions as follows:

“Now that you have most of the books on Meta-Coaching written, as well as the extensive training manual, what is the value of the live training— the coaching bootcamp? Can’t I get that from the books? What will I get that I can’t get from the books?”

The answer is really simple; it is direct; and in my opinion it is unequivocal. What you get in the training is the experience of closing your own personal the knowing-doing gap. “Knowing” is actually the easy part. If you can read, if you can watch a video, if you can listen to an audio tape, or get the live training on your i-pod— you can get the content information. You can discover and learn the key distinctions about the competencies, about the models, the patterns, and so on.

But *knowing* something in your mind is not the same as *knowing* it in your body. In fact, much of the human dilemma that all of us face throughout our lives is that we “know.” Cognitively and academically we know. We know, and yet we do not do.

Actually this has been a theme in Neuro-Semantics from the very beginning. From the beginning we launched Neuro-Semantics as a field and community because we had a vision of people using the communication and modeling tools of NLP *on themselves* and not merely using NLP to “do things” to other people! “Doing NLP” on people is what has led to such charge against NLP as “NLP is manipulative,” and “Lots of NLP people don’t apply NLP to themselves.” And sadly, those charges are just as true today as it was in 1996.

*Knowing and not doing*— the human dilemma. People know what to do for health and fitness and don’t do it. They don’t need another class on nutrition or exercise; *they need experiential embodying of their knowledge*. People know what to do for business success and wealth creation; they don’t need another class on the basics of business. They need to close the gap between what they know and what they do.

And that’s what Neuro-Semantic trainings and coaching with a Meta-Coach focuses on—

experiential knowledge, the embodiment of what you know, the integration of information so that it becomes your “way of being” in the world. This is where the Mind-to-Muscle pattern shines. This is where Crucible experiences facilitate transformation. And this is where the coaching bootcamp of *Coaching Mastery* does its magic.

What you get from the live training is *experience in embodying the content knowledge*. Sure you know how to listen! Who doesn't? Just listen. But when it comes to sitting down with another person and *listening* to his or her dreams, visions, and outcomes and being able to repeat it back word for word, listening intently, accurately, personally and listening not only with your ears. You also listen with your eyes and skin, you listen with your discernment of dozens of distinctions. And that's a very different thing! So with supporting, and questioning, and meta-questioning, and state induction.

*Embodying* is the *neuro-* part of Neuro-Linguistics and Neuro-Semantics. It is the active use of your body— your neurology, physiology, and state—to activate new patterns and install them into muscle memory. It's the way you learned to drive, roller-skate, ski, type on a key-board, and another thousand skills that you have. You *learned* those skills, and made those skills, *yours* by doing, by practicing, by practicing under the competent eye of someone who has been through the process.

The mythology that Bandler and others have perpetuated in NLP is that they can “install knowledge and skills” in you unconsciously, that is, apart from your conscious awareness. That is pure non-sense! Anders Ericsson and associates (*The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*) have now demonstrated via extensive research that expertise arises only through conscious deliberate practice. And lots of practice, 10,000 hours for world-class violinists and “the ten-year rule” for almost every expertise you can name.

What can you get from the Coaching Bootcamp? Intense deliberate practice in a Crucible of caring and skilled people along with a community of passionate people. You get entrance into a living human laboratory for the embodiment of non-content, process facilitation skills. You get an experience of transformation so that you know coaching from the inside out. You get an experience of your life at high level of challenge and support.

To the full embodiment of your content knowledge!

From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.  
Meta Reflections #55  
Dec. 14, 2009

## BUT IT'S *NOT* ABOUT MOTIVATION

Among the things I hear a lot, and from all kinds of sources, is “the need for motivation.”

“I guess I just need more motivation.” “If I had more motivation, I could get myself to exercise regularly, or pursue my true passions.” “I would have finished the project, but I just ran out of motivation.”

Fascinating lines. Lines in my opinion that create the very problem they bewail. “How is that?” you ask. Simple— if we recognize that there are always premises and assumptions and unspoken presuppositions in everything we say, and if we look *behind* the words to identify the silent assumptions in these words, what do we find? What premises lurk behind these particular words?

The answer is that there are several assumptions. First, the assumption that this thing called “motivation” is like petrol for your car. You can have enough of it and you can run short of it. It is like gas in the tank of your car. From time to time you have to visit a Motivation Station and fill up on “motivation.” Of course, that’s running with the nominalization (“motivation”) and treating the referent behind this term as if it were a *thing*. Second, the assumption that “motivation” is an *external* thing. It is something you get, have, don’t have, need more of, run out of, etc. Third, the assumption that it is outside your control. You ran out of it, and now you’re stuck until you can figure out where you can get a fresh supply.

Now if you’re skilled in NLP, you immediately recognized that there’s a problem in the *kind of language* being used to frame the complaint. You know that a “nominalization” is creating a distorted and disempowering map about the territory. And with that level of comprehension, you know that the solution lies in de-nominalizing (turning the noun-like-verb back into an actual verb).

“What do you need more ‘motivation’ for?”

“What is your *motive*? How much or big is your *motive*?”

“What are you *moving* away from as a dis-value and what are you *moving* toward as a value?”

“What values *move* you? To what extent? In what context?”

“How did you represent and frame that value as *moving*, as your *motive*, when you felt a lot of energy and passion?”

And if you come from the Neuro-Semantic NLP perspective, you also know something else. Namely, people—all people—are already motivated. It is the very nature of the human experience. We are all—always— motivated. The question is not *whether* we are motivated or

not, but *toward* what or *away-from* what are we motivated? We all have *motives* already—values, beliefs, and meanings. The only question is:

“What are your motives? How vivid, rich, empowering, etc. are those motives? Do you know how to keep them vividly present in your consciousness?”

And from the Self-Actualization Psychology perspective:

“What are the innate human needs and drives that are currently driving you? Where are you on the hierarchy of needs? And what matrix of belief frames inform your drives? And how well do you accurately gratify those needs with true satisfiers?”

Know about the Meaning and Performance Axes informs you that the question of motivation is really a question of where you are on the Meaning scale and the Performance scale, and how well you are synergizing your highest meanings with your best performances. And when you know that, you know this secret truth about motivation: *The door of motivation is locked and unlocked from the inside.*

So, that’s why the question is never a motivation question. The question is a meaning question, and/or a performance question, and/or a question of your ability to synergize both. So if you lack motivation, here are some things to do:

- 1) Check the quality and kind of your meanings. The meanings you give to anything determines how you experience that thing and the state it elicits in you. What meaning do you give to— exercise, work, hobby, etc.? What is the level of that meaning? What is the quality of that meaning?
- 2) Check the quality and competence of your performance. How do you act on that meaning? What are the actions that you take on a regular basis to actualize that meaning?
- 3) Check for interferences. Are there any counter-meanings that are in your way? If so, what? Is there a limiting belief, decision, etc. interfering? Or is there a distorted understanding? Are there any counter-behaviors that are in your way? Any habits that undermine your motivation? Any habitual lifestyle activities that dampen and inhibit you?

The door to your motivational life is open and closed from your inner world— the world of your semantics and your neurology. Your “motivation” is not determined by other people, by events, by experiences. It is determined by *your interpretation* of those things. It is governed by your *interpretative style* as informed by your meanings.

Want more motivation? Then learn to *win the inner game* of your meanings. Become a top-notch meaning-maker and a quality meaning-maker. Then winning the outer game of passionate motivation and focus will be a cinch. To your highest meanings and best performances!

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**

## ADVERSITY UNIVERSITY

2009 has been a year of challenge, trial, and adversity for a lot of people. All around the world, the banking crisis of late 2008 and the recession that followed in 2009 has been a challenge to some, a set-back to others, and the failure of dreams for many others. How much challenge has the world-wide recession been to you and how have you handled it? How much resilience have you had to developed or wish you had before it all began?

Adversity in whatever form it takes can either make or break you. Mistakes, failures, rejections, financial collapses, bankruptcies, demotions, redundancies, business failures, income losses, relationship breakups, these and many other forms of *adversity* can knock you down and defeat you or knock new sense and wisdom into you. Which does it do for you? It all depends on your interpretative style and your ability to learn and develop new coping skills.

So, what courses have you graduated from at Adversity University? What degrees have you obtained? The problem with life isn't that we have problems— that's inevitable. As long as we are fallible and mortal human beings— we are going to have problems. In fact, problems can just as well bring out your best as your worse.

*Actually, we need problems.* We human beings are a class of life who thrive on problems. There's nothing more boring than a movie where everything is rosy, going as expected, and everybody's perfectly happy. We need drama. We need a challenge to conquer. Give a human being too perfect of a life, and they invent problems. For fun, they do cross-word puzzles, math problems, riddles, computer game problems, or read fictional stories about the end of the world or some severe challenge.

And why? Because we're sadistic? Because we have sold out to the dark side? Because we have a pathology within for the negative? No! *It's because we are by nature problem-solvers.* Problems bring out our best because they give us contexts for applying our creative minds. Problems require that you think hard, that you think laterally, that you think in wild and crazy ways to come up with *solutions*.

It's not the problem per se that turns us on, that brings us to life, that wakes us up— it is that we now have a context that needs us! That's why there's nothing like a crisis for coming to terms with the essence of life— What are we about? Why are we here? What are we doing to do? What can we contribute? How can we solve this or that difficulty?

And that's why the most creative, the most effective, those who step up into leadership, the

entrepreneurs of tomorrow's businesses are those who *love problems*, who are turned-on by difficulties, and who have an attitude of "bring it on!" They also have something else. They are experimenters. They try one thing and then another. Not knowing the solution is a good bit of the fun because that makes the problem-solving an adventure, a discovery. So they take risks trying this, and then trying that, and all along making mistakes. But the mistakes are nothing but learning-solutions along the way to the final solution.

In building up a dynamic and joyful problem-solving mental attitude, make sure that you frame mistakes as just *playing around with possible solutions*. Don't demonize them. They are part and parcel of creativity. And if you use them to learn from, they are not bad at all, but a nugget that can be learned from.

The *solution focus* mind-set of a leader, entrepreneur, creator, or innovator is the *driving force* that causes them to not only endure "problems," but search for them. "Problems are great!" they think and say. Inside of problems they find solutions. Inside of problems is wealth. "The bigger the problem I can solve, the more value I add, the more the solution is worth." Problems are wonderful because they are tokens of the future. *The solutions* that we invent today for the problems people bring to us, that we encounter, that society struggles with paves the road to the better future that we are now creating.

Did you receive any invitations to *Adversity U.* this year? Did you go or have you been avoiding it like the plague? Do you first need some robust frames of mind to build up a more beefed-up attitude and a stronger sense of inner resilience? Are you ready to win your own *inner game of frames* about adversity or mistakes or disappointments or set-backs? Then seek out a Neuro-Semantic Trainer or a Meta-Coach. We specialize in the creative attitude that best characterizes self-actualizing people—the solution focused attitude of using problems to create value.

**From: L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.**  
**Meta Reflections #57**  
**Dec. 28, 2009**

## **THRIVING ON CHAOS**

### **The Need for Self-Actualizing Leaders**

In 1987 Tom Peters wrote a book by the title *Thriving on Chaos*. As the co-author of *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies* and then *A Passion for Excellence: The Leadership Difference*, Tom Peters has been a leading thinker in the field of business for many decades. As with many other seminal thinkers in fields, I went back to read *Thriving on Chaos* to more fully understand Peters and how the fields of business, leadership, and management had been changing over the years. I went back to read a classic, but was I surprised.

What was the surprise? The biggest surprise was the relevance of the book! *Thriving on Chaos: Handbook for a Management Revolution* was anything but “old.” Beginning from the idea of “a world turned upside down” Peters wrote over two decades ago as if he had a crystal ball into today. And to offer practical guidance, he couched his ideas as *prescriptions* for the revolution. The major sections of the book indicate the relevance of the book:

- Creating Total Customers Responsiveness
- Pursuing Fast-paced Innovation
- Achieving Flexibility by Empowering People
- Learning to Love Change: a new view of Leadership at all Levels
- Building Systems for a World Turned Upside Down

Foreseeing the changing of the world, Peters writes about the difference that numerous factors are making and will make: technology, globalization, information explosion, the change of the work force as people develop, etc. He writes about the importance of quality and flexibility, the need for flatter organizations, a new focus on service, customers, and responsiveness, the need for empowering people for making decisions, solving problems, facilitating innovations, and adding value. The book is as current as any book on the market today in terms of offering practical steps for creating a cutting-edge company.

Of course, I read the book through a particular frame—through the lens of *Self-Actualizing Psychology*. This is the psychology that uniquely governs everything that we do in Neuro-Semantics and the psychology that created NLP. And it is also the missing frame that pulls together almost all of the initiatives in business to become more effective, productive, and profitable. That is, what all of the pioneering thinkers in business, leadership, organizational development, management, etc. have been building up to for decades and have tried to articulate in so many different ways—is pulled together and given a governing framework by Self-Actualization Psychology.

There are many factors contributing to this: the rising of the standard of living, the increase of a more educated work force, globalization, etc. These things have not only advanced our technology, they have affected human consciousness itself. Human consciousness has been evolving and growing and rising to new levels of awareness. And this has been changing businesses and the way we do business. And this evolution is just beginning. A new human being is in the process of emerging. The time is coming when the old forms of leadership (authoritarian command-and-control) and the old forms of work (hierarchical, bureaucratic, leave your brain at the door, do what you're told without questioning, etc.) will be completely irrelevant.

Self-Actualization Psychology focuses on the nature of people under conditions of health and growth. It's about human nature when it moves beyond the animal level of the lower needs to the truly human needs—the drive for meaning, for meaningfulness, to make a difference, to create, for beauty, order, excellence, legacy, and all of the things that makes us fully alive and fully human. It focuses on how we *become* fully what we are capable of becoming. Unlike all of the other schools of psychology which provide models that explain how people go astray and suffer various distortions and pathologies, Self-Actualization Psychology models excellence in human nature.

What Self-Actualization Psychology offers business is a very powerful and unifying framework. Even though many of the details of a humanistic work place has been envisioned and described, the framework has not. The framework has been missing. What business needs is the framework that explains the reasoning why the best companies are creating flatter organizations, firms that empowers people, that is customer focused, that seeks to add value, that recognizes the many forms of meta-pay that we can create in the workplace. The emphasis on quality, participative management, visionary leadership, deep democracy, recognition and engagement of employees—why all of these things makes sense in human psychology.

These are the elements and expressions of people at their best. They are descriptions of people who move beyond “the jungle” of the lower needs and seek to contribute, make a difference, and find meaning even in their work. And surprisingly, Tom Peters wrote about the details of the new twenty-first century workplace in 1987. He foresaw the need for several completely new attitudes—for managers to treat employees, suppliers, and customers as partners in a common endeavor. He foresaw the need to not only deal with change, but for leaders and people to actually *love* change and develop the capacity for a flexible adaptiveness. He foresaw the shift to constant innovation at all levels in an organization by everybody, the use of self-managed teams for leading innovation, the importance of engagement, the de-bureaucraticizing, the remaking of middle management's role, the elimination of humiliating Mickey-Mouse rules, the deference to the front-line, and the ultimate importance of listening by leaders.

Pretty incredible, wouldn't you say? In the book, Tom Peters writes—  
“The chief reason for our failure in world-class competition is our failure to tap our work force's potential.” (p. 286)

And that's why we need *Self-Actualizing Leaders and Companies*— which is what the book,

*Unleashing Leadership* (2009) is about.