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From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #1
January 4, 2016

MAKING 2016 MEANINGFUL

I’m often asked, “What is Neuro-Semantics?” The shortest answer is, “It is about the *meaningfulness* of your life.” That’s because the term “semantics” refers to meaning and meaningfulness and “neuro-” refers to where you experience meaning, namely, *in your body and in your experiences*. Given that, how meaningful is your current life experience? How much meaning do you experience on a daily basis?

These initial questions about meaning and meaningfulness is just the beginning. There are a lot more to ask. For example, we can take any aspect of life (well-being, health, fitness, relationships, family, job/career, finances, wealth-creation, hobbies, creativity, sports, faith/spirituality, etc.) and asked these questions regarding meaning.

- How meaningful is exercise for you? What meanings do you give to staying fit?
- How meaningful is your work, the job you do, your career path?
- What meanings do you give to your loved ones? How much meaning do you invest in them? How much more meaning would you like to invest?

One of the central models we use in Neuro-Semantics, which takes it beyond the ken of NLP, is *The Meaning—Performance Axes*. This model arose from the study of self-actualization and the research into the history of the Human Potential Movement which was the background for the emergence of NLP (see “The Secret History of NLP”). These axes enable us to sort out the two dimensions of life, the inner and outer dimensions, which uniquely and still mysteriously defines our lives.

- *The Meaning Axis*. You and I are meaning-makers. We create, construct, and invent meaning. This lies at the heart of our essential nature. Without formal “instincts” which animals have, we create our “instinct-like” responses by the meanings we construct. Nor is this optional. *You have to invent meanings*. Why? Because by itself, nothing means anything. For anything to have “meaning,” you have to attribute meaning to it. And when you think, when you feel, when you respond—that is what is happening, you are attributing, appraising, and constructing meaning. What meaning you create then becomes the question. So also the quality of the meaning that you invent. That’s because *the quality of your life is the quality of your meanings*. This is the inner dimension—the dimension that you cannot see, hear, smell, or taste. It is your inner game. And all of the truly meaningful and significant facets of your life comes from this dimension. That’s why it is *inside-out*.
- *The Performance Axis*. You and I are also responders. We act. We speak, emote, behave, react, respond, and do things. And the key to our actions, the meaning of our actions, the quality of our behaviors lies in our meanings. That’s because behind or within every response is a meaning and the response is the acting-out of meaning. That’s also what every emotion is—the

feel of meaning. Regarding this outward dimension, this is the outer game and is what you can see, hear, smell, and taste. It is empirical and sensory-based. And, *the quality of your actions or performances depends on the quality of your meanings.*

This is Neuro-Semantics: the synthesis of *meaning* and *performance* which enables you to manage your life—both your inner and outer dimensions of life so that you find it significant and highly meaningful. If there's some aspect of life that you don't experience as rich and meaningful as you would like, you have two areas or dimensions that you can work with—the inner and the outer games.

As you begin the new year, the structure of experience requires that you must choose and act, for better or worse, to determine the meaning of your life. No one can do this for you. No one or no thing will come along to relieve you of that responsibility. You are the meaning-maker and you are the responder. So your life—and the quality of your life, the quality of your actions, the effectiveness of what you do—is ultimately in your hands. If you try to live off of the meanings that someone else gives you—you do so to your own detriment. If you procrastinate, waiting for some great meaning to come to you—the odds are against you and you will more likely just be wasting your time.

To make your life meaningful—you need to learn *what meaning is, how you make it, how you can suspend old meanings, how to reframe new meanings, how to integrate meanings into your neurology, to translate what you know into what you do, and how to perform your highest meanings.* That's what Neuro-Semantics is all about.

Yes, this is about “how to run your own brain” (the basic NLP theme) and yes, it is about “how to manage your states” (another NLP theme). It is also about how to become a professional communicator in using language with precision and clarity (after all, NLP is essentially a Communication Model). Yet it is about much more. It is about discovering your uniqueness and stepping into your very best states so that you can unleash your highest meanings and values. That's what the *Accessing Personal Genius* (APG) focuses on as the flagship training of Neuro-Semantics.

From there we move into the *unleashing processes*, that is, how *actualizing* your highest meanings into your best performances work. Accordingly, picking up on the modeling emphasis of Maslow and NLP, Neuro-Semantics focuses on the structure of experience and how to model excellent and highly meaningful performances. If you're committed to raising the level of meaningfulness in your life this year, try Neuro-Semantics.

Check out www.neurosemantics.com / Trainings / Institutes/ 2016 Schedule

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #2
January 11, 2016
Meta-States “Genius” Series (APG) #9

THE PATTERNS OF APG

When you use or “run” the patterns of APG, you are engaged in a very special *psychology*. Because of that, we now train Trainers and Meta-Coaches in “The Psychology of APG” at Trainers’ Training (NSTT). If you ask, “Where did these distinctions come from?” The answer is from a combination of Developmental Psychology and Self-Actualization Psychology.

Developmental Psychology informs us about how we grow and develop over the lifespan. It is the psychology of our psycho-sexual development, our psycho-social development, our cognitive development, our faith development, our moral development, and so on. It is the psychology developed by Piaget, Eric Erickson, Fowler, Keagan, and many others.

Why is this important and how does it relate to APG? It’s important because one of the key *interferences* that prevent people from unleashing their highest potentials involves how a person can get stuck at various stages of development. For example, people can so easily get stuck when they don’t recognize or claim their innate powers for responding. Or they can get stuck when they don’t value, accept, and appreciate themselves. Or they can get stuck when they don’t know how to enjoy and endow things with joy and pleasure.

Stuck experiences such as these usually arise from parenting errors. That’s the reason for the quip, “If your parents didn’t go to ‘Parent 101’ or didn’t pass Parenting 101” —then maybe you mis-learned somethings about this stage or learned something that’s just not so. Maybe you learned that “power” is a bad thing. Or that saying “Mine” means that you are selfish. Or perhaps you were not allowed to say “no.” It was tabooed. Or you learned that saying “yes” leads inevitably to disappointment.

Given this, the APG patterns facilitate completing these developmental stages. For example, on Day 1 you will meta-state your innate *powers* so that you own them, feel empowered, and construct a robust sense of responsibility. This cures helplessness. Or if “no” was forbidden, you reclaim that power and use it to develop beliefs at will. In other words, the APG patterns can be used to facilitate completing the development stages. And that’s because *the patterns of APG recapitulates human development*.

Meta-Stating yourself or your client with *awareness* and *ownership* of your response powers establishes the foundation for taking charge of your life, running your own brain, and becoming a fully response-able person. Out of that you can build states of proactivity, take the initiative, and engage in smart risk taking—foundational states for being an entrepreneur and taking on the challenges of unleashing your highest and best.

These patterns inevitably activate your power to dream about your best life. To achieve that you meta-state your innate powers to set frames for your personal empowerment. Then by meta-stating meta-stating *self*, you develop a strong sense of self—one of self-acceptance and self-appreciation. This facilitates the development of the kind and quality of ego-strength so you can face and take on the challenges of life.

For most people, doing this is just a matter of facilitating the meta-stating that sets the frames. It may be a matter of completing a developmental stage. Others may have to find a good therapist and work through the traumas, or whatever interferes with their full and vibrant development. For some who have spent a life-time trying to be “a somebody,” the meta-stating acceptance, appreciation, and awe (esteem) absolutely transforms everything about oneself. The problem was just that no one had ever facilitated this set of liberating meta-states. How much is that worth? Then you suddenly realize that you don’t need to prove anything, rather you are free to express yourself fully.

The psychology driving the APG patterns creates a foundation for you to be unleashed to being your unique and wonderful self. Identifying the prerequisites of “genius” —the APG patterns enable you to build that foundation. In fact, the Day 1 patterns are the most essential states for actualizing your best self. From there all of the more complex states arise. That’s why we emphasize on Day 1 the child-like development pieces as captured in the words: “Mine!” “Yes!” “No!” and “Ahhhh!” (for pleasure). Day 1 patterns are designed to awaken and challenge you to be all you can be.

Day 2 meta-stating patterns focus on *clearing the path* around three big human problems: emotions, concepts, and mis-applied reflexivity. In APG we use the morning and early afternoon for de-loading the *semantic load* on these dimensions of human experience.

- *Emotions.* They are not commands from heaven, nor are they an accurate source of information. They are *just* emotions.
- *Concepts.* Your concepts are just ideas, thoughts, or understandings that operate as a map about things out in the world. So, they are not externally real, and should not be so treated.
- *Mis-applied Reflexivity.* If you take a negative thought or emotion and *turn it against* yourself—you create, metaphorically, a demon or dragon. Yet these thoughts-and-feelings (states), when you turn these against yourself, you put yourself at odds with you!

In APG we use these patterns for getting unstuck from strong emotional states, from having our “buttons” pushed, feeling controlled, dis-empowered, and helpless, or being our own worst enemy. The patterns enable you to *unleash yourself from* these things.

The rest of Day 2 uses patterns for *unleashing yourself toward* your visions and goals. The Mind-to-Muscle pattern takes great ideas that you already know, but do not live, and translate what you know into your muscle-memory. This meta-stating feeds forward your best understandings. Now you can take a great idea *and feed that information forward into your body by mobilizing your powers of speech and behavior in taking effective action.* This enables you to “coach your body to *feel* a great idea.” Doing this makes you an implementor—you execute what you know. You close the knowing-doing gap.

Then with the Miracle Pattern, you meta-state possibility thinking so that if “the kind of thinking” that

creates a problem can't solve it, you access a different kind of thinking. This is good for various stuck states. It give you a chance to try on an entirely different kind of thinking-feeling to open up new vistas of possibilities.

On APG Day 3 you meta-state focus and then build a “genius” state of engagement so you can step into the flow state at will. By meta-stating intentionality, you energize what you *know* is important, but does not *feel* important. By this pattern you link intention and attention. This oftentimes cures what has been mis-diagnosed as ADD or AHAD and enables you to stay focused and engaged.

In the Genius State pattern, you set the frames and then practice steppig in and out of “the flow zone”—your optimal state for a particular engagement. This is the ultimate state for self-actualizing. The rest of Day 3 focuses on aligning things for congruence. We use three patterns: Excuse Blow-Out, Spinning Icons, and Meta-Alignment. The first helps you to stop letting yourself off the hook by making excuses from going for excellence. To prevent that, you learn how to blow-out any and every excuse.

Then for all of your “parts” that may pull you into different directions, you can use your vestibular sensory system to create a dis-equilibrium that will shake up the old system. Spinning Icons is a pattern that works with the larger part of your mind that's outside of conscious awareness. The Meta-Alignment pattern pulls all of your higher levels of mind to create a laser-beam of focus on an important behavior that you want to do with more elegance, focus, and power.

Taken together these 14 APG patterns from Self-Actualization and Developmental Psychology enables you to create the foundation for your “genius” or “flow” state. If you're ready for APG— see the following list of trainings to find one near you.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #3
January 14, 2016
Re: A Report on The NLP Leadership Summit
the 4th Summit at Alicante, Spain

FORGING A NEW FUTURE FOR NLP

A truly *historical event* occurred January 8, 9 and 10 in the coastal city of Alicante Spain, on the Mediterranean Sea. It occurred when 33 top leaders in the field of NLP came together representing 13 countries and multiple languages for a conversation of a lifetime. Another ten were expected, but for family issues and other things at the last minute they were not able to come. These leaders typically were key leaders in various National Associations of NLP around the world— The Association of NLP of the UK, of Germany, of the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, etc. and we even had one of the original co-founders of NLP with us, Frank Pucelik from the Ukraine.

For three full days officially from 10 am to 7 pm, and many more hours at breakfast and in the pub, we had many of the conversations that the field has needed to have for the past 40 years. We actually began these four years ago when we began the half-day (4 hour) Summits in London prior to the NLP London Conference. We began those Summits to know each other and become acquainted with each other so that it began to build trust between us. And what we did there was taken to a much, much higher level in this three-day intensive. Several commented on the level of trust and sense of community that has emerged among us.

The Idea of a “Summit”

In the world of politics, when an issue or a problem arises in a country and it is too big, too overwhelming, too global a problem for the leaders of one country to solve, often an invitation will go out to the leaders of half a dozen countries or a dozen or two dozen to come together to talk about it. They call that conversation, *a Summit*. The Summit has no power, no organization, no army, no budget, etc. It is just a meeting of leaders to put their heads together to talk about a shared problem or a shared challenge. Sometimes, however, out of such Summits, arise an Alliance that is empowered by all of the countries.

The *NLP Leadership Summit* is similar. The Summit, as such, has no “authority” to prescribe or control. It is a place, or perhaps more accurately *an experience*, wherein the top leaders come together to encounter a shared problem or challenge. That’s what we have done. And what has emerged, ever so slowly (well, for my tastes) is a growing sense of collaboration and willingness to take some effective actions to address the problems of “negative press,” misrepresentations, lack of an international unifying body, the “cowboys” giving NLP a bad name, etc.

One problem in the field of NLP has been the divisiveness—the separating into individualistic camps. This has led to the Elephant-in-the-room problem that every person new to NLP excitedly and

surprisingly asks, “Do the leaders of NLP talk to each other?” “Do they get along?” “Why are there these divisions and camps?” “Why don’t the leaders apply NLP to themselves?” For years, many of us talked this way primarily with regard to Richard Bandler and John Grinder. Then we spoke about it regarding those who have been carrying the mantle of leadership from them.

The good news is that today we can say, “The top leaders of NLP are talking and attempting to work together.” “And they are also forging ahead looking for how we can co-create the kind of future for NLP that we all want— a future wherein the model/s of NLP are recognized, found credible, and is progressing in the world as it enables people to change their lives for the better and become their best selves.”

Accomplishments to Date

From the second Summit, we created a website, www.nlpleadershipsommit.org. We also discovered that we could agree upon a list of values, ethics, and a basic definition of NLP. In this fourth Summit, I think everyone realized what a few said repeatedly, “We have so much more in common than I ever thought.” I would guess that 80% or more of what we think of as NLP and what we do we have in common and agree upon. And regarding the ethics and professionalism, I think that we are nearly 100% in agreement.

From this summit we formed six Project Groups which will be working to produce different things and many of these will be on the website. We will also be producing a small book *Powered by NLP: The 2016 NLP Leadership Summit*. This will provide documentation of the Summit in a variety of ways— articles, poems, stories, pictures, even jokes.

What we did during the Summit was experience *co-leadership*. That’s not easy. I think it could be said that everyone of the leaders present is a person of strong opinions and a person who gets things done. They are not just talkers. They are there, in part, and self-funded themselves to come because they are successful in their own right in using NLP. Many (probably most) are or were trainers, entrepreneurs who run or had run Training Centers. Others are therapists, consultants, coaches, or researchers. And as the saying goes, leading a group of strongwilled people like that is “trying to herd cats.”

In facilitating the group, Heidi Heron and myself, set up the processes so that everyone had a opportunity to be in front of the group and present what one of the three (or more) smaller groups had deliberated on. We also facilitated conversations within the larger group— and many times it became very animated. Yet, amazingly, we truly kept applying the NLP Communication Model to ourselves so the conversations were respectful and considerate even when the conversations became intense. I felt proud of the group and everyone in the group.

On to the Future of the field of NLP

The next **NLP Leadership Summit** will be Friday April 15 in London just prior to the NLP Conference. And the next 3-day Intensive Summit will be **January 12, 13, 14, 2018** and we will return to the same hotel in Alicante Spain.

Open Invitation to the Field of NLP

We now have over 100 top leaders in the field of NLP listed on the website:

www.nlpleadershipsummit.org. Any “Leader” in this field is welcomed to join this “tribe of elders” if they meet the following criteria:

- 1) You have been in the field of NLP as a “leader” for 15 years or more.
- 2) You are committed to high standards for NLP which means you not engaged in things that lower the quality, like doing NLP Practitioner training as a 5-day workshop.
- 3) You are “good” with the definition of NLP we have on the website and able to “sign off” on it?
- 4) There is someone on the NLP Leadership Summit who will recommend you as an ethical and professional person.
- 5) You are a “leader” because you have been teaching, training, coaching, and/or influencing people to enter the field of NLP and they consider you a leader.
- 6) You are a part of a recognized NLP Association which has a Code of Ethics that you are held to.

Participants as of 2 January 2016

Netherlands

Anneke Durlinger, Netherlands
Anneke Meijer, Netherlands
Jaap Hollander, Netherlands
Lucas Derks, Netherlands

France

Brian van der Horst, France
Gilles Roy, France

UK

Bruce Grimley, UK
Joe Cheal, UK
John McLachlan, UK Ireland
Judith Lowe, UK
Karen Meager, UK
Lisa de Rijk, UK
Melody Cheal, UK
Reb Veale, UK

Scotland

John McWhirter, Scotland

Chile

Fabiola Escobar, Chile

Ukraine

Frank Pucelik, Ukraine

Australia

Heidi Heron, Australia
Laureli Blyth, Australia

Germany

Karl Nielsen, Germany
Nandana Nielsen, Germany

Portugal

Luzia Wittmann, Portugal

USA

Michael Hall, USA
Rachel Hott, USA
Steven Leeds, USA

Canada

Shelle Rose Charvet, Canada

Switzerland

Ueli Frischknecht, Switzerland
Hedi Roulin, Switzerland

Romania

Catalin Zaharia, Romania

Those who were planning but could not make it at the last moment

UK

Michael Carroll, UK

Norway

Lene Fjellheim, Norway

Austria

Peter Schutz, Austria

Australia

Terry McClendon, Australia

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #4
January 18, 2016
History of NLP Series

THE 7 GENIUSES OF NLP

The Maven, Connector, and Salesman and the Patron Saints

How NLP Really was Created

I want to tell a story. I can't say that it is absolutely correct; it could be way off. But it is the best thinking and understanding about the origin of NLP that I know at this date. For more about this see the 17 articles on the History of NLP that I wrote ([www.neurosemantics.com / Writings](http://www.neurosemantics.com/Writings)). You can also compare *The Wild Days of NLP (1971-1981)* by Terry McClendon (1989) and Grinder's book which I provoked, *The Origins of NLP* (2013) and the review that book (Neurons, 2013, #23, May 13, 2013).

Malcolm Gladwell writes in *Tipping Points* (2000) that in a social movement of change, "some people matter more than others." That's because "when people are in a group, responsibility for acting is diffused." There are three agents of change in a social movement who bring about a new phenomenon in the world. The three key roles are: the maven, the connector, and the salesman. He says it takes all three roles to effectively initiate a new movement. Using this as a template, then we can ask: Who played these roles in the origin of NLP? Who was the maven, the connector, and the salesman? Here is my answer to these questions.

Connectors: The connectors are people with a special gift for bringing the world together. What makes a person a connector is knowing lots of people (Gladwell, 2000, p. 38). They have a knack for making friends and acquaintances. Connectors like people, like being around people, like seeing people develop and grow. Today we call this social intelligence.

Mavens: The word *maven* comes from Yiddish and means one who accumulates knowledge. Mavens know something that others don't. As an information broker, they may be avid readers, or researchers, or persons who have access to special knowledge. A maven who has "knowledge and social skills" can start word-of-mouth epidemics (Gladwell, p. 67).

Salesmen: These are people with the skills of persuasion. They may be persuasive because of their energy, enthusiasm, charm, likeability, speaking skills, etc. They get rapport and trust and then are able to lead people.

The Mavens. The persons who had specialized knowledge or skill were **Richard Bandler** and **John Grinder**. Grinder in Transformational Grammar (TG) simply because that was his area of expertise. He did his doctorate in TG, worked with the founder Noam Chomsky, and worked with the other founder of Cognitive Psychology movement, George Miller in his lab. And two years prior to the formal founding of NLP (1975) with the publishing of *The Structure of Magic*, John and Suzette Haden published a preliminary version of the Meta-Model in the book, *Guide to Transformational Grammar: History, Theory, Practice*. And Richard's specialized "knowledge" was his mimicking/ copying skills so that he could somehow pick up on the patterning in Perls, then Satir, and then laer Erickson without

knowing how he did so. By the way, Richard was never a “mathematician” or a “computer programmer.” Those were classes he took at Kresge College when he was 20 years old. Both of his degrees were in psychology.

The Connector. This describes the person who can get people together, who can create collaborations or coalitions and hold a group together. The person who had the inter-personal skills for pulling people together to work together was **Frank Pucelik**. Frank and his wife Judith DeLozier moved to Santa Cruz after he got out of the army and time in Vietnam and studied psychology and Gestalt at the very time when the new College, Kresge, was beginning in 1971. Somehow he and Richard got together, became good friends and Frank sat things up with the college so that they could do the “Gestalt Class” for college credit. Later when Richard got John involved, Frank and John began good friends (so much so that when Judith left Frank for John, John raised Frank’s son, Eric). Frank also got together the first group of some 17 people and organized them as the experimental laboratory for the discoveries that later became NLP.

The Salesman. The “salesman” (salesperson) is the person who can get information out so that the specialized knowledge of the mavens can have a wider influence. Those who did that for the origin of NLP were four: first, **Robert Dilts**, then **Steve and Connair Andreas**, and then **Anthony Robins**. Robert Dilts did it through his studies while still a student and studying for his master degree—which was published in *Roots of NLP*, *Applications of NLP*, and then Bandler and Grinder commissioned him to write the authoritative work, *Neuro-Linguistic Programming: The Study of the Structure of Experience* (1980). This made NLP far more widely available and made it read-able and truly accessible.

Steve and Connair Andreas did the same by writing and publishing the four seminar books: *Frogs into Princes*, *Trance-Formations*, *Reframing*, and *Using Your Brain for a Change*. These were the books that put NLP into the world of psychotherapy. When *Trance-formations* sold 380,000 copies, it made NLP a house-hold name in the field of therapy. Steve also brought into NLP the credibility he had built for years as a key leader in Gestalt Therapy as John Stevens. He established a place for NLP in the Ericksonian Conferences. Anthony Robins then took it further by essentially putting the NLP Practitioner training into the book, *Unlimited Power* (1985)—selling multiple millions of copies. Then with a genius in marketing, he made NLP known to literally millions and even today still influences more people to come into NLP than anyone else.

When we ask the question, “Who really created NLP?” there is not a simple or single answer. *It really took a community to create it.* Richard as one maven offered the amazing possibility of learning by modeling. John created a code for how that worked. Frank developed a community of people to test and refine the models (Meta-Model, Representational Model, Strategy Model). Then Robert, Steve and Connair, and Anthony got the word out. Each of these seven had their own genius which collaboratively brought the movement together as a field.

NLP could not have been created without them. NLP as we know it today has developed from the combination of these seven geniuses. And because there was a community, two original “groups” which tested and refined the beginning models—there are scores and scores of highly significant people who also made it happen. Together they were able to innovate the models that we now call NLP (PNL).

And the patron saints? None other than **Abraham Maslow** and **Carl Rogers**. They were the ones who established the premises and principles of the new humanistic psychology that have now become the “NLP Presuppositions.” They established the idea of the healthy side of human nature, what I have designed as “the bright side,” in contrast to the sick and dark side. And unknown to most, Kresge College as a new experimental college that began in 1971 was dedicated to the ideas of Rogers and except for the funding of the college, it would have been called the Carl Rogers College. They were the ones who conceptually led the human potential movement from the 1940s through the 1960s and among those who became the second generation leaders of the human potential movement were Bateson, Perls, and Satir.

META-STATING YOUR PSYCHO-LOGICS FOR THE NEW YEAR

A New Year has arrived and with its arrival our thoughts naturally turn to what the new year holds and what we’d like to accomplish in it. Thinking about what you’d like to achieve then brings up the question of how—what skills or processes can you use to make this a fabulous year? One answer is to meta-state your psycho-logics so it serves to enhance you and all you do.

“Psycho-logics?” What is that? What does it mean to *meta-state* it? How do you do that? And why?

If the term is new to you, it refers to the “logic” that you use as you think and that you create by your thinking. Originally invented by Alfred Korzybski in *Science and Sanity* (1933), it describes human nature. You and I are *psycho-logical*; our lives are *psycho-logical*. Korzybski put a hyphen in the word “psychology” to create “psycho-logy.” In this way he distinguished two kinds of *logic*. One kind deals with the logic (reasoning, understanding) you study in school for mapping the *external* world. The second addresses the unique and idiosyncratic logic you use to map your *internal* world.

What then are *psycho-logics*? How are you and I psycho-logical? We are psycho-logical because inside we are free to *set* any state, thought, feeling, memory, imagination, decision, etc. as a *frame* for experience. If you know the Meta-States Model, this is the meta-stating process. Here, by bringing one mental-emotional state, even physiological state to another, you not only create a meta-state, you also create internal *logic* for your experience. The higher level thinking, feeling, and/or physiology becomes a class (classification) for the lower. It creates your particular logic or thinking.

- What is your particular *logic* about the new year?
- What is your particular *logic* about new year’s resolutions?
- What’s your particular *logic* about setting goals?

To find out simply reflect about what do you think and feel *about* these ideas. What do you think and feel about the idea of a “new year?” Your *thoughts-and-feelings about* (i.e. your meta-state frame) any of these ideas creates your internal category/classification. It comprises your inner “logic”—your psycho-logics. If you think, “I don’t like goals setting, it just sets me up for disappointment,” you are meta-stating yourself with “anticipated disappointment tinged with dislike.” That becomes your frame-of-mind about it. It becomes the “logic” (your reasoning and meaning-making) about it—your thinking pattern.

- What do you think about charting your future with some fantastic new goals?
- What do you think about yourself as someone who acts on and makes your goals real?
- What do you think and feel about the goals you sat last year?

No wonder you proliferate meta-states all over the place! This, by the way, answers the question that John Grinder once asked of me, “Why so many meta-states?” Mostly because it is inevitable! Now depending whether your thoughts-and-feelings *about* these things are positive and supportive or negative and limiting—so are your frames, beliefs, decisions, attitudes, and state of mind. That’s the nature of the meta-levels. When you *go meta* and set some thought, feeling, belief, category, decision, etc. at a higher level—it becomes your *frame* (as in frame-of-mind, frame-of-meaning).

It also becomes your attitude. Have you ever wondered how you create “attitudes” that predispose or set your mind, body, habits, lifestyle, etc. in a certain way? The answer is simple: *You meta-state those attitudes into existence*. The stuff out of which you do that is the same stuff of all meta-levels: thoughts, feelings, and physiology. In Neuro-Semantics we define “attitude” as the composite of your multiple *frames of mind* about something. Knowing that, you now have a clue for how to de-commission an old attitude and build up a new one (see the pattern, *Super-Charging Your Attitude*).

Coming back to the subject of the new year—what’s your attitude? What psycho-logics do you use? What would you like it to be? What attitude would be truly a new frame of mind for you that would support you in unleashing more of your potentials? In fact, what if you spent this year focusing more on setting *attitude goals* than you did on the traditional goals of more time at the gym, more time reading, more time with your loved ones, etc.?

Undoubtedly you already know the reason. To win at the outer game of health, fitness, career, relationships, wealth, etc. you first have to win the inner game. That’s what attitude is all about. Win at your attitude, super-charge your attitude, custom design the attitude that you want to empower you through the challenges of life, then as you win the inner game, the outer game becomes a cinch (see *Winning the Inner Game* (2007)). All of this gives us some very different questions for this new year:

- What inner game are you not winning that you want to win at?
- What inner game do you need to win to really succeed outwardly in the external game?
- What frame of mind do you have about effort, discipline, patience, long-term commitment, mastery, problems, and the other facets that make up character and a winning personality?

There’s no escaping your own psycho-logics. Everywhere you go, everything you say, and every emotion you experience is a result of your inner psycho-logics. Whatever reasoning, reasons, ideas, states, thoughts, feelings, etc. that you bring to your states sets the next level of *logics* for your mind and your emotions. The real question is: *What is the quality of your psycho-logics?* This is critical. After all, the quality of your psycho-logics is the quality of your life. Your life, in fact, can be no better than the quality of the frames that you set through your meta-stating.

As you begin this new year, realize more fully than ever before that you are psycho-logical. So do you like your psycho-logics? Do your psycho-logics enhance and empower you? If not, are you ready to engage a Neuro-Semanticist for updating and enriching your psycho-logics? We have lots of coaches and trainers who can do precisely that. Here’s to the most ecological and robust psycho-logics for you so that you can live the life that fulfills your inner dreams and passions!

WAYS OF THINKING

Differences in Politics and Business

How a person *thinks* determines how that person *talks* and *acts*. We all know that and, strange as it seems, we all also tend to forget it. We forget it as we get caught up in the content of a person's talk and actions, then we forget that it is a function of that person's thinking. We react to something said or done *assuming* that we know what it means— it means (to us) what it would mean *if* we had said or done that. We call that “projection.” Yet in spite of this immersion into the content of words and actions—what is said and done is a function of the person's thinking patterns.

In NLP we think of *thinking patterns* using the Meta-Programs Model and the Meta-Model Model and distinctions. Meta-Programs are perceptual filters that govern how we think— we may see things optimistically or pessimistically. We may see things that match what we know or mismatch. These meta-programs distinctions govern the filters by which we view things. Meta-Model distinctions are the linguistic codes which filter and describe our style of talking. We may use cause-effect statements, “this causes that” when they are only correlations and not causes.

In these two models, we have lots of distinctions. We have 60 meta-programs (see *Figuring Out People*, 1997) and we have 22 meta-model distinctions (see *Communication Magic*, 2001). In actual experience of life each of us have a configuration of these— a set (or group) of these that make up a larger pattern or syndrome. This gives us lots of variables when it comes to modeling an expert. So let's apply these to the different ways that characterize people who succeed in business, in politics, and in television.

Political thinking is generally “careful” thinking. Afraid that they will offend people, their language tends to degenerate into language that is “politically correct.” Politicians think in terms of how others could or might misinterpret things. So in being careful, they parse words and speak with sufficient vagueness so that it does not cut a hard edge. Politicians are highly aware of the danger of being disliked and getting bad press and so work hard to avoid it. They can also speak empty words. It is common to hear a politician speak and sense that it is meaningful, then afterwards realize that for all of the words, he said nothing. Politicians often engage in what we call “spin.” They spin a story so that it sounds better for them and within the spin they cover-up things. Think of Richard Nixon or Bill Clinton. When politics goes bad, then they become highly partisan and the favoritism degrades into nepotism. In the political world, things are often black-or-white, all-or-nothing— you either win the election or lose it.

Business thinking is oriented to action, to getting things done. After all, business only succeeds if it

creates products, services, and information that meet a need that people will pay for. Business generally gets feedback quickly and people who are successful listen to it and make adjustments. They have to keep up with the pace of change, watch what's happening to markets, and be flexible enough to be ready to change. For small business owners and entrepreneurs know that the money their investing is their own. So they are more economically knowledgeable and disciplined. The *business thinking* of highly successful entrepreneurs is characterized mostly by being straight, honest, saying what they mean, not mincing words, and thinking big. This is the thinking that characterizes Richard Branson, Warren Buffet, Jack Welch, etc. Business thinking is typically a matter of degree and not all-or-nothing. The question is, "How many customers do we need to make a profit?" When business goes bad, there's corruption, theft, embezzlement, fly-by-night operations, etc.

Entertainment or Marketing thinking is oriented to getting people's attention. The focus is on the things that grab attention—what's immediate, loud, bright, extreme, big, bold, involves win/lose, celebrities, etc. This thinking also focuses on delivering what's promised, knowing that if all of the sparking and energy doesn't deliver the goods, the audience will leave and go elsewhere. The turn-around is short and quick.

Now imagine a celebrity business person entering the political realm! Wouldn't that be wild? Well, we have that today in the political campaigns occurring now in the United States. Listening and watching the current American political campaigns and debates, the "Establishment" candidates (Hillary on the Democratic side and Bush, Kasich, Rubio, etc. on the Republican side) don't seem to be able to understand or figure out Bernie Sanders (Democratic side) and Donald Trump (Republican side). They don't get it. Why? They have a different thinking style and the Establishment people don't seem to have the flexibility to even imagine thinking outside of the box.

Of course, the person who really stands out in this is Donald Trump. He uniquely combines both *business* and *entertainment thinking*. He also seems to fully understand the pattern of *political thinking* and intentionally violates it. He doesn't just avoid it, it aims to *violate* it and to use that violation for marketing. To understand the way he thinks, the following comes from his 1987 book, *The Art of the Deal*. What I find amazing is that just about everything he is doing today, he wrote and described some 29 years ago. And if you don't know that he's strategic in what he's doing, you will probably think that he's a wild-card, crazy, uninformed, etc. But reading the book again, I think it is intentional, planned, and highly strategic—the way he negotiates.

About *political thinking*:

"He was a politician, and he wanted to see which way the winds were blowing before he took a stand."
(108)

"I discovered that politicians don't care too much what things cost. It's not their money." (111)

"Raise the possibility of bad press, even in an obscure publication, and most politicians will jump."
(306)

"Worst of all, no one in the city government bureaucracy is held accountable for the failure. ... You don't reward failure by promoting those responsible for it, because all you'll get is more failure." (322-323)

About *business thinking*:

“I like thinking big. I always have. To me it’s very simple: if you’re going to be *thinking* anyway, you might as well think big.” (46)

“I wasn’t satisfied just to earn a good living. I was looking to make a statement. I was out to build something monumental. ... What attracted me was the challenge of building a spectacular development...” (47). “One of the keys to thinking big is total focus.”

“I’m a businessman, and I learned a lesson from that experience: good publicity is preferable to bad, but from a bottom-line perspective, bad publicity is sometimes better than no publicity at all. Controversy, in short, sells. So, it turned out, does glamour.” (176)

Long-term thinking: “I was prepared to be as patient— and as persistent— as I needed to be.” (252)

Strategic thinking: “You don’t act on an impulse—even a charitable one—unless you’ve considered the downside.” (264)

On negotiating and making deals:

“The best thing you can do is deal from strength, and leverage is the biggest strength you can have. Leverage is having something the other guy wants.” (53)

“I am very competitive and I’ll do nearly anything within legal bounds to win.” (108)

“There are times when you have to be aggressive, but there are also times when your best strategy is to lie back.” (223)

“I fight when I feel I’m getting screwed...” (236)

“Deals work best when each side gets something it wants from the other.” (335)

About *marketing thinking*:

“One thing I’ve learned about the press is that they’re always hungry for a good story, and the more sensational the better. T’s in the nature of the job ... The point is that if you are little different, or a little outrageous, or if you do things that are bold or controversial, and my deals tend to be ambitious.” (56)

“When I talk with reporters is to be straight. I try not to deceive them or to be defensive, because those are precisely the ways most people get themselves into trouble.” (57)\

“The way I promote is bravado. I play to people’s fantasies. ... a little hyperbole never hurts.” (58)

“... I understand now that certain events can take on a symbolic importance.” (175)

About Leadership:

“Leadership is perhaps the key to getting any job done. There wasn’t a single day when I didn’t check on the progress we were making on the rink. Most days, I visited the site personally.” (316)

Understanding Trump’s *Thinking*

Combining the patterns of business and entertainment thinking, a dominant aspect of Trump’s speech patterns is that of *bigness*. He is bigger than life and his vision is bigger than life. So he begins by exaggerating—using “universal quantifiers” he states things so that they grab your attention, stops the presses, and dominates the news. When he does that, he’s “entertaining” and “marketing.” Then when he has stopped the presses and has an excited media all around him pushing in with questions, he calms down his statement.

Politicians on both sides don’t understand. They take each and every word, parse it, create a campaign against it— all the while Trump is on to the next thing to control the media cycle! In the end, he “sets the frame” or controls the agenda of the media and the others run around trying to use it for political gain. But it doesn’t seem to work. He’s having fun, saying many things in jest and because they are

so serious, they get stupid in their counter-attacks.

In this, he is thinking about the larger picture, the long-term strategy, and they are caught up by short-term thinking. They think that the “bad press” he gets from throwing out some outrageous statement will be the end of him. But he embraces the bad press and uses it for all its worth. They are afraid to be politically incorrect. He embraces political incorrectness and mines it for all the publicity he can get.

From his top-rated TV show “The Apprentice” and “Celebrity Apprentice” he has demonstrated that he fully understands how to build drama, capture attention, create suspense, and use cliff-hanging drama to make his points. Now those shows were business shows. How boring, yet he turned them into one of the most highly watched and rated TV shows ever. The others don’t understand, nor does the media. They call him a clown, a showman, wild, dangerous— and he loves it. All of that plays right into his hands as it gets even more attention and larger crowds. People tune in to see what outrageous thing he will say! All the while the Establishment candidates complain that they can’t get any air time.

Yet behind all of that entertainment is a business man who looks at things through the lens of cost, productivity, results, and effectiveness. How it will all turnout—who knows? There’s no predicting, we just have to wait to see. Yet so far, Trump has certainly been a game changer in the field of politics. He is breaking all the rules of the old political game and breathing new air into the whole process.

Post Note:

I wrote the above last week and before Trump’s boycott of tonight’s debate. My take on it is that he is, again, negotiating. It’s risky, it’s outside every political box that people have thought in, and it is absolutely fascinating to see what will come of it. From a psychological and neuro-semantic perspective—it is very different thinking and framing! And certainly, “he who sets the frame controls the game.”

One politician, Como once said that politics campaign with poetry, and then govern with prose.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections #
Unpublished March, 2016

WHAT I LIKE & DISLIKE ABOUT DONALD J. TRUMP

The adventure of campaign politics continues in the US and it is coming down to two candidates left on both the key parties, the Republicans and the Democrats. After being outside of the US on a five-week tour and seeing/hearing US Politics through the media in Egypt, Indonesia and the Philippines as well as talking with people in each country, I was actually stunned by many of the things I heard. I shouldn't be, traveling outside of the US most of the time during the past twenty-years, I thought I was pretty well adapted to the distortions. But I have not adapted well enough. During that time, I also conducted my first training in *Political Coaching*. Breakthrough Consulting and the University of Asia and the Pacific sponsored it in Manila Philippines. I think we had 15 Meta-Coaches present, preparing themselves— so watch out Philippines.

I expect the media everywhere to distort the news, spin it to fit the agenda of the media, to focus on the bad news, to use “gotta questions,” etc. I expect that when I'm in the US and when I travel. But this time I heard the news distorted in absolutely outrageous ways. Most of it was against Donald Trump. Now many years ago (early 1990s) when I studied and modeled “wealth creation” I studied the biographies of a dozen billionaires, Trump being one of them. Later he collaborated with Robert Kyosaki (“Rich Dad/ Poor Dad” and “Cash Flow Quadrants”) to write “We Want You Rich.” So when I mentioned entrepreneurs and recommended Trump, I got sighs and hummps. When I asked about that, I heard just how crazy the distortions had become. In the end, I had to say that “95% of what you have been hearing about him is just wrong. It's not true at all.” That's when several asked what I liked about Trump and someone else shouted out, “and what you dislike!”

I like him speaking his mind and stubbornly refusing to be “politically correct” (PC). Before this year, not being PC has been like kryptonite to anyone who was politically incorrect. But not so with Trump. He can touch on what is politically incorrect it without it destroying him to the dismay of the pundits who keep predicting his demise. Apparently I'm not the only one who likes him speaking his mind, speaking without a script, and speaking in the way that ordinary people speak. With him, there's none of the calculated speech designed to offend none and say what everybody can be okay with. Of course, such speech is usually insipid, boring, and non-committal.

I like him for being an outsider to Washington. The career politicians of Washington are the problem along with their lobbyists who seem to own the political process in spite of the will expressed by the voters. By self-funding and by refusing political donations other than small donates of \$10 and \$25 from regular people, he owes no one any vote or favors. I like that. I think we need a person with a good business head on his shoulders and not these career politicians who don't know what it is to work

for a dollar, or how to run a business, or the challenges of hiring and firing and getting good people, and training and coaching people, and dealing with all of the government regulations and taxes. Most politicians don't seem to understand.

I like him for putting women in positions of power since 1985. He put women into positions of senior managers in his companies, even CEOs. He was doing that long time before it became politically correct. Of course, this stands in contradistinction to what people are saying that he says about women. The difference is that his negative comments about particular women, just like his rough comments about particular men, and not about a category of people, but specific persons. And yes he can be crude about that (see what I don't like about him, below). But the way he deals with women, the way he puts them in positions of power, is something that I appreciate.

I like his business acumen and practical ability to get things done. I began following Trump back in the early 1990, modeling him as an entrepreneur and wealth creator and the one thing that he has consistently done for 40 years is build magnificent buildings under budget and under the time frame. Today his brand stands for luxury and high quality. He knows how to create a team, hire the brightest and best, watch the numbers, and deliver what he promises.

Conversely, there are things that I do not like. *I do not like his name calling and insults.* I think I know why he does it, to play the media and get media attention. The downside of it is the way his opponents spin it and then label him with the worst of names, racist, women hater, etc. obviously, he used the name calling at first to get publicity and it worked for him. But there's been too much of it, far too much.

I do not like his over-generalizing. Obviously, again, he used that at to say things that were very politically incorrect, like Mexico is sending rapists and the worst of people, to get the media to surround him and give him lots of air-time. What much of media and others failed to notice is that he said it once, got the media all stirred up and running to get his comments about that, and then he never said it again. The over-generalization worked to grab the media by the nose and do the marketing for him. But the downside is that people run with the over-generalizing. They run with the idea that he is a racist and ignore all of the facts and all of his statements to the contrary.

I do not like the way he gives people things to use against him. Because he doesn't speak in politically correct terms, but off the cuff and sometimes in very rough language, it gives his opponents lots of things they can use against him, things that sound terrible like racist, sexist, etc. when that's not the case.

I do not like the way he criticizes Megyn Kelly. For some reason, Trump has seemed to single out anchor-woman Megyn Kelly and created a fight with her about her reporting and the questions she asks. This has never made any sense to me. Even if she was asking some "gotta questions," which I don't think she did, but even if that was the case—a great many reporters do that. It certainly keeps him, and her, in the news— if that's the purpose. Anyway, what's the big deal? I think he should apologize and get on with it.

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #7
February 1, 2016
Meta-States “Genius” Series (APG) #11

META-STATES LAUNCHES IN SANTA CRUZ

Back in the 1970s **NLP** began in Santa Cruz California. That was the place where NLP was launched. That is where we have had two leadership conferences, one *Visionary Leadership Conference* in 1997 and the other *Millennial Project* in 2000. That is where Robert Dilts and Teresa Epstein created and run NLP U and where every year they hold NLP U presenting Prac. and Master Prac. and other trainings in the summer. So my dream for years has been to take the Meta-States Model to Santa Cruz.

But I’ve never been invited to do that. Yes, Robert Dilts invited me to share at the *Millennial Project* in 2000 and I did present the Meta-Yes pattern at that time. But neither I nor any one else has every presented the Meta-States Model (APG) in Santa Cruz. 2016 will change that and I would like to hereby invite you to join us.

But you may wonder, “Is the Meta-States Model NLP?” Yes, of course. 21 years ago, the International Trainer’s Association of NLP awarded me an award for the Meta-States Model for “the most significant contribution to NLP, 1995.” So yes, it is integral to NLP. During the 1990s I wrote scores and scores of articles on the Meta-States Model in all of the NLP journals— Rapport, Resource, Anchor Point, NLP World, etc. The Meta-States Model has also now been mentioned in dozens and dozens of NLP books. There are even NLP Trainers who include a section on Meta-States in their basic NLP Trainings. In the book that I and Shelley Rose Charvet edited, *Innovations in NLP*, Meta-States is included there.

Further, the Meta-States Model expands and details what has been in NLP all along—“the meta move,” “the meta function,” and “the meta position.” What the Meta-States Model discovered was the whole realm of self-reflexivity hidden inside the little ^m move in the strategy processes as presented over and over and over in *NLP Volume I* (1980). And that entire hidden realm of reflexivity was the central theme of *Science and Sanity* (1933) of Korzybski. In fact, he said that his Theory of Multi-Ordinality and Reflexivity solved the problems that arise when people do not distinguish map and territory or the levels of abstraction (logical levels).

That’s why after the Meta-States Model was discovered, Bob Bodenhamer and I began *remodeling NLP* and that led to the nine books we co-wrote and many, many new models. That led Graham Dawes of

London to write that the Meta-States Model would be the model that would “eat NLP.” He wrote that in his original reviews of the Meta-States Model in several NLP journals.

Today the Meta-States Model not only *adds* to NLP, it actually *explains* NLP. It explains *how* the NLP Communication Model, Meta-Program Model, Strategies Model, Sub-Modalities Model and all of the NLP change patterns work. A clue— they work by the hidden frames which these models set at a higher or meta-state level. That’s why and how the Meta-States Model *takes NLP to a higher level*. If you don’t know that, then the APG training that reveals the essence of the Meta-States Model in a three-day training will be truly eye-opening for you.

The value is that you will discover *how* the dynamic patterns and models of NLP actually work. And knowing that, you’ll be able both to appreciate NLP in a much deeper way and, in your mind, you will see the link between the models and patterns. It will give you a much more thorough and systemic understanding of NLP.

All of this and more will be presented in Santa Cruz as we launch the Meta-States Model from the place where it all began. This will happen in **March** and you are invited to come and be a part of it. If you have already been through APG, come and revisit (50% discount for those revisiting).

I am delighted that *Damon Cart* and *Logan Christopher*, who started **The NLP Gym** in Santa Cruz have invited me to come and present the *Accessing Personal Genius* (APG) training. Today, they are the only persons providing NLP training year-round in Santa Cruz and this event is also my way to support them as they are supporting me. The time has certainly come to re-assert NLP in the United States where it has been dormant for many years and with the APG training in Santa Cruz, I hope this will energize the other NLP and Neuro-Semantic trainers who are a part of the Institute of Neuro-Semantics — United States (Website link: <http://www.insusa.org>).

Bottom Line:

The Dates for this event — **March 18-20, 2016.**

The Place — Santa Cruz, California, USA.

The Hotel — Best Western Hotel: <http://www.bestwesternsantacruz.com>.

The Sponsors — *The NLP Gym*.

— Damon Cart and Logan Christopher.

The Contact information: damon@nlp-gym.com or logan@nlp-gym.com
testing55678@gmail.com

The Subject: — *Accessing Personal Genius, An Introduction to the Meta-States Model.*

Come and join us!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #8
February 8, 2016
Meta-States “Genius” Series (APG) #12

MAY ALL YOUR META-STATES COALESCE

When you *meta-state* a resourceful thought, belief, state, emotion, or physiology, you bring that piece of experience to your current experience and apply it to the state of mind, emotion, or body that you are in. That’s what “meta-stating” means. You apply joy to learning and create joyful learning. You access and apply respect to anger to create respectful anger. In Neuro-Semantics, we talk about this as *coalescing*. The state you access and apply *coalesces* into the first state. Given that, you may have several questions.

“What exactly is this coalescing? How does this coalescing work? What’s going on when one state coalesces into another state? What are some examples of this coalescing?”

The idea of coalescing is that of two things that “grow together,” that “unite into a whole,” and that “fuse together.” Water and coffee beans do that. Put hot boiling water on the ground up coffee bean and presto! Coffee! Now when you hold a cup of Starbucks coffee in hand and look at the way that the water and the bean coalesce, think about how you would separate the two. “Impossible!” The water and the bean have so coalesced that they are one.

Coalescing your states upon states is similar to the percolating of coffee. As you take two separate things, coffee beans and water, so with taking two different states or aspects of states (thoughts, beliefs, emotions, sensations, physiology, breathing, posture, etc.) and let them inter-penetrates each other. In coffee, you heat the water and pass the boiling water through the crushed beans to get coffee. The end result is something more than water, more than coffee beans, it is something more than the sum of these parts.

Similar to when you meta-state. You take another thought or feeling to your current experience so that there’s a new alchemy. The second state starts off being *higher* or *meta* to your first state or experience. But it does not stay that way. It does not stay separate and distinct. *It coalesces into the first*. Then, from this emerges something new, something that represents a new whole or gestalt. The emergence of this gestalt creates a new kind of state that in Neuro-Semantics we call a *gestalt state*.

This is the feed-forward process that’s inherent in systems and systemic thinking. When you *feed* (or put) a new and more resourceful state, idea, meaning, belief, etc. *forward* into your current experience, you texture or percolate your previous thoughts and feelings with it. This also is an integral part of Meta-States because it is a systems model. When you make a meta-move to a higher level of awareness and bring it to your current experience, you are giving *feedback* to yourself of that higher awareness.

Then when you apply it to yourself, you are *feeding it forward*. This is also part and parcel for how we are then able to “follow the energy” of a client through his or her human system in coaching and training. Obviously, this different kind of thinking separates it from linear thinking. It is systems thinking.

Feed back is information that you get back from the world and from others “out there” beyond your nervous systems. It is *information into you*, into your system of thinking and feeling. You then feed it back another time as you put it forward into your mental representational movie. After that you can feed other thoughts back to yourself about your first thoughts. You are reflexively thinking and feeling.

Feed forward is how you transform that information into *energy*. You turn your thoughts into signals that the body transforms into feelings, urges, impulses, etc. As a metaphor, you metabolize your thoughts and meanings. As you feed this energy forward into your body, your neurology (brain, nervous systems, motor cortex, etc.) translate them into speech, behaviors, and all of your responses so they become your skills to the outside world.

All of this is involved in the *coalescing* process. You bring information inside and then you draw conclusions about it. Eventually you feed-forward information or emotion into your experience so that it becomes energy in your mind-body system. Every time you draw a conclusion and feed that conclusion back to yourself, you create more meaning, more significance. You thereby set a higher frame.

Feed forward describes how you take a higher level thought, belief, emotion, etc. and send it *back down* into your body and neurology. This is what happens in the *Mind-to-Muscle pattern*. Here you take a high level principle that you know “intellectually” is true and valid, something that you want to get yourself to do. If you did, that would make a positive difference in your life. But now you *know* and don’t *do*. To close that knowing-doing gap, this pattern enables you to linguistically drive the *principle* down into your system. You turn the principle into a *belief*, then into a *decision*, then into a *feeling* state, then an *action* to engage the external world. In the *Mind-to-Muscle process*, you feed forward a principle into your mind-body system so you *feel* the principle. You *bring that knowledge down and coach your body to feel it*.

As a metaphor, you are *metabolizing* your ideas. As you metabolize food and transform food into fuel, you do the same thing with ideas. You eat fish and chips, pizzas and tacos and somehow the fish in the river and the potatoes in the garden become part and parcel of *you*! It becomes part of your skin, eyes, fingernails, internal organs. You masticate the food, tear it apart, digest it, and then assimilate it so that what was *other* now becomes part of *self*. *Metabolism* describes a basic transformation process for how stuff “out there” comes in and becomes a living part of your biology.

Coalescing is a kind of *metabolism*. It is a metabolism of ideas and emotions as you access it and apply it to your experience. You bring mental stuff from conversations, books, symbols, etc. and masticate them as you think and reflect upon them. You tear the ideas apart, digest them and assimilate them into yourself. Similarly, you integrate beliefs and make them an integral part of yourself. This is coalescing. When you *apply* one state to another (joy to learning; calmness to fear, respect to anger, abundance to relating, etc.) and bring the two states together and allow them to become linked— *they*

can coalesce. They “unite or come together in one body or mass” so that the two become one and operate as one. This explains why a coalesced meta-state *feels like* a primary state. From the inside, you experience it as if it were one thing.

This is the process by which you are metabolizing your meanings so that you are commissioning your body to feel them. You are commissioning your neurology to experience this new gestalt. You are closing the knowing-doing gap and incorporating (put into your body or *corpus*) or *embodying* what you know in your mind. This creates the personal power of congruence. It enables you to get yourself to actually do and perform what know and believe in your mind. This unites meaning-and-performance, neurology and semantics, and knowing-and-doing. It gives you the synergy of the whole. This is what lies at the heart of self-actualizing your potentials. Are you ready to coalesce? Great! Here’s to your positive coalescing in 2016!

L. Michael Hall
Meta Reflections #9
February 15, 2016
Meta-States “Genius” Series (APG) #13

META-STATING META-MUDDLES

Last week someone asked me, “What is the heart-pulse of the Meta-States Model and why is that so important?” I liked that question because it made me stop to think about how to answer it.

If there’s a heart-pulse of the Meta-States Model, it concerns reflexivity. It concerns with *how* your self-reflexive consciousness works and *how* you can work it to your health and effectiveness. It is about how you constantly, inevitably, and forever *reflect back onto yourself*. It is about how you reflect back onto yourself with more thoughts, emotions, and physiology. It is about how you apply one state to another of your states. Yes, I know, stating it this way doesn’t sound very sexy. Stating it this way may even sound technical and boring. Yet actually it is magical.

Reflexivity is the most peculiar feature of human consciousness and it is the very essence of our consciousness that causes it to differ from that of every other creature on this planet. That’s because when you *reflect back*, you move to a position *above* what you just thought or felt and as such, this means you have just *stepped up to a meta-position*. You are no longer in reference to the world, you are in reference to your interact state. You are in reference to your thoughts, to your beliefs, to your understandings, to your memories, to your imaginations, and so on. You have turned inward. You are inside the Matrix. And because of this, whatever you think and feel *at this higher or meta-level* sets a frame *about* everything below it.

And with that, the magic begins. With that, you *classify* the lower. You *catagorize* the lower, you *embed* the previous thoughts and feelings inside of a higher frame that defines them, that positions them, that determines what you will feel about the previous thoughts and how you will respond. And with that you enter into the magical land of framing and reframing.

Here’s an example. Say you have an experience wherein you *worry* about someone or something. Do you know that one? Recall a time when you worked up a good case of worrying. Shouldn’t be too hard to do. Most of us are pretty skilled at worrying, especially about things that never happen.

Black Magic

Now to create a meta-muddle out of worry—*worry* about your worrying! That’s right, worry that your worrying is irrational and that maybe you’re losing your mind or perspective, and that if this continues, you’ll create an ulcer. Now *fear* that this may happen. Now *dread* it. Now *hate* that this is happening to you. How’s that for a sick, morbid, and very, very un-useful meta-state which is actually meta-muddle!

So far you have categorized your worry in the class of Worry (Worrisome Things). Then you classified your worry-of-your-worry in the class of Dreadful Things. Then you put all of that inside of the frame of Things to Hate. Do that and you will create some black magic. You will create a complex meta-state that will undermine your health, peace of mind, and effectiveness. And with it you just might send enough messages to your nervous system to actually create an ulcer.

White Magic

But what if you want to create some white magic? Okay, let's start with *worry* again. Got it? Now step back and bring a state of *Witnessing* to the worry so that you categorize worry in the class of Things to Observe and Witness. How's that? Now given that most worry is silly and un-useful and an unrealistic exaggeration, bring *Exaggeration* to the Witnessed-Worry. Exaggerate it to the most extreme situation that you can. Doing that you categorize witnessed-worry in the class of Humor. How's that? This describes how frames work, how meta-stating works, how reflexivity works. And it is magical. Yet, you ask, How can I say that it is "magical?" What does that mean?

It is "magical" in the sense that you can put almost anything in any category that you want — no matter how insane, insane, crazy, irrational, stupid, idiotic, etc. that it may be. Consider fanatics who take a fundamentalistic attitude to and believe in their belief. They are great examples of this. A fanatic fundamentalist is someone who forgets, or doesn't know, that "the map is not the territory" and so a fundamentalist actually thinks that his or her belief is true. So above the meta-state of a belief (a validity thought about a first thought), they *believe* in their beliefs. They believe in the belief of their beliefs. All of this, of course, closes them off to new or different information. It doesn't matter if the person is a Christian fundamentalist, a Muslim fundamentalist, a Science fundamentalist, etc. The structure is the same.

The problem is not that these people have beliefs. Believing is fine. We all believe. The problem is that they *believe-in-their-beliefs* which leads them to assume that they cannot be wrong, cannot be corrected, and so they are unable to have an open explorative conversation. In their meta-muddle, they cannot simply believe. Having over-loaded their beliefs with so much meaning and significance, even a question about their belief triggers them to feel attacked and so they get defensive about ideas in their heads or the heads of others.

The process of meta-stating involves bringing thoughts-and-feelings to an experience, to a state, and that creates categories of the mind —classifications, frames, contexts, meaning structures, etc. When you do this without awareness that you are not even dealing with the world, just your own levels of thinking-and-feeling —you *confuse* your internal mappings with the territory. You then think your conclusions are real. Getting to this point reveals a very deep meta-muddle.

What is the solution? First and foremost— *become aware*. What categories have you created as you have meta-stated some primary experience that has become semantically loaded and now creates limitations and problems for you? Second, *dis-identify with the map, that is, your belief*. You are more than what you believe. Your beliefs are just human maps trying to figure something out. The problem is never you as a person, the problem is always your frames. Stop identifying yourself with your frames and categories — dis-identify yourself and that will begin to give you some perspective.

Now most meta-muddles build up and get created lightning quick. Really. In a nano-second you jump logical levels and bring various thoughts-and-feelings to your experiences (to your primary states or to some level of a meta-state). Just as soon as you do, the next thought—there you go again. This is your reflexivity at work! Now if you can begin to just observe it, you will be able to catch the process without judging and evaluating. Doing that, you begin to develop an incredible skill that few humans have— the meta-skill that enables you to unleash potentials like no other skill.

AN ATTITUDE IS A META-STATE

Here is something that everyone has heard and that most people fully agree with— *Attitude is everything*. Do you believe that? Most of us know that in just about any and every situation, a person’s attitude makes a tremendous difference. Success and failure often hinge on attitude. Resilience and defeat often teeter on attitude. Close bonding with a loved one and/or bitter resentment can even turn on an attitude. We also know that sometimes a person will adopt a horrendous attitude about something and that attitude will consume them, make them sick, undermine their immune system.

“He has copped an attitude about authority; I can’t even stand to be around him.”

“She’d be great in that position in terms of her skills, but her whiny attitude makes her obnoxious.”

This is true for just about everything in human experience, isn’t it? Take *learning* as a prototype. Attitude governs not only the quality of your learning but also your ability to learn. To undermine your learning, to prevent yourself from effectively learning—all you need is a “stickin’ attitude.” Hate learning, despise the person teaching, think others are getting special treatment, imagine the presenter has a “thing” against you, and so on—and you can go through the learning experience and yet *learn nothing*. The attitude can completely nullify the learning. Amazing, wouldn’t you say?

So, how is your attitude? Take anything and step back and ask yourself, “What is my attitude about this?” Or perhaps do this: Talk to someone about that subject and invite them to ask you repeatedly, “What is your attitude about X?”

- What’s your attitude about problems, difficulties, mistakes?
- What’s your attitude about business? Money? Charging? Asking for business?
- What’s your attitude about selling? Influencing others? Trying to win someone’s or a group’s mind about your project?
- What’s your attitude about exercise? Sweating? Eating healthy foods?

Now for the connection between attitude and meta-states. *Every attitude is a meta-state!* That is, whenever you consider an attitude, you are actually working with a meta-state. And if it is a meta-state, then knowing the structure of a meta-state means that you can do something about it.

Analyze the Attitude

Begin with the subject or theme of the attitude. Complete this sentence stem: “It is an attitude about ____.” This will enable you to specify the primary state. For example: It is about work. It is about saving money. It is about being frugal. It is about following a schedule. Now you have your primary state, so describe it in sensory-based terms (see, hear, feel terms).

Next, now that you have a primary state description, explore the meta-state frames that you or another person has about it. “What do you think or feel about X (the primary state)?” “What images, meanings, awarenesses, etc. come to mind when X is mentioned?” Ask these questions repeatedly so that you get the frames that are in the back of your mind about it.

Once you have that, repeat the meta-frame elicitation. “Let’s say Y comes to mind. Let’s say that idea or feeling is true for you, if that’s true for you, what do you think, believe, understand, etc. about that?” This *holds the first frame* and enables you to get the next level frame. With this you now have a structural description of the attitude. You now can see how your attitude is constructed and held together.

Quality Control the Attitude

Does that attitude enhance your life? Does it empower you as a person? Does it set in motion the consequences that you want? Is this your highest spiritual pathway? Does it reflect your highest values?

Built up a New Enhancing Attitude

What attitude would you like to have? First identify the context and subject and ground in sensory-description the primary state where that attitude would be required. Then answer the meta-frame elicitation questions: “What do you need to think, feel, believe, understand, decide, etc. *about* that which would create the desired attitude?”

If you want a robust attitude of determination so you courageously and persistently stick with something, where and when do you want that? And what do you need to think and feel so that you have that attitude? If you want a resilient attitude of always bouncing back when you experience a set-back, what do you need to perceive, understand, etc.?

Knowing meta-states and the structure of meta-states, it is now possible for you to design-engineer the attitude that you want and need. You can now create *the right frame of mind* for any given context that you have to face. You can also now interview people you admire who have an attitude that you’d like to have. That is, you can now model their “attitude” precisely because you know what comprises an attitude. Do you want an attitude of collaboration? Of abundance? Of equality with people? With a servant-leadership? All of that is now possible. It is available to you through using the Meta-States Model.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #11
February 29, 2016
Meta-States “Genius” Series (APG) #14

A BELIEF IS A META-STATE

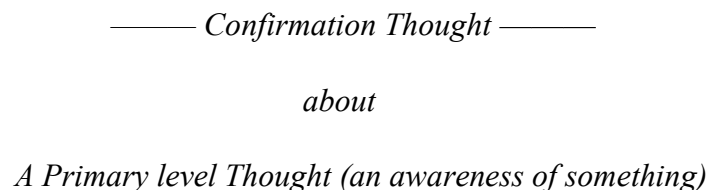
Not only does an attitude partake of *the structure of a meta-state*, so does a “belief.” Now *beliefs* are actually pretty strange things. Well, not “things,” because they do not really exist, but phenomenon. That’s because, on the one hand, we all believe, and we all believe in thousands of things. Philosophers have even called us humans “homo credo” (believers). As human beings we have to believe in things. We don’t have another choice. And yet on the other hand, our beliefs don’t seem like beliefs. Nor does anyone actually think of them as beliefs. Instead we experience them, as just what’s true and right and real. Then again, that’s an operational definition of a belief— what you consider true, right, and real is what you “believe.”

From Thought to Belief

Because NLP never really distinguished thoughts from beliefs in a really clear way, we took the opportunity in Neuro-Semantics to do precisely that. So today, in our flagship training of APG, that is one of the first things we do—we present the distinction of how a *thought* differs from a *belief*. How does a thought differ from a belief?

The two are distinguished by the multi-ordinality of “thought.” This is a meta-state structure. At level one a *thought* is a representation (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, words, diagrams, etc.) of an awareness. At level two, a thought is embedded inside of another thought so that it is much richer. The higher thought is a frame for the lower—a classification, category, assumption, etc. When at level two, the higher thought is a *confirmation thought* that validates the first, then it transforms the “mere thought” into a belief—a command to the nervous system.

Diagram



By *transcending* the first level thought to a confirmation thought *about* it, you are putting the first level thought into the class of things Validated and Confirmed as Real, True, and Right. That makes the thought more than just a thought, more than just a signal to the body. It transforms into a command to the nervous system. In systems language and thought, the higher thought as a “belief” sets up a self-organizing attractor so that it operates like a self-fulfilling prophecy. That’s why we have known for

thousands of years that *beliefs* are very powerful things. People everywhere tend to see what they believe. What they believe, they see in the world and they typically use that to confirm the belief. Obviously, this sets up the circular thinking that generates the self-fulfilling prophecy.

In *believing* what you are really doing is empowering a mere thought with meaning—and that meaning is energizing the thought so you treat it as if real, right and true. Now you no longer question it, now your perceptions and behaviors keep reinforcing it, now you are inside of a belief system that validates itself. No wonder Jesus warned us to be careful what we believe, “Be it unto you according to your belief.”

Given this semantic and representational structure of a belief, the essence of changing a belief involves removing it from its classification. That is, remove it from the class of Confirmed Things, that is, change the meaning so it once again becomes “just a thought.” Do that you and you will de-energize the belief and limit its ability to be a “command to your nervous system” which, when that happens, your nervous systems will try to actualize it.

This explains the so-called “magic” in the Mind-Lines Model. Remodeled from the old NLP “sleight of mouth” patterns and extended, Mind-Lines gives you *seven directions* to send a person’s mind in thinking about something and twenty-six linguistic patterns for reframing the meaning of a belief that creates limitations. Knowing *how* we build up beliefs, and the essential structure of a belief as a meta-state, now you can pretty easily change beliefs and update them with more empowering beliefs that will support your development and self-actualization.

What’s the bottom line? *Where you have a belief, you have a meta-state. When you meta-state, you are setting beliefs in place.* “Beliefs” are meta-level confirmation-ideas that describe an understanding that we treat as real and true and which thereby send “commands” to our nervous system to make real. And where you have one belief, you almost always have an embedded set of beliefs—a belief system. Knowing this, you can now meta-state new beliefs into existence, beliefs that you *want* to believe. Knowing this also means that you can suspend a belief that no longer serves you well.

An example: If you believe that “criticism can hurt you,” then you have a cause-effect belief. You believe that when something you call “criticism” can influence your mental and emotional state and result in what you call “hurt.” Thinking about words and their effect on you is the primary state; confirming that this is true and real turns it into a belief. Then it orders your breathing, muscle tension, throat, etc. to respond in a way that makes this actual (actualize). When you meta-state questions and doubt about this as “real and true” the belief begins to loosen up, when you bring the meta-state of realizing the idea is just a mental map, the belief fragments even further. When you bring the idea that “words” are just words, you undermine the old limiting belief even further.

Beliefs can be at your command— when you know their meta-state structure and have developed the skills of confirming and suspending. This is what we mean by “running your own brain” in order to manage your own stat.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #12
March 7, 2016
Meta-States “Genius” Series (APG) #15

WHEN YOU FRAME, YOU META-STATE

What else can I say about Meta-States and the meta-stating processes? Here is something. *When you frame you are meta-stating. Conversely, when you meta-state, you are setting a frame.* Most NLP people don’t know this because they don’t know the Meta-States Model or don’t appreciate its depth and it is here that the Meta-States Model takes NLP to several new levels and dimensions.

Let’s start with the idea of frames and framing. The person who really developed this and popularized the language was Gregory Bateson. He developed this in the 1950s in his research in schizophrenia and looking at *the levels of awareness* and the power of a higher level to influence and even govern a lower level. Then, developing the levels of awareness into his levels of learning, levels of change, he and his research team provided many new approaches to therapy and business.

NLP picked this up and, as a discipline, talked directly about frames and reframing. This led to the list of ways to reframe (“Sleight of Mouth”) which we turned into *Mind-Lines: Lines for Changing Minds* (1997). In doing that, I was able to create a systematic way to frame. That gave us seven directions to frame, i.e., to send a brain. And in each of those seven directions there were many framing formats available.

Today, framing is a critical distinction and skill in Neuro-Semantics. It is so critical, that we benchmark the competency in *Group & Team Coaching and in the PCMC level of Meta-Coaching*. We also benchmark it in Presentation skills for trainers. It is critical because “The person who sets the frame governs the game.”

Framing inevitably occurs when you bring one state to another. That’s because within a state are thoughts, feelings, and physiology and these are the component variables of a frame. If you bring the state of “respect” to your anger and set *respect* over your *anger*, you generate “respectful anger.” In doing that, “anger” now becomes a member of the class of “respect.” So all of the thoughts and beliefs about “respect” of people is inside of, incorporated within, and now the governing frame for how you think about and experience “anger.”

If you bring a state of “resilience” to a state of “disappointment,” “frustration,” “worry,” etc., you set a frame of “I’ll get through this,” “I won’t let this defeat me,” “I’ll bounce back,” etc. that’s because these ideas are inside of *resilience*. So in meta-stating resilience to disappointment, you do not just bring the new feeling to primary feeling, but you also are setting a reference frame that re-calibrates the disappointment. Now the disappointing thoughts-and-feelings are inside of a new category—that of resilience. This changes everything! Talk about a very, very powerful transformational process. And

you can do it in such a simply profound way, by accessing and applying one state to another. So simple in process, and yet so profound in effect!

This explains in part why that when you attend any training in Neuro-Semantics, you will hear a lot about frames, framing, reframing, etc. That's because no matter what *experience* you have or want to have or want to stop having, that experience is what it is due to the frames that comprise it. The experience is what it is *because* of the frames. The frames create it.

It is not the case that you have not been framed, you have! The questions are: How have you been framed? What framing (or whose framing) are you now living? Do you like those frames? Are they serving you well? Do they bring out your best? Or your worse? Or what is mediocre in you? Do you even know the frames? Would you like to?

Neuro-Semantic NLP focuses on enabling people to detect frames. Can you detect the frames that others are offering you? Can you detect the frames within yourself? Or can you detect the levels of frames in others? Can you detect the frames that hold other frames in place? How much mental flexibility do you have to play with the frame once you detect it? Or do you tend to let "the frame that be" hypnotize you into compliance and non-questioning obedience? Do they enslave you into their frame world?

We also focus on reframing. That's because if there's a frame and it does not bring out your best, do you know how to reframe it? Have you developed your skill to reframe it in dozens of ways so that you can then choose the best reframe? Do you know how to figure out what frame will out-frame it the very best?

Why? What do all of this? Because when you **set a frame, you control a brain**. So start with your own! Precisely because brains operate according to their frames, when you work with your frames, you learn to "run your own brain." So, just as a computer's mainframe controls the processes for how the computer operates, your frames govern how you interpret things, draw conclusions, create your mental maps, and experience your world. Your frames are that influential in your life experience!

No wonder then that we speak a lot about *winning the inner game of our frames* in Neuro-Semantics. If you want to become a winner in life—that's where it begins. And to become a winner in your frames, we recommend you start with learning the foundations of NLP and Meta-States.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #13
March 14, 2016
Meta-States “Genius” Series (APG) #16

TRANCE IS A META-STATE

As you haven’t caught and realized the the richness of the Meta-States Model yet during the last 15 posts, perhaps this one will deepen your appreciation. Here is yet another facet of Meta-States to mention. Namely, *every meta-state is a trance*. And as with most trance states, most meta-states are also unconscious trances. So when you meta-state, you are tapping into what is called hypnotic language patterns and hypnotic processes. That’s one reason meta-stating is so powerful and why it has such pervasive influences in the mind-body system.

“How does that work?” you ask. Well, take a single state like *the learning state*. Let’s now ask a meta-state question: What is in the back of your mind when you are in a learning state? That is, what do you think about your experience of learning. What do you feel?

“I just need to learn this subject?” you say.

Okay, good. But why? Why learn the subject that you are studying? What is your intention in doing that?

“Well, because it is important for my understanding.”

And it’s important because ...?

“Because I will become more skilled and that will open up new opportunities for me.”

And when you have that intention and step into a learning experience, what do you feel what learning?

“I feel curious.”

You have curious learning? Okay, and what do you think about being curious?

“It’s fun, and it is exciting. ... It makes make life more exciting.”

Excellent, it is fun, exciting, curious learning. And what do you think-feel about that?

“Well, it is who I am and who I have become. It’s the way I live my life.”

And what do you now expect in our future given all of this?

“Talking about learning in this way makes me aware that I’m actually a pretty good learner, and makes me appreciate the learning experience even more.”

Do you have any new understandings about learning?

“It seems that the more you move backward or upward into thinking about your thinking about learning, that is, the deeper you go into it, the more I am finding more of what’s been unconscious in my mind.”

While many people think of and treat *trance* as such special, near-magical, and mysterious experience, in truth it is an everyday experience for everybody. To be human is to continually *transition* (hence “trance”) from the waking state of being present in this moment to one of a thousand inner states. You might transition to remembering something or imagining something that will happen or might happen. You might transition to a state about yourself or others, your skills, some meaning, some understanding, a belief, etc. Trance simply refers to altering your state of consciousness and you do that dozens upon

dozens a time every day.

What the Meta-States Model offers is a specific way to transition from the waking state to the higher states that govern your everyday experience. Now you can choose your trances, and as you do, you can choose to qualify your trances so that they make you increasingly more resourceful and at your best. What trances can you chose by meta-stating?

- Meta-state yourself into a trance of intentional focus by accessing your highest intention. Then you can develop a laser-beam focus on something that you want to concentrate all of your mental and emotional energy on. This is what we do in the APG program.
- Meta-state yourself into a state of acceptance and appreciation of yourself as a person. We also do this in APG and we do it in order to change and eliminate any self-abuse, self-attack, and self-depreciation. Then, with this trance, you can live in a way in which you are kinder and gentler with yourself. Inside you, you have a more peaceful place to live.
- Meta-state yourself into a state of unconditional positive regard. To that and you can create a sense of self-worth that will be based on nothing outside. It will be unconditional. Will fully developed, this trance will give you a solid sense of self and, paradoxically, then you can get the ego out of the way. Now the state of self-forgetfulness becomes available to you.
- Meta-state yourself into a wild and wonderful state of pleasure, then pleasure-of-pleasure. This will do your body good. It will enhance your health, energy, and vitality. It will make you an easier person to live with. Your loved ones will appreciate this.
- Meta-state yourself with appreciation ... or love ... or trust ... or curiosity ... or resilience ... or a thousand other states. Transition from the outside world into a world of your mind-and-emotions and take, as it were, a daily vacation for a few minutes to get a new lease on life. Now that's a trance you'd like isn't it?

The process of meta-stating starts with a primary state that connects with the outside world. At that point, you turn inward. You move back from that state and up above that state (meta) to identify the next level of thoughts and emotions about that state. Even this single-move often takes you to an unconscious state or frame of mind. Do that several more times, and you will for sure be at the levels within a person's experience that are outside-of-consciousness. And in moving there, you are transitioning more and more from the outside world to the internal world. This is a "trance."

What does this perspective add to what we already have in NLP about trance? It provides another very specific way to *do* trance, to get there, to work with trances (especially toxic ones), and to build up effective frameworks for enriching a person's life. And that's because, trance, like any other subjective human experience has a structure and when you know it, you have much more control over it—you can manage it more effectively.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #14
March 18, 2016

ARE YOU AS PRODUCTIVE AS YOU COULD BE?

Two years ago, Andrei Pligin, NLP Trainer in Moscow and founder of the Moscow NLP Center, asked me if I could put together a training on productivity. He looked over the list of 50+ trainings that we have available in Neuro-Semantics and didn't see “Productivity” listed. My explanation is that we get to productivity through *Achieving Peak Performance*. “That may be true,” he said but those words will not appeal to people in Russia. What we're interested in is “Productivity.”

So I began studying things from the perspective of *Productivity*. And sure enough, I came right back to *performance*. To be productive, you have to perform. Duh! Yet that's not enough. To be highly productive in a way that increases the quality of your life and that brings out your best—there's much more to it than just performance. Performance, without the other things, can lead to stress, performance anxiety, overload, unhappiness, running around not knowing where you are and lots of other unpleasant states. And that's not what anyone wants.

In view of that, I returned to one of the central themes in Neuro-Semantics— *The quality of your life is the quality of your states*. So it's about your states! And if it is about your *meanings*, then it is also about your *intentions also*. When we put all of that together, it is about your ability to get into a highly focused state of flow that we call your “genius” state. There's a lot to productivity!

Further study revealed that even that is not enough. You could get into the right state of flow and engagement (genius) with high quality meanings and intentions, feel the inspiration, and even transfer what you know to what you do (mind-to-muscle) and still not be productive. That's because what if there's a set back? What if the production takes a lot longer than you anticipated? So we need to add persistence, dedication, discipline, and resilience.

About the same time that Andrei was asking about a training on Productivity, a magazine in Brazil in the process of introducing the Meta-Coaching system and Neuro-Semantics, described me as “the master of productivity” quoting the number of books I had written. Some of my friends in Brazil sent the clip to me. Personally I found it surprising because I don't think of myself in that way or in those terms. When I said as much, one of my friends asked, “Then how do you explain all of the materials you've been able to produce?”

“Well, it is just the accumulation over many years of an inspiration that keeps animating my life.” That's when my friend asked, “Is that the secret of productivity? You get an inspiration, you believe in it, you stay with it through the ups and downs, you refuse to let it go, you keep refreshing the

inspiration, and focusing on the process rather than the end product?”

That last line was it! That was the missing piece I needed to complete the training program for Productivity and what I realized was that it presents a paradox. The paradox is that to be highly productive a person, you have to focus on the process, and get your eyes off of the end-product. For most of us, this feels counter-intuitive. We think, “I need to keep my eye on the end-product!” But to do that distracts us from the productive process, the performance of the success factors that leads to that final product. Now I had the program for “Unleashing Productivity.”

If you’re interested then in May I will run the prototype of this training in two places, first in Oslo Norway and then in Moscow Russia. Later many other Neuro-Semantic trainers will be training it.

Oslo Norway — May 2-4. Contact Lene Fjellheim: lene@coachteam.no

Moscow Russia — May 6-8. Contact Andrei Pligin: pligin@nlpcenter.ru

Here is a description of it from the Executive Summary in the Training Manual:

Productivity— The Vision of becoming a Highly Productive Person:

One thing that you can count on from *highly effective people*—**they are productive**. They are highly effective in their life’s work, their relationships, their home, their career, their hobbies because they have an effective strategy for *getting things done and producing results*. As a result, their productivity level is much higher than most people. This enables them to enjoy the fruits of their productivity in terms of money, recognition, influence, joy, having fun, and making a difference in the world. This is true of experts and this is true of people who make a mark for themselves in the areas that they are interested in.

How is your productivity? Are you ready to discover how you can turn up your productivity? Are you ready to discover the secrets of high level productivity so you can unleash it in your life?

- What makes people highly effective and productive?
- How are they able to regularly and consistently produce as they do?
- What makes them prolific, efficient, persistent, and resilient in their work without burning-out or succumbing to stress?
- How can you unleash your processes of productivity while still having lots of fun?
- How can you become productive in a healthy way without more work and stress?

Productivity: What is it?

- *Productivity*: Being able to *produce* goods, services, and information that you desire at a level that allows you to succeed in reaching your goals. Producing— getting results, achieving the objectives that you set.
- *But not all “productivity” is healthy or ecological*. There are many kinds of productivity which may not be, in the long run, productive! There’s *fire-fighting productivity*; there’s *stressful productivity*, there’s *forced productivity*. These involve working harder and longer and are more stressful. Getting busy and being busier is not necessarily healthy productivity. Productivity is not pushing harder or beating yourself up.
- **Self-Actualizing Productivity**: the kind of productivity where work becomes play, where you actualize yourself, your best potentials, and operate from a state of flow. In the “genius” state

- in are in the zone and much more productive because all of your resources are available.
- When a person is not productive— he is unproductive or may be doing counter-productive things which undermine his productivity.

There are answers to the questions about the mystery of productivity. These answers reveal that there's a strategy and process for being productive. You can become twice as productive as you currently are. What if you became four times more productive? You can also have a much more enjoyable experience as you simultaneously become more productive. This does not inherently mean more stress or “work,” it can mean less!

The Design of Productivity Training:

Using the modeling processes of NLP and of Neuro-Semantics, you will discover —

- *How to examine and enrich your current strategy of productivity.* When you discover where and how the current strategy is not working as well as it could, you can then enrich it so it is more robust, powerful, and effective.
- *Identify all of the mental-emotional states that you need in order to take your productivity to a high level.* To make your strategy work effectively, you have to be able to access— in the moment you need it— the right state.
- *Run a checklist on the requires skills for high productivity.* Do you know the skills that you need for high productivity? Do you know how to develop those skills? Do you know the four components of every skill? Do you know how to deliberately practice your skills until you can “turn them on” at will?
- *Discover the near-magical frames of mind that enable you to think like a highly productive person.* Such persons typically *think* in ways that distinguish them and differentiate them from most people. Do you know these unique thinking patterns? Do you know what and how they think that differs from you? Would you like to?
- *Identify the complementary set of skills that you need.* In every area of expertise, productivity in that area will be distinguished also by unique complementary skills. Which ones govern your area of interest? These are not the core skills. Yet these are the contributing factors that can make all the difference in the world.

If you're interested in it *now*, contact the sponsors mentioned above. And look for the training of *Unleashing Productivity* as Module V in our Self-Actualization series. There will be many other Neuro-Semantic Trainers presenting this training in the months and years to come.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #15
March 21, 2016
Meta-States “Genius” Series (APG) #17

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ROSETTA STONE OF META-STATES

In 1799 the Rosetta Stone was discovered by accident by Napoleon’s armies. And with the discovery of that stone, the mysteries of Egyptian hieroglyphics began to be unlocked. This was possible because the Rosetta Stone contained the same message in two languages and three alphabets, two of which scholars already understood. This immediately meant that the hidden code of hieroglyphics could be broken so that with the code the ancient world was opened to be explored in a new way.

The Meta-States Model operates in a similar way. The similarity is that the Meta-States Model today provides a new way to unlock the code of all of the meta-language that evolved over the centuries for our higher levels of awareness, for our meta-life. For millennia the human race has been trying to come up with the language for describing the meta-levels of the mind, for the “realities” that we live in and deal with, but which do not exist empirically. We live in this higher realm. We live in a realm that is an evaluative rather than descriptive realm. It is created by the human mind through the way we draw conclusions, abstract, and conceptualize. And it exists at that level, not at the primary level.

This means that whenever you talk about “beliefs,” “values,” “understandings,” “concepts,” “intentions,” “memories,” “imagination,” “models,” “permissions,” “prohibitions,” and use a hundred other terms similar to these—you are talking about *the higher levels of the mind*. You are talking about the “logical levels” of your meta-life.

Yet the referents of these words are not real. They do not exist—well, at least they do not exist “out there” in the world. You can’t go to Wal-Mart and buy these things. You can’t ask the attendant, “Where do you keep new beliefs; mine are worn out.” “What aisle is ‘values’ on?” “I need a pound or two of some higher intentions.” You can’t put these meta-terms in a wheelbarrow—the NLP test for nominalizations. You can’t weigh them, measure them, take pictures of them—no empirical see-hear-feel test will be able to identify these things.

That’s not only because they are not *things*, they also do not exist at the primary dimension. Their referent exist in the meta-dimensions of your meta-life. Further, this is where all of us mostly live our lives—we live in meta-land. We live our lives seeing each other and the world and the things we do through the lens of our *beliefs*. We shop by making our choices through the lens of our *values*. We relate and get along with each other, or don’t, and have fights and arguments through the lens of *understandings*, *memories*, *imagination*, and all of the other hundred meta-terms. In Neuro-Semantics, we refer to these meta-terms as the *psycho-logical levels* (following Alfred Korzybski) and use the four

Meta-Dimensions model to detail out the numerous meta-questions that this model gives rise to.

As a psychological Rosetta Stone, the Meta-States Model explains how we create level-upon-level of layers of thoughts-and-emotions to create these psycho-logical levels. And Meta-States also shows how that each of these “layers” or “levels” of these processes are simultaneously “the same thing.” That is, they offer us multiple points of view of the same thing—the subjective experience. (This is the point of the Diamond of Consciousness diagram that we have in the APG manual.)

Consider the experience or meta-state of “joyful learning.” Is that a belief? Do you *believe* in joyfully learning? Is it a value? To you value joyfully learning? Is it a memory? An imagination? A concept? A decision? An identity? Are you a joyful learner? A permission? A plan? It is all of these and many, many other meta-levels and it is all of these *at the same time from different perspectives*.

What then is a “belief?” Using Meta-States, we define a belief as a confirmed thought. That takes it to a meta-level from the primary level. And as a meta-level generalization, it is also many other things—a value, an understanding, a concept, a permission, a thought, an emotion, a meaning, etc. The Meta-State Model as a Psychological Rosetta Stone now gives us an extended vocabulary and alphabet so that we can talk about and give expanded descriptions of the higher realms of the human mind and spirit. It gives us a redundancy about the layers of our meaning frames in our mind (our Matrix) so that we can open up a belief system and work with it using the language of permission, decision, value, identity, meaning, and so on.

A belief may be a belief about the importance of something (a value), a belief about the direction to take (a decision), a belief about one’s self-definition (an identity), a belief about the allowance or disallowance (permission or prohibition), and so on. In this, it is beliefs all the way up. Now you can discover that each of the words that have been considered *different* logical levels are *just different languages for the same thing*—a Rosetta Stone enabling us to translate one “logical level” in terms of another.

If you want to learn about this psychological Rosetta Stone do so via the Accessing Personal Genius (APG) training or in the NLP Master Practitioner delivered by Neuro-Semantic Trainers. Or you can read about it in the book *Meta-States* (2008). The good news is that when you do, you are learning to decoding the higher levels of your meta-life which gives you many more tools for self-management and self-leadership.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #16
March 24, 2016
Report on Santa Cruz

META-STATES

LAUNCHING FROM THE BIRTH PLACE OF NLP

While the Meta-States Model was birthed in 1994 and recognized in the field of NLP in 1995 by the International Association of NLP Trainers as “the most significant model developed in 1995 for NLP,” during the entire 20th century, I had never presented the Meta-States Training in Santa Cruz. Now I did present a couple of the patterns in Santa Cruz at *Millennial Project* (2000). I presented the Meta-Yes Belief Change pattern and Mind-to-Muscle pattern—so that was a small bit of the APG training. But now, here in the 21st century, finally the Meta-States Model has been presented in Santa Cruz!

For that to happen, it took two guys with the vision and commitment—Damon Cart and Logan Christopher with *NLP Gym*. What’s amazing is that *NLP Gym* is today the only full-time NLP Training that’s going on in Santa Cruz. As Damon said, “I thought there would be an NLP Trainer Center on every corner in Santa Cruz.” But no. For years, only NLPU has been there, which is a summer (July and August) training. For that Robert Dilts returns each year in the summer and has presented NLP Prac. and Master Prac. trainings. So the only *year round NLP Training* going on there is what Damon and Logan have been presenting.

For me it was very special to train AGP in Santa Cruz. This is where NLP started in 1972 and officially became NLP in 1975. So returning to the NLP birthplace made the experience seem especially special. Additionally, because NLP has been so damaged in the United States, it was important to use this as to re-launch things and get it started right ... so having two men who share the sense of vision and abundance that I do made it all the more valuable.

One of the special things that happened was the video-recording by Tom Welch. I met Tom in 1997 and over the years he has video-recorded APG, NSTT, and many other trainings. And many years ago he created www.nlp-video.com to promote the videos. Yet one thing he had never videoed was the format of “APG in Stages.” But now he has. Tom and his son, Tom Welch Jr., who is the web-master for Neuro-Semantics, flew in from the east coast and recorded *NLP In Stages*. Eventually, they will make the training available on DVDs.

While we only had a small group of 30 people, we did have people from many states—mostly California and then one from West Virginia, Washington DC, North Carolina, Oregon, and Texas. We also had one person from Canada and three from Costa Rica. We had several licensed Meta-Coaches and two Neuro-Semantic Trainers. So overall, had a great launch there in Santa Cruz and **plans are to return to Santa Cruz each year** to keep NLP and Neuro-Semantic NLP alive and well in the United States.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #17
March 28, 2016
Meta-States “Genius” Series (APG) #18

EMBEDDING AND META-STATES

A common question for NLP people when first learning the Meta-States Model is, “Isn’t this very similar to the collapsing of anchors?” The answer is *No*, it is not. In fact, it is *the very opposite* of “the collapsing anchors” (or states) in NLP. Instead of *collapsing* or reducing the neurological energy of two incompatible states, in Meta-States you *transcend* (rise above) the state you are experiencing and *include* it as a member of another state. In this *transcending and including* you put the other state at a higher position (level) to the first state. This embeds the first state within the next higher one making it a member of it.

You transcend your fear (state¹) to calmness (state²) so that now you experience a new gestalt— *calm fear*. Lots of things happen simultaneously when you do this. Here are a few of them:

- Fear (state¹) is tempered, textured, and qualified by calmness (state²).
- Fear (state¹) becomes a member of the class of calm (state²).
- Calm becomes the frame-of-reference for fear.
- Calm becomes the belief and the value of the person expressing fear.
- Calm becomes the internal *context* of fear.
- Calm becomes a belief about fear, “I believe I can stay calm when fear is triggered.”
- Calm becomes an identity, an understanding, a permission, a memory, an imagination, and the other one-hundred meta-levels.
- Calm becomes a self-organizing attractor in the person’s neuro-semantic system.

In other words, there are lots of things happening all at once! By embedding the original experience (state of fear) inside of calm—fear is situated in an internal context which changes the quality of the fear itself. In one swell move, *system change* has occurred sending out ripple effects throughout the person’s life. Talk about a transformational process! This certainly explains why many Neuro-Semanticists get so excited about the ease and power of meta-stating change. By transcending and including, a skilled Trainer or Meta-Coach can set up a self-organizing process that completely renews the mind and personality.

Now the astonishing fact is—everything is embedded in something. Now it becomes a matter of asking what any particular thing is embedded in. What is your fear embedded in? What is your anger embedded in? Your compassion? Your passion? Is it embedded within frames that support you so that you can live out of your very best potentials? After all, that’s the key to living a great and joyous life.

Suppose your anger is embedded in fear and shame. What would that be like? This is what many with “anger problems” experience. Years ago when I did “anger control” with the Department of Corrections in the State of Colorado—that’s what I regularly and consistently found. I would ask the men, “What

do you think about your anger? Do you like your anger, or dislike your anger? How well do you accept your anger?” None of them liked their anger. Most were feared their anger. They feared that they could not control their anger. Nor did they want to accept their anger. They feared that if they accepted their anger, they would not be able to control themselves. They said that they would explode into violent behavior which would then get them into more trouble. And because they were not able to control their anger, once they failed to control it, they would feel ashamed of their anger. That describes the problem with anger being embedded in fear and shame. Ironically, the fear and the shame made their anger even more dangerous, more explosive.

Conversely, suppose you embed your anger in acceptance, calmness, and respect. With acceptance, you are then able to embrace your anger as “a normal human emotion.” It is just anger. With calmness, you are able to slow things down so you can actually *think* and *reflect* while you are upset. This puts your anger under your control. Then when something triggers you to feel anger, something that violates your values and expectations, you are able to notice it and are able to monitor when it increases and when it decreases. Now you can turn your anger up and down in terms of intensity, as appropriate to the situation. With respect, you are able to communicate the anger to others without threatening them, but in a way that honors them as persons.

Embedding, as a meta-stating process, is powerful. It enables you to texture the quality of a state so that the experience enhances your life. When you are aware of embedding, you can flush out the old frames that your experiences are currently embedded within so that you can transform things as appropriate.

Now given this, you can probably see why ... even attempting to model an experience ... without understanding and using the Meta-States Model, will give you a very limited mapping.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #15
April 4, 2016
Resilience Series #1

RESILIENCE BEYOND A MERE STATE

What do you call it when you get knocked down and you just get right back up? What do you call it when you suffer a set-back in your health, relationships, business, finances, project, or whatever and with the set-back your attitude goes, “This will not get me down!” “I will handle this, learn from it, and continue to move forward in life.”? The word that has come to describe this is *resilience*.

Recently I read a chapter on resilience in a new NLP book of patterns and processes being developed in the UK. I was especially interested in it given that Meta-States arose from my study of resilience in 1991–1994 (next week’s *Neurons*). But at the end I felt disappointed by the chapter. The author treated the subject as if resilience is just a regular state and didn’t know that it was a meta-state. But resilience is not a mere state. It is a rich, layered, and complex state that involves multiple states of mind and emotion.

Consider the *attitude* described in the belief, “If I get downed down, I will get right back up!” That’s an intricate part of resilience. As a belief statement, it entails a decision and a commitment to oneself. “*If knocked down, I will get up.*” Yet how does a person come to a decision like that? How does make a commitment of that caliber to oneself? *Behind* that attitude there must be a passion, another commitment, a belief in what one is doing that’s highly important so that one doesn’t just quit.

A commitment that one will not quit, even with a set-back, is a powerful commitment, is it not? Now the commitment could be to a wide range of things. It could be to oneself— to live fully, to learn and develop, to be one’s best self, to actualize one’s potentials. It could be to a particular passion— I will find the cure for cancer, I will make this business succeed, I will step up to leadership in my group, etc. Whatever the commitment is to— it is *a commitment or a passion* and one that works as a vision. And that’s why the person will “get right back up” when knocked down.

There’s a lot within and behind that resilient attitude, “*I will get up!*” And there’s more. There must also be a hidden believe behind it that “a set-back” or a “knock down” is not fatal and not permanent. Lots of people do not think or perceive that way. When they fail at something, when something falls apart, when there’s a major or even a minor disaster in their life— they just throw up their arms and quit. Why? They treat the problem as serious and fatal. It is something from which it is unrecoverable. That’s why such individuals do not have the attitude, “I will get up.” Their attitude is, “Oh no! This is devastating, I’ll never get over this.”

What I’m highlighting is that there is a lot in the subjective experience of resilience. It is not a simple

state like the primary states. A state like stressed or relaxed, love or apathy, fear or anger, sad or joy, aversion or attraction, etc. is simple. You can point to where in your body you feel that state. The feeling of the state is distinct. Not so with a meta-state.

There's another facet of resilience that makes it a complex experience—the triggering event is usually one that activates a lot of different responses in us and one that usually takes a certain amount of time to process through. Suppose the set back was the loss of a job or a divorce. The intensity of the set-back or the knock-down will depend on how meaningful, how significant the job or the marriage. The more meaningful, the more severe the set-back. In that case, to be resilient will require much more. And what if these events surprised you? You didn't expect them.

Typically the first stage of resilience is shock and surprise. Something knocked you down that you did not expect or anticipate and so getting your head around it, trying to figure out what in the world has happened, and why, and what to do about it—this is usually the first aspect of resilience. And this indicates another thing about resilience—it occurs over a period of time. Now there are various models about handling loss, grief models. And in different cultures, grief can take a week or two or two years or forever. It all depends on what a person or group of persons *believe* about grief and the rituals that have been developed to process through the sense of loss.

The process of resilience involves this. That's why for some people, to become resilient after a loss or set-back takes years while others bounce back within days or weeks. This again reveals that behind the various aspects of resilience are additional beliefs and layers of beliefs. The bottom line—resilience is a meta-state. It is not a here-and-now in-this-moment experience that you can trigger and step into. It is a subjective experience that involves a unique set of beliefs about loss, time, set-backs, life's meanings, your self, relationships, your resources, coping skills, and much more.

Finally, because resilience is such an important and critical meta-state for each of us to operate from, in this series of posts, we will explore these facets of resilience. We will do so for the purpose of making explicit how resilience works and how you can become highly resilient in your attitude and coping skills.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #19
April 11, 2016
Resilience: The Art of Bouncing Back #2

THE STRATEGY OF RESILIENCE

When I first thought about *the state* of resilience in 1990, I assumed it was a primary state. I mostly assumed that because I had no other distinction about states. I did not know about meta-states or gestalt states, so it was natural to assume that the subjective experience of resilience was like every other state that I knew about. That explains why I studied resilience from the NLP perspective of the steps that result in the state of resilience.

And, at first everything was fine. As I interviewed people, asking, “Who had been to an emotional and personal hell and you are back?” I began to put together how they did that. That was in the early 1990s and there was very little about Resilience and almost nothing under that term. What I did find was the stages of grief that Elizabeth Kubler-Ross had mapped out—that when a person goes through a severe grief, the person goes through the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. There was also the literature on those who had experienced Hitler’s holocaust and survived, especially Franks biography, *Man’s Search for Meaning*.

Whatever the *step-back* that a person experienced, I found that the process of bouncing back was typically one that took a fairly long time (many years) and that involved pretty predictable stages of development. As I began to map this out, I recognized that were numerous states were involved, that a person would go into those states to process the hurt, disappointment, or trauma. Eventually, I set out a “strategy” for how to “go for it again.” And it was that theme and title that I presented at the NLP Conference in September of 1994.

By then I had also read Korzybski’s *Science and Sanity* a couple of times, had written a series of articles on the linguistic distinctions in General Semantics that Bandler and Grinder had missed or skipped. I had also read Bateson’s *Steps toward an Ecology of Mind* (1972) several times. It was those studies that prepared me for the surprise I was about to experience at the Conference.

At the Conference, I had a large group, some 60 people attended *Go For It— Again! The Strategy of Resilience*. After an introduction to the idea of resilience, I invited someone up front to demonstrate how I elicited a person’s strategy of resilience. My invitation question was, “Who has been to hell and you are back again?” Several raised their hands and the man I picked had been through divorce, business bankruptcy, and a health crisis. It sounded like a hellish experience to me. “And you are back?” Yes. “Fully back? Back into the zest of life?” Yes. “Great, I want to know how you have done that.”

From there I began the interview. I got the details of when and where the set back occurred, what happened then, the stages of grief he went through, when he moved on to accepting, then coping with

life, and when he moved into not merely coping, but mastering life's challenges, and when he finally came to the place where he felt that he was back. Getting the overall steps and stages, I then reviewed with him how he moved from one stage to the next. What was he thinking? What beliefs supported him? What did he do practically that assisted? What challenges he had to deal with, etc.? At one point, as he was describing moving from one stage to the next, I asked, "How did you know that you could move to the next?" What he answered was both surprising, unexpected, and opened up the whole realm of what became the Meta-States Model:

"I just knew that I would get through it. It was as if I had a state about my state that kept me going forward, that it was just a matter of time."

At that point, I asked, "How did you know that?" Now I don't exactly remember what happened then. Either he made the following statement or I did. It all became confused in my mind because after the statement a thousand thoughts raced through my head. So either he said, "I have a *state* about my state, a meta-state," or I said, "So it is a *state about the first state*, a meta-state." I can no longer sort out who actually said the words "meta-state."

What exploded in my head at that moment was a picture that was in the form of a diagram. It was a diagram of a higher-level state governing, controlling, monitoring, framing a lower-level state. It was at that moment that all of the lights and bells of an insight went off inside. Suddenly the phrase "meta-state" brought together all of the studies in Korzybski and Bateson that I had been studying for years and, just as suddenly, it all made sense. In that instant, the Meta-States Model was born.

Suddenly, also, my understanding of *resilience* changed. For four years I had been assuming that resilience was a regular state, a primary state, a state that you could set an anchor for and trigger it when you wanted it. Not so. As a *meta-state*, this meant that resilience involved *layers of states*. This now explained the very structure of a *complex state* and especially a state that does not occur in a single moment of time, but that occurs *through* time and *over* time. *Resilience* is not just one thing, it is many things— a set of beliefs, a set of values, a set of actions during the various stages that the resilience person goes through and experiences.

This created the first distinction in states, the difference between a primary state and a meta-state. A primary state is a state *about* something *out there* beyond one's self, one's nervous system whereas a meta-state is *about* one's experience. It is your thoughts-and-feelings *about* what you experience in your body and which eventually begins to temper, texture, and qualify what you experience in your body. Later I would discover yet another kind of state, a gestalt state, made up of multiple meta-states and partaking of the system's property of emergence so that the gestalt state is "more than and different from the sum of the parts."

NLP enables us to understand the *primary states* of fear and anger, stress and relaxation, aversion and attraction, love and hate (or apathy), joy and sadness, etc. Meta-States enables us now to understand complex states that are not easily located in the body— resilience, self-esteem, forgiveness, leadership, magnanimity, proactivity, responsibility, etc. And it is these higher-level meta-states that describe the uniqueness of human experiences.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #20
April 18, 2016
Resilience Series #3

THE THREE MAGIC WORDS OF RESILIENCE

There are three magic words that conveys the inner spirit of resilience. I stumbled onto them in reading Martin Seligman’s work on *Learned Helplessness* and then on *Learned Optimism*. In his books he tells the story of moving from being a strict Behaviorist to integrating cognition into his understanding of human nature and eventually becoming a Cognitive Behaviorist. It happened with his studies with animals and how he was able to train them to learn to become helpless.

What later happened, if I remember the story accurately, first he trained the dogs to learn to be helpless. They would just sit on the electrified grid having learned that there was no place they could move where there wasn’t the electricity and so they would just lie down and “take it.” It was as if in doggie think, the dog had concluded there was nothing he could do. “I’m helpless to change things, and so hopeless.” This is “learned helplessness.” Then one day, one of the lab technicians physically moved one of the dogs, who had learned to be helpless, off of the electrified grid to a place where there was no electricity.

That’s when something magical happened. Whereas previously the dog had “learned” he could do nothing and so sat down in a helpless state, now having experienced something beyond the pain, the dog “learned” something else. He learned “there is a place where there is no pain.” He learned that there is hope! Something did make a difference. And even more incredibly, after that the dog could not or would not re-learn the learned helplessness. Seligman’s conclusion was that the dog had now “learned” optimism. That is, the dog had essentially learned, “There is always something that I can do. I am not helpless.”

Seligman said that what the dogs “learned” was *as if* they thought that the unpleasant experience they were having was everywhere (pervasive), forever (permanent), and about them (personal). Comparing that to people with severe depression, he recognized that this is also the structure of clinical depression. People assume the same things—about space, they assume that the problem is everywhere. About time, they assume that the problem will last forever. And about the source of the problem, it is about them. This gives us three Ps— pervasive, permanent, and personal. Use that template to think about a problem and you will draw the conclusion that you are stuck! You are helpless and hopeless. And, if you draw that conclusion, you inevitably create a good case of depression. It is a formula for personal misery.

Structurally, this gives us what he called **the pessimistic explanatory style** for interpreting events. It is characterized as seeing things through the following lens:

- **Permanent** in time: unchangeable, insoluble, insurmountable.
- **Pervasive** in space: effecting everything and undermining every facet of life.
- **Personal** in source: positing the problem with the self.

With these three perspectives, when facing a set-back a person sees himself as inadequate, deficient, lacking, selfish, mean, criminal, etc. That, in turn, creates dis-empowerment and non-resilience leading to feeling depressed, passive, and suicidal. Not a pretty picture! And when facing a set-back or a knock-down, looking at an experience with these lens makes things much, much worse. For humans it creates depression. But there is good news: You do not have to view things through these lens. There's a better choice.

The better choice is to use an opposite explanatory style. Seligman named it **the optimistic explanatory style**. Here a person interprets the set-back in a "positive" or optimistic way. The "optimism" here is not "Thing will turn out great!" It is rather an optimism that enables you to do something tangible about a set back. It keeps the "bad" or "evil" thing from getting into your inner game. The optimistic explanatory style enables you to interpret the unpleasant event or bad thing through the following lens:

- **Then—temporary** in time: The event is about this person and situation in this moment of time.
- **That—specific** in space: It is that thing in that space.
- **There—external** in source: It is there, not me.

In the place of the pessimistic **Ps**, you have three new magic words to say, all of them start with **T**: "That— there— then." Or if it is occurring currently, then "This— here— now." With this style, you see the problem as in the environment, the behavior, etc., but not you. "*Not me!*" This explanation prevents you from over-generalizing and coloring dark the future, life, or another person. You perceive what happened as occurring at a specific time, in a specific situation, involving specific people, etc. This contains the "evil," thereby preventing it from spilling over onto everything else. It keeps you open, hopeful, and responsible to taking effective actions.

What Seligman discovered concerned a person's attitude (or meta-state) about three facets of his or her Matrix— Self, Time, and World which, in turn, then affects one's sense of Power, Meaning, Intention, and State. Framing a set-back or problem as *you* (your Self) undermines your power to do anything. What can you do if *you* are the problem? By making it *everywhere* in your World you over-generalize and imply, "nothing is exempt." And by making it last *forever*, you make the problem permanent. No wonder you feel helpless and hopeless. Here, as always, the problem rests in these frames.

Changing the frames (meta-states) so that the problem is *outside* and not you, limited to the here and now and not everywhere or forever *contains* the problem. And as it limits the problem, it frees you to be able to do something about it. And when that happens, then *you can be resilient*. You can bounce back from the problem. Ready for some magic? Try on the three magic words: *That there then*. Or, *This here now*. Whatever the problem, say these three words to it. It will contained the "bad" thing so that you can bounce back. There's more to resilience than this, yet this is the beginning and a powerful beginning at that!

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #21
April 25, 2016
Resilience Series #4

THE INNER POWER OF “BOUNCE”

Resilience is about bounce. It is about bouncing back from a set-back. I seem to remember a scene from one of the Rocky Movies where after being knocked down for ten rounds and where he used his face to block his opponent’s blows (!), all of a sudden “Rocky” tapped into his inner source of resilience so that he *bounced* back triumphantly after the knocked down. In fact, he got up so quickly and with so much energy that it looked as if he was literally *bouncing*— *bouncing* and suddenly up on his feet, and ready to take on his opponent.

Life also has a way of knocking us down. So many things can go wrong. And why not? We are fallible beings so we make mistakes and sometimes they are serious enough that we take a fall. We also live in a world that is unstable with many things that can go wrong— as “natural disasters” can occur and set us back: tornados, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, fire, etc. Then there is the fact that we live in a world where people do hurtful things to each other: thefts, robbery, being molested, raped, wounded, killed, tortured, war, bombs, etc. Then there is our mortality— we are mortal beings and so we can get knocked down with various health problems and challenges.

With all of that, any one of us can experience a set-back or a knock-down at just about any time. There’s no guarantee against this. Nor can you buy insurance to prevent it. Things happen. While you cannot control *what* happens, you can control *how you respond*. This is where resilience comes in because *resilience is your ability to bounce back* and not stay down.

Even Superman was not immune to being knocked-down! Christopher Reeve, who played Superman in the movies, suffered a major set-back and was significantly knocked down when he was riding a horse in preparation for a movie. When he was throw off the horse, he broke his spinal chord and became a quadriplegic. In falling head first and damaging experiencing a cervical spinal injury, he was paralyzed from the neck down. He could not even breathe on his own. In spite of that, he eventually bounced back, not by recovering from the injury, but rising above it in his spirit. Interviewed by Barbara Walters, she asked if he ever got depressed. “Yes, every morning before 8 am. But then it passes because I have a lot of things to do.” Those “lots of things” included his daily exercises for recovery, playing in movies and TV shows (Smallville), starting his foundation (Christopher Reeve Foundation), he narrated an HBO film, *Without Pity: A Film About Abilities*. In his spirit and attitude he bounced back and lived a full live in spite of severe physical disabilities and challenges.

Now to bounce back after a set-back requires that you have qualities within you that generates an inward bounce— *bounce-qualities*. Do you have such qualities within yourself? What are they? What puts *bounce* in your soul? These questions direct you inward so that you can win the inner game of resilience. Once you win that game, then translating the bounce outward into your behaviors,

relationships, language, etc. enable you to win the outer game of resilience.

My first attempt at writing about resilience was in the May/June 1992 edition of *Metamorphosis* (Volume XII). That was two years prior to discovering Meta-States. So at that time I did not have the meta distinction— that resilience itself is a meta-state, so I wasn't able to identify the higher level frames that govern resilience. They were present in my list, but I didn't know it at the time. All I could do was make a list of the factors that create a sense of bounce. And that's what I did. I simply listed the recuperative powers in one's mind, emotions, speech, behavior, relationships that would put bounce into a person. Under the category of *Components of Resilience* I listed and described the following:

Centeredness: Centered in yourself, your values, and congruency.

Good Boundaries: The capacity to know yourself and to be kindly tough.

Sensory Awareness: Good uptime skills so that you are in contact with reality, and not lost in a hypnotic state.

Living in the present: In the here-and-now of today and not lost in the past.

Flexibility: The more you can adapt, cope, and master your environment. You can go with the flow when circumstances change.

Dream power: The ability to keep your dream alive and re-establish a new dream if a current dream has been knocked-out.

Meaningfulness. Uses your meaning-making powers and creates passionate reasons for moving forward. You have something meaningful to live for.

Empowerment. Accesses your powers and believes in your empowerment. This eliminates victimization thinking and talking, it over-comes learned helplessness.

Self-Discipline. Take control of your actions to act consistently, regularly, and methodically to do what needs to be done.

Learning from failures. Learn what went wrong, gets detailed feedback, learns from the experience, and tries again.

Social support. Stay in community, stay connected to friends, and continues to nurture core relationships with social skills.

Acceptance: Accepts life, self, limitations, etc.

Forgiveness: Releases old hurts and disappoints by forgiving others.

Conflict management skills: Manages conflicts with people so that you can find good resolutions to differences.

Humor: Able to laugh at oneself and one's humanity, to see the lighter side of things.

Care: compassion, empathy, love.

Kindness: consideration.

So what do you need to put *bounce* inside you? Obviously, resilience has a great many variables. That was my first discovery—a discovery that came from both reading about resilient people and interviewing 40 individuals. Even without knowing the order or the level of these variables, you can begin adding the bounce-qualities that will build up the overall sense of resilience. Which would you be your first choice? And second? To your resilience!

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #22
May 2, 2016
Resilience Series #5

THE STRATEGY FOR RESILIENCE

There are lots of variables that play into the experience of *being resilient* as noted in the last post. And also noted in that post was the question about the strategy? Which variable comes first, then second, and third? Which variables are critical and which are secondary? These are *strategy questions* and they are the questions that enable us to create a model of resilience. After all there is a structure to resilience and if we want to replicate the experience of healthy resilience in our lives and in the lives others, we need to know how to put the structure together. It's like a formula or a recipe.

When I first began modeling resilience, I worked from the assumption that it was a primary state and like the NLP “Circle of Excellence” pattern, it was a matter of putting all of the variables into the space of the experience, step in, and “Whollo!” the experience of resilience! But it does not work that way. No long-term complex state (gestalt states) work in that manner. If they did, then we could do the following:

- Imagine the state of being healthy, fit, and thin. Identify every variable that plays a role in that state of being, see, hear, and feel it fully, step into it. Presto! You are now healthy, fit, and thin!
- Imagine the state of being wealthy, financially independent, with passive sources of income, able to budget, save, increase income, see and seize opportunities. Imagine it fully in all of the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic systems, step into it. Aha! You are now a millionaire and have the mind of a millionaire and financially independent!
- Do the same with leadership, with self-discipline, with entrepreneurship, etc.

Obviously, and perhaps sadly, reality does not work that way. “State induction” in that manner does not, and cannot, create the experiences you want. When an *experience* is complex in that it has multiple layers of states-about-states, belief frames that hold multiple belief-systems in place, and that occur over a period of time (usually weeks and months, maybe years), you cannot just “access” it so that it enters into your neurology. These kinds of experiences have to be developed over a period of time as you go through the steps and stages of its creation. That is, first you take X and Y actions and that creates the state of A, and then you repeat that for the next action steps so you get into state B, and so forth.

For *the experience of the resilient state* there are several stages that you'll have to go through. Using the grief stages that Elizabeth Kubler-Ross identified, we potentially have these:

- *The Set-Back Stage:* An event occurs that knocks you down that triggers a sense of loss, disruption, upset, block, etc.
- *The Shock Stage:* You inwardly are shocked, surprised, in a state of dis-belief, amazement, disillusioned, can't believe it, etc.
- *The Bargaining Stage:* You look outside yourself to a supernatural source (God) or to some other person (boss, wife, husband, etc.) and beg that you will do anything to get your life back

- the way it was. You placate, beg, show remorse, confess faults and sins, etc.
- *The Anger Stage:* You yell and scream, you threaten, you throw a tantrum, you are as mad as hell, you curse, you blame.
 - *The Depression Stage:* You give up, press down your hopes, expectations, and energies, you resign to your situation, you feel like a victim, you stand in the rain and let it rain all over you.
 - *The Acceptance Stage:* You acknowledge what happened and face it by thinking about what you can do that will move you forward.

I say that these are *potential* stages because it all depends. The greater your ego-strength in the first place, the less you will go through Shock—Bargaining—Anger—and—Depression stages and move straight forward to the Acceptance stage. That is, the stronger you are inside yourself, the more meaning and bounce you have inside you, the less you need to go through those emotional roller-coaster stages. The more reality-oriented you are, then the less you will be shocked. You will have anticipated potential problems and take them in stride with a more philosophical attitude. The more realistic your expectations and the less demanding you are that everything go your way, the less shock and anger.

All of that depends on *the meanings you give to your maps about what's real and what could happen*. The more childish you are, the less developed, then the more cognitive distortions will govern your way of thinking and feeling: you will personalize, awfulize, catastrophize, emotionalize, over-generalize, demandingness with shoulds and musts, and so on. This will make you more susceptible to being “throw for a fall.”

The emotional roller-coaster stages of upset make perfect sense depending on how close or how far your expectations are to reality. The more demands you make on reality, the more you can be knocked-down. The more unrealistic your *shoulds* and *musts*, the more of an upset you'll experience and therefore the more intense the emotional roller-coaster.

What stages you will go through therefore depends upon your preparation for facing life on its terms, rather than your. In terms of the stages that we all go through, then the basic

- *The Set-Back Stage:* Some event occurs that interferes with your goals, hopes, and wants. Now there is something blocking you that you have to deal with.
- *The Emotional Roller-coaster Stage:* The amount of emotional distress that occurs as you deal with the upset. This depends on how mature and accurate your expectations, your meanings, and your resources for handling the set-back.
- *The Coping Stage:* The required skills for handling your basic needs and getting through the set-back and putting your world back together. What you need to know, understand, believe, and do so that you can get your feet back on the ground.
- *The Mastering Stage:* The ability to not merely get through it and survive, but to use the set-back for learning, development, and opportunities. In the book, *The Art of the Comeback*, Donald Trump says, “Take adversity and make it an asset.” (p. 68). Mastery involves rising above the set-back to such a degree that you make good use of it— That's what Viktor Frankl did with his experience of Hitler's Concentration Camp.
- *The Recovery Stage:* You are now in the stage predicted by Arnold Schwarzenegger's famous line, “I'll be back! You're back! You are back in the swing of life— living with passion and vitality.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #23
May 9, 2016
Resilience Series #6

THE META-STRATEGIES WITHIN RESILIENCE

Given the many, many variables within resilience (#4) and the stages of resilience (#5), you have to have several meta-strategies to handle each of the stages. That is, for each stage (set back, emotional roller-coaster, coping, mastering, and recovery) you have to have specific belief frames, identity frames, understanding frames, decision frames, etc. in order to navigate through that stage. It is not sufficient to merely have the right state or states within each stage, you have to have the right belief-system (beliefs and beliefs-about-beliefs) which will hold those state or states in place. This is another one of the great contributions of the Meta-States Model.

To start this process, elicit each of the stages and simply begin by asking meta-questions about each of the stages. For example, take the *set-back stage* itself. Considering that stage, now ask:

- What do you *understand* about the set-back? Is this normal or abnormal? Is this something you can expect in life, or is it completely unexpected?
- What do you *believe* about being set-back? What does it *mean* to you?
- How do you experience yourself as a person and in your *identity* when you are set-back?
- What *decisions* do you need to make given the set-back?
- Do you have *permission* to experience the set-back or do you fight and reject it?
- What do you *expect* when a set-back occurs?
- All of these italicized words are meta-levels, also known as logical levels, and when you ask questions about them, you are asking a meta-question.

What then happens? What do you achieve by doing this? When you ask these meta-questions, the answers take you (or another person) into the realm of the person’s internal matrix of frames which informs your experience of that stage. It lets you explore in depth what you think consciously and what you are unconsciously thinking that’s setting the meaning frames that you are living by. This enables you to do some, literally, high-level information gathering about what a person understands, believes, expects, etc. about that stage. These make up the person’s *frame of mind*.

These frames of mind not only *inform* you and that person regarding the person’s rich inner landscape of consciousness, it also *governs* it. It *self-organizes* it. And if there’s any problem for you or another person in handling that stage, the frame is almost always the problem. The meta-questioning enables you to get to the frame, understand it, and then give you an opportunity to change it—reframe it, deframe it, outframe it, etc.

Now when you have done that with each of the stages, you have gathered intelligence about the person's higher frames of mind about the whole process from suffering a set-back to bouncing-back in a resilient way. But ... but is there any connection between each of the meta-levels of beliefs, understandings, expectations, etc.? Are there any commonalities between one meta-level set of beliefs and another's?

This question takes us up-and-beyond the primary level strategies wherein we handle each of the stages. It takes us to a higher level where we can begin to consider meta-strategies. A meta-strategy would be a strategy that enables us to go from one stage to the next. And in terms of resilience, this is critical. "How do you know to go from the set-back stage to the emotional roller-coaster stage, or to the coping stage, or to the mastery stage, or to the 'I'm back!' stage?" This is the question that I asked in 1994 that opened up the key to *how to be resilient* and to the presence of Meta-States.

If a person answers, "How I know to go from this stage to the next is I have an overall picture of all of the stages" then the person has just given you a larger-level, a meta-level, strategy. You can then explore more about the person's understandings. "How many stages are there for you?" "What do you believe about moving through these stages?" "What do you believe about how long it will take you to do the 'work' in each stage and get to the end?" "Is there anything that could stop you from proceeding forward and getting through it all?" And so on.

"I believe that I will get through this!" one person says. That's a high level belief about the process and about himself. "What enables you to get through it?" That will call forth information about how the process of knock-down and get-up works and factors that may play a role inside of it. "While you may not like the initiating experience of suffering a set-back, what do you believe or understand about such things happening?" That will give you much of the person's philosophy of life. "Do you think the set-back was fair or unfair, or do you think it has nothing to do with fairness, it is just things that happen in the world?"

With that introduction to the meta-levels of consciousness that set the frames for how you think about set-backs and resilience, let's now explore more personally what meta-level frames that are operational in the back of your mind that supports you being a resilient person or that undermines it. Here are some questions to consider:

- What do you understand about unpleasant and disturbing events? Do you think of them as a personal attack or as activities that occur? What do you believe about what causes them, what brings them about, and what they say about you?
- What are your expectations and assumptions when some "bad thing" happens to you? What meanings do you give to such an event? What criteria (or standards) do you use to evaluate the experience as "bad?"
- What do you permit to happen or not permit? Are there "bad things" that can and do happen to people and you have no permission within yourself for them to happen? What permissions do you need to give yourself so that you aren't shocked or blown away if something bad happened?
- What are your understandings, beliefs, and decisions about how to cope with disasters or hardships? Where does your mind go in terms of what you can do to ameliorate the hurt?

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #24
May 16, 2016
Resilience Series #7

HOW LONG DOES RESILIENCE TAKE?

In terms of resilience, what is most problematic for most people are the early stages of a set-back stage. That’s because most people are completely unprepared for life’s inevitable and unpredictable set-backs. I know I was. How about you? And because of that lack of preparation, that is why a set-back almost always occurs as a *shock*—as a surprise. And if it totally disrupts life, the shock is even greater. That’s why a person doesn’t seem to be able to get his head around it no matter how one tries.

“What’s happening? I can’t believe this!” “No, no way I’ve been fired!” “No way would she leave me!” “I can’t believe that I lost all of my investment.” “The doctor has to be wrong with that diagnosis— not me.”

Precisely because a person is not prepared for the possibility of a set-back, when it comes she goes into shock. The facts about the set-back shock her—shocks her perceptions, expectations, beliefs, style-of-life, response patterns, and so on. It shocks her out of her pattern of thinking and perceiving and out of her way of living. No wonder Elizabeth Kubler Ross put *shock* as the first stage of grief. A loss has occurred, but the person isn’t prepared for it.

So the person goes into a regressive, childish state of *bargaining*. He offers “bargains” with God, with the universe, with others, with himself.

“If this will go away, I’ll go to church, I will never lie again. I will never cheat again.” “I will be a good husband.” “If I can get back what I lost, I’ll reform and be a new person. I will treat others right.”

The bargaining stage is a childish promising state of desperation driven by fear, distress, and confusion. It is a demanding state. It is in that stage that spouses show up at the other’s doorsteps or at work making the most loving, romantic promises of faithfulness. They attempt to bargain with fate to get their life back!

Then comes *anger*. When the shock fades and the bargaining fails, then the person gets pissed. He gets as mad as hell and starts storming around. Some people throw things, others kick things. She curses and uses words you have never heard her say before! The person is now fully registering the loss of the value and the threat that it poses to one’s job, finances, relationship, health, future, reputation, etc. And with that sense of threat, comes the emotion of anger. Anger is the state where we feel threatened and so we fight to get back what we have lost or to push back whoever (whatever) we blame. And blame we do! We become highly activated and maybe aggressive in pushing back whatever we think is the cause of our problem.

Yet if for all of the pushing back, nothing changes, nothing good happens. That's when one moves into the *depression* state. We give up. We relinquish it and then we push down (de-press) our hopes, dreams, desires, wants, beliefs, optimism, energy, etc. The pain of having loss now comes home and the cure is to not want, to not care. So into the depression mode we go, we let it all go. In doing this we usually also let ourselves go—we given up spending time with friends, exercising, reading, and everything that makes life interesting and fascinating. We let our appearance go. We don't care. "It can all go to hell. Who cares anyway? I don't!" so, leave me alone.

What happens after depression? Maybe cycling back to more anger or shock or bargaining. In fact, while these stages do tend to be sequential, we also cycle around them over and over. This is the heart of the emotional roller-coaster stage as we try to get our feet back on the ground. Yet we can perpetuate these stages for a long time. How long? It all depends.

Studying people in the US and Europe, Elizabeth Kubler Ross postulated that it usually takes two years. But it all depends on how prepared a person was in the first place and how skilled a person is at coping and accepting. That's why—in some cultures—the process hardly occurs at all. For example, the more a culture accepts death, celebrates death, see it as a graduation to the great beyond—the less grief there will be. So also, the more a family or culture or person is well-adjusted to reality—the less shock, the less bargaining. The more ego-strength, the less trying to cope with bargaining and anger. The more coping skills and resources available, the less time in the grief or roller-coaster stage.

In fact, the last stage in the state of *acceptance*. Acknowledge of what has happened so you can take whatever actions that you can to ameliorate the situation as best as possible. In this, acceptance is the cure for the grief stages. The sooner you get to acceptance, the sooner you begin to deal with the set-back appropriately and effectively. Acceptance is an incredibly powerful state—deceptively so because it does not make one feel powerful. Yet in acceptance one releases the demandingness that creates bargaining, anger, and depression.

After the set-back stage is the stage of coping—and coping effectively. Everything before this stage essentially consists of inadequate and poor coping skills—activities and mindsets that generally make things worse. Acceptance is the transitional state. With acceptance a person is able to simply acknowledge the reality and go about doing the best one can to deal with the set-back. So, given the general nature of how we humans face set-backs, it should be abundantly clear that we save ourselves a lot of heartache and waste of emotional energy *if we would just begin with acceptance*. What's the value of shock, bargaining, anger and depression? All of these emotions speak about how unprepared a person is for real life—it speaks about lack of, or low, ego-strength.

So, to speed up your development of resilience, to shorten the time between set-back and recovery, here is the strategy: skip shock, bargaining, anger, and depression and *go straight for acceptance*. It will do you good. You will be more reality-oriented, more attuned to how life on planet Earth actually works, and you will be able to get to the business of living effectively quicker.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #25
May 23, 2016
Resilience Series #8

HOW TO CREATE THE META-PERSPECTIVE ESSENTIAL FOR RESILIENCE

You now know that if the only perspective you have when life falls apart, when you experience a set-back or a knock-down, you will have difficulty seeing “the light at the end of the tunnel.” Instead, all you will be able to see is the distress, pain, frustration, confusion, shock, etc. immediately before you. You will lack perspective. The tunnel-vision of your immediate experience will define everything—you, life, the future, meaningfulness, etc. And in addition to whatever problem the set-back gives you, you now have a secondary problem—you feel stuck because you can’t see beyond today.

Question: How do you get the needed *meta-perspective* so that you can keep things in proportion and not become reactive and destructive to yourself and others? How can you raise your eyes up and see beyond the darkness and confusion of this moment? People may be trying to help you and they may be saying things like:

“You’ll get through this.” “One of these days you’ll look back on this and laugh.” “Don’t take yourself so serious.” “This isn’t the end of the world.”

The problem is that in the middle of the set-back or in the lowest pit of your life, all of that sounds like childish mumbo-jumbo unrealistic non-sense. “Yeah, sure,” you may say, but you know that none of that advice is going to help. So what will?

The Meta-Perspective

To attain a meta-perspective you first have to know what it is and then actually and experientially access it. If what it is describes a bigger, larger, broader, and more extensive perspective about life, yourself, time, relationships, etc., then a meta-perspective refers to the ability to hold these many aspects in mind at the same time. The term *meta* refers to moving to a position (literally or mentally) where you can think and feel *about* the first experience.

A meta-perspective is then a layered consciousness or perhaps better, as we say today, a systemic consciousness. It can see and hold in mind the relationships between the parts and the dimensions without over-simplifying by reducing to a linear perspective only or treating different factors as polar opposites. Opposite to a meta-perspective is the tunnel-vision perspective. This arises when we zoom in so close on something that we can no longer get enough distance to see the context.

As a result, a meta-perspective tends to enable us to develop what the ancients called “wisdom.” Gregory Bateson said that wisdom is the ability to hold multiple perspectives simultaneously. It is the

ability to take first perceptual position (seeing from your own eyes), second (imagining how things look from another person's perspective), and third (seeing things from the larger system). And as we all know, such *wisdom* arises from experience, and experience is what shoves us around into different places so that we get a chance to experience life from multiple perspectives. And when we bring them all together without dichotomizing or over-simplifying, wisdom emerges.

Accessing the Meta-Perspective

If what we need is distance from the immediate, then if you *step back* in your mind and start noticing the context, you begin to access a larger perspective. "What is the context in which X is occurring?" "And this context Y, what is the context in which it is operating?" "And these contexts X and Y, what is the larger system of activities, energies, meanings, etc. in which all of this is operating?" Asking these layered questions and answering them takes you out of the immediate tunnel vision and enables you to begin to create a meta-perspective.

Then you won't feel stuck in a narrow tunnel vision. Seeing the larger picture, you will almost inevitably see areas and variables that you could use to make a difference. You begin seeing processes and recognize how you can influence the system. One of the classical studies that Bateson engaged in was the structure of schizophrenia. In the end he analyzed it as a double-bind situation wherein a person is locked into a no-choice system which he cannot escape. And how could he escape? How do some people escape? By meta-commenting about the double-bind. That takes a person above and beyond the conflicting frames, giving him perspective about the situation:

"You say you love me and you want me to express my emotions, but when I do you stiffen up and reject my hug. So I'm confused, which do you want me to do?"

Similarly, to be able to step back and gain perceptual distance on ourselves and our situation. To see the set-back as an event occurring in time, one event in a series of thousands of events, enables us to not over-load that one event with too much meaning and importance. What about the meaning and importance of the other tens-of-thousands of events?

Resilient people do this—they keep perspective. That's why they bounce back quicker and with less semantic damage. To create this for yourself, use a series of questions to help you:

- The set-back event occurred in what domain? (Health, career, money, relationships, etc.)
- How much importance have I or am I giving to that event?
- Is endowing the event with that much meaning helping me to be resilient?
- How much of a tunnel-vision is this perspective creating for me?
- While I'm seeing that one thing, what else am I not seeing?
- If you go forward in time ten years and look back, what do you notice?
- When you step back, what parts of your life are okay or fine?

What are your Resilience Question?

Send to me at meta@acsol.net

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #26
May 30, 2016
Resilience Series #9

RESILIENTLY LEARNING

Jack Welch, former CEO of GE, writing about how to win and about winning in business and winning in leadership and management, calls for “heavy-duty resilience.”

“Every leader makes mistakes, every leader stumbles and falls. The question with a senior-level leader is, does she learn from her mistakes, regroup, and then get going again with renewed speed, conviction, and confidence? The name of this trait is resilience, and it is so important that a leader must have it going into a job because if she doesn’t, a crisis time is too late to learn it.” (*Winning*, 2005, p. 90)

The key to winning is *not* avoiding mistakes. When it comes to making mistakes, that is inevitable. Nor is the key to *not* take risks, that is, to avoid risks. Again, that is inevitable given the human predicament of fallibility. The key is *learning*. The key is picking yourself up and figuring out what you need to learn, learning it, integrating that learning into your actions, getting back on the saddle and going for it again. If something didn’t pan out as you anticipated, then you have something to learn, don’t you? The question is *what*?

Well, there’s actually another question. Are you willing to learn what you missed? Are you willing to take a long deep look into the mistake and figure out what didn’t go by the plan, what deviated from the plan, what is needed to regroup and “get going again with renewed speed, conviction, and confidence.” Are you willing to learn to become resilient?

There is a connection between *learning* and *resilience*. Do you have those two things linked within you? If they are connected, then obviously, the better your learning, the faster your learning, the more open and curious your learning—the fast and better your resilience. You can bounce back quicker and cleaner, that is, carrying less of the contamination of the past.

To argue this point I’ll run with the metaphor of “getting back in the saddle again.” You are riding a horse and you get thrown. Now you’re down on the ground, maybe in the mud, and you may be a little sore for wear. So what do you do now? Do you brush off the dirt, turn your back and walk back to town swearing, “Never again! I’ll never trust a damn horse again?” Do you pull out your gun and shoot the horse? (I’m supposing you’re a complete cowboy or cowgirl and have your gun with you!) “That’s for throwing me down!” Or do you brush yourself off, and go back to get into the saddle again, “Now what caused the horse to throw me? Did I pull on the reins too hard? Did I urge the horse over terrain with briars and thorns? Did I not notice the snake until we were nearly on top of him?”

Here *learning* is the cure and *resilience* is the result. The more you accelerate your learning in an

attitude of openness, responsibility, and curiosity, the quicker your resilience and success. Are you a fast and thorough learner in the presence of a mistake? Do you immediately default to the attitude, “What can I learn here?” “What did I miss that I need to understand?” “Who knows how to handle this that I can talk to?” The ability to “get going again,” to bounce back, to get back in the saddle is the ability to not let a set-back defeat you, but to persist until you can ride with grace and elegance.

My first big set-back was a divorce, my second was getting fired and losing my first career choice, and my third was a severe financial loss. There were others, but those were the Big Three for me. Luckily for me, I had a learning bias. I had already learned that *learning* was an important strategy for getting ahead in life. The shock of finding myself on my back contemplating the Milky Way Galaxy, alone, penniless, and confused triggered me to use the best coping skill that I had at the time, study. For awhile I think I could have made a career in the Library! I did spend a lot of time there tracking down the best works I could find on relationships, then psychology, then wealth creation.

The amazing thing is that sometimes one simple principle is all you need to turn things around, get back in the saddle and ride off to success. I have seen that time and time again with various people. Sometimes the set-back occurred because they were missing one piece to a great puzzle and when they found it, they were off and running with conviction and confidence. Like everything else, it depends on the mental model that you are using to do something—how accurate or inaccurate it is, how complete or incomplete.

Whatever it is, it is what you need to learn. If you spend time blaming and accusing, shouting at the horse, or worse, shooting the horse, you will learn nothing. You will just create more trouble for yourself. If you give up, change the subject, focus on something else, you also will learn nothing. You’re not even looking to learn. Some seem to have an aversion to doing the post-event review because they label it “negative” and think they will get more dirty and negative if they spent time on that. That hardly ever happens especially if your frame of mind is, “I want to know what I missed so I can fill in the missing pieces.”

Learning led me into doing Couple Counseling for years, from there into focusing on Communication and doing Communication Training. Learning sent me through the history of psychology until I was thoroughly familiar with every school of psychology and ended up with a Master Degree in clinical psychology and then a Doctorate in Cognitive Psychology. Learning turned around my financial mess, enabled me to stabilize it and later to reach my goal of financial freedom so that I stopped living paycheck to paycheck or worrying about money.

It’s out of the tough experiences of life, the crucible experiences, that we seem to learn more thoroughly and integratively. Well, you do if you have a learning bias. It’s out the set-back experiences when you get knocked down that can, if you let it, motivate you to learn what you need to learn to never get knocked down in that way again. [Want more about Resilience, see *Meta-States*, or look for the Neuro-Semantic Training on *Resilience*.]

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #27
June 6, 2016
Resilience Series #10

RESILIENCE AND WEALTH CREATION

A couple weeks ago I ran the *Inside-Out Wealth* training in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and in reviewing some of the articles I have written over the years I came across one that shouted out about *resilience*. The word “resilience” was not in the article, but the idea was everywhere. So I have taken that article, updated it to make it specifically related to this series on resilience.

There’s an untold variable that plays a key role in creating wealth that most people are not aware of. In fact, the common myths about how to create wealth obliterate this variable completely. That’s why very few people even know about it. Then, to make matters worse, it is not a variable that can be very easily expressed. I wish I knew how to describe it *succinctly* and in a *compelling* way. I do not know how to do that—yet. I will do the best I can. You be the judge of how well the idea gets across to you. Here it is in a single paragraph:

A key secret of wealth creation is for you to use the power of compensation when you are knocked down or suffer a defeat so that you develop a stubborn resolve of commitment, one that has so much steel in it that it, as it were, immunizes you to failure. You become undefeatable against the odds because you persist. Your steel-like resolve gives you a powerful will-to-win so you persist and out-perform against all odds.

Whew! That was a mouthful. Did you get the point? The point is about turning a failure into a resource. The point is letting an upset become a crucible so that you compensate for it, even over-compensate, and come out of that crucible with a resolve of steel! Now the crucible is the tough part—the set-back. It answers the question, “What calls forth this kind of resolve of steel and makes the difference?” The catalyst for a steel resolve in most people is typically one of the things that we fear most—a humiliation, defeat, adversity, conflict, etc. It is usually something unpleasant, distressful, challenging, disappointing, even painful.

Interesting enough, I’m not the first to write about this. Researcher of the rich, Stanley Thomas wrote extensively about it in *The Millionaire Mind*. In that book he exposed several myths of wealth creation among them is this: Those who became the first-generation self-made millionaires were not the whiz kids at school, not those voted “most likely to succeed,” not those with the highest grades or IQ tests. Only 2% of those with the Millionaire Mind scored high scholastically. The majority were “C” grade students and “...they are more likely to have one or more components of inferiority in their self-image.” (p. 88). Inferiority! He found them self-deprecating. Now for the set-backs or the knock-downs:

“... during their formative years, some authority figure such as a teacher, parent, guidance counselor, employer, or aptitude testing organization told them, *You are not intellectually gifted*. ... They were degraded by someone or something during their formative years ... [They] responded by over-working and eventually out-performing the so-called intellectually gifted.” (p. 88, 89)

To being insulted and degraded they refused to take it personal, or pervasive, or permanent. They took it as a challenge and they set out to prove the teacher wrong. Now that's the resilient spirit!

“In the real world, who succeeds? People who have built up immunity to pain.” (p. 93). “Questioning the norm, the status quo, and authority are hall-marks of the thinking of self-made millionaires and those destined to become affluent.” (p. 92)

Stanley describes them as *compensating* which means that they worked harder. They developed a strong work ethic (99) when they faced obstacles or handicaps, they compensated for deficiencies.

“ ... most self-made millionaires were confronted with one or more significant obstacles in their life. ... Our self-made millionaires chose another path [than accepting the negative evaluations by some authority figure], they discredit the authority figure who attempt to degrade them. ... They had the insight, courage, and audacity to challenge the assessments.” (p. 101)

If you underline the words “insight, courage, and audacity to challenge” you are identifying essential ingredients in resilience. They ingredients create the kind of tenacity that enabled them to “fight and compete for important goals” (p. 106). So, as steel cannot be hardened unless it's hammered,

“ ... it's no different with people. Self-made millionaires report that degrading evaluations and comments by certain authority figures played a role in their ultimate success in life. Hammering built the antibodies they needed to deflect criticisms, and temper their resolve.” (p. 102). “Adversity is essential in bringing out the best in people. Some call it character.” (p. 108)

Have you ever heard that a steel resolve from a serious knock-down is the *secret ingredient* of success? If you have heard it, you probably don't hear it very often. Yet establishing a steel resolve to fight for your goals, what's important to you, and not expecting it as an entitlement because you are smart or from money—this doesn't usually hit the evening news. The key is the stubbornness to compensate, to learn to play the game with whatever handicaps you start with, and to nurture your courage so that you fight against all odds. The key lies in the very process of overcoming problems, labels, the odds, humiliations, and challenges that strengthens a person from the inside out. It is like adding titanium to steel—that very process makes steel many times strong than it is alone.

“Life is not one short race—it is a marathon of marathons. Labels come and go. If you believe that you can succeed in life in spite of degrading labels that predict your failure, you are likely to win most of the marathon. This is the common experience among millionaires. The large majority report that at some point or points in their lives they were labeled inferior, average, or mediocre, but they did not allow critics to forecast their future achievements, and they overcome their label of so-called inferiority.” (p. 98)

Have you ever had a process that was like the forging and hammering of steel? Like adding titanium to steel to create a steel resolve about something? Those are the kinds of experiences that make and/or break people. Yet it is from such a furnace that self-discipline, courage, commitment, and passion arise. It puts a fire in your belly making you ready to take on impossible challenges. This explains why over-protection and over-cuddling creates a softness that leaves one unprepared for life and unwilling to devote the necessary effort.

It is the disciplined person who takes charge of his or her life and assumes complete responsibility for your results and for succeeding. That's because, not given to self-indulgence and not expecting a path

of roses, a disciplined person is not easily side-tracked.

“If you lack discipline, the chances of your ever accumulating wealth are very, very small. ... A person with self-discipline possesses an internal compass, a control and navigation system. ... To become wealth one must be disciplined in thought and deed, disciplined enough to search for great economic opportunities.” (p. 85)

This wealth creation secret (a steel resolve for persistence) is actually a complex meta-state. It is made up of numerous ingredients so you have to use a meta-stating process to put them together, shake well, bake. Then you'll get a batch of this new gestalt state, a state made of a titanium enriched steel resolve. This will save you the need to go through a painful experience that will trigger you to compensate.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #28
June 13, 2016
Resilience Series #11

THE MEANINGS YOU GIVE— THE EXPERIENCE YOU LIVE

Of all of your powers, the greatest of your inherent powers, lies in your ability to create meaning. That’s because *the meaning you give is the experience you then live*. For designing a healthy and robust resilience, it is here that you will find the heart of a resilience that will allow you to spring back into action after any set-back. In this series I have already recommended specific meanings that will create the resilient state. Yet above and beyond those specific meanings as empowering beliefs, understandings, decisions, and identities is *the ability to choose your meanings*.

Do you know this power? This is your power to invent a semantic framework that will keep you healthily invested in living your life to the full. After all, that’s what a set-back knocks out of us—our meanings. By definition, that’s what a *set-back* is—your hopes, dreams, and richest meanings as manifested in your relationships, career, home, possessions, family, etc. suffer a loss. What is set back is your journey to fulfill your highest intentions and meanings.

Whatever that is for you—that’s the *content* of what you have lost. Yet above and beyond that, you have *not* lost your ability to create meaning. But many people, maybe most people, act as if they have lost that when they suffer a set-back or a knock-down. They act as if they cannot re-construct their intentions and meanings. They act as if they cannot re-invent themselves and the meaning of their life. Yet that *process*, the very ability to construct meaning, is your greatest innate power for creating and sustaining your resilience.

To support this claim, look again at the people that we quickly look to and think about when we think about highly resilient people—people who do not let a major set-back stop them. What do they all have in common? *They have the flexibility to quickly begin re-constructing the meaning of life*. Viktor Frankl did this. Christopher Reeves did this. Sentenced to a Concentration Camp for years and suffering severe privations and suffering a major health crisis (becoming a quadriplegic) represents some pretty major set-backs. Yet both Frankl and Reeves shared something. They used their meaning-making power to reinvent themselves, to give their lives renewed meanings.

When you know that the meaning you live is the experience that you will live, then you will be in a position to flexibly use your meaning-making powers. That realization will put you in a position where you can truly *choose* your response to the challenges before you. That’s because the option of choosing your response similarly comes from your ability to choose your meanings and to set them as your semantic framework for responding.

If you know this power, how is your skill in using this power? Do you know how to put a positive spin on things so that you can stay positive? That short statement summarizes *reframing*. You take something and put a new frame on it so that it can be interpreted in a different way. You take the content of something and say “It does not mean X, it means Y.”

Recently during some of our *Group and Team Coach Training*, we ran an experiment wherein we gave people a set of complaints to reframe. Group members were given complaints to make in the group and the coach was to take the complaint and give it a positive spin and put it to good use. Some of the complaints were normal kind of complaints, some were exaggerated and really stupid ones. The amazing thing is how difficult most people, even well-trained people, have in taking something and giving it new and better meanings. It sounds easy, but like so many things, it is much more difficult to *do* (implement) than to understand.

While it may be challenging, even difficult, the ability to frame and reframe is one of the most unique and distinguishing human powers—namely, the ability to assign meaning and interpret things in a way that brings out your best. Whatever meanings you set determine your focus, your response, your emotions, your state, and the way you thereafter live your life.

It has been said that anyone can explain things when everything is going your way. In fact, any fool can do that. But it takes a creative and flexible mind to explain things when life falls apart. It requires true creativity to be able to find and set a great meaning for a set-back that then induces a state of resilience, determination, vision, and optimism. And while it may not be easy, it is certainly highly desirable.

The truth is that at every moment of your life, you are in the process of creating meanings. The question is not whether you are a meaning-maker and that you invent meanings, you do. The question is about the kind and quality of meanings you create. The question is whether those meanings are supportive and empowering for you as a person or whether they are limiting and diminishing.

What happens to you in your life is not always under your control. Things happen. Natural disasters occur. People do hurtful things that affect you. But *the meaning that you give to those things is under your control*. And the meaning you give will be the experience you live. Knowing this, how will you choose to use your innate semantic-construction powers? Do you need to learn more about those powers and develop your skills in using them to your well being?

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #29
June 13, 2016

KORZYBSKI TO THE RESCUE!

Dealing with the Ideology behind Terrorism

If you’ve been watching television, the cable stations, internet, etc. for the past two days of the death and destruction in Orlando Florida, then you’ve been hearing the same questions that we hear every single time there’s a terrorist attack, *the why questions*: “Why did this happen?” “What is he (or they) so angry, hateful, intolerant, etc.?” We also hear *the what questions*: “What can we do to stop this?” “What can we do to catch the people before they start the murdering?”

Actually we already know the answer to the *why* questions. Indeed those who engage in the massacre of innocents and glory in murder have made it clear. It comes from their ideology—they *believe* that they have the right to impose their religious views on those who disagree with them. And behind that is an even more insidious belief: “My belief (as my mental map) *is* the reality (the territory). So first they believe in something most of us consider stupid and medieval: “We can impose our beliefs on others!” This violates the modern spirit of democracy and the human right that people can believe whatever they want to believe no matter how ridiculous or assinine. But *believing* is not the same as having the right to *act out* your beliefs.

Now those who believe in *Radical* Islam engage in terrorism because of its ideology *and* because they confuse their map with the territory. I’m not speaking about the religion itself, Islam. Instead, I’m speaking about people taking that religion and *adding to it this radical attitude*. “If I believe something, I have the right to *impose* that belief on others. I’m right, they are wrong. They are infidels, I must kill them.”

Confusing map and territory, your thinking and reality—that’s the problem. This is the medieval thinking which preceded today’s more modern and scientific thinking that distinguishes a person’s understanding from reality. Medieval thinking is *the either-or thinking* that puts a person into a dogmatic and fundamentalistic state. These symptoms make the persons closed-minded, intolerant, hateful, angry, etc. It distorts their religion so they actually think they are serving God by murdering people! *This kind of thinking is the problem.*

The young man (29) in Orlando Florida did *not* engage in mass murder because of poverty or mistreatment. He had a good job, had plenty of money, had a wife and child, and even had a loving family (parents). [Although he may have learned some of it from his dad who supported the Taliban, a terrorist group in Afghanistan.] While some people may join ISIS or Al-Qaeda or other Radical Islamic groups for these reasons, not this guy. The same could be said of the husband and wife murderers in San Bernardino California who slaughtered 14 fellow employees. *The problem is their ideology and their confusion of map and territory.* That’s what makes them fanatics!

It is similar to the problem with Nazism in the 1930s. The source of the anger, hatred, intolerance, murderous rage, etc. started with *the ideology*. It then went into the pathology of feeling proud of murdering as they thought that their mental map *is* the territory.

In Florida tThe problem was not his anger at gays. The problem was not his hatred of those who do not accept the Islam religion. The problem was not even his scornful attitude toward western culture. These were but symptoms. The problem is his ideology— his meanings! The *meanings* that he gave to these things became the *experiences* that he then lived.

As long as there are people who *think* and *believe* that they have “a divine right” to impose their values and beliefs on others, and as long as there are people who will do whatever it takes (e.g., murder, destruction, bomb civilians, etc.) to reach their goal of a Caliphate government on earth, then these problems will continue.

At the heart of these political problems are the psychological or ideological problems of *their thinking*. That’s why Alfred Korzybski’s formulation, “The map is *not* the territory” can rescue us from this nonsense. So I call upon all of our Muslims in Neuro-Semantics to spread the word wide and far— “The map is not the territory.” Tell people, “Whatever you believe is a belief— not the territory.” Help people understand that this means that none of us can be so cockeyed sure that what we believe is *the* truth. We are all fallible and always will be. We are all wrong about many things. We now have hundreds, and perhaps we are close to thousands of beautiful Muslim people in Neuro-Semantics and many, many more in NLP, that’s a great start on a groundswell movement around the world. Of course, this by itself will not stop or defeat ISIS, but it will significantly help to change the kind of thinking that’s feeding the *radical attitude* that creates the *radical* Islamists who support terrorism.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #30
June 20, 2016
Resilience Series #12

I wrote the following many years ago in a series
on Self-Actualizing for the Meta-Coaches egroup.

RESILIENT AS ACTUALIZING AGAINST ALL ODDS

Imagine what life would be like and the possibilities if you were a young black boy, born in Texas at the turn of the 20th century, in the year 1900. How meaningful and productive do you think your life would have been?

That’s when Wilk Peters was born. He was born to a share-cropper in a part of Texas where the nights were ruled by racial threat and the days were spent fighting off poverty by working the cotton fields. So by eight he was walking behind a plow mule. Now would you think that this is the place or context of the best conditions for self-actualization? Would you guess it to be a place of dreams?

Yet young Wilk caught a dream, and early. At 8 years old he happened to meet the only one educated man in his humble experience, an awesome figure in a tall black hat— the doctor. But even better, when he mentioned it to his dad, John Peters, his dad knew how to nourish the beginning of aspirations in his young son. He encouraged him. He validated knowledge and expertise and that he could become whatever he wanted to become.

And so the dream began. And as it began to grow, it put a passion in Wilk. It plants within him a fire for learning, for discovering the world, and for questioning. It put in him a hatred against ignorance and that became the emergent talent, skill, and competency of his life.

But there was a problem. And that problem was his immediate environment and the family situation. Specifically, by 13 his dad took ill in an accident and died so young Wilk had to step up to be “the man” in the family and take care of the family. So he dropped out of school (fifth grade) and stayed home to tend the farm in his dad’s place. And so it went, adult responsibilities and no more school. How would he ever become a doctor? How would he ever pursue knowledge?

But by 18 his mother remarried and so left for another town, and that left Wilk alone for the first time in his life. Without education or skills, he took a job at a local lumbermill and that’s where he began to hear the other young men dreaming of getting an education. In fact, he had heard that some had actually gone to Tyler Texas and enrolled in college.

That sparked something in young Peters. It had a dramatic impact! Many decades later, Jon Franklin wrote about how this affected Wilks.

“If they could go, so could he! The gossamer fantasy instantly solidified in his mind, from possibilities to dream to goal to necessity.”

Of course, this was his self-actualizing *vision* at that time. Yet up against that were many things ready to throw cold water on this dream. First, the men he talked to who had gone to college, went and had failed. They dropped out. Some mismanaged their money. Some couldn't cut the grades. Some just lost their dream. Some failed to apply themselves. Some were put off by the racism of the day. Then there was the belief that was circulating in the intellectual atmosphere at that time.

“It was said that an illiterate, once he became an adult, was done for. The mind was set, firm, impossible to teach.”

Talk about interferences to the self-actualization process of unleashing one's potentials! And, while Wilk was filled with cold terror, he refused to believe it. He *absolutely refused* to believe it. Ah, the creative and positive role of stubbornness! He told himself that if he ever got the chance, he would not drop out. “*If* I get the chance.”

Then he did something to begin to make his dreams real in his life. Looking around him and seeing the machinery at the sawmill, the first automobiles, the goods at the company store, it struck him that somebody had to know something. That's when he made a decision. He would be one of those people! And with that he moved to a choice point of his life.

“The resolution made, his ignorance became suddenly intolerable, and he couldn't wait. He borrowed some primers and when he wasn't working, he reviewed arithmetic and grammar ... when he found it incomprehensible, he still refused to put it down.” (Jon Franklin)

And so the plan began. He began saving for school. Each payday he would save a little for his education; the rest going to his mother and family and some for his modest requirements. A year passed, then two, then three and all the while he was reading. Learning.

“The more he learned, the more voracious his appetite for knowledge became. Slowly the puzzle of mathematics yielded to his stubborn attack, and he was captivated by the sweet logic of it. As he learned, the idea of learning itself broadened.” (Franklin)

With his eyes opened to learning, he one day saw an opportunity. A notice on a church bullet board said that the president of Texas College was coming to give a lecture. So 23 years of age with only a 5th grade education, he showed up with the money he had saved in hand and asked if he was too old. The president didn't have the heart to tell him otherwise, and simply said, “Nothing was impossible.” That was all Wilk needed to hear.

In the fall of the year he showed up to enter college. The admissions officials gave him a job shoveling coal and allowed him to attend 6th grade. So sitting with his knees jammed under a tiny table, he wrestled with long division and if there was laughing and jokes, he didn't notice. “He viewed his place in class as opportunity, not insult.” How about that? Talk about having owned his powers to create meaning and to exercise that power! Talk about someone letting a vision direct his responses rather than taking his cues from the environment.

The school administrators thought that the embarrassment of being with little kids, of having to work

at hard menial labor to put himself through school would be enough to quench his dream. It wasn't. The next year he was back and that's when he discovered Shakespeare; and Shakespeare spoke to him. "To be or not to be: that is the question." He memorized the words as he shoveled coal. That was also the year he discovered the library— a sacred place of unimaginable riches. And the books began to change him. His learnings began making him a different man. And he became a dreamer and in beating back ignorance, he was slowly turning his dream into reality. And as he has respected knowledge, now he was coming to respect himself.

Fast forward several years, and when Wilk was 28 he graduated from high school. And Franklin wrote that with that, all of his fears of failure vanished. Now he was ready for college. Now he would be a "college man." But in the second year, 1929, the stock market crashed. That meant even fewer menial jobs. Yet as always, he persisted. Waiting tables in the student cafeteria, he did so until he graduated in 1931. During that time he became fascinated by languages and so started learning German, then Spanish while teaching math. Talk about an emergent passion taking a long time to arise in one.

When there was no work even with a college degree in mathematics, he volunteered at the college library. In it was in that context that the head librarian began noticing the reverence with which he handled each volume. That's when she asked a question that planted yet another vision within him. "Why not become a librarian?" The rest of the story is that Wilk Peters applied for a scholarship to the Hampton Institute's College of Library Science in Virginia.

Then, over the ensuing years he began traveling in his summers to see the world. A teacher most of the year, he spent 3 months each summer as a student, studying Spanish at the University of Barcelona, art and French in Paris, and his travels took him to Denmark, Switzerland, Portugal, Norway, England, Ireland, and so on. "His profession was perfectly matched to his dream of learning." As a professor and lecturer, he lived his life traveling the world, searching for knowledge, and constantly beating back ignorance. He traveled to bring knowledge back to black universities around the world. And, in the end he discovered that the world wasn't a stage at all as per Shakespeare, but a campus. And that was the dream that caught his fancy in the first place, a dream that unleashed a ferocity of learning and turned him into a life-long learner.

Reference

In 1983 Jon Franklin wrote *The Ballad of Old Man Peters* which was published in *the Evening Sun* (Baltimore) and later in *Reader's Digest* (Jan. 1984).

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #31
June 27, 2016
Resilience Series #13

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

As we all know, and know all too well—things often go wrong. Whether in business, career development, relationships, parenting, in all areas things can go awry from our plans, desires, and expectations. Sometimes when things go wrong, things become muddled and confused. At other times, things become damaged even destroyed, toxified, traumatized, and distorted.

Now when things go wrong—one thing that potentially can undermine resilience is *your philosophy of good and evil*. And you can count on your “good—and–evil” philosophy being activated when things go wrong. It comes with the territory of being human. We all have some understanding about good and evil, but until something goes wrong and you have a set-back, it is just a philosophy. Then it becomes real, it becomes life. And then, as a meaning-maker who has to identify what a thing is, what it means, how it operates, it’s significance, etc., now you have to do that with the set-back. What do you think? Is it good and supportive? Is it evil and hurtful? What is its source and significance?

Whether the set-back occurs to you as an individual, a manager, leader, entrepreneur, business owner, parent, a friend, etc., you have assumptions in the back of your mind about what it means when things go wrong. You ask the *why* question:

“Why did this happen to me?”

“Why is there pain, hurt, unfairness, injustice, challenges, problems?”

“Why does evil things happen in the world?”

At this point your answer to these so-called *philosophical* questions enables your resilience or it disables your resilience. Which direction does your philosophy lead you? How do you explain the *source* of evil? Does the cause of the thing that goes wrong come upon you because there’s something wrong with *you*? Is it just happen chance? Is evil personal or is it impersonal? Does “evil” even exist as a thing? If it does not, how do you understand the presence of evil in the world?

Prior to the twentieth century, people mostly thought of *evil* as a thing, something that existed externally and apart from human activity. They even invented personifications of evil in terms of demons, devil, satan, etc. Twentieth Century Psychology did no better. It also took the negative view of things going wrong. Following Freud and Watson, both Psychoanalysis and Behaviorism assumed that “human nature” was the problem. The source of evil goes to the basic human drives which are hostile, antagonistic, aggressive, totally selfish, anti-social, etc. The problem is inside. Applied to business or social contexts, and people don’t really want to work, they are lazy, irresponsible, selfish, greedy, etc. McGregory called this Theory X.

Maslow changed all of that as he explained “evil” differently, it is not grounded in human nature, but

arises from failing to fulfill the basic needs required for health and growth. For Self-Actualization Psychology, *deficiency* is the problem. Things do not go wrong because people are bad (evil) at their core. It is because their basic needs have not been taken care of in a satisfactory way. *Pathology* arises because of the lack of gratification of needs. People become sick due to *not* satisfying the requirements for health and growth. The problem is outside. It is in how you cope with your driving needs.

The first needs are those for oxygen, food, water, and sleep. Deprive a person of one of these and stand back. Watch the person become desperate. Perpetuate that state—then out of that desperate need to survive will come aggression, hostility, competition, greed, fear, grief, sadness, shame, etc. The same happens when you deprive a person of the safety and security needs, the social needs for love, affection, connection, relationship, and support. It happens with deficiency of self-value, self-respect, and self-dignity. When people are deprived of these basic human requirements, they become aggressive, hostile, competitive, desperate, fearful, angry, etc. and will *do harm* (evil). They become reactive which then leads to *doing evil* to oneself and to others.

Deficiency even occurs at the highest of needs, the self-actualizing needs of knowledge, beauty, justice, order, love, etc. When deprived of these, meta-pathologies arise— meaninglessness, hopelessness, futility, desperate, depression, alienation, cynicism, etc. What is called “evil” arises due to the failure of human beings to live and be fully human. “Evil” describes the failure to be human, it misses the mark of what’s required to be fully alive, fully human— knowledge, understanding, self-development, personal growth, meaning, significance, beauty, order, discipline, excellence, etc.—the *being*-values.

What do we need when things go wrong, when bad things happen to us or to our world? What do we need when questions of good and evil arise? One thing we need is a philosophy that enables us to understand the source of the problem which, in turn, gives us a way to respond creatively. And that’s precisely what Self-Actualization Psychology and Theory Y provides.

When things go wrong—something is off-track. We are missing a key variable that’s required for things to go right. When we evaluate that something is “evil,” we are saying that instead of fulfilling the criteria for health, growth, success, etc., we are instead experiencing something preventing that or something destroying it. It is “evil” to what we are attempting to achieve. The solution is now at hand— let’s find out what’s missing or what’s interfering. If something is deficient, let’s fulfill it. If something is interfering, let’s identify it and replace it.

When things go wrong, you need a practical philosophy or understanding that can guide you into taking smart corrective actions. Maslow suggested the understanding that human nature is neutral or good, and *not* bad or evil, and that it is designed with certain requirements for health and wholeness. Believing that leads us to get curious, “So what’s going wrong?” “Going wrong in terms of what goal or objective?” “What’s needed so it goes right?” Now you’re thinking resiliently!

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #32
July 4, 2016
Resilience Series #14

HAPPILY RESILIENT

“... the happiest people do have their share of stresses, crises, and even tragedies. They may become just as distressed and emotional in such circumstances as you or I, but *their secret weapon* is the poise and strength they show in coping in the face of challenge.” (p. 23)

“If we observe genuinely happy people, we shall find that they do not just sit around being contented, they make things happen. They pursue new understandings, seek new achievements, and control their thoughts (p. 64) Sonja Lyubomirsky (2008), *The How of Happiness*

In the first quotation above from the book, *The How of Happiness*, the author offers a strange and paradoxical statement: “the happiest people ... have their share of stresses, crises, and even tragedies.” Really? So you could have a tragedy and still live happily? Crises and distresses could occur in your life and you could still be content and joyful? If that’s the case, then merely getting knocked down does not necessarily equate to misery.

The next statement is even more amazing: “their secret weapon is the poise and strength they show in coping in the face of challenge.” That sounds like resilience! Somehow they have *poise and strength* when facing some personal challenge in their lives. This gives them a secret weapon.

The third statement reveals a bit of the *how-to*. “They do not just sit around being contented, *they make things happen*.” They are active, even proactive. They take the initiative. “They pursue new understandings, seek new achievements, and control their thoughts...” Now in this book which focuses on *happiness*—what it is and how it works—there are also secrets about resilience. There’s a reason for that—namely, the author focuses on thinking and thinking patterns:

“It is a truism that *how you think*—about yourself, your world, and other people—is more important to your happiness than the objective circumstances of your life.” (p. 88)

This is also true for resilience. It’s true for a great many other mental attitudes as well. *What and how you think about things plays a critical role in your experience*. In Neuro-Semantics we say, the meaning you give is the experience you live. No surprising then, the largest part of this book on happiness is comprised of going through *the thinking patterns* which are the variables for happiness. In examining them, they strike me as many of the very items that put “bounce” into a person so that when you get knocked-down, you *bounce* right back up and land on your feet. Here are some of those resilient thinking patterns.

Gratitude. Research indicates that the person who is inclined to gratitude is less likely to be depressed, anxious, lonely, envious or neurotic. Gratitude first is about “counting your blessings.” This is about an attitude of wonder, appreciation, and savoring what’s precious. Gratitude can neutralize envy, hostility, worry, and irritation. It enables the ability to focus on the good things.

Optimism. This capacity to look on the bright side of things enables you to keep your dreams fresh and alive. To do that, imagine or write out your best possible vision of self and your future. Create a bright and compelling future.

Presence. Ruminating over and over, over-thinking, obsessing—these are thinking patterns that undermine happiness and resilience. Emerson said, “Finish each day and be done with it. ... Tomorrow is a new day.” *Kindness.* To act with kindness you have to access and live from compassion. Conversely, if you focus on acts of nastiness, you will lower the quality of your life by darkening your heart.

Caring. Because we are social beings, connecting with others and belonging is critical for our well-being. Yet for every negative expression between people, it takes a ratio of 5-to-1 positive expressions to keep the relationship healthy. Now because there are inevitable differences over which we can conflict, the problem isn’t conflicting *per se*, the problem is not knowing how to engage in positive conflicting. The problem is knowing how to avoid toxic conflicting which John Gottman describes as criticizing, impugning motives, showing contempt (sneering, demeaning), being defensive, stonewalling, etc.

Coping Strategies. Because there will always be frustrations and blocks in life that evoke stress, it’s critical to have strategies for effectively dealing with these stresses. Coping comes first as it enables you to focus on getting by. But getting by is a very low objective. Better is to aim to not merely cope with things, but to master the stresses and problems so they actually become sources of renewal.

Forgiving. Research further shows that people who forgive are less likely to be depressed, hostile, anxious, bitter, resentful, or neurotic. They are more likely to be happier, healthier, more agreeable, and serene. Mandela provided an example by forgiving his jailers. Later when he left prison he said, “When I walked out of the gate I knew that if I continued to hate these people, I was still in prison.”

Flow. Engage in an activity for the sheer joy of it. Make sure you are fully in the present moment so that you access a state of intense absorption. When you are fully focused, you lose awareness of yourself, others, time, the world. They all go away and you are lost in that moment in the engagement. “To maintain flow, we continually have to test ourselves in ever more challenging activities” says Csikszentmihalyi.

Savoring. Live in the moment and savor all of life’s joys. Don’t postpone this by thinking that the best part will come sometime in the future. Now is the moment. So savor each experience as a special moment. *Commitment Goals.* Goals are important. What is important about goals and goal setting is the process of participating in an activity that’s challenging and valuable and meaningful to you. When you do that, you live with a purpose—you live “on purpose.” It makes your life much more meaningful.

It turns out that the way to happiness is the way to resilience. That is, when you adopt more of the thinking patterns that make for a joyful attitude, you create the foundation for resilience. Here’s to you experiencing a more joyful attitude!

Resilience Notes:

Don't you understand? Just Give Up!

In the movie, "Cool Runnings," John Candy is talking to a character by the name of Maurice, the commissioner regarding bob sledding team, he wants a team from Jamaica. Actor, John Candy, just does not give up. He keeps asking and proposing, finally the commissioner asks, "Do the words 'give up' mean anything to you?" Candy responds, "No! Not a thing."

This comes from a new book on NLP, what someone suggested as to how to build up resilience but there's a problem. Resilience is here treated and considered as if it is a primary state. But it is not! And that's why the following will not work and goes in the wrong direction.

1) Identify a time when you were resilient.

How were you defeated, put down, set back?

What happened? What was the context? How did you stay resilient? Flexible?

What did you focus on?

What problems were present?

What problems did you solve? How?

Remembering What they Wrote

Donald Trump, Art of the Comeback

Unlike the media, politics is a business of relevance. People have always asked me if I'll ever be involved in politics. It seems every so often there's some unfounded rumor that I'm considering seeking office— sometimes even the presidency! The problem is, I think I'm too honest, and perhaps too controversial, to be a politician. I always say it like it is, and I'm not sure that a politician can do that, although I might just be able to get away with it because people tend to like me. Honesty causes controversy, and therefore, despite all the polls that say I should run, I would probably not be a very successful politician." (1997. p. 186)

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #33
July 11, 2016
Reflections about NLP #1

THE GESTALT BASE OF NLP

If you ask, “Where did NLP come from?” there are multiple answers. One of the central answers is Gestalt Therapy. It arose in the context of a Gestalt Class that Richard Bandler and Frank Pucelik started at the new Kresge College at the University of California at Santa Cruz. There they practiced Gestalt practices and principles that they had learned. Frank learned Gestalt Therapy at a University in San Diego where he studied prior to coming to Santa Cruz. Richard never studied Gestalt. He learned about it from books and from the audio and video tapes of Fritz Perls which Dr. Robert Spitzer gave him to transcribe. From those transcriptions, Spitzer published the book, *The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy* (1973).

When NLP began—and long before it was called “Neuro-Linguistic Programming”—it began as a *class* studying how Fritz Perls encountered people to help them develop more fully as human beings. What they added to Gestalt was a structural analysis—that’s when John Grinder got involved. Then together with the group, they began wondering about how the language patterns and experiential processes were able to create the changes that the group was experiencing.

Yet—and this may be surprising—they did not invent so much as they appropriate what they found and put it together under the name “NLP.” What follows describes many of the things that NLP inherited from Gestalt. How these facts got shuffled to the back and de-emphasized, I don’t know. Nor do I understand why those who launched NLP didn’t highlight these facts. After all, from my perspective, they validate and give even more credibility to the birth of NLP, not less. Here are some of the things we (NLP) inherited from Gestalt.

1) Sensory Awareness. The focus on *awareness*, especially on *sensory-based awareness*, came from Fritz Perls. Perls’ focus was known for his “Now I am aware ...” exercise. He would have a person start every sentence with this line as a way to develop *sensory awareness*. It invited people into the present—and to be present in this moment.

“Become aware of his gestures, breathing, emotions, voice, facial expressions. The more he becomes aware of himself, the more he will learn about what his self is. “Now I am aware...” *The Gestalt Approach* (p. 65)

“... the patient must come to his ‘senses.’ He must learn to see what is there and not what he imagines to be there. He must stop hallucinating, transferring, and projecting.” *Gestalt Approach* (p. 104)

2) The Sensory Representational System.

NLP also received its focus on the VAK. An extensive description of each sensory system is detailed in *Gestalt Therapy* (1951) in the third chapter. There Perls goes through the visual system, auditory, kinesthetic (body awareness) and from there remembering, imagining, emoting, verbalizing. NLP did *not* invent the VAK—it was in the Gestalt experiments and processes that goes back to the early 1950s.

3) Patterns. In NLP we have lots and lots of what we call “patterns.” These are not new. In fact in the 1951 book on *Gestalt Therapy* there are dozens and dozens of patterns there, called “experiments.” The design was to get people to experiment with their awareness in order to shift and change it, to try on the possibilities. Fritz Perls and his co-authors of that book, Ralph Hefferline and Paul Goodman, presented *the experiments as trials* to facilitate people to engage in specific observations about themselves and their experiences to either confirm or disconfirm an idea or hypothesis. Ah, yes, that’s what any scientific experiment seeks to do. It does not seek to “prove” something, but to either confirm or disconfirm a hypothesis that they are testing.

4) Holistic Patterning and Constructionism. Perls defined *gestalt* as “configuration, structure, theme, structural relationship (Korzybski) or meaningful organized whole ...” (1951, p. ix). From Perls also they got the content/structure distinction. That was the distinction that Fritz presented repeatedly and which NLP inherited. It was also from Perls and Gestalt that they became acquainted with Korzybski. In *Gestalt Therapy* it was Fritz who quoted and referred to Alfred Korzybski’s General Semantics.

“Although the content is what is said is important, it is much more the structure, the syntax, the style, that reveals character and underlying motivation.” (*Gestalt Therapy*, p. 216)

“The therapy consists in analyzing the internal structure of the actual experience... not so much *what* is being experienced, remembered, done, said, etc., as *how* what is being remembered is remembered, or how what is said is said...”

“A gestalt is a pattern, a configuration, the particular form of organization of the individual parts that go into its make up. Basic premise: human nature is organized into patterns or wholes.” *The Gestalt Approach*, (p. 5)

5) From Why to How. In NLP we strongly emphasize that we don’t ask *why*, especially when a person is in an unresourceful state. Instead we focus on *how*—and that gives us a focus on modeling the structure of an experience. Again, this is *not* an NLP invention. It came from Fritz.

“Therapy oriented to the past is invalid because the *whys* of the patient’s neurosis really explain very little. ‘Why’ opens up an endless series of questions which can only be answered by a first cause that is self-caused. How will an explanation which makes the aunt the villain in the piece solve his problem. Such an explanation only gives the patient license to project all his difficulties onto the aunt. It gives him a scapegoat, not an answer.” *The Gestalt Approach* (p. 54)

“These are the questions that start with ‘why?’ The ‘why’ questions produce only pat answers, defensiveness, rationalizations, excuses, and the delusion that an event can be explained by a single cause. Not so with the ‘how.’ Those inquire into the structure of an event, and once the structure is clear all the whys are automatically answered. ... If we spend our time looking for causes instead of structure we may as well give up the idea of therapy and join the group of worrying grandmothers who attack their prey with such pointless questions as ‘Why did you catch that cold?’ ‘Why have you been so naughty.’” *Gestalt Approach* (p. 77)

6) Figure / Ground Distinction. A gestalt involving the relationship between figure and background and in a “good gestalt” a figure stands out against a ground so that it finishes what is started. And what about this statement from Fritz: “In such a case, all attention tends to flow from the ground of what one is into the figure of what one is becoming.” That’s sounds like the structure of the Swish pattern to me. Could it be that the NLP Swish pattern came originally from Fritz and all that happened in NLP was that someone (and from what I can tell, it was Christine Hall) who invented a process for doing the Swish.

7) The Phobia Cure pattern. In NLP we have a pattern that “cures” phobias and that can take the emotional charge out of a strong reactive emotional state. The pattern involves playing a movie through to the end as you remember it and then rewinding it to the beginning. That’s why I have always called it *The Movie Rewind Pattern*. The following was written in the context of reversing functions and playing around with the images that people entertain in their minds. Perls said, “Turn the pictures upside down.” Yet long before Richard Bandler *claims* to have invented it, in 1951 Fritz Perls wrote:

“Imagine the motions around you as if they occurred the other way around, as in a reverse-motion moving picture film, where a diver sails gracefully from the springboard into the water, and then with equal ease flies back up from the water to the springboard.” (*Gestalt Therapy*, p. 47)

8) Meta-Model Distinctions. There are the linguistic distinctions that Perls introduced. Most famously was his constant challenges to the modal operators of necessity: should, must, have to.

“If you say, ‘I must do them,’ who is supplying the ‘must’? You, apparently, for you are not compelled from outside. What if you didn’t do them? No blow would fall. ... Suppose you say, ‘I want to do them but some part of me objects.’”

9) Emphasis on Authenticity. One of the things that Bandler heard on the tapes from Perls and transcribed in that 1973 book was about using Gestalt to enable people to get real. This was Perls way of talking about self-actualization—a theme that seemed to elude Bandler and the NLP movement for many, many years.

“The idea of Gestalt therapy is to change paper people to real people. To make the whole man of our time come to life and to teach him to use his inborn potential to be ... a leader without being a rebel, having a center, instead of living lopsided.” *Gestalt Approach* (p. 120)

10) Responsibility. If there was one thing that the first Human Potential Movement emphasized, at least what Maslow and Rogers stressed, it was responsibility. Perls as one of the second generation leaders of that movement also emphasized it. Here are two quotations, both in the book Bandler transcribed.

“Without awareness, there is no cognition of choice.” *The Gestalt Approach* (p. 66)

“Responsibility is really response-ability, the ability to choose one’s reactions. ... The therapist’s primary responsibility is not to let go unchallenged any statement or behavior which is not representative of the self, which is evidence of the patient’s lack of self-responsibility.” *Gestalt Approach* (p. 79, 80)

Wow! That’s a lot! NLP inherited a lot of what we today present as “Neuro-Linguistic Programming” from Gestalt. NLP did not invent it. Instead the originators *appropriated* it from Gestalt, and then, failed to give full credit to its source. They stood on the shoulder of these giants and saw further, but did not fully acknowledge those shoulders.

Sources:

Perls, Fritz. (1973). *The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy*. CA: Science and Behavior Books.

Perls, Frederick; Hefferline, Ralph; Goodman, Paul. (1951). *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality*. New York: Dell Publishing Co.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #34
July 13, 2016

TERRORISM — MEANINGFUL OR MEANINGFULLY TOXIC?

Last week I was in China and after presenting the Self-Actualization Quadrants and the Hierarchy of Needs during Meta-Coach Training, several people asked me about the “meaningfulness” that the Terrorists must get from their activities.

“Are they not at a high level of self-actualization?”

“They have lots of meanings, it is meaningful to them, and they are performing to live out their beliefs. Isn’t that self-actualization?”

I answered with a short and definitive answer, “No!!” Well, as you can imagine, that created a lot of conversation! They wanted to know, “Why not?” “What is the distinction that would prevent us from explaining it in that way?” Simple. A thing can be “meaningful” and still be very sick! Someone can give toxic meanings to something which will thereby create toxic responses. Maslow explained this in terms of “neurosis” or human pathology. He ought to know, he wrote a book on Abnormal Psychology. This also explains the structure of human addictions. Yes a person can give lots and lots of meanings to something as the Islamic Terrorists do which, in turn, drives them to behead infidels, go to war, strap on suicide vests, become mass murderers, etc. But that does not by any stretch of the imagination mean that they are self-actualizing.

Lots of meanings, and even “meaningfulness,” does not guarantee the correctness of their thinking, healthfulness, or being a “spiritual” person. To determine these things we have to step back (go meta) and reflect on the *quality* of the meanings that are being created.

Does this reflect the best of human health and well-being?

Does this promote love, compassion, care, joy, serenity, justice, appreciation, etc.?

Does this improve the quality of relationships between people?

Does this help us resolve conflicts and find ways to understand each other?

In the Neuro-Semantic perspective this is *the quality control question* that looks at the ecology of the meanings, the effects it has on relationships, health, conflict resolution, healthy negotiations, etc.

Is it realistic? Is it reality-oriented?

Is it correct according to psychology or to theology?

The Nazis did the same. They gave lots and lots of meanings to the ideology that Hitler promoted in his book, *Mein Kampf*. For many of them, it was “meaningful.” It was also sick. It was sick to the point of being toxic, dehumanizing, and destructive. It brought about World War II. Similarly, *the misuse* of Islam today by the fanatics and their ideology has brought about what will eventually be recognized as World War III. After all, look at all the countries being attacked by these people. In just

the past two weeks—the terrorist war showed up in six countries that got international news attention. The bad news is—World War III is already upon us.

World War III? In just two weeks there have been hundreds of murders in Orlando, Istanbul, Bangladesh, Baghdad, and other places as they have killed so many innocent children and civilians. The Radical Islamic Terrorists are certainly not “contained” in spite of what President Obama proclamation. They may be suffering some set-backs in Syria and Iraq, but they are certainly not a second-rate J.V. (Junior Varsity) team. They are deadly, they are serious, and they are fanatics and they are perverting Islam giving it a terrible public image.

Whether it is ISIS, Al Quada, the Taliban, or some other Islamic Terrorist group, these fanatics “think” they are serving God (their meaning) by killing, destroying, and murdering. Yet is pathological meaning and the most outrageous behaviors that humans can commit, not behaviors connected with being spiritual, serving God or mankind. Whatever happened to kindness, love, and humility? These fanatics know nothing of these. And they are using Allah, the Koran, and the Islamic faith to justify or buttress up their stupid and destructive purposes.

The consequences of what they are doing are dire. They are creating an increasingly dangerous world which is provoking more and more governments to create more and more security measures and to be on the lookout for terrorists. This is create more fear and paranoia in political leaders (which cannot be good!). They are contaminating the Islam religion encouraging naive young people to join an idealistic Nazi-like movement which is doomed to end in death and destruction. Reports say that in the most recent attack in Bangladesh, the terrorists had people quote passages from the Koran and those who got them wrong were killed. How sick is that?

Surprising or not surprising, these Radical Islamic Terrorists are just as willing and contented to murder Moslems who do not share their fanaticism! Nearly all of the nearly three hundred people murdered by the bombs in Baghdad were Moslems. So these terrorists are as much a terror to decent, peace-loving and spiritual Moslems as they are to Westerners and Infidels.

When will the larger Moslem community around the world rise up in force to distance themselves from these fanatics? Some have, there are beginnings. Yet there are thousands who sympathize with these radical fundamentalists and provide them safe havens for promoting their hate and intolerance. That has to stop.

Hopefully there will be a stronger unification of countries including Moslem countries to create a committed decision to eliminate ISIS and the other terrorists. Terrorism under any justification is a psychological and moral sickness driven by toxic meanings. It is an evil to human dignity and human nature. The good news is that it has to be cured by spreading healthy meanings. Let’s go to work!

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #35
July 18, 2016
Reflections about NLP #2

SATIR’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO NLP

In *The Gestalt Base of NLP* (July 11) I suggested that what became NLP was heavily dependent on Gestalt Therapy. After all, it arose from a “Gestalt Class.” It was also from Fritz Perls that Bandler got his rough persona as he modeled the person who called himself “a dirty old man.” Consequently more was contributed to NLP by Fritz Perls than by the other two, Virginia Satir or Milton Erickson.

None of this is to discredit NLP, just the opposite. It gives credit to the sources which is what any professional does. Acknowledging sources actually helps to establish a field’s credibility and is the way it is in any academic field.

This time I turn to the contributions that Virginia Satir made to Neuro-Linguistic Programming. Virginia Satir also contributed a lot to NLP as noted below. And she unlike the Perls and Erickson was a constant visitor to the early Meta groups out of which NLP arose. Except for “the Satir Categories,” the founders did not take much from Virginia’s books. In the history of NLP, a year after the Gestalt Class that Richard and Frank were leading, Dr. Spitzer sent Richard to Canada for a month to record Virginia’s Family System Constellation work.

1) *Rapport.* As they got *representational systems* from Perls, they found that they were masterfully utilized by Virginia. My guess is that because Virginia was such a big person (6 foot 1 or 2), she could easily have been intimidating to people. And that’s why she learned how to match people behaviorally and verbally. So from her NLP announced “the structure of rapport”—matching the behavioral outputs of people. Later, shortly prior to his death, Dr. Spitzer was talking with Fritz when he described Virginia. Fritz said she was “the most nurturing person he had known.” (1972, p. x). This was also her focus. She focused on developing nurturing people and families as even a cursory reading of *Peoplemaking* reveals.

2) *The Satir Categories.* Her focus was also on communication and from her they reproduced “The Satir Categories” of communication: blaming, placating, distracting, computing, and leveling (speaking assertive). These categories were reproduced in the early NLP books and then over the years, they were eventually dropped.

“Communication is the largest single factor determining what kinds of relationships he makes with others and what happens to him in the world about him. ... We pay a heavy price for not seeing and not hearing accurately as we end up by making assumptions and treating them as facts. (p. 30, 48)

In *Peoplemaking* she went through each of the representational systems: visual, visual-kinesthetic, auditory, and even olfactory (35-39, 41) and wrote extensively about how we use each in our

interpersonal communications.

3) Systems Thinking and Working. While Gestalt is systemic and holistic in nature and there is some emphasis on that in Perls' writings, it was even more prominent in Virginia's work. After all, she is recognized as the founder of *Family Systems*. For her the family is "the factory" where the person is made, so parents are the people-makers (p. 3).

"The relationships in a family are extremely complex. ... You must learn *how* to make that system work vitally yourself."

"What the leveling response does is make it possible for you to live as a whole person— real, in touch with your head, your heart, your feelings, and your body." (p. 78)

4) State. Satir emphasized "states." She used that terminology and it was probably from her that *state* entered into NLP's vocabulary. The state that she constantly talked about was self-esteem (self-worth). After that came safety, fear, and anger.

"Integrity, honesty, responsibility, compassion, love— all flow easily from the person whose pot [self-esteem pot] is high." (p. 22).

5) Patterns. Satir created various exercises that today we call patterns. There was the "Do you mean..." exercise (49-51) where people practiced making guesses and had to continue until they get three guesses right. She warned about mind-reading (52) distinguishing description from judgment (55)

6) Not "Why?" — "How?" As Perls made the case for *not asking why* and for shifting to focus on how (as mentioned in the last article), so Satir presented the same emphasis. Again, this did not originate with Richard or John.

"Understanding the system helps people to ask 'how' questions instead of 'why' questions. You know how hard you have to work with a 'why' question so it doesn't come out sounding like a blame question. ... 'How' questions get information and understanding, 'whys' produce defensiveness." (p. 119)

7) Parts, Parts Parties, Integration. A significant contribution from Satir was her emphasis on integration and, of course, her "Parts Parties" were designed specifically for that. From this came the talk in NLP about "parts" and the patterns for integrating parts. This was a big part of Volume II of *The Structure of Magic*, and one of the patterns presented there (Vol. II, p. 74-76).

8) Positive Intention. One of the premises of NLP is that "behind all behavior are positive intentions." The positive intention may not be at the first level of intention, it may be two or three or even more levels up (intention of intention), yet it is there. Satir operated from this and may have been the original source of that presupposition.

"I have never found a human being who was all bad. Such a violent man isn't all bad. It takes a good deal of maturity and understanding on the part of an adult to recognize this." (p. 183)

Steve Andreas noted this in his book on Virginia Satir:

"One of the most powerful aspects of Virginia's work was her assumption that everyone's *intentions* were positive, no matter how horrible the behavior was..." (1991, p. 4)

9) Well-Formed Outcome. Steve Andreas modeled 16 of Virginia's patterns in his book about her. What he writes suggests that the NLP Well-Formed Outcome pattern came from her.

"Virginia's work was guided by the basic outcome questions: What do you want? How ill you know when you've got it? What stops you now? What do you need in order to get it. She also understood that the answers to these questions have to be specific in sensory-based terms..." (1991, p. 3)

10) Mind-Reading.

If there was a language pattern that Virginia was always sniffing out and challenging, it was mind-reading. With families and couples, she considered it the biggest destroyer of communication, intimacy, and understanding.

"You don't really know what I am sensing, what I am feeling, what my past is, what my values are and exactly what my body is doing. You have only guesses and fantasies, and I have the same about you. Unless the guesses and fantasies are checked out, they become 'the facts' and as such can often lead to traps and ruptures." (1972, p. 33)

"Listening and looking require one's full attention. We pay a heavy price for not seeing and not hearing accurately as we end up by making assumptions and treating them as facts. ... How easy it is to misunderstand someone by making assumptions about what he meant. This can have serious results ... This brings us to what I consider one of the most impossible hurdles in human relationships. That is the assumption that *you* always know what *I* mean. The premise appears to be that if we love each other, we also can and should read each others minds." (1972, p. 48, 50, 53)

11. Meta-Questioning.

Now while meta-questioning did *not* originate in NLP, we originated it in Meta-Coaching, the founders could have discovered it. They were close to discovering it, very close.

"This new question, which is characteristic of Satir's work, is: 'How do you feel about your feelings about what is happening?' Consider this question in the light of the Meta-Model. This is essentially a request on the part of the therapist for the client to say how he feels about his reference structure—his model of the world..." (*The Structure of Magic*, Volume I, p. 161).

With a question like this, Virginia was able to "go meta" and get to the frames above and beyond the experience. "How do you feel (a meta-feeling) *about* your feelings (your first-level primary feelings) *about* what is happening (the experience out there in the world)?"

Sources:

Peoplemaking (1972), Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, Inc.

Changing with Families (1976), Virginia Satir, Richard Bandler, John Grinder, Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, Inc.

Virginia Satir: the Patterns of her Magic, (1991), Steve Andreas, Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, Inc.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #38
August 8, 2016
Reflections about NLP #6

SATIR’S META-MODEL & HER INNER STATES

After writing about Virginia Satir’s Contributions to NLP (#35), I reviewed her book *Conjoint Family Therapy* (1964) and then found another book about her—one that I never knew about or even heard of. Both of these indicate more of her contributions to NLP.

First her book, *Conjoint Family Therapy* (1964). This book was published by Spitzer and his publishing company, Science and Behavior Books, written nearly one decade prior to the beginning of NLP. Until my review last week, I had failed to realize the significance of this book. For example, in Chapter 8 “Communication: A Process of Giving and Getting Information,” she presents two of the basic NLP Presuppositions— You cannot *not* communicate. The meaning of your communication is the response you get.

Then she presents her “Meta-Model”—distinctions that you will recognize as part of the NLP Meta-Model. The following sample comes directly from her writings which were integrated into the language or communication model of NLP.

- 1) Universal Quantifiers. “If a person fails to realize that words are only abstractions he will tend to over-generalize...” “*Everybody* is like that.” “*Nobody* likes me.” “*All women* are...” (p. 82)
- 2) Lost Performatives indicating permanence. “He will assume that what he perceives or evaluates won’t change.” “That’s the way she is.” “I’ve always been that way.” “That’s life.”
- 3) Either/Or (in the Extended Meta-Model): “He assumes that there are only two possible alternatives when assessing perceptions or evaluation; he dichotomizes or thinks in terms of black or white.” “She either loves me or she doesn’t.” “That will either make him or break him.” (p. 83)
- 4) Mind-Reading. “He assumes that he can get inside the head of another. He operates as if from a ‘crystal ball’ and he acts as a spokesman for others.” “I know what you’re thinking.” “I know what she *really* means.” “You know what I *really* mean.” (p. 83-84)

Virginia even presents many of *the very questions* which ten years later became Meta-Model Questions for challenging the ill-formedness (p. 85). She doesn’t call the statements *ill-formed*, but *dysfunctional*. They are examples of dysfunctional communication—messages that are not clear.

- “What do you mean when you say that picture is ugly?”
- “What does she do that strikes you as selfish?”
- “How can you tell what I’m thinking?”
- “What do you mean, ‘everybody’ is like that? Do you mean your wife, boss, or who?”

“Do you mean *all* women or just the women you have known?”
 “What doesn’t turn out right? What in particular?”
 “Where, exactly, have such things happened to you? At home? At work?”
 “Why does it surprise you that I like fish? *You* don’t, but that doesn’t mean I don’t.”
 “What do you mean by doing something the ‘right’ way? Do you mean *your* way or what?”

If Richard and John created NLP by modeling Virginia’s “structure of magic,” now we know where they got much of the Meta-Model. *Virginia* provided them much of the content information of the Meta-Model. Interestingly, she even warned against over-using these questions so that a person does not become a Meta-Monster!

“Anyone who perpetually clarified and qualified would seem just as dysfunctional as the person who rarely did so. ... A receiver for perpetually asked a sender to clarify would seem testy, uncooperative, and irritating.” (1964, p. 89)

What they did not pick up on was other presuppositions from Virginia that could have become NLP Presuppositions such as these.

“Humans cannot communicate without, at the same time, meta-communicating. Humans cannot *not* meta-communicate.” (p. 97)

“All messages have requests in them, they are not always expressed verbally. These are meta-communications.” (p. 100). “The request, which is part of every message may or may not be expressed denotatively.” (102)

Modeling Virginia

In my research as I have tried to find out where the NLP Model came from, how it came into existence, and who contributed what, I have in just the past couple weeks come across a book that I had never heard of. Nor would I have ever thought that this book had anything to do with the origins of NLP, yet it does. The book, *Tidings of Comfort and Joy: An Anthology of Change* (1975) it is about Virginia Satir, Fritz Perls, Sheldon Kopp, and Raven Lang, was published and edited by Dr. Robert Spitzer the same year he published the first books of NLP.

The most incredible chapter in the book is a chapter about an Interview with Virginia Satir that occurred in 1974 between Spitzer, Richard Bandler “who is in charge of production” (of Science and Behavior books!) and Peggy Granger “who is on the editorial staff.” (p. 111). The chapter, “When I Meet a Person,” is a record of Virginia talking about her beliefs and attitude as a Family Therapist. It is the closest thing we have of modeling Virginia’s attitudes. And while Virginia mentioned that Richard Bandler was present in this interview, there was no interview or modeling.

What can we find in the open discussion of Virginia that gives us insight into her? Virginia says, “I would like to start with what goes on in me when I think about using myself as a helper to another person.” (1975, p. 111).

I interpret their presence as indicating they have “reached the end of their ability to cope” *and* as “a search for a new ability to cope better” (111). “What I am working for is to help people seek a different kind of coping process.” (119). “...I am dealing with a coping process rather than a problem-solving process.” (122).

I imagine “the life that he is and has” ... “to see his inside.” (112)

I seek to “reach the self-worth of each member of the family.” “I feel that no changes can be made in people unless they begin to feel themselves as having worth.” (113)

I seek to connect with the person’s “personhood,” “I feel that I am giving mine to you.”

I start with what the person wants, not with a discussion of the problem. (113). “What do you hope will happen to you as a result of your coming here?” (116)

“I see the people in front of me as doing the very best they can with what they have learned.” (114).

My search and efforts is directed to “helping these people become *real* with one another.”

“I like to make an ‘alive’ picture as quickly as possible. ... I find words are more useful when there is a picture; I call this ‘sculpturing’ or ‘posturing.’ “...actually putting themselves in the position of doing it make it more *real*.” “This kind of sculpturing has value because it makes explicit what is going on.” (117)

“I consider myself the leader of the process in the interview but *not* the leader of the people. I check out everything I do with them before I do it, so what I am is a strong leader for the process.” (118)

“I want to help people to become their own designers of their own choice-making; and before they can do that, they need to be free to take risks. So, my checking out with them their willingness to undertake anything is a very important piece of this interaction.” (118)

Another place where Virginia reveals more about herself which comes from *Conjoint Family Therapy* (1964). The last chapter is titled, “Involving the Larger System” (pp. 261-269).

“My attitude of hope goes a long way toward helping people change. I am convinced that all people can grow. It is a matter of connecting them with their inner resources. That is the therapeutic task.” (264)

I do not blame. “I blame no one—certainly not parents—and this gives people a better feeling about coming to group sessions. It is an attitude that also acknowledges that I am dealing with intelligent people...”

I set “the stage for awakening inner resources.” By asking questions to get members of the family saying that what I’m doing with them—they had never seen before. “Maybe there are other parts you haven’t noticed.” (266)

In setting up a sculpturing: “I’ve got an idea ... do you want to try it out with me?” ... Let me have your bodies for a while and I’ll give them back to you.’ I put a *lot* of humor in everything I do.” (267)

“Humor is a very important part of my work.” (268)

“I believe that people can handle tough problems more creatively when they feel good about themselves.” (268)

Today all of this sounds and feels very NLP-ish, and no wonder— it comes directly from one of the persons who were modeled at the beginning.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #36
July 25, 2016
Reflections about NLP #3

ERICKSON’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO NLP

Here’s something most people don’t know about NLP. Namely, when NLP began it was not called “NLP,” it was called *Meta*. Those involved were *the Meta people*. It was in late 1976 that the term “Neuro-Linguistic Programming” was created and used for what had been invented. That’s why there is no mention of “NLP” in the first books— *The Structure of Magic*, *Patterns of Milton H. Erickson*, *Changing with Families*. At first, the pre-NLP *Meta* groups focused on Gestalt (the first group was the Gestalt Class at the College) and then the second group focused on the first models: Representational Systems (from Perls and Satir), the Meta-Model (some linguistic distinctions from Perls and Satir) and then Grinder’s Transformational Grammar (TG) taken from his 1973 book where he sought to demystify TG.

Then suddenly everything seemed to change. What happened? Gregory Bateson introduced Richard and John to Milton Erickson and they discovered a whole new set of linguistic distinctions—hypnotic language patterns. As they found and studied hypnotic language patterns and began modeling what Erickson, they created a list of linguistic distinctions that detailed how “hypnosis” worked. They fondly called this new set of distinctions, *the Milton Model*. The structure of what’s called “hypnosis” works via communication— a specific way of being precisely vague (!).

As I read the history and have talked with those at the beginning, I get the sense that things changed radically once the hypnotic language patterns were added to NLP. Prior to this all of the NLP Communication distinctions focused on precision and clarity. Afterwards NLP began to become “manipulative” as those involved began exploring *what states and behaviors they could induce in people* with the new communication distinctions. They even bought books on hypnotic phenomena and sought to see how many of those phenomena they could produce using the Milton Model.

Reading *The Wild Days of NLP* by Terry McClendon suggests to me that this changed everything in the early NLP movement. Suddenly, NLP (or Meta) no longer stressed precision, specificity, and modeling expertise in actual behaviors. Now the group shifted to being focused on inducing people into hypnotic states—*doing things to people*. And yes, while sometimes this would improve life and enable new resourcefulness, often it was about self-indulgence.

What Erickson contributed to NLP was mostly and primarily *the hypnotic language patterns, the Milton Model*. What the group discovered was that whereas with the Meta-Model you could take a person back down to real life experience and ground it in see-hear-feel referents, the Milton Model could take a person in the other direction. It can take a person up-up-and-away into a person’s imaginations and into a person’s wildest dreams and hopes. It takes a person up into the non-specified

realm of nominalizations and unspecified nouns and verbs: “And you can enjoy a loving and deep relationship with your loved one, feeling a rich connection and support as you have never felt before.”

Another thing that Erickson contributed was a deeper appreciation of matching and pacing. From him we learned the pattern, “pace, pace, pace, lead.” The young Meta group learned from Erickson just how important it was to match, match, and match a person’s experience; by so pacing Milton could create a deep unconscious connection which allowed the person to be more open to change. Erickson also furthered the idea that each person has his or her own map of the world and the need to create a new theory of personality for each person. That’s what he did. These practices underscored his attitude—one of absolute respect for his clients and curiosity about them. Milton Erickson himself was highly ethical and didn’t tolerate manipulation.

Of course, as a medical doctor and a psychiatrist, Erickson’s work focused first and foremost on health, wellness, disease, pain management, etc. He had introduced Medical Hypnosis to the psychiatric community in the 1950s and his series of books on his seminars— *Healing in Hypnosis* (1983), *Life Reframing in Hypnosis* (1985), *Mind-Body Communication in Hypnosis* (1986), as well as his many other books focused mostly on *medical* conditions. Yet NLP did not take this from Erickson. If NLP had, there would be a whole set of patterns similar to Robert Dilts’ “Allergy Cure” pattern in NLP. And this, by the way, is still an open and mostly unexplored area for NLP.

My take on NLP’s journey into hypnosis and hypnotic language patterns is that it unfortunately led to some people (not all of course) taking up NLP and using it for manipulative purposes. After all, the Meta-Model essentially *de-hypnotizes* people. It brings them *out of their nominalizations and unspecified models of the world* and grounds them back in the real world. But with these new language patterns some of those who came into NLP who lacked a strong sense of ethics or professionalism began using it to sell, negotiate, seduce, etc.

The Milton Model conversely induces people into states but does so under the framework of the client *not knowing* what you are doing. Further, both Bandler and Grinder to this day still think this way. In various ways they say: “The conscious mind cannot be trusted to know what’s best for it, only the unconscious mind can be trusted.” This then leads to the next step:

“I as your therapist or programmer know what’s best for you; so right now I’m going to speak to your unconscious mind. So go away and I’ll give you what you want; you don’t need to know what I’m doing or how I’m doing it.”

No wonder people have gotten the idea from some NLP practitioners that “NLP is manipulative.” In the hands of some people, it is! Taking the Milton Model, they use it to covertly *do things to people* with or without their understanding or approval. In Neuro-Semantics from the beginning, we have considered this unethical and have taught our trainers and people to *not* use the hypnotic language patterns in that way. We have even revoked the license of a few who did such. We emphasize to work with people explicitly and overtly. In the code of ethics that governs our use of NLP and Neuro-Semantics, we emphasize respect, understanding, transparency, permission.

They used the technology without the attitude of respect and honor for people that Erickson had.

Erickson contributed to NLP *the how of state induction*, the positive nature of our “larger” mind—the mind that is typically outside of consciousness, and how to tap into it as a positive resource. He contributed the idea of isomorphic metaphor—to speak to someone using an analogy, an analogy completed corresponding to the structure of the person. David Gordon wrote an amazing book on this subject (*Therapeutic Metaphors*) integrating into isomorphic metaphor representational systems, sub-modalities, and strategy.

To this day using hypnotic language presents a unique challenge. Part of the challenge involves the misunderstandings and myths about hypnosis—thinking that it is about mind-control and making people do things that they don’t want to do. Part of the challenge is the responsibility for guiding a person into their inner world and doing so in a way that respects the person—his or her values.

Erickson contributed a lot; he and Bateson had been life-long friends long before NLP arose. And as Wyatt Woodsmall has noted, like Virginia and Fritz, NLP did not model *their attitude, spirit, beliefs, etc.* But their products—what they did with their language and behavioral patterns. NLP would have been significantly better if the early pioneers had modeled the attitude of Virginia and Milton.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #37
August 1, 2016
Reflections about NLP #4

BATESON’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO NLP

In the field of NLP we consider Bateson as one of the “grandfathers” of this field. He and Alfred Korzybski, along with Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, perhaps also George Miller and Noam Chomsky, these were key people who provided *the content information of NLP* when it appeared in the early days (1972– 1976). Yes, NLP has content!

When NLP began at the brand new alternative style college (Kresge College) on the campus of the University of California, Santa Cruz, British anthropologist and systems thinker, Gregory Bateson had just been hired as a Professor. Prior to that Bateson had been into just about everything. Bateson was not only an incredible scholar, he also danced between many disciplines and was one of the most interdisciplinary persons to ever live. He began as an anthropologist with Margaret Mead (his first wife), he studied trance (Bali), dolphins (Hawaii), alcoholism, schizophrenia, cybernetics, biology, genetics (his father a famous geneticist), epistemology, politics, consciousness, and the list goes on and on.

Bateson’s history goes back to the beginning of the Human Potential Movement given that his first wife, Margaret Mead was the protégé of Ruth Benedict— one of Maslow’s first mentors (along with Max Wertheimer, co-founder of Gestalt Psychology). He was also connected to Korzybski inasmuch as he spoke at the General Semantics Conference in 1969 on “the difference that makes a difference” as he explored about *what* gets mapped onto the map.

Bateson played a crucial role in the creation of NLP and it could well be argued that without his original endorsement, NLP may have never become the world-wide influence it became. Grinder acknowledged this in *Origins of NLP*. First of all, Bateson was the teacher of almost every one of the original leaders in NLP— they all studied under him. Second, he wrote the Foreword to *The Structure of Magic* and convinced the publishers about the value of the book. Third, he introduced the early leaders to Milton Erickson. Bateson was also a second-generation leader of the Human Potential Movement presenting the second workshop at Esalen in 1963 and moving onto Esalen’s property to become “the Scholar in Residence” there where he died in 1980.

So, what did Bateson contribute to NLP? Bateson contributed a focus on framing, reframing, form, patterning. In fact, it was Bateson, more than any other person, who introduced the terminology of *frames, framing, and reframing*. He discovered this in his anthropological studies, in his original contributions to the understanding of schizophrenia, and to his logical-levels of learning and change.

Bateson further contributed *systems thinking* and was a key pioneer in systems. He spoke at the Macy Conferences on Cybernetics back in the 1940s and 50s. It was that *systems thinking* that corresponded

to the holistic system thinking of Gestalt, of Satir's Family Systems, and to Korzybski's Non-Aristotelian system. No wonder *systems thinking* lies at the heart of NLP! Almost every source of influence to NLP involved systems thinking and working.

From this systems emphasis, Bateson gave NLP an emphasis on flexibility and ecology. Several of the NLP premises comes directly from systems, "In a system, the person who has the most flexibility will have the most influence (control)." And from systems we got our emphasis on feedback and feed-forward.

Bateson contributed *logical levels* and the terminology of *meta*. Maslow also introduced the term, he talked about meta-pay and other uses of *meta*. Yet it was Bateson who conceptualized how the logical levels work, how higher levels govern and direct lower levels, how the prohibition from moving to a higher (meta) frame explains the symptoms of schizophrenia and how making the meta-move begins to resolve that confusion. From that Robert Dilts created the Neuro-Logical Levels in NLP and I created the Meta-States Model.

Long before the Meta-Model distinctions which came from Transformational Grammar, Bateson identified many of the problems with words and labels. He talked about the false concreteness (reification) of some words—what we call "nominalizations" in NLP. He focused on how words work to describe things and make sense of things and the importance of clarifying our terms.

"The 'self' is a false reification of an improperly delimited part of this much larger field of interlocking processes." (1972, p. 331)

Bateson emphasized non-verbal communication, actions that communicate, actions that indicate a negation and via Bateson we recognize that NLP itself is an epistemology. These was the theme of Part V of *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*.

"Mental process, ideas, communication, organization, differentiation, pattern, and so on, are matters of form rather than substance." (p. xxxii).

Yet there was a lot more that NLP could have learned and developed from Bateson. For example, Bateson's anthropological thinking and modeling could have really expanded what we do in NLP. This could have led to more of a focus on larger level themes than individuals, i.e., culture, politics, etc. His work on words and language led him to write a lot about critical thinking— getting out of muddles, avoiding shoddy thinking, learning to think straight, etc. These are themes in his 1972 book, *Steps To an Ecology of Mind*. There also he wrote *Metalogues*—humorous and imaginary conversations between himself and his daughter that dealt with difficult subjects that addressed "the structure of the conversation as a whole."

Sources:

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From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #38
August 15, 2016
Re: The Olympics of Training
The Kind of Training that Creates
Olympic Champions

THE ROAD TO THE EXTRA-ORDINARY!

“Deliberate practice can revolutionize our thinking about human potential.”

Anders Ericsson (p. 256)

As the Olympics continue in Rio de Janeiro this week, *we keep seeing extraordinary performances*—world-class athletes doing incredible things. How are they able to do this? How does it work that anyone who can do extraordinary things? What kind of training produces expertise?

I ask these questions because NLP is about *modeling best practices*. And that modeling of the extraordinary arose from Maslow’s Psychology of the Bright-Side. Abraham Maslow began this focus when he began his “Good Humans Studies” which was triggered by two extraordinary “good human specimens”—Max Wertheimer and Ruth Benedict. As a Behaviorist he had already studied some of the highest intelligent animals (he did the bonding studies with chimpanzees with Harry Harlow at the University of Wisconsin). So when Max and Ruth caught his attention, he began studying “the best” of humans. That began a thirty-year study of self-actualizing people.

Now while this has been the focus of NLP, NLP has never had an exclusive right on this subject. Since Maslow’s initiation of the Human Potential Movement and Humanistic Psychology, many others have followed. Among them is Anders Ericsson, the Swedish Psychologist. And the newest book by Anders Ericsson continues this theme of modeling excellence. In *Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise* (2016) he has highlighted the concept that he is known for—“deliberate practice.” And in terms of *the study of expertise and how expertise develops*, Ericsson is an undisputed leader. It was Anders who led out with scholarly papers on expertise and who then put his longitudinal studies in a massive 800+ page book, *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance* (2006).

In his latest work Ericsson focuses on the importance of *training for developing and expanding capacity* and argues persuasively throughout the work that “potential” is much less a function of genetics and “innate talent” than “the right training.”

“The clear message from decades of research is that no matter what role of genetic endowment in ‘gifted’ people, the main gift that these people have is the same one we all have— the adaptability of the human brain and body, which they have taken advantage of more than the rest of us.” (xviii)

He argues that the ability to create, through the right sort of training and practice, abilities that they would not otherwise possess by taking advantage of the incredible adaptability of the human brain and body. It is this *adaptability through the right kind of learning* that makes all the difference— we could

say, the Olympic difference.

“... this is a book about a fundamental new way of thinking about human potential, one that suggests that we have far more power than we ever realized to take control of our lives.” (xix)

The key then is the right kind of training, training “in the right way.”

“People have a tremendous capacity to improve their performance as long as they train in the right way.” (p. 113)

So what is this *right way* to train? The answer is “deliberate practice.” Read that carefully. He did *not* merely say “practice.” Mere practice, in fact, is *not* the key and may in fact make things worse. What?! Yes our common ideas about “practice” are mostly “myths.” Ericsson argues that any practice which does not tap into the unique qualities of *deliberate* practice can be worse than no practice at all. Shocking? Stunning? Yes, for anyone who has grown up with the idea that all you need is practice and effort. In this book Ericsson calls deliberate practice “the gold standard” of practice and it is for anyone who wants to take advantage of the gift of adaptability in building new skills.

So what’s wrong with *practice* as we normally think about practicing something? Ericsson says that the misunderstanding is that “continued practice improves skill.” But it does not. “Research has shown that once a person reaches that level of ‘acceptable’ performance” so that the skill becomes automatic, then “the additional years of practice don’t lead to improvement (p. 13).” And the reason? Homeostasis (p. 37). “The human body has a preference for stability.” And the problem with traditional approaches is that they are “not designed to challenge homeostasis” (p. 48). Most people are “satisfied to live in the comfortable rut of homeostasis.”

“You have to keep upping the ante; run farther, run faster, run uphill. If you don’t keep pushing and pushing and pushing some more, the body will settle into homeostasis, albeit at a different level. This explains the importance of staying just outside your comfort zone; you need to continually us to keep the body’s compensatory changes coming.” (p. 40)

This gives us our first hints about what’s involved in *deliberate* practice. And in this special kind of practice is the structure of expertise—the critical success variables that lead to “the right kind of training.” It is this kind of training that produces extraordinary results.

1) Focused on small specific goals which are in service of the larger long-term goal. When you make your practice deliberate and purposeful, you start with a well-defined goal, create a plan, then break the skill down and put together “a bunch of baby steps.” Now you can truly *focus* your full attention on a specific detail of the skill in question. Now you have a clear objective of your focus; now you can zoom in with close attention to every detail of the performance you are working on.

“If your mind is wandering or you’re relaxed and just having fun, you probably won’t improve. ... There’s little point to practicing if you don’t focus.” (p. 151, 154)

2) Strained effort as you up the ante and push yourself to the edge of your discomfort. The effort here is *not* effort for the sake of effort, but to break out of the body’s homeostatic processes that seek to prevent instability and compensate for disequilibrium.

“Most people live lives that are not particularly physically challenging. ... The reason that most people don’t possess these extraordinary physical capabilities isn’t because they don’t have the capacity for them, but because they’re satisfied to live in the comfortable rut of homeostasis.” (p. 47)

“The hallmark of purposeful or deliberate practice is that you try to do something you cannot do—that takes you out of your comfort zone.” (p. 159)

3) *Constant and precise empirical feedback to monitor how you are doing.* “Without feedback, you cannot figure out what you need to improve on or how close you are to achieving your goals.” This feedback needs to be sensory-based (something you can see or hear) because when you are able to measure it, you can monitor how you are doing— what’s working, what’s not working, what to do instead.

The incredible thing about *deliberate* practice is that it aims beyond merely reaching your potential, it aims at *developing your capacity*. That’s why we have developed benchmarks in Neuro-Semantics as well as a training process that taps into the wisdom and insight of “the structure of expertise” as detailed by Ericsson and others. We do that in Meta-Coaching, which is a whole system designed in this way. We are doing this in the Self-Actualization Trainings. We also do this in the Trainers’ Training (NSTT).

People interested in trainings that incorporate *deliberate* practice and trainers who are fascinated in learning how to train in this way do not come to Neuro-Semantics because it is easy. It is not. It is rigorous. It is challenging. We invite people to move to the edge of their comfort zone and then two more steps. People come precisely for these reasons— it *is* challenging, rigorous, and demanding—and fun.

They want this because in this way *they develop and expand their capacity* for learning, developing, and moving to areas of expertise. They do this because they want to be on the cutting-edge of excellence. It is not for the fair-hearted. It is not for those who need therapy. It is for those who are ready to be challenged to be more than they ever imagined they could be.

Join the Olympic Training for Trainers (NSTT):

NSTT: Neuro-Semantic Trainers’ Training in 2016 is in Hong Kong.

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Contact: evy@apti.com.hk; sherran@apti.com.hk

Ask for the Flyer of the event.

Resources (see www.neurosemantics.com for these books):

Achieving Peak Performance (2009).

Benchmarking Intangibles (2011).

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #39
August 8, 2016
Reflections about NLP #5

KORZYBSKI’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO NLP

As Bateson was one of the “grandfathers” of NLP, Alfred Korzybski was another. And the two were related. In the early 1950s Bateson published many articles in “ETC.” the General Semantics Journal, articles that today are incorporated in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972). Bateson even worked on Korzybski’s formulation, “The map is not the territory.” In his 1969 Presentation to the International Conference of General Semantics, he extended the work on it by asking “what gets onto the map?” and answered that question by talking about “the difference that makes a difference.”

What Richard and John took from Korzybski and put in *The Structure of Magic* was that famous quotation, “The map is not the territory.” Given that our mental maps (our model of the world in our heads) *is not the territory*, but a map of it, it is at best *a facsimile* of that external reality. We then use the model that we create to guide us in the world.

“...important characteristics of maps should be noted. A map is not the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness.”
(*Science and Sanity*, p. 58-60)

Now in spite of the 830 pages of *Science and Sanity*, that is the one and only quote that they ever took from Korzybski. Did they take other terminology from Korzybski? For example, did they take “Neuro-Linguistics” from him? He used that phrase over and over again and in the 1940s he traveled the United States doing “Neuro-Linguistic Trainings.” If so, they never gave credit to him. And what about “human design engineering?” After all, as an engineer, Korzybski filled his book about patterns and structures, even mathematics, about how to design or engineer aspects of human experience.

One of the distinctions Korzybski made was about humans as *time-binders*. He contrasted the kind of life characteristic by plants, animals, and humans. Plants *bind* chemicals into themselves, animals *bind* space by movement, and humans *bind* time—we can incorporate into ourselves the learnings of people in previous times. He then went on to create a *Theory of Time-Binding*. In fact, he later said that he originally intended to title his system *Time-Binding*. On second thought, he decided to name it “The Science and Art of Human Engineering.” Eventually he called it *General Semantics*.

What is not so well known, because most people do not read original sources, is the rest of the quotation about the map and the territory. Notice the fourth sentence in the quotation that I have put in italics:

“A map is not the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a *similar structure* to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness. ... If we reflect upon our languages, we find that at best they must be considered *only as maps*. A word *is not* the object it represents; and languages exhibit

also this peculiar self-reflexiveness, that we can analyse languages by linguistic means. *This self-reflexiveness of languages introduces serious complexities, which can only be solved by the theory of multi-ordinality.* The disregard of these complexities is tragically disastrous in daily life and science.” (p. 58, italics added)

Now in the beginning, they quoted Korzybski on the first part (“A map is not the territory”), but did not go further. Over the years I wondered if either Richard or John ever even read Korzybski’s original work. If so, why did they *not* pick up on the importance of self-reflexivity or multi-ordinality? My guess is that they picked up that quote from other writers and never directly studied Korzybski.

Twenty years later it was my privilege to do that. So in 1991-1992 I began writing articles on the *unknown Meta-Model distinctions* of Korzybski and published in *Anchor Point* as a series of articles (1991-1993). Using Korzybski’s distinction of self-reflexivity, in 1994 I created the Meta-States Model.

Precisely because Korzybski founded *General Semantics* in linguistics, he focused on how language works, on how the human nervous system operates, and on how language operates as a psycho-physiological function in our lives. That’s why *Science and Sanity* contains a great many linguistic patterns—patterns that make for both sanity and unsanity. Not surprisingly, while many correspond to the Meta-Model distinctions, there were many *new* Meta-Model distinctions. And like the linguistic distinctions in the Meta-Model, these indicate deleted, generalized and distort information which create limitations in mental mapping processes and result in leaving us impoverished.

As I began writing about Korzybski’s original neuro-linguistics, I began wondering why these linguistic patterns were not included in the first NLP Meta-Model. “Why were these not picked up and used?” Bandler and Grinder started with Korzybski’s premise, “The map is not the territory,” and yet they did not follow-up with the ill-formed linguistic structures that Korzybski identified or how to question them. Strange. At first I guessed that they had their hands-full with the linguistic distinctions from Transformational Grammar, but today I think that they didn’t even know about them.

Then in 1997 Richard Bandler asked me to co-author a new book on the Meta-Model to celebrate 25 years of the Meta-Model. He suggested a title for the book—*Magic Revisited*. The book would update the original Meta-Model with the discoveries made in those 25 years. Actually, this is what Richard and John predicted would happen to the Meta-Model. In speaking about those in Generative Semantics they wrote that *these “will be particularly useful in expanding the Meta-Model further.”* (p. 109, also p. 38, *The Structure of Magic, Volume I*, 1972).

In 1992 I had suggested in numerous articles in NLP journals both in the US and in Europe seven new patterns from Korzybski to the Meta-Model. In the 1997 book which we were to co-author (now titled *Communication Magic*, Crown House Publications), I added a total of nine. Two additional ones from Cognitive psychology. All of these patterns continue the original design of enabling a person to re-connect one’s language to the original experience so that you can develop a richer and more effective map for navigating life. (The reason why we didn’t put both names on the book was that after Richard signed the contract, he got upset with me for something and so refused! Such is life with geniuses!)

By the way, when Frank Pucelik and Byron Lewis updated their original book, *Magic of NLP*

Demystified (1990) based on Lewis' 1980 work, they included the 9 additional distinctions, Second Edition, 2012. Not surprisingly, John was very upset about the second edition!

Did Korzybski contribute to some of the other NLP presuppositions beyond “the map is not the territory?” I don't know, there's no evidence for or against it. Yet in *Science and Sanity* there are statements that could have been the origin of some of the presuppositions:

People communicate from their model of the world (p. 419).

The human nervous system works perfectly well (p. 466).

People have all the resources they need. “His [the average man] nervous system works continually, as does that of a genius. The difference consists in that its working is not productive or efficient.” (p. 485).

You can learn to solve your own problems (p. 529).

There's a structure in every experience, so search for that structure; structure is the only source of knowledge (p. 544).

Alfred Korzybski certainly contributed much to NLP, he established the basic language of NLP—neuro-linguistics, neuro-semantics, human engineering, states, etc., and the central NLP Presupposition. And he did that forty years prior to the birth of NLP—in 1933-1941. His work then, as it does today, continues to inspire new discoveries.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #40
August 29, 2016
Reflections about NLP #6

GEORGE MILLER & NOAM CHOMSKY’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO NLP

The people who obviously contributed to NLP and the development of the NLP Model were the three communication “magicians” (Perls, Satir, and Erickson) and the two “grandfathers” of NLP— Gregory Bateson who taught and mentored them all and Alfred Korzybski who invented the very idea of “neuro-linguistics” and “neuro-semantics.” Yet there were others. Other contributors that made NLP what NLP is today who may not be so obvious. Two of them were the founders of the Cognitive Psychology Movement: George Miller and Noam Chomsky. Both men created a distinction in 1956 that changed the face of Psychology which has led to dating *The Cognitive Psychology Movement* to 1956.

Noam Chomsky and Transformational Grammar (TG)

What Noam Chomsky did in 1956 was publish the Transformational Grammar (TG) model in his *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. In doing so landed a death-blow to Behaviorism. For half a century from John Watson’s original work in Behaviorism and B.J. Skinner’s work, in associative conditioning, Behaviorism or Learning Theory was the Psychology of Choice. It had proven useful and effective in many areas. What Chomsky demonstrated was that Behaviorism was inadequate in explaining language development. In fact, he showed that it did not work. He demonstrated that we have a “language acquisition device” within us by which we learn language. That’s why children learn *as it were* the rules of language and then invent sentences that they have never heard. It’s not mere association.

In T.G., he presented language as rule-organized and governed. He further sought to demonstrate that by mapping out all of the transformational rules. To do that, he distinguished surface statements from deep statements and created hundreds of “transformational rules” that govern how we move from one level to another. This was revolutionary and a tremendous jump in terms formulating a way to conceptualize the role of language in human functioning.

This is what John Grinder studied. He did his doctorate in TG and wrote his dissertation on Distortions. Then, two years prior to the launch of NLP, he published the essential content of the Meta-Model in a book on Transformational Grammar with Susette Elgin. The book, *A Guide to Transformational Grammar* (1973) offers almost everything that’s in the Meta-Model, but not in the form that we know it. That’s why I have said in several places that my view is that he was looking for a mechanism whereby he could offer it more practical in order to catch public attention with it. Of course, that’s what happened with the development of Meta, which was later named, “Neuro-Linguistic Programming.”

It just so happened that Perls used two distinctions that Grinder could use to connect and Virginia also used two linguistic distinctions. This allowed Grinder to then introject the Transformational Grammar (TG) model and, with the team, create the NLP Communication Model—the Meta-Model. And in the first books of NLP, *The Structure of Magic, Volumes I and II*, and in the appendix he put in a summary overview of TG. But thereafter TG did not continue to play a significant part of NLP. It was never put into any other books or appendices. And today, it is completely gone. Why? One reason is that in 1976, Chomsky himself dis-avowed Transformational Grammar saying that the model really did not work. The model broke down in too many places. Those who continued his work created Generative Linguistics, and after that Space Grammar, and eventually Cognitive Linguistics—where it is today. Another reason is that NLP did not need it. All we needed was “levels” and we had that in Korzybski’s work and in Bateson’s work. So we did not need the levels of TG to substantiate the language in the Communication Model of NLP.¹

George Miller and Cognitive Psychology

What George Miller did in 1956 that changed the face of psychology was publish his famous paper, “*The Magic Number Seven Plus or Minus 2.*” This paper introduced the language of “chunks” of information and presented the amount of information that we can hold in *conscious* awareness. This language soon was adopted in the 1960s during the early development of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Then in 1960 George Miller with Karl Pribram and Eugene Galanter published the book, *Plans and the Structure of Behavior* which introduced the Test-Operate-Test-Exit (TOTE) model for how to follow the internal processes from “behaviors” are created. Both of these developments were revolutionary and with them (and Chomsky’s *Aspects of Grammar*, 1956) launched the Cognitive Psychology Movement (*Origins*, James Eicher, p. 125).

What is the connection of these developments with NLP? John Grinder did a post-doctorate study for one year in George Miller’s laboratory (1969-1970) (*Origins*, p. 139). Miller mentored him! Then in 1977-1978 Grinder, Bandler, DeLozer, and Dilts took the TOTE model added the representational systems and created the Strategy Model for out to model the structure of experience.² While Dilts wrote this in papers in 1978,³ this first showed up in a book when Bandler and Grinder commissioned Dilts to write *Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Volume I, The Study of the Structure of Subjectivity* (1980). So the key distinctions of the Cognitive Psychology Movement became incorporated into NLP *from the beginning*. This is why NLP is recognized as an expression of Cognitive Psychology and in Psychology books is put in the chapters on Cognitive Psychology.

From these roots came the details for *how to model a subjective experience*. Without the work of Miller and associates and the TOTE model, NLP might have struggled for years trying to figure out how to sequence or structure what happens inside “the black box” (Behaviorism’s term for internal experience). Bandler and Grinder and the original group did not create that—they took into the revolutionary breakthroughs that were just occurring and combined them with representational systems (which came from numerous other people) and presto! *the Strategy Model* of NLP.

References:

1. I wrote about this history extensively in *Communication Magic* (2001, formally, *Secrets of Magic*, 1997). Those who picked up Chomsky's work were George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Ronald Langacker, etc. Randy Allen Harris wrote about the history of TG in *The Linguistic Wars* (1993).
1. Today Grinder goes so far as to deny that the TOTE is an NLP pattern. "There are no applications of the TOTE in any applied process pattern... In what sense, then, is the TOTE part of NLP?" (*Origins*, p. 141).
2. See Robert Dilts' books that contain his original papers, *Roots of NLP* (1983) which includes his 1976 paper on NLP. *Applications of NLP* (1981).

From: L. Michael Hall
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September 5, 2016
Reflections about NLP #7

ROBERT DILTS’ CONTRIBUTIONS TO NLP

In thinking about the persons who have been *major* contributors to NLP, as we know it today, as significant as the original contributions of Bandler, Grinder, and Pucelik are the contributions of Robert Dilts. What Robert has contributed has extensively shaped the very contours of NLP. Coming into the second group at Santa Cruz in 1975 and studying from John Grinder and Gregory Bateson directly, Robert began immediately writing about NLP. Now I knew that he began writing soon, but until I began looking over the materials, I forgot or did not know that his first writings were in late 1975!

In 1975 Robert wrote his first “Application” of NLP when he put together “The Meta-Model and the Socratic Method of Philosophical Inquiry.” This paper is now in the book, *Applications of NLP* (1983). In fact, Robert was the first to put forth the Meta-Model in the ordered list that we recognize today. By contrast the Meta-Model distinctions, which are in the first two books, *The Structure of Magic* (1975/ 1976), are all over the place. Robert organized the distinctions and put eleven distinctions them in two categories in 1975.

Information Gathering

- 1) Deletions
- 2) Unspecified Referential Index
- 3) Unspecified Verbs
- 4) Nominalizations

Setting and Identifying Limits

- 5) Universal Quantifiers
- 6) Modal Operators
- 7) Complex Equivalence
- 8) Presuppositions
- 9) Cause-Effect
- 10) Mind-Reading
- 11) Lost Performative

This is a great example of the character of so many of Robert’s key contributions—his ability to collect, organize, and put things in an easy to remember format. The next year, 1976, he wrote a paper on “Neuro-Linguistic Programming” (now in the book, *Roots of NLP* (1983) and which eventually became the book, *Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Volume I* (1980). This academic paper framed NLP as an epistemology based on systems or cybernetic principles. There he extensively used Bateson’s work and extensively quoted him (see pages 22-27). Here also he presented the Meta-Model in an organized way (as above) and added the twelveth distinction: 12) Comparative Deletions. He also created another category and put three of the linguistic distinctions in it—semantic ill-formedness: cause-effect, mind-reading, lost performative.

Robert wrote that “NLP is an outcome oriented discipline”¹ and then detailed *Present state* and *Desired State* which he later called “the NLP algorithm for change” (in the paper, *Meta-Model Live*, p. 31-32). Between these two spaces, he put *resources* as “a transition mechanism.” Later he wrote, “so present state desired state is the overlay” (p. 33). From that he later created the SCORE Model which is today

a staple for anyone trained in NLP.

Further, he was the person who came up with the first set of criteria for a well-formed outcome. Compare his six criteria in 1980 with the 18 that we have today in Meta-Coaching.

- 1) The outcome must be stated in positive terms.
- 2) The outcome must be testable and demonstratable in sensory experience.
- 3) The desired state must be initiated and maintained by the client.
- 4) The outcome must be explicitly and appropriately contextualized.
- 5) The desired state must preserve any positive by-products of the present state.
- 6) The desired state must be ecologically sound.

It was Robert who put together the first list of NLP Presuppositions. I am often asked who put it together, and I had always guessed that it was Robert. Now I have evidence. It is in his “Applications of NLP in Family Therapy and Interpersonal Negotiation” (1980). There he provided a list of nine of the presuppositions with commentary about each of them:

- 1) The map is not the territory.
- 2) Mind and body are part of the same system and affect each other.
- 3) Individual skills are a function of the development and sequencing of representational systems.
- 4) The meaning of any communication is the response it elicits, regardless of the intent of the communicator.
- 5) Human beings are capable of one-trial learning.
- 6) Individuals have all the resources they need to achieve their desired outcomes.
- 7) Behavior is geared toward adaptation: People make the best choices available to them at any point in time, underlying every behavior is a positive intent.
- 8) There is no substitute in communications for clean, active, open, sensory channels to know what response you are eliciting at any moment in time.
- 9) The element in a system that has the most flexibility will be the controlling, or catalytic, element in that system.

In the collection of his early papers (1975–1981) which are now in two books (*Roots and Applications*) Robert wrote about his modeling of NLP in such diverse realms as Business, Sales, the Socratic Method, Education, Family Therapy, Creative Writing, and Health. Thereafter he was commissioned to put together *NLP: Volume I — The Study of the Structure of Subjectivity* (1980) and in the years that followed, Robert has turned out 30 or 40 more books including the massive *Encyclopedia of NLP*. If Robert Dilts did nothing else than write and extend the literature of NLP, his contributions as a scholar would have been massive and extensive. But he did more. Unlike the other founders, Robert has always made himself available for appearances at Conferences and Congresses.

Then in 1997 he along with his significant partners (Suzi Smith, Tim Hallboam, Judith DeLozier) put together the *Visionary Leadership Conference* which brought together 200 NLP Trainers and Leaders during the middle of the Bandler lawsuit. Three years later, he sponsored *The Millennial Project* to bring people together, and this year (2016) he hosted the 40th Birthday of NLP during his summer trainings in Santa Cruz.

Robert, from the beginning has modeled a great many experiences. At the beginning he started with Socratic Questioning, sales, creative writing, cancer surviving, healing strategies, strategies of genius (Einstein, Disney, Freud, etc.), leadership, etc. All of this makes him one of the most significant contributors of NLP, and he is still at it to this day. Recently he modeled Steve Jobs which I heard about at the training he did during the “40th Anniversary of NLP” at Santa Cruz. That material is now in his latest book, *Next Generation Entrepreneurs, Success Factor Modeling, Vol. I* (2015).

Notes:

1. Robert Dilts also wrote, “NLP is highly outcome-oriented” (*Application of NLP in Family Therapy*, p. 35).

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #42
September 7, 2016

WHY DID I WRITE “GET REAL?”

One week ago I put out the advertisement for the new book, *Get Real: Unleashing Your Authenticity*.

I immediately had several emails and two phone calls saying that they were surprised. They didn't even know I was working on that subject! “Why did you write about getting real?” one asked. “Why did you spend a whole book on authenticity?” asked another. “I don't get it,” said a personal friend, “What's the big deal about authenticity, why should I ‘get real,’ why is that important?” Here are some of my answers.

Why did you write the book, “Get Real?”

My first motivation was the discovery that *authenticity* is actually one of the big secrets of coaching experts. I first discovered that in Graham Richardson and then, when I began looking for it, it seemed to always be present in those who we consider experts in Coaching. And conversely, I realized that it was astonishing missing in those who were just learning or who were at the mediocre level. The best coaches challenge clients to get real.

What else motivated you to write the book?

Maslow! If you go back and read the original works of Abraham Maslow, you will find that he defined self-actualization as discovering *your real self*. And he believed that there is in all of us *our real self* but that most of us have sold ourselves short, sold human nature short, have played small, and don't even know our *true self*. We have lost ourselves. So if we are to become “fully alive/ fully human” and the “best version of ourselves” and actualize our highest and best (definitions of self-actualization), we need to be able to discover our *real self*. This also fits with the other books on Self-Actualization and how to facilitate it.

And anything else? Any other motivations?

Yes, the one that always motivates me to write—I want these things for myself. So in reading about authenticity in Maslow and others, and seeing that this is a key in world-class coaching and unleashing one's potentials, I wanted to apply this to myself.

What do you mean by “getting real” and “authenticity?”

The idea of getting real is the idea of being true, true to yourself, your values, your talents, your best potentials. Authenticity contrasts with faking it, covering up, losing oneself in a persona and living behind a mask or public image. When a person does not know his *true self*, he is actually living a false life and depending on how far away you are from your truth, you could be living a lie. And that would mean self-deception.

Why is getting real important? What are the values of such?

One of the great values of authenticity is the *aliveness* that results. When you are real, you are truthful, you are in touch with reality, and you have a vitality that enables you to live the life that you are made for. Conversely, when you are not real, you are hiding ... hiding from yourself. When you are out-of-touch with your real self, you won't have an inward sense of knowing yourself and developing a solid confidence in living your life fully. When you get real and live authentically you have a solid base from which to operate. You are more likely to be "fully functioning"—mentally, emotionally, relationally, etc.

What are the problems that prevent a person from becoming real?

There are many obstacles. Because we are social beings and become human as we grow up in many cultures—family, school, religion, ethical, national, business, etc. cultures, we are all significantly formed by our cultures. So within all of us are many "voices" telling us what we *should* be, or *must* be, and what we *cannot* be. These voices are often much louder inside of us than our own voice. Often we cannot hear our own inner voice because the voices of family and culture drown it out. So part of becoming real is learning to hear our own inner voice.

Are there any other problems that stop us from getting real?

Yes, many. Another one is this—it is easier and quicker to live behind *an image* than being real. And today "image-management" is one of the great substitutes for authenticity. We hide behind personas. We define ourselves and sometimes lose ourselves behind titles, jobs, groups we associate with, etc. This weakens relationships. Lots of relationships are not—real people relating to real people. Instead they are images relating to images! How many people marry an image and then later discover the real person—who usually doesn't fit the image they married! They don't know each other's heart at all.

In addition to hearing one's inner voice what does a person have to do to become real?

There are lots of things—that's why I devoted a whole book to it—knowing oneself, establishing a solid sense of unconditional self-esteem, committing oneself to truth, knowing that you have many kinds and levels of "self," becoming courageous to live from within rather than being a shallow person living according to what others say, learning how to bring your authenticity to your roles, your career, your relationships, etc. For each of these, I have devoted an entire chapter.

When you are real—when you unleash your authenticity—life is a lot easier and much more fun. There's no more hiding. There's no more need to cover up and pretend. Now you can focus on being your real and your best self. Now you stop comparing yourself to others and focus on *being* true to yourself and your *real* potentials of truth, love, justice, beauty, and all of the other *being*-values.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #43
September 12, 2016
Reflections about NLP #8

STEVE AND CONNAIRE ANDREAS’ CONTRIBUTIONS TO NLP

With seven posts on the primary *contributors to the development of NLP* which Bandler, Grinder, and Pucelik relied on, yet another source is one that I cannot overlook— Steve and Connair Andreas. In fact, in my opinion, it was the early contributions of Connair and Steve Andreas that significantly helped to put NLP on the map. That’s because it was their seminar books of Bandler and Grinder that primarily got the word out. And that’s because of a singular fact— *you could read those books!* Does that imply you can’t read *The Structure of Magic*? Yes, those are not very readable books. If NLP was dependent on those books communicating NLP, it would have had an early death!

It was the later books, and especially the four “seminar books” from the Andreas’ that began spreading the word about Neuro-Linguistic Programming. The first NLP book that I bought and read (well, actually “devoured”!) was *Frogs Into Princes* (1979), then *Trance-formations: Neuro-Linguistic Programming and the Structure of Hypnosis* (1981)— a big seller, selling 350,000 in the first few years! No other NLP book until Robbins sold those kinds of numbers. Then, *Reframing: NLP and the Transformation of Meaning* (1982), and then *Using Your Brain — For a Change* (1985).

These books came from the actual trainings and workshops that Richard and John were doing, and mostly recorded what Richard was doing. Similar to what Robert Dilts had been doing since 1975, they began doing—sequencing, systematizing, and organizing the NLP materials. They were also business savvy and then created the first NLP Training Center that lasted more than a year or two. Decades later, “NLP Comprehensive” of Boulder Colorado became the stable, ongoing Training Center— where they brought Richard in to NLP Comprehensive repeatedly over the years to introduce their work and whatever they were newly working on and later John (which then triggers Bandler’s lawsuit against the field of NLP in the United States, but that’s another story.)

After the seminar books (1979- 1982), they began writing their own books and developing new patterns. First *Change Your Mind and Keep the Change* (1987) and then *Heart of the Mind: Engaging Your Inner Power to Change* (1989). In *Change Your Mind* Richard Bandler wrote this:

“Steve and Connirae are among the few who have gone on to use NLP modeling techniques to *develop useful new patterns*, and this is evident in ... Chapter 8, ‘A Strategy for Responding to Criticism...’ (1987, p. v, italics added)

Now what makes the Andreas especially fascinating to the history of NLP and those who contributed to its development is Steve’s history prior to NLP. Before NLP, he had a different name, he was *John O. Stevens*— a key thinker and developer in Gestalt Therapy and he was a well-known, even famous,

Gestalt Therapist! Further, John O. Stevens had also published several books about Gestalt Therapy. Before NLP even began, he edited and published *Awareness: Exploring, Experimenting, Experiencing* (1971). Then, in the same year that the first book on NLP was published, he published *Gestalt Is* (1975). Further, he did this via the Gestalt Publishing Company, *Real People Press*, which his mother, Barry Stevens had created years earlier.

So the Gestalt history of NLP with Fritz Perls goes back through the relationships he had with Barry Stevens, Real People Press, and John O. Stevens who became Steve Andreas. For example, Barry Stevens' book, *Don't Push the River* (1970) tells the story of her life with Fritz and their time together when he moved from Esalen to Canada to establish a Gestalt Kibbutz there. During that time Fritz, as his self-proclaimed title, "a dirty old man" (mentioned in his auto-biography, *In and Out of the Garbage Can*) had numerous relationships.

Interesting enough, when NLP began Fritz Perls was already dead. Yet before that, when Steve Andreas came into NLP in 1977, he brought in his personal acquaintance with Fritz Perls— something that neither Bandler, Grinder, or Pucelik had. By contrast, Steve learned Gestalt Therapy directly from Fritz Perls.

“He learned Gestalt Therapy from Fritz Perls, and combined Gestalt with teaching psychology and social science at Diablo Valley College, California, for seven years. Out of this came his book of Gestalt awareness experiments, *Awareness: Exploring, Experimenting, Experiencing* (1970).” (*Transforming Your Self: Becoming Who You Want to Be*, 2002, p. 274)

Yet there's more historical connections. Steve received his Master's degree in Psychology at Brandeis University in 1961 where he had studied with none other than Abraham Maslow himself. So if there was anyone who was *the direct link* between the Human Potential Movement and NLP, it was Steve Andreas. Then after studying with Maslow, he studied with Carl Rogers! Some years ago I asked Steve about his relationship to Esalen *after* he learned NLP. He said he did return to Esalen and presented classes on Gestalt, but not on NLP. [As an aside, several of the early developers did speak at Esalen and presented NLP, James Eicher did in 1978 (*Origins*, p. 119) as did Robert Dilts and Terry McClendon.]

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #44
September 19, 2016
Reflections about NLP #9

ABRAHAM MASLOW & CARL ROGERS’ CONTRIBUTIONS TO NLP

When I wrote about the contributions of Fritz Perls, Virginia Satir, and Gregory Bateson to the development of NLP in the previous posts, I frequently noted that they were all second-generation *leaders* in the Human Potential Movement (HPM). That is highly significant because of their relationship to Maslow and Rogers and to the HPM. I noted this in the article I wrote back in 2005 about “The Secret History of NLP.” That was when I found out that the very persons *modeled* by Bandler and Grinder worked together and lived together at Esalen in the early 1960s.¹

Imagine that! *They lived and worked together at Esalen as leaders in the Human Potential Movement.* Do you know what that means? For one thing, it identifies **the psychology** that they all were involved in, a psychology separated from Behaviorism and Psychoanalysis, the first two “forces” in psychology. They were involved in the third force of psychology. This terminology came from Maslow himself and was crystalized in the book, *The Third Force: The Psychology of Abraham Maslow* (1970) by Frank G. Goble.

What is the psychology of NLP? Yes, it is Cognitive Psychology in that it came from the leaders of that Cognitive Psychology movement—George Miller and Noam Chomsky. It is cognitive to the extent that we operate in the world using our mental models or maps as Alfred Korzybski noted, “the map is not the territory.” Yet more essential than that, the psychology of NLP is Humanistic Psychology or Self-Actualization Psychology.

Humanistic Psychology operates predominantly from the idea that there is within human beings a drive for excellence and that even when we do bad or evil things, it’s not because that is our nature. There is within a positive intention—we are doing the best we can given our mental understandings and our skills. Human evil arises from ignorance, misinformation, desperation, lack of development, etc. We have all the resources to handle the challenges of life. To fulfill that, we need to truly and adequately meet our needs and understand ourselves and then develop effective strategies.

In NLP all of these essential ideas are contained in “The Presuppositions of NLP.” These ideas, collected originally by Robert Dilts, summarize the key premises that NLP operates from. Where did they come from? What was the original source of these presuppositions? Ah, this is an amazing thing! I once assumed that those presuppositions were the premises or assumptions that the original developers collected from Perls, Satir, Erickson, Bateson, and Korzybski. Then when I took the time to go back and read through all of the original works of Maslow and Rogers, I found that almost all of those presuppositions were already present. They came out of the HPM as the assumptive premises

of that kind of Psychology.

What else in NLP goes back to what Maslow and Rogers contributed? *Modeling!* It was Abraham Maslow, who forty-five years before Bandler and Grinder, began modeling his two incredible mentors. He began studying Max Wertheimer who co-founded Gestalt Psychology and Ruth Benedict who was the founder of Cultural Anthropology. He took notes about them writing down their behaviors and characteristics and from his “good humans studies” he began a 30-year study with his graduate students of Self-Actualizing People. So even the idea of modeling outstanding individuals did not start with NLP, but with Maslow.

As Maslow was writing his book on *Abnormal Psychology*, a massive work on all of the ways human nature goes wrong, he began wondering about the other side. This was the sick side. Was there a healthy side? Thinking in terms of a bell-curve, was there are exceptional, superior, and excellent outliers. To find out, that’s what initiated his modeling of Max and Ruth.

NLP certainly did not start from scratch. There are many forces that contributed. NLP did not invent new premises that had never been heard of before. Instead, what happened at the beginning and what created what we today know as Neuro-Linguistic Program arose from a movement—the *Human Potential Movement*.

Here’s more evidence of the connection between NLP and the Human Potential Movement. Consider for example *where* NLP originated. It originated at Kresge College, a college that began in 1971 as an alternative and experimental college on the campus of the University of California—Santa Cruz. *This college would have been named the Carl Rogers College* if it had not been for the rich donor.

“The college was designed with the concept of participatory democracy as a means of encouraging a strong sense of community. The vision was for the college to be a place where students enjoyed a sense of creativity, community, and individuality.” (UCSC’s website)

“Robert Edger, the provost of Kresge ... decided to develop and run an innovative experiment in academic organization, using Kresge College as a test case. The experiment was a living/learning model for Kresge—a model of how to develop community within the boundary conditions of a college at a university...” (Grinder, *Origins*, p. 175)

“Groups ... a popular theme on Kresge College campus ... The college had instituted the process of T-Groups, frequently described as a form of sensitivity training.” (Carmen Bostic-St. Clair, *Origins*, p. 241)

Perhaps a sad loss to NLP was the fact that while the original developers obviously could not have modeled Maslow, he died in 1970 as did Perls. But Carl Rogers lived until 1980 (same as did Erickson and Bateson) and NLP began at his college. Yet in the years of the beginning of NLP (1971-1976), Rogers never appeared on campus. He was at the University in Chicago at the time.

Notes:

1. You can see that article on the Neuro-Semantic website and in the book, *Self-Actualization Psychology*.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #45
September 26, 2016

THREE DIMENSIONS OF REALITY

Outside — Inside — Upside

“What is Neuro-Semantics?” I get that question all of the time. And over the years, I’ve answered the question in many different ways. Here is another one. Neuro-Semantics is a model about the various dimensions of life— outside, inside, and upside.

All things human are inside-out. Of course, it usually does not *seem* to be that way. Instead life more often than not, *seems* to be an outside-in phenomenon. That’s why Behaviorism was the first model of psychology and dominated the field until 1956. This explains why the very idea of wealth and wealth creation as inside-out (*Inside-Out Wealth*) is radical and counter-intuitive. So is the idea of health and fitness being an inside-out phenomenon (*Games Fit and Slim People Play*).

- Someone criticizes you (outside), you feel upset (inside).
- There’s a traffic jam and you are late for an important meeting (outside) and you are feeling stressed and even angry at the traffic (inside).
- You want a raise at work because of some recent unexpected financial costs (outside), so you are studying to prepare yourself to make the best request possible (inside), if your boss to raise your chances of success (outside).

It *seems* outside-in, but it is not. The truth is that life is *an inside-out affair*.

- What someone says to you (outside) is only “criticism” (inside) because you define it as such. Your definition and understanding creates your emotional state of being upset (inside).
- The meaning that you give (inside) to the fact that there is a lot of traffic (outside) depends on your thoughts and beliefs and to your thinking about “time” (inside) and your preparation prior to leaving your house (outside).
- That you want(inside) a raise due to your finances (outside) motivates you (inside) to do what you can (outside) to become more influential in your communications (outside).

The *inside* phenomena is the key. The *inside* controls how you experience the *outside*. The *outside* is easier to see— it is more obvious and easily seems more “real.” No wonder your attention goes to the *outside*! You attend to it, you notice it, you focus on it, and if it is not to your liking, you attempt to change it. Doing this takes you fully into the *outside dimension*. That’s where you live your life. Because of this, you live your life in an *outside-in* way. That’s one way to live. It is one way to perceive (e.g., have certain meta-programs). It is the way most people live. But it is not the only way, nor the best way.

Outside-In

As a way to live, the living *outside-in style* creates all sorts of problems. Among the key symptoms

of this dimension are the following:

- You are highly likely to feel *controlled* by the outside world. You believe and behave as if it causes your experiences. You may even feel like you are a victim of the outside world.
- You feel *little power*—sometimes no power—to effect the outside world. You live in a deterministic world rather than a world where there is free will.
- You focus on *getting the outside world of things and others* to change—you play various games to deal with the outside world: victim, persecutor, rescuer.
- When it does not work, you *blame those things and people on the outside* for your state and your state of mind and emotion.

A further consequence of living *outside-in* includes living a shallow life. When your focus is on the outside, you tend to live on the surface of things. What counts for you are the external things—money, status, influence, beauty, certificates, etc. Obviously, this feeds living a materialistic life and missing out on a deeper and more spiritual life.

Inside-Out Life

Another way to live life is in the dimension of being orienting from the *inside-out*. This is our focus in Neuro-Semantics, a focus that came from NLP and before that the Self-Actualization (Humanistic) Psychology of Maslow and Rogers and the Human Potential Movement. *Inside-out* puts the emphasis on the *character* of the person rather than the *condition* of the material world. It reclaims Socrates' theme, "Know thyself" as a key to being able to manage things. It starts with self-management. If you can't lead or manage yourself, you won't be able to manage things out there in the outside world. When you enter into this dimension, you enter into a new and different world.

The *inside-out life* also taps into what is now called "emotional intelligence." Prior to that popularization, in NLP we called it *state management*. Today we think about emotional intelligence as involving five facets:

- Self-awareness: aware of what you are thinking, feeling, saying to yourself, kinesthetics, body movements and gestures, etc.
- Self-monitoring: able to monitor the ups and downs of thoughts and emotions, to monitor what triggers various responds, when and where and with whom one's insides oscillates.
- Self-regulation: able to manage or regulate the micro-behaviors of thinking, feeling, emoting, languaging, etc.
- Self-responsibility: willingness to accept ownership of the inside dimension, and to choose one's thoughts, feelings, words, etc.
- Self-relating: using one's insides to connect with others, bond, understand, listen, care, set boundaries, empathize, etc.

The consequences of living in the dimension of *inside-out* and using this approach is that you take control of your own self and tap into the cognitive psychology principle. "As you think—so you are." You *are* as you mentally map the worlds that you live in, and yet "the map is not the territory," it is just a map—a process that you use to navigate the outside world. If it is not working, you change or update the map and test again. Does it now work? If not, you continue to experimenting and testing until you develop a mental model in your mind (inside) that allows you to succeed outside.

Upside– Inside-Out Dimension

“But wait, there’s more!” There is yet another dimension that many people who do use the *inside-out* approach do not use. When you enter into the *upside dimension* you enter into yet another entirely new world. Here you use your self-reflexive consciousness— that uniquely human kind of consciousness by which you can transcend yourself. You can step back *as it were* from what you are thinking, feeling, speaking, responding, etc. and reflect on your experience which thereby gives you the ability to change your experience.

This is a meta-awareness of your self-awareness. That is, it goes beyond (far beyond) mere self-awareness. The higher intelligent animals experience self-awareness. Beyond that is the awareness of your awareness— a meta-awareness. This meta-awareness of your self-awareness itself leads to a tremendous mystery of consciousness, your sense of transcendence. We humans universally experience the ability to transcend ourselves and our experiences. At the further reaches of this is our sense of spirituality.

More practically, you can become aware of your thinking patterns—your cognitive distortions, your cognitive biases, the patterns of how you reason and when you move to this area, you are able to do critical thinking and creative thinking— which is the source of our sciences and civilizations. Here you discover your frames— the internal contexts that you use to make sense of things. Here you discover your inside source of things (your frames within yours) and here you can step back to quality control these inside structures. Here you can create change that will be transformative of your entire mind-body system.

You live simultaneously in three dimensions of reality. What is most compelling and seemingly “real” is the outside dimension. Yet the outside is a product of the inside dimensions. Your *real life* occurs in the inside dimensions. The first inside dimension are your thoughts and emotions, your states. Here, “as you think, so you are.” The highest and deepest *inside dimension* is the *upside dimension* because it is there that you set the frames that govern your overall life. And that’s why we do Neuro-Semantics.

Want more information?

See the book, *Neuro-Semantics: Actualizing Meaning and Performance* (2011).

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #46
October 3, 2016

THE CALL FOR GREATNESS

It’s a bold word. It is a word so bold in fact that requires a lot of courage to use it. That’s because it is not a word for the faint of heart. What is that word? *Greatness*. It is also a self-actualization word.

- Do you believe you have greatness within you?
- Would you like to believe that?
- If you did believe that there is greatness within you, what difference would that make in how you live your life?
- What greatness do you suspect that there is within you to be developed and released?

Jim Collins wrote *Good to Great* and issued a warning in the first sentence of the first chapter. Here is the warning: “The enemy of great is good.” Now while his focus in that book was on good companies becoming great companies, the principle holds true also for individuals. What he meant by “greatness” he specified in the conditions that had to be met—ROI, finances, sustainability, leadership, retention, engagement, etc. To move from good to great requires setting a higher and bigger and more audacious vision for ourselves and/or our businesses. It requires focus and discipline and many other things. Perhaps that’s why we hold back from striving for greatness.

Donald Trump won the Republican nomination by stirring up millions of Americans with a call for greatness. “Make America Great Again” is his theme, his brand, and his vision. Quoting how things have fallen back— from kids failing to finish school, falling back in mathematics and reading, schools in the USA now 30th in the world, increase in unemployment, and the permanently unemployed who are no longer even looking for work, more millions living in poverty, higher unemployment among young black men (nearly 50%), the economic stagnation, more police shot on duty (up 50% this year), etc. His call to becoming great again has struck a chord with literally millions upon millions of people.

Not long ago we witnessed the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro Brazil and what it means to be a *great athlete*. I didn’t see everything there, but what I saw was astonishing, especially in diving, running, and gymnastics. There’s something undescribably delicious in watch true greatness. Why does it evoke goose bumps? Why do we stand in awe and amazement? Why do we clap and cheer?

There’s something inside all of us that *greatness* calls to. If we are growing healthily, there’s something within us that invites and challenges us to be great. There I said it. We want to *be* great, we want to *do* great things, we want to *achieve* great accomplishments. Don’t you? If you are honest with yourself, wouldn’t you want to do or experience something great? And where does this come from?

It derives from an innate drive within, a drive for greatness—for excellence, for stepping up to one’s

full potential. Maslow named this drive, the self-actualization drive. It is what truly distinguishes us from animals. It is the realm of the *being*-values for knowledge, meaning, justice, fairness, excellence, contribution, making a difference, beauty, order, giving love, etc. These are the things that endow our lives with *greatness*.

Greatness presupposes standards—values and criteria. It presupposes doing the best one can do at a given time—by giving something your full presence, intention, and learning. It is not about perfection. Greatness entails accepting mistakes and learning from them. It entails receiving feedback so you can tell where you are and how to move forward.

The greatness that we aim for in NLP and Neuro-Semantics we call expertise or excellence. That's actually how this field got started—being amazed at the “magic” (or seeming magic) of a few truly extraordinary individuals who could speak healing and wellness to people. From that came the realization that this is not magic at all. It is structure. There is rhyme and reason regarding how any particular expertise works. And that's why we have been doing—modeling the structure of human excellence, or if you will, *greatness*.

Whatever we consider *great* has structure. If every experience that you consider great has structure, then by discovering it and using that structure, you can replicate that greatness. That's one of our key themes in Neuro-Semantics. As *great* communication has structure, so does *great* resilience. So does *great* forgiveness, *great* leadership, *excellent* wealth creation, etc. What is *great* speaks about our values—that which we consider to be most important. It speaks about not only what is good, but extremely good—what is great, what is superior.

This was Maslow's passion and quest. Question: How much does greatness scare you? How much fear do you have toward greatness? It is the same question that Maryann Williamson addressed in her famous statement that our greatest fear is that we are “powerful beyond measure. That it is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.” Maslow called this the Jonah Syndrome. Using the biblical story of Jonah who ran away from God's call to him, to the divine destiny that he had, Maslow said we also run away from our potential, we play small, and we shrink from discovering and developing our real self.

Greatness calls to us because there is that self-actualization drive within. When it calls to you, will you heed the invitation and step up to it? This is what we do in Neuro-Semantics with all of our programs, from Accessing Personal Genius (APG) to NLP to Self-Actualization Series. Come and see.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #47
October 10, 2016

TRAINERS’ TRAINING IN HONG KONG

Each year the training that we do with Trainers to another place on the globe, and there’s a reason for that. Our aim is to make the training, *Neuro-Semantic Trainers’ Training (NSTT)* international and yet more than that—to use the training to continue to create an *international community* of people united through a common vision. So we focus on different regions of the world by taking the training to different countries. This year we are in Hong Kong (2017 will be Brazil, 2018 in Australia, etc.). Each year we have 40 to 70 persons in the training, this year a smaller group of 40 from 10 countries and a team of 10 who facilitate the training.

Now Neuro-Semantic Trainers’ Training is *unlike every other Training* in the world in many ways. The one that stands out most to trainers is the **benchmarking**. We have benchmarked the basic presentation skills of Engagement, Group Rapport, Framing, Use of Voice, Use of Space (semantic space and gesturing), 4-matting, State Induction Demonstrating, Q&A, and another 30 training skills. When I say we have benchmark, we have created behavior indicators for each skill and put them along a continuum of competence. For some skill we have identified 30 or more behaviors and these are the behaviors that we look for when a person speaks.

Often very experienced trainers come and discover, sometimes to their amazement, that there are many, many factors of a skill that they were not even aware of, let alone using. Some discover that they are actually doing things that disengage, break rapport, communicate without precision or inspiration, etc. This is equally true for NLP Trainers who learn about the structure of presentation and adult learning at levels that they never knew about.

To that end, every person who comes is up on his or her feet making presentations every day. The first three days we have “flexibility drills” by which we push and stretch and challenge people to get out of their comfort zones and to be able to handle *anything that happens* in a training context. Then we have people presenting a single pattern for the next 6 days, two times a day, getting precise feedback with each presentation. By days 11 and 12 we have the finals, 30 minute presentations which are benchmarked against the nine skills. This is all completely unique and unmatched anywhere.

Another key difference is that *we train for Collaborative Leadership*. We do not just run a training and say “goodbye,” “good luck.” We provide ongoing support as a world-wide community. We have organized national Institutes (now 20 of them) around the world with leadership teams in each. We have a weekly communication to all of the Trainers. We have specialized egroups for those who want to move to the Master Trainer level (which again has the highest standards in the world) and the Meta-Coach Trainer group (which involves a 3 to 5 year internship). There’s much more to say, and there are articles on this on the Neuro-Semantic website. Here are some pictures from this years NSTT.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #48
October 17, 2016

AN ATTITUDE IS A META-STATE

We know that attitude is important. But how important? And why is attitude so important? We all have heard that *attitude makes the difference*. But what difference does it make? For that matter, what is an *attitude* anyway?

Here are a set of questions that the original NLP could not and did not answer. That’s why for the first 20 years, there was nothing done in the field of NLP on attitude. Perhaps that’s because, as the dictionary indicates, an *attitude* is a very rich, complex gestalt made up of the disposition of one’s mind, emotions, and body and “the position of something in relation to a frame of reference.” Then, in 1994, upon discovering the Meta-States model, it became obvious that an *attitude is a meta-state*.

Take optimism as an attitude. The optimistic person is a person who accesses and applies positive thinking and feeling toward something. Then having access this positive state of thinking about possibilities and opportunities, the person speaks and acts accordingly. Yet this is not a primary state like fear, anger, joy, relaxation, tension, love, hate, etc. In a primary state you can point to the body parts (to your physiology) where you feel the state. But, where do you feel “optimism?” This reveals that it is not in the body as much as it is in the mind. It is a belief. The optimist believes in possibilities and in thinking positively.

Because of this, the person repeatedly brings this belief to many experiences in life. This reveals the meta-level nature of optimism. By repeatedly *applying* this state to one’s everyday states, the person meta-states himself or herself with optimism. The habituation then turns the meta-state into a meta-program. Now it is in the person’s eyes as his lens for perceiving things.

This is the case with every attitude— a timid, fearful attitude, a go-for-it proactive attitude, a racist attitude, a procrastination attitude of putting things off, a looking for the path of least resistance attitude, a critical attitude, an attitude of gratitude, and so on. These are *gestalt states* made up of multiple states-about-states. This explains the power of an attitude. It is not just a thought, but much more than a thought. An attitude is a disposition of mind-and-emotion, a meta-level self-organizing attractor and belief.

This explains why attitudes are so important. They organize us. They control our perceptions. They induce us into states. They establish our internal motives and motivation. They make up one of the most significant variables in our personality. Your attitude, and mine, can prevent us from even considering opposing information. Attitude can limit you from accessing some resources.

Given all of this, what attitudes do you have that do not serve you well? Do you have a grumpy attitude when you get into traffic? Do you have a fearful and apprehensive attitude when you see or hear others

in conflict? What's your attitude about mistakes, errors, and failures? How robust is your attitude in bouncing back in a resilient way from a set-back? What's your attitude about learning new things? Obviously, attitude plays a very significant role in our lives and therefore we need to have a way to change our attitudes, refresh them, make them more robust, eliminate negative attitudes, and create new attitudes as the need arises. How do we do that? Here's a recommended process.

1) First identify and detect your attitudes.

Take time to begin an attitude search in your life. Three or four times a day stop and identify the attitude that you are experiencing or have experienced. Make a record of the attitudes that you find yourself experiencing. You can not change what you are not aware of. So this is first.

2) Decide which of your attitudes need some help.

Which of your attitudes do you no longer need? Which undermine your effectiveness? Which ones reduce your joy and gratitude in life? Which ones increase your sense of grumpiness and misery? Which attitudes are good but need to be refreshed or rejuvenated or made more robust and courageous? To do this you will need to rise above the attitude as it were and run a quality control on it. Does the attitude give your life higher quality or does it lessen the quality of your life? Does it work to enhance your life, empower you as a person, reflect your best values?

3) Explore the variables inside the attitude.

Your attitude is made up of thoughts, emotions, beliefs, etc. that you have built over the years from your experiences. They develop from the conclusions you have drawn ... and some of your conclusions were made by a five-year-old mind, others by a fourteen-year-old mind, etc. So which ones are limiting? What changes do you need to make in your representations? In your beliefs.

4) Use the basic NLP and Neuro-Semantic patterns to make changes.

There are lots of patterns for making changes: Sub-modality shifts, Change Personal History, Movie Rewind, Meta-Yes Belief Change, Reframing, Super-Charging Your Attitude, etc. See any *Introducing NLP*, *Sourcebook of Magic*, *User's Manual of the Brain*, etc.

Structurally, your attitudes, as your outlook on the world, are your meta-programs and your meta-states. Knowing that, you now have several ways by which you can refine your attitudes to make them richer and more resourceful.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #49
October 25, 2016

DO YOU NEED A SWIFT KICK IN YOUR AA....?

Some people suffer from a really crappy and grumpy attitude. Their attitude sucks. They have an attitude that ruins their work, their career, their relationships, their happiness, their effectiveness, and more. We say, “With *that attitude*— no wonder you can’t get things done!” “With *that attitude*— you’re going to have lots of trouble!” “You need a swift kick in your attitude!” Do you know anyone like that? Does that apply to you in some way? Do a check list. I need an attitude adjustment when it comes to:

<input type="checkbox"/> Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficult people	<input type="checkbox"/> Taking risks
<input type="checkbox"/> Budgeting	<input type="checkbox"/> Making money	<input type="checkbox"/> Saving money	<input type="checkbox"/> Discipline
<input type="checkbox"/> Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Bosses	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict	<input type="checkbox"/> Aggression
<input type="checkbox"/> Politics	<input type="checkbox"/> Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Success	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning
<input type="checkbox"/> Mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>		

When you consider your attitudes about various things, how empowered is your attitude? How well does your attitude help you? How much does it hinder and block you from what you want to achieve? What we today know is that a rotten or grumpy attitude makes everything worse. And a positive and appropriate attitude makes everything go better, smoother, easier. And from the last Neuron post (#48), we know that an attitude is composed of one or more meta-states that set your frame of mind. And once it does that, it is likely to become your meta-program for perceiving things as you do.

In *Winning the Inner Game* (2007, previously “Frame Games”) the central point is that — To win the outer game of performance and relationship, you have to first win the inner game. And the inner game is the game you play in your mind— your attitude. Accordingly to deal with this, you have to get to the thoughts “in the back of your mind” as the references you are using to interpret something. Change that and your attitude will change.

An attitude then is a meta-level structure (a meta-state) that uses a frame of reference for establishing a frame-of-mind. Given this and the patterns we have in Neuro-Semantics for entering into a person’s matrix of frames, we can now fairly easily detect the structure of an attitude and determine how well it is operating in a person’s life. Got an attitude that is not serving you well and you’d like to update it? No problem. We can do that.

When I think about this, I think about that scene in the second Matrix Movie. It is at the beginning of the movie where there’s a meeting among several of the captains of the various vessels. They are all Zion vessels and captains and Neo is now on the vessel with Morpheus and they all seem to be waiting to find out what’s coming. Suddenly Neo leaves the room and goes to the door protecting the meeting. Then just as suddenly some agents come crashing through the door. Neo engages them and another

one of those martial art fighting scenes occurs. When Neo steps back for a moment, he realizes something. “Upgrades!” he says, mostly to himself. And they were. They were faster, quicker, stronger, more flexible, etc.

That’s what you can do with your attitudes. You can upgrade them! What attitude would you like to be stronger, more flexible, more resilient, more gracious, more loving, or more of some other quality? Ultimately your attitude is a function of your meaning-making skills, the framing you do, the states that you access and apply back to yourself. And that’s why, ultimately, they are at your command— if only you know the key for how to detect them and then update them.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #50
October 24, 2016

MORE THAN JUST SELF-CONFIDENCE —> SELF-EFFICACY

While self-confidence is good, there is something that goes far beyond self-confidence and something that would really enrich your life. Interested? Yes, I’m talking about self-efficacy. So what is that?

Confidence in yourself refers to what you can do. It is your faith with yourself (con- *with*, plus fidence— *fideo, faith, belief, trust*). With self-confidence you trust and believe that you can *do* something. What do you trust yourself to be able to do? The fact is there are hundreds if not thousands of things that you do everyday that you have faith that you can do, that you can pull off. It’s not always been that way. Today the simplest things that you do were once upon a time major challenges—tying your shoes, getting dressed, eating, etc. Now you can do these things with your eyes closed!

Coming to trust and believe in your skills, your capacities, your ability to do something is an ongoing and life-long process. What are you now working on? What new skills are you developing that in a year or two you will look back and remember with delight that once upon a time it seemed hard, challenging, and difficult? Remember learning to drive a car, using a computer, typing on a keyboard.

Maybe you have learned to play an instrument, compete in tennis or gymnastics, rebuild an engine, write a grant proposal, or developed one or more of a thousand other more advanced skills. Whatever skills you have developed and practiced to the point of competence—you now have *confidence* that you can handle that. Confidence unveils your *ability* to function in a given area.

Self-efficacy is the name of the meta-state that goes far beyond mere self-confidence. Whereas self-confidence is about the past, self-efficacy is about the future. With any skill that you now have confidence about, that speaks about your history, what you have *over time* learned to do and do at a level of competence. That’s why the questions to ask about self-confidence are these:

What are you confident about? Can you do that skill? Are you competent in that?

Have you moved through the stages of unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, and so you are now at the stage of unconscious competence?

Confidence, based on competence, means that you learned to do something so you can now perform the skill when you are called upon or when you so choose. It is under your control. You know how to do it, the state to access and operate from, the process that’s required, and so on. Now you can point to many instances over time wherein you demonstrated your competence.

Self-efficacy relates to the future rather than the past. In fact, if someone asks if you have ever done that particular skill, the answer is no. But you know you can. If someone asks me, “Do you know how

to fly a helicopter?” I would say, “Sure. If I wanted to as part of my plans, sure. No problem.” Yet I never have. So what is the basis of the *confidence* inside of self-efficacy? The basis is based on several things—I know how to learn, I know how to learn something brand new, I know how to read and study, I know how to contract with an instructor, I know how to follow instructions, I know how to set up a discipline for practice, I know how to patiently walk through the learning process, I know that it is just a matter of time (payment, hours of flight time, etc.), and I know how to persist until I succeed in a task.

The meta-state of self-efficacy arises from knowing yourself and knowing how you know things and how you learn things. And it naturally arises after you have walked the pathway from unconscious incompetence through the stages to conscious competence and then on to unconscious competence. After you have done that repeatedly, the moment (or moments) comes when you realize something. “I have done this before!” “I have repeatedly done this same process.” You then jump some logical leels as you realize several key things that make up the heart and soul of self-efficacy:

“I know that I will figure it out. I don’t have to know it all right now.”

“I know how to learn, how to relate, how to access resources, how to set up a practice discipline, how to persist, how to be resilient, etc.”

Now you have a state of mind-and-emotion that’s oriented toward your future. This is a common state for entrepreneurs and explains why they can move forward with “confidence” (actually self-efficacy) in areas that they have no experience. It is not a single skill that they feel confident about—it is something higher. They feel confidence or rather efficacious about their ability to learn, work through a process, and persist until they succeed. So when they launch out, to others without self-efficacy it might look scary, risky, and fearful. The entrepreneur with self-efficacy see it as just a matter of moving forward and “learning as I go.” “I will figure it out. That’s what I do—I figure things out and if I can’t, I know many others who can and I can create collaborative partnerships with them.”

Over the years I have written about this meta-state of self-efficacy in creating wealth (*Inside-Out Wealth*), in building businesses (*Games Business Experts Play*), in leadership (*Unleashing Leadership*) and in Coaching (*The Meta-Coaching System*). It shows up in so many areas of life. It is the foundation for resilience, for determination, and for being proactive (*Achieving Peak Performance*).

Want some? Unlike pseudo- self-confidence which some people build solely on their optimistic thinking about their dreams and hopes, real confidence and real efficacy is based on walking the pathway from incompetence to competence again and again and then, from those experiences drawing the conclusion that you know that pathway.

“I have walked that pathway often and when I move from unconscious incompetence into conscious incompetence—I know it is just a stage. It is just part of the process. And so I fully embrace the incompetence, the feelings of being awkward, and uncomfortable, and confidently move through it!”

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #51
October 31, 2016

CONFESSING POLITICIANS

Yes I know that the above title is an oxymoron— a self-contradictory statement. When do politicians ever confess? When they do—we have an extremely newsworthy event on our hands! That’s just about true whenever a politician confesses just about anything! Normally for them, confession is a bad word, a bad idea, and political suicide. Or so they think. So they don’t. Instead they hide, they cover-up, the divert, they blame—they do anything and everything but take responsibility for mis-behaviors or actions that indicate corruption or criminal mis-deeds.

In American politics, the biggest case in recent history was Watergate and Richard Nixon. The biggest problem in that instance was the cover-up, not the crime. The crime amount to petty thief, a break-in at the democratic headquarters, a stupid action concocted by Libby and which didn’t really amount to anything. But the cover-up, the lying, the 18-minutes audio-tape erased— that was what Congress set out to impeach Nixon for and so he was forced to resign in humiliation. But did he ever confess or own up to it? No.

Then there was Bill Clinton and his cover-ups and lies about “that woman” that he “didn’t have sex with,” which he eventually admitted that he did. So he was impeached. He lost his license to practice law, but just a couple votes saved him so he was able to stay in office, although tremendously weakened as president. Again, the big thing was the lies and cover-up, not the actions. Martha Stewart experienced a similar thing. There was some insider trading, but what sent her to prison was the lying, the cover-ups.

Now we have the same thing with Hillary Clinton. Swearing she did not lie to the FBI over and over and over, but James Comey the head of the FBI admitted that she did. Swearing that she did not send out sensitive top secret information on the emails, but the FBI director said that she did. Lying about the death of the Ambassador in Libya and the deaths of the others in Benghazi by saying that it was due to a video and yet simultaneously telling the truth (that it was a terrorist attack) to her daughter and the President of Egypt, she then later dismissed it, “What difference does it now make?” Now this week we have another FBI investigation of her on another matter about classified materials being on other people’s servers, and it looks like more cover-ups.

I would think that *they would learn*, well, I always hope that they will learn. But it seems to be a particular blind spot for politicians and one that nearly all politicians face. The paradox is that in the USA, the American people are especially forgiving and will forgive if there is simply an acknowledgment and request. We all know human fallibility— we make mistakes. That’s inevitable. There’s no escape from that. And with a confession that acknowledges the mistake, that comforts us that the person understands and has a new consciousness about it and so will probably not repeat the

same mistake.

This is what's missing when a person covers-up. How do we know that the person understands and will work to avoid the mistake next time? We don't. And that's the problem. Conversely, with a confession, what we get from the person is an understanding and an accountability. The current explosion of events in the US Presidential race brings this issue to the foreground again. How refreshing it would be to get a politician who is open and vulnerable and human and who will acknowledge mistakes, simply say so, and ask for forgiveness.

In terms of creating personal self-actualization, or the self-actualization of a family, a group, a business, or a country—people have to get real. They have to come out from behind themselves, behind their roles and masks and public images. Coming out and getting real means being open to being a human being, vulnerable to many things, fallible in everything, limited in resources and understanding. It is not easy, but it is the human way. And when people do, then they can grow, develop compassion for others, and focus on doing better.

It is the process of covering up that creates all sorts of other problems and even human evils. When a person starts covering-up and hiding their truths and realities— they begin to lose touch with their real selves. They create secrets and as Virginia Satir often said, “A family is as sick as its secrets.” As they hiding continues, people develop blind spots and with all sorts of defense and escape mechanisms. Eventually, they become alienated from their real selves.

The call to have *Confessing Politicians* is a call for them to get real. But that is not only a call for them, it is for us also. I have recently written a book on this subject. *Get Real* focuses on authenticity as the quality that makes us healthy and human. It enables us to be trusted, it builds credibility, it makes relationships and collaborations possible, it unleashes potentials, and there are many, many more benefits.

If you're interested in more— see the newest book:

Get Real! Unleashing Your Authenticity (2016)

www.neurosemantics.com / Products / Neuro-Semantic Books

if the book is not there — you can order / Trainers / Pay a Statement

the book is \$25 ... shipping IN the USA is \$6 and outside the USA is \$34.

So \$31 or \$59 ... the packages can hold as much as 3 books, add \$20 for each additional book.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #52
November 7, 2016

EMBRACE THE FLUIDITY OF “PERSONALITY”

If the question came up once, it came up several times, at NSTT this year (Neuro-Semantic Trainers’ Training). The question? Something about “personality.” “Is that the way some people just are?” “What about people who are X?” Sometimes the questions were about the meta-programs that a person favors, sometimes about a favorite representation system, sometimes about what to do with people who “are” X or Y?

Once, in answer to some of the questions, I commented, “Just forget ‘personality.’ It doesn’t exist, it is a construct that has been overly used, it is just not a useful way to think about things.” When some asked that I later explain that, I commented on the book, *The Structure of NLP: Ordering and Disordering Personality with NLP and Neuro-Semantics* (2000, Crown House Publications). I wrote that book to address the “personality disorders” in the DSM IV along with three co-authors. My intention was to show that the NLP and Neuro-Semantic models can and do adequately address personality disorders.

The comment I always make with regard to personality is this—

*Personality is what we **do**, not what we **are**. You and I **do** personality— it is how we think, emote, speak (language), act, and relate. As we do these things—we establish in our minds and the minds of others what we call as our “personality.” It’s how people know us, recognize us, and think about us.*

As a *person*, how do you function? How do you know yourself? How do others know you? Is it not in how you think and the way you think? Is it not in how you emotion, the particular emotions that you regularly access as you move through life? Is it not in the way you use language, the way you speak, the words you use? Is it not in your actions and how you relate to people? Well, yes, of course. You learn to be and express *the person you are in these ways*. And as you do, you are doing your “personality.”

Where did you learn to think, feel, speak, act, and relate that way? From your early home life, from your culture, your religion, your school, your friends, your books, your movies, etc. *You learned to **do** your personality from all of these influences*. And often, you learned to do what you needed to do in those contexts in order to survive, to get along, to deal with the factors that you had to deal with. Obviously, the more dysfunctional your early home environment as well as the “world” that you grew up in, the more you would have adjusted your person (personality) and that may result in developing personality disorders.

Abraham Maslow spoke to this in *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1968). Maslow was answering the

question about “personality problems.” What do you say when someone tells you that he or she has “a personality problem?” Do you say “I’m sorry!” or do you say, “Good!” He noted that it all depends upon *the context in which the person has been surviving*. He asked about the “personality” of someone trying to survive Hitler’s Nazi environment. If someone adjusted oneself to that, would he have a healthy and normal personality, or would there be some severe maladjustments? If well adjusted to a context of hate, prejudice, racism, etc., would we say “good?” Or would we say, “Sorry to hear that?” And would the so-called “personality disorder” in that situation not be a good thing?

Personality is context relative. You *do* your personality in some context in order to adjust or not to adjust and a healthy, strong, and vigorous sense of self can be deemed good in one context and a disorder in another. So Maslow asked, “Who is doing the calling, the labeling?” He recommended that we ask about the context, the criteria of the evaluation, the identity and motivation of the person doing the labeling if we want to fully understand what’s being discussed.

“The essential characteristic of holistic analysis of the personality in actual practice is that there be a preliminary study or understanding of the total organism, and that we then proceed to study the role that our part of the whole plays in the organization and dynamics of the total organism. ... The personality is not separate from its expressions, effects, or the stimuli impinging upon it (causes) and so at least for psychological data it must be replaced by another conception.” (1968, p. 297)

His “Self-actualizing People: a Study of Psychological Health” appeared in *Personality Symposia: Symposium #1 on Values* in 1950. There Maslow challenged the fundamental premise of modern psychology, namely that we can devise accurate theories about human nature by studying the mentally ill or the statistically average.

If we learn to *do* personality, and if personality arises in specific contexts and is relative to those contexts—this implies several really important things.

- *It important to create healthy contexts.* Parents take note. School administrators take note, also leaders and managers, etc. The context that you create for people to live and operate within will inevitably have tremendous effects on the personalities that are developed in those contexts. Is it a healthy self-actualizing context? Is it an unhealthy context for human beings? Is it loving, joyful, learning, contributing, etc.?
- *Personality can be positively changed for the better.* Personality is an ongoing process and so by improving one’s thinking, emoting, speaking, acting, and relating—one’s personality is improved, enhanced, and enriched. People are not stuck or victims of fate.
- *How you know and expressed yourself is under your control—if you so choose.* “Personality” is not a mysterious force that is imposed upon you. You may be tendencies and you may be wired for certain talents, but you are not fated to “be” a certain way. You can choose what to think and value and believe.

To your highest and best personality!

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” #53
November 10, 2016

PRESIDENT ELECT DONALD TRUMP!

WHAT HAPPENED AND WHY?

When America woke up on November 9, many people were shocked! Many were depressed and upset, others frustrated and even angry. Why? The person they thought and expected to be elected was not. She lost. The person that they never ever seriously thought had a chance at the Oval Office was elected. Shocking! Astonishing. So what happened? And why?

I’m writing this post in an attempt to try to explain what happened and why, and to do so especially to people outside of the United States. What follows is my view and does not represent anyone else. It is not a policy statement for anyone. It is solely my personal view. Since November 9 many have written asking how did that happen, what it means, why there are protests, etc.? I think that there are several explanatory facts. If you don’t like my opinion, that’s perfectly fine. You have that right.

Explanatory factor number one: The way the media mis-handled the news. Almost all of the media was for Hillary and against Trump. Now true enough, they presented most of the facts (maybe 80 to 85% of them) about the events of the campaigns, but facts alone are never enough. Facts always have to be interpreted. And interpreted they did. And the spin that 90 to 95 percent of the media put on the facts created an impression against Trump and for Hillary. The negative stories on the news and in print against Trump was overwhelming. I have heard that it was 70to 80% negative for Trump and only 20% for Hillary. That spin biased the news.

CNN was especially biased against Donald Trump and I experienced that way in every single country that I have traveled during the campaign, some 30 or so countries. The news I heard when away from the US was completely different from what I heard at home. When I talked with people about American politics, what they heard and what I had learned at home were completely different. I eventually started saying early this year (2016) that “just about everything you have heard in the news about Trump is wrong.” And it was. It was taken out of context, it was exaggerated, it was given negative spin. Half of the American population discovered that on November 9. They were absolutely shocked because the media bias had set them up for a disappointment.

Second explanatory fact: *The “message” that the Democratic candidate put out.* During the campaign Hillary painted Donald Trump as being so bad, so evil that people were absolutely convinced that he was a bigot, hateful, that he would be a dictator like Hitler, etc. No wonder her people are now protesting! If Hitler had been elected, I would have protested! But what are they protesting? They can’t be protesting the democratic process? A free election process? The peaceful transfer of power? Actually, the protesting is an unthinking reaction to the framing rhetoric of Hillary Clinton. But it was

just rhetoric—the extreme language that both candidates used as they painted the other one as the embodiment of evil. But it was just words. Not reality. Yet some people don't seem to know that.

For months I have been objecting to the way *both* candidates *talked* about the other. *Both* used what we call “cognitive distortions”—exaggerations, over-generalizations, personalizing, awfulizing, emotionalizing, etc. That's not good. Many people do not know how to process that kind of language. They think it is real! They don't know that these childish kinds of words create cognitive biases and distortions and *prevents clear thinking*! It sells papers. It gets notice on the evening news. But it is childish, immature, and psychologically debilitating. In therapy, in counseling, in trainings, and in coaching— we warn people against that kind of language. In NLP, the Meta-Model of Language is a model designed to challenge and question that kind of language and enable people to clean up their language patterns.

Both of them should have known better! But “political speech” in 2016 seems to be full of it and the US elections is a riot of mis-linguaging. So no wonder people without training, believing the words and getting into cognitive distorted states of mind-and-emotion are out on the streets protesting. It is an inevitable result of the kind of language that was put out.

Third, *the division and polarization of the country*. A divide of values, understandings, lifestyles, etc. has been dividing Americans for a couple decades. It got much, much worse in 2008 when Obama was elected and in spite of him wanting to unify the country, the country has become much more divided. In terms of unifying the country, he failed. And now at the end of his presidency, there is a deeper divide than has been in decades. The deepening of that division then showed up in the election in terms of the vision of the future that each candidate presented. Today, that division is deeper than ever.

Two visions of the future of America emerged during the election and these different visions defined the campaigns. One is an increasingly socialistic state wherein the government would take more and more responsibility and control of people's everyday life— regulating things, managing things, etc. A vision of centralization. The other vision is a vision of a smaller government and control being more local— with States and cities. One vision struck me as that of entitlement and the other of personal responsibility.

My own politics is for smaller government, more local government, and more personal responsibility. I vote for more choice, not less. I prefer to let people choose the way they want to live and be responsible for their choices rather than trying to control them. For social issues I prefer the liberal and libertarian point of view. About financial issues, I opt for running government as we do our personal finances and businesses— pay for what you buy and fiscal responsibility.

Today (November 10) Obama and Trump met at the White House and talked for an hour-and-a-half and described the peaceful transfer of power. That's the way it should be. So let us be stronger together and make American great again!

\From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” #54
November 12, 2016

INTOLERANCE— THE SOURCE OF THE VIOLENCE

On November 10 in Portland Oregon the “protests” transformed and became “a riot.” Men in masks using baseball bats started damaging cars, smashing windows, setting fire to buildings, looting businesses, setting police cars on fire, and destroying private property. Later, at least one person has been beaten by angry hoodlums simply because he voted for Trump. And why? Because they didn’t get their way in the election. *This response is not the democratic response, it is the response of primitive societies.*

Now we know where the earlier violence came from. Earlier during the campaign violence burst out at some of the Trump Rallies and people complained and even charged Trump with causing it. But now we know the truth of the source— “the angry left.” The good news is that others on the Left are calling for calm.

So, what is the source of the violence? Where does it come from? It arises from the intolerance of those on the Democratic party’s “far left.” Many of the protesters are simply communicating their views and opinions and are not engaging in violence. Yet even some of them, far too many of them, are justifying the violence by their words. In interviews with them in the past two days many have argued that those committing violence have the right to disagree. What? You mean *disagreeing* is the same thing as *committing crimes of violence*? When did that happen?

What’s amazing is *the rise of a new form of intolerance*. Some or many on the liberal side now hold some very intolerant attitudes toward anyone who disagrees with them or has a different view thing. They proclaim tolerance and act with rigid intolerance! They charge Trump and the right wing as being intolerant as Hitler and yet are so intolerant that they engage in violence!

Where does violence come from? *Intolerance*. When people become intolerant and will not allow diverse opinions and view-points, they begin to shut down and prevent people who think and value differently. This is the problem with the whole “politically correct” movement— a problem George Orwell spoke about via his creative novels— his *1984* and *Animal Farm* books. Today far too many University Professors and students have invented an intolerant set of values that they define as being politically correct and punish anyone who violates it.

Interesting enough the two candidates who did *not* subscribe to political correctness started two movements—Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump. Conversely the persons who were “politically correct,” namely, Obama and Clinton, were on the losing side. They would not even name the

enemy— Radical Islam Terrorism. That phrase has *nothing* to do with legitimate Islam. Instead it emphasizes a perversion of Islam, something “radical” and a belief system committed to violence and terrorism. Every Moslem believer that I know (and I know hundreds who are valued colleagues in Neuro-Semantics) are quick to condemn that perversion. May their numbers grow!

The intolerance of some on the left is now showing up in the protests and which is getting out of control at times in the riots. What are they protesting? They cannot be protesting the election process about popular vote because we have always elected presidents by the Electoral College. And Trump won 290 to 228; State after State that were expected to go for Hillary did not, but went for Trump. Whatever “rationalization” they come up with to justify the protests, it will be shallow, inadequate, and forced. There is no reason. None occurred when Obama was elected. None with other presidents.

The problem is intolerance. Paradoxically they intolerantly carry “No hate!” signs *and* speak hateful language about Donald Trump! In all of this there is the lack of critical thinking. If they listen carefully, they might discover that Donald Trump never once said that he hated anyone. He never encouraged anyone to hate any other person. What he did instead was to focus on certain criminal behavior—murders, inability to vet people coming into the country, etc. Did he sometimes over-state his case and fail to contextualize the persons involved? Yes he did. Yet the idea of “hate” was invented and promoted by various media outlets. A great way to sell papers and increase an audience, but a terrible way to accurately communicate.

The fruit of intolerance—violence—arises from the seeds that have been planted for many years. What are those “seeds?”

- *Entitlement:* The world owes me; the government owes me happiness and anything that I say is a “need.” I *expect* that I get health care, college education, no taxes, etc.
- *Over-sensitivity:* You should never say anything that upsets me. If you say anything that I don’t like, you must stop. Otherwise you are abusing me. I have the right to demand that you not offend me. You do not have the right of speech, only I do. (This is also called immaturity!)
- *Lack of discipline:* Don’t expect me to discipline myself, be responsible for myself, and don’t enforce the laws when I violate them or others violate them.
- *Failure to understand democracy and “the democratic contract.”* There is an astonishing lack of understanding of our history and what democracy is and means. I solved that problem with the book— *Political Coaching* (2015). (You can order it on www.neurosemantics.com).

If that’s the source, what’s the cure? How do we cure *dogmatic and rigid intolerance*? That’s the question, isn’t it? That’s what we have to change. What we need is openness, acceptance of differences, critical thinking, willingness to engage in debating issues and not personalizing them, etc. And that’s what we work on every way in Neuro-Semantics ... and that will be the theme of forthcoming posts.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #55
November 14, 2016
Basic NLP Concepts #1

BASIC NLP CONCEPTS

The originators of NLP, and most of the developers of NLP, seem to want to put a spin on NLP that would make it unique. So they preached the myth that “NLP has no theory!” And many of us believed it for years. I did. Eventually, however, I began to think that through and realized it was a marketing device that came from the Bandler/ Grinder spin room.

Coming from many theoretical sources (as I have noted in the Contributors of NLP series) and in the History of NLP series), Neuro-Linguistic Program certainly has a theory. Yes, it is not explicit and even to this day, forty years later, for most people studying NLP, the background philosophy and psychology is hidden from sight.

That our theory has a hidden nature and is not fully recognized even applies to some of the most respected Researchers in the field of NLP. Some of them seem to not recognize it. I say that because, since NLP comes from directly from Cognitive Psychology and Humanistic Psychology, all of the research done in those fields *count for NLP!* That is, any research validating or offering substantial evidence for Cognitive Psychology as well as for Humanistic Psychology applies as research evidence of credibility for NLP.

What is the *theory* of NLP and where is it? It is mostly in the so-called “NLP Presuppositions.” From “The map is not the territory” (Korzybski) to all of the presuppositions about communication (“The meaning of your communication is the response you get,” “You cannot not communicate.”), to those about systems (“The element in a system that has the most flexibility will have the most control in that system”), *the presuppositions reveal the hidden theory of NLP.* Here you will find basic premises from Cognitive Psychology, Systems, Self-Actualization, Developmental Psychology, Phenomenology, and Constructionism. And those are the disciplines from which NLP arose.

I write these previous four paragraphs to set up the next series of posts that I want to put out here on Neurons— *Basic NLP Concepts*. And there’s a reason for this new series— lots of people who have studied NLP and who are even “Practitioners” of NLP do not know the basic concepts. I know that because in the advanced Neuro-Semantics that we do, mostly Trainers’ Training and Meta-Coaching, many people ask about some of these basic concepts and are often surprised by them.

In Trainers’ Training, we put out a 22-page document, “The Exam,” that we ask everyone coming to NSTT to fill out. Then at the training, we go through the Exam and talk about the answers. One of them that happen every year, and that happened in Hong Kong a few weeks ago, was about the NLP Presuppositions. In addition to the 20 that we have in *User’s Manual of the Brain (Volume I)*, there were another 20 or 30 that people presented as possible ones. Some could have been, others were in

direct contradiction to the theory and philosophy of NLP. Here are the 21 presuppositions that Dr. Bob Bodenhamer and I put in *User's Manual*.

Mental Processing and Encoding Presuppositions:

1. The map is not the territory, but is useful as the structure of the map corresponds to the territory.
2. People respond according to their internal maps, not according to reality.
3. Meaning is context dependent.
4. Mind-and-body inevitably and inescapably affect each other.
5. Individual skills function by developing and sequencing of representation systems.
6. We respect each person's model of the world.

Human Behavior and Responses Presuppositions:

7. Person and behavior are different phenomena. A person *is* more than his or her behavior.
8. Every behavior has utility and usefulness in some context.
9. We evaluate behavior and change in terms of context and ecology.

Communication Presuppositions:

10. We cannot *not* communicate.
11. The *way* we present our communication affects perception and reception.
12. The meaning of your communication is the response you get, regardless of your intention.
13. There is no failure, only feedback.
14. There is an ecology in every system and so should be checked to make sure that a change does not ruin the system.
15. The person with the most flexibility of behavior and responses will have the most influence in that system.
16. Resistance primarily reveals a lack of rapport.

Learning, Choice and Change Presuppositions:

17. People have all of the necessary internal resources they need to succeed.
18. People are response-able and able to choose their responses in thinking, emoting, speaking, acting, and relating.
19. People have the ability to experience one trial learnings.
20. People make the best choices open to them when they respond.
21. The best communication and responses increase choice.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #56
November 21, 2016
Basic NLP Concepts #2

CONSTRUCTIVIST

Question: *What is the most basic NLP concept?* I vote for *constructivist*. This refers to how we humans *construct* in our minds our understanding of reality. Early NLP literature said: “We do not deal with reality, but with reality as filtered and processed through our mental maps.” What’s real “out there” beyond our nervous systems does not enter into our minds—that territory is what it is. We do not deal with reality, but with our maps *about* it. There is a great gulf between reality and our sense of reality. Engineer Alfred Korzybski described the gap with the words, “The map is not the territory.”

Whatever you mentally map as your understanding about reality is a map. It is not and never can be the reality. As a *map* does not consist of *the territory* it represents, the words you use, and the internal pictures you entertain, are not the event. The territory “out there” is independent of your wishes, hopes, and intentions. While this may seem obvious, yet most personal failures occur precisely because we do not adequately acknowledge and adjust ourselves to reality. *Map* and *territory* are different logical levels—external reality and internal perceptive. If what you think and perceive is not the territory, then all you have to navigate that territory is via your *perceptions*. So we ask:

Is your map adequate? Does it correspond structurally to the territory? Do you have a map that encourages you to face it, deal with it, and adjust yourself?

When you see an apple, you are actually constructing an internal picture of it. The rods and cones of your eyes give you the sense of “color.” Your nose creates a smell. Yet what is “out there” does not have color or smell—those features are part of your perceptual filters. You *construct* an image along with beliefs as your mental map, then you use your *constructions* (called “knowledge,” “understanding,” “beliefs,” etc.) to navigate the territory of the world. Now, if the map is not the territory, then do the following:

1) *Expect differences in maps.* Every person responds to things according to their maps, not according to reality. Given the map/territory distinction, each person’s perception determines his or her perceptions and responses. Every person responds to the world *according to his map about it*. Neuro-linguistic maps consist of beliefs, values, attitudes, language, memories, and dozens of other psychological filters.

Those shocked by the election of Donald Trump must have had expectations in their mental maps based solely on the mainstream media. They somehow did not take the full reality into account—things typically *not* reported by the media. Perhaps they confused what the media *said* with the *reality* being pointed to. Perhaps they thought that the political rhetoric from both Clinton and Trump were to be taken literally and forgot that politicians seem to always engage in name-calling and exaggeration.

2) Explore differences in each other's maps. When there are differences between you and others—the difference is a function of the constructions. Expect it. Explore it. The fact that others have *constructed* things in different ways provides an unique opportunity. You can try on a new perspective, you can lose your own perspective, you can discover how the other's sense of reality works, you can become better acquainted with “human nature,” etc. What an opportunity! In terms of the Presidential election, if you were disappointed you were probably listening only to those who agreed with you and not even considering the viewpoint of those on the other side. Might be a good idea.

3) Explore your own response patterns. Your own responses to people and to events occur according to the mental maps you have constructed. Do you understand your own reactions and responses? Do you know how you set yourself up for disappointment through expectations and demands? Every experience gives you this opportunity. When you know yourself better, you can be better prepared and make better choices. Because all of us use our models to guide our perceptions, thoughts, emotions, and actions, when you understand the constructions that you have invented or received—you are in a much better position to adjust to external reality. After all, that reality does not operate by your wishes, beliefs, or wants.

4) Check the ecology and the quality of your constructions. If your “sense of reality” is your construct, then the usefulness of your mental maps depends on their correspondence to the territory. Korzybski wrote this:

"A map is *not* the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a *similar structure* to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness. ... If we reflect upon our languages, we find that at best they must be considered *only as maps*. A word *is not* the object it represents; and languages exhibit also this peculiar self-reflexiveness, that we can analyze languages by linguistic means. ... As words **are not** the objects which they represent, *structure, and structure alone*, becomes the only link which connects our verbal processes with the empirical data. ... Words *are not* the things we are speaking about... If words *are not* things, or maps *are not* the actual territory, then, obviously, the only possible link between objective world and the linguistic world is found in *structure, and structure alone*. The only usefulness of a map or a language depends on the *similarity of structure* between the empirical world and the map-languages." (*Science and Sanity*, 1980 Edition, pp. 58-60).

With the recent election in the United States, thousands took to the streets to “protest.” They claim to be depressed, shocked, disappointed, in fear, grieving, etc. And whatever they feel, they should feel—*given their maps*. What always explains our subjective (and emotional) experiences are our maps. Map governs experiences. The good news is that *when* we change our maps, we transform our subjective experiences. The good news is that we can learn to discern reality better, update our maps, adjust to what's real on the outside, and more successfully reach out objectives.

How are your constructions? Do they provide you a way to move through life's experiences so you are successful and effective? To achieve that, NLP's first concept of constructionism provides us a direction and a resource.

A final thought. Al Pittampalli has recently (2016) written a powerful book about the ability to be persuaded, *Persuadable: How Great Leaders Change Their Minds to Change the World*. What he

describes is a key quality of great leaders, namely, their power to be open and to change their minds.

“... persuadability, the genuine willingness and ability to change your mind in the face of new evidence. Being persuadable requires rejecting absolute certainty, treating your beliefs as temporary, and acknowledging the possibilities that no matter how confident you are about any particular opinion – you could be wrong.” (pp. 4-5)

In fact, he says that the ability to be persuaded is “the ultimate competitive advantage” because it leads to smarter decisions, more agility, active open-mindedness, etc. “Actively open-minded leaders are in a hurry to find out the truth no matter what it is, good or bad.” (p. 11). Even more important, it saves us from the confirmation bias that plagues anyone with a strong opinion. When we are persuadable...

“... we can then treat all of our beliefs as initial guesses with particular probabilities associated with them, then we can welcome new evidence as an opportunity to get closer to seeing the world the way it actually is.” (p. 111)

Now isn't that the design of the Map/Territory distinction— over our lifetimes to get closer and “closer to seeing the world the way it actually is?” If we cherry-pick only the information that supports what we want to believe, we will never discover the critical facts about anything. We will then become a victim of the *confirmation bias* which will keep us blind and deaf and set us up for disappointments.

“Whenever we believe something, regardless of whether we have a stake in that belief or not, we tend to interpret new information in a way that is consistent with that belief.” (p. 94)

Leonardo da Vinci himself spoke to this when he wrote, “The greatest deception men suffer is from their own opinions.” The point? Be open minded enough to consider opposite opinions. And when confronted with someone who believes the diametric opposite, ask yourself, “What are some reasons I may be wrong? How could this other view be right?” Do this remembering that the map is not the territory.

James Lawley:

I'd like to point out that in most academic papers I've read “constructionism” and “constructionist” are most often associated with “social constructionism;” the idea that meaning is jointly constructed and that understanding about reality is co-created. Whereas “constructivism” and “constructivist” is more associated with the idea that each of us constructs our own unique systems of knowing. Constructionism is more about groups and constructivism is more focused on the individual. It's unfortunate that the two words are so close (and so easily confused). However, they are not incompatible. NLP is much more focused on ways individuals construct meaning, and hence has its roots in constructivist philosophy. Perhaps the first philosopher to deeply examine these ideas was Tienne Bonnot de Condillac. Relatively, there is still very little in NLP about group dynamics and social psychology. A little historical footnote, when the NLPt section had to decide which part of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy to join in 1992, we chose the Experiential Constructivists. Personally I have long thought these two words best define the philosophical underpinning of NLP. Here is a little piece I wrote which sets NLP within its an Experiential Constructivist framework:

<http://www.cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/pages/FAQs.html#What%20is%20NLP>
<<http://www.cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/pages/FAQs.html#What is NLP>>

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #57
November 28, 2016
Basic NLP Concepts #3

MEANING: CONTEXT & CONTENT

After the first two NLP premises (presuppositions) is the third one—*Meaning is context dependent*. This is another very basic NLP Concept. Because “The map is not the territory” and because “People respond according to their internal maps, not according to reality,” if we are to understand ourselves or others, we have to look at how the person constructs meaning and the contextual frames that they use.

Meaning is Context Dependent

This presupposition asserts that meaning both *involves* contexts and *depends* upon contexts. Conversely, *meaning* does not and cannot exist apart from contexts. What are these contexts? First and foremost is language. What we call a “word” or a “sentence” only makes sense when understood in its language context. For example, these words make sense within the English language context.

Then there are other contexts: interpersonal, business, religious, political, ethical, cultural, etc. Each of these contexts determines and governs the specific words, gestures, movements, behaviors, interactions, etc. that occur within them. It is the context that frames *how to understand and interpret what they mean*. A statement or an action in one context may mean entirely something very different in another context.

Saying "I love you!" to your father does not mean the same when saying it to your wife.

Saying, “How are you?” means something different at work, at home, in the therapy room, and at hospital’s emergency room.

For any word or action a context is require to make meaning of it. By themselves, words and actions have no meaning. The context determines how you and I frame the meaning. O'Connor and Seymour (1990), write:

"Events happen, but until we give them meaning, relate them to the rest of life, and evaluate the possible consequences, they are not important. We learn what things mean from our culture and individual upbringing." (p. 131)

Similarly, this is the point of the biblical Proverb, "As a person thinks (literally, *appraises*, calculates, reckons) in his soul, so he is." (Proverbs 23:7). We are *meaning makers*. When it comes to *meaning*, we invent it. We construct it. We construct it through our thinking, appraising, calculatating, reasoning, etc. It is a personal construct. And until we do this, *meaning* does not exist.

To say that meaning is context dependent is to say that *context* (the contextual frame) controls or governs meaning. That is, the context we accept determines the meaning that we attribute to something. Fundamental to NLP is the principle that we construct our internal experiences through

how we use our mental processes to *code* and *re-code* our thoughts. That's why when you change the internal structure, you change the experience itself. This structural point of view both defines and identifies the heart of NLP. While content is important, it is secondary to the contextual framing. The contextual framing determines the meaning of the content. So when you rise *above* your content mapping, you begin to understand how you have structured your understandings and what's running the show.

This explains the importance of the *how* question rather than the *why* question. When a person says, "I am depressed," we never ask *why* in NLP. "Why are you depressed? What is causing your depression?" Asking why will garner explanations and justifications. He will give you reasons to explain and justify the depression! That's not a wise choice. If that experience exists, it does so due to its structure. So we ask the modeling question of *how*, "*How* do you do that?"

By asking *how*, you move from the content of the depression to the structural level. *How* are you creating the depression state? What are you picturing inside your mind? What are you saying to yourself? Asking these questions enables you to search for the process that explain the depression code. Then, once you discover the structure, you can change it.

Now while we construct meaning by framing a context (which then becomes the hidden structure behind the meaning), our *meanings* are not necessarily true, accurate, or even useful. We can (and do) construct stupid, irrational, and useless *meanings* just as readily as we create meanings that are intelligent, rational, and useful. Just because we attribute meaning to something, or create a meaningful understanding of something, does not make it so. We can be completely wrong. Further, meaning can be not only dysfunctional, but destructive.

This explains why *perception is not reality*. Your perception is a function of your thinking, framing, and meaning-making. It is something you have learned and just because your inner mental mapping *sees* something in a particular way does not make it real. Nor does it mean that it is possible to make it real. Just because you believe in some imagined fantasy does not "actualize" it. Reality is reality. Perception is our human effort to try to understand reality. And when we do there are two parts— *the content* of our thoughts and *the framing* of that content.

Content is your story, the details of what happened. *Framing* is how you think, your style of reasoning, and the categories you use to classify the content. Framing structures your content. The content could be my thinking about starting my business and the ups-and-downs in the early years, some of the things I tried that didn't work, the things that did, and so on. But how do I frame it? Do I frame it as a story of upward success, every step leading to the next level of success? Do I frame it as learning to succeed through failure? Do I frame it as a struggle because it didn't happen quickly? Do I frame it as unmitigated success because even failures led to new discoveries? Do I frame it in terms of the overall story (the big picture)? Do I frame it in terms of the many details? Do I frame it by matching what I expected? Do I frame it by mismatching and identifying everything that didn't fit my understanding?

What NLP began with this premise, Neuro-Semantics has expanded and developed with the Meta-States model which gives us multiple ways to getting to *the internal context* of experiences.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #58
December 5, 2016

ARE THE PROTESTERS CRYBABIES?

That’s what many on the right are saying. That’s what they are calling those who are protesting the election of Donald Trump. Now because protesting an election has *never before happened after any election in the United States*, many of those who felt that they lost the election back on Nov. 8 have taken to the street to protest. Sometimes it has gotten out of hand and been more than a protest, it has become a riot with people destroying property, damaging cars, assaulting the police, burning stores, etc. But that was a small group.

Many just protested and did so crying and even wailing that Clinton lost. So those on the right began calling them names and mocking them— “crybabies,” “cupcakes,” etc. Videos of people crying have been played on television and social media. They were also quick to recommend solutions: “grow up,” “get over it,” “suck it up,” and so on. But it is not only those on the right of the political spectrum, even those on the left have been consoling them— giving some of them hot chocolate and cookies, bringing in puppies to comfort them, giving them a “safe space,” etc.

But are they crybabies? Could there be some other explanation? What other explanations could there be for people in a democracy having so much “emotional distress” that they can’t go to work, can’t go to class, and need comfort? Here’s one. What if they are not just crybabies who didn’t get their way. What if they are liberal fundamentalists who are actually hatefully intolerant of those who contradict them?

After all, that’s what being a “fundamentalist” refers to. When you are a fundamentalist about anything, it is “your way or the highway.” What you believe is not just a belief, it is “the truth.” It is the final word about what is true and real and anyone who can’t see that is stupid or evil. A fundamentalist is a person who confuses map and territory. They confuse what they mentally map in their head with *what is real*. Then they reason that anyone who disagrees is just plain wrong and need to be straightened out, eliminated, or stigmatized. Anyone who disagrees must not be capable of rational thought or must be an evil person. They do not tolerate differences. And why would they? They are right. They have *the truth*. They are in the know and the others are not.

That’s why they are so intolerant. That’s why they forbid those who differ to have an equal voice. They will shout down a speaker who dares to stand up and express a different point of view. We have seen a lot of this in the past few years on College Campuses. They proclaim that they are liberal and loving, but it is a limited tolerance and love, only to those who agree with them.

I’m not only targeting the left-wing fundamentalists, this is equally true of right-wing

fundamentalists, religious fundamentalists, and anyone who confuses their reasoning, thinking, believing, concluding, etc. with “the truth.” When you believe you are fundamentally right about something, a strange temptation arises. You start to scorn and disdain anyone who disagrees with you. That’s because the more you *know* you are right, that you have the truth, the more a divergent view threatens “the truth,” and of course, you cannot have that. That must be stopped! It was that kind of thinking that created the European wars, the Crusades, the Nazis, Radical Islam, etc. It continues to this day as the fuel for terrorists of all brands and creeds.

Now given this possibility, I hope that the protesters are just crybabies. That would be a much smaller problem and one easier to solve. I hope it’s a case that they were fooled by the liberal media who set them up for the disappointment, who never seriously thought Trump had a chance in hell of winning and who gave him billions of dollars of free publicity—even though it was overwhelmingly negative. I hope it is the case that they were the unsuspecting victims of assuming that Hillary was the inevitable candidate that they never gave any consideration to the other side’s perspective.

Interesting enough a few networks have actually come out and apologized for their biased and one-sided coverage. That’s good. Maybe instead of being agents for a party, they will return to actual journalism and begin reporting in a more fair and balanced way. That would be good although it is unlikely given that 90% of reporters identify themselves as politically liberal (which in the US means tending toward the socialistic side of things).

What’s the solution for getting beyond the fundamentalistic mind-set of assuming that you are the possessor of truth and have a right to be rigid and intolerant? Several things:

- *Recognize that all of your thoughts are but mental maps and never the reality.* Whatever you understand about anything is a human understanding and subject to all of the cognitive distortions and cognitive biases that plague all humans. Absolutism, black-and-white thinking, over-generalizing—the thinking patterns of children.
- *Recognize that you could be wrong.* Not only could you, you are. I am. We all are wrong on a daily basis about things. We forget things. We misconstrue things, we mis-perceive, we mis-hear—the list of things that our human fallibility touches goes on and on. For years when someone knocked on my door and said that they have some “truth” to share with me, and “could we come in for a few minutes?” I always say, “Yes, sure, upon one condition.” “What is that?” they would ask. “If you could be wrong, please come on it.” In all of the years, not one person could cross the threshold! Once one said, “That’s not fair, I have the truth and cannot be wrong.” So I responded, “Then sorry, but I’m not prepared to talk to an infallible person today, only to fallible humans who could be wrong.”
- *Humbly explore each other’s views with respect.* Intolerance kills learning. The intolerant are saying, “There’s nothing I could learn from you.” How sad. Let’s adopt the attitude that “I can learn something from everyone. No matter how extreme the other’s view, there’s things I can learn.”
- *Cut out all of the insults.* This includes name-calling, mind-reading, judging, etc. None of that helps. It makes authentic conversation less and less likely.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #59
December 12, 2016
Basic NLP Concepts #4

SYSTEMS THINKING

NLP is a systems model. It came from numerous system models, it requires systems thinking to understand it, it depends on working systemically to do it well, and it is loaded with system premises through and through. Systems is built into the very fabric of Neuro-Linguistic Programming model and yet lots of people misunderstand this and present it in a linear way. First let's start with the system models within NLP and count them.

- *Gestalt as a system.* Even the German word “gestalt” itself refers to a systems property, that of emergence. A gestalt is something “more than the sum of the parts and different from the sum of the parts.” When the parts are mixed, new properties emerge.
- *Family Systems.* Then there is Virginia Satir's approach to families by looking at the family itself as a system and to the communication patterns within the family as a system of interlocking patterns. That led to the Satir communication categories.
- *Bateson's Cybernetics.* One of the original systems thinkers and developers was none other than Gregory Bateson who began with doing original research in anthropology, cultural systems, etc. then applied it to communication theory, to the development of cybernetics in the 1940s, then to mind as he sought to create models for systemic properties such as beauty, humor, schizophrenia, etc.
- *Non-Aristotelian System.* Alfred Korzybski sub-titled his classic work, *Science and Sanity* calling it a Non-Aristotelian system. Therein he related things that had been pulled-apart and dichotomized (polarized) from mind-body, to neuro-linguistics, to time-space and argued for the hyphen to put a torn-apart, polarized world back together again.

Given all of this, no wonder that we have several *system principles* as basic concepts in NLP. Here are the central concepts (presuppositions) that arise from systems thinking and enables us to engage in systems working:

- *Mind and body are part of a single system and so inevitably and inescapably affect each other.*
- *The ecology of a system determines its health and robustness.*
- *The person with the most flexibility in behavior and responding will have the most influence in that system.*

The Mind-Body System

Normally we talk about "the mind" and "the body" *as if they operate independently of each other.* Yet they are not. Nor can we separate them. Korzybski in General Semantics describe separating such inseparable phenomenon as a "false-to-fact elementalism" and argued strenuously that the primitive thinking involved in elementalism works to our detriment. That's why we need to put hyphens between terms we can create a more holistic and systemic understanding, hence mind-body.

While there is still a lot of mystery about how the mind-body system works, we know that a lot of our illnesses are just as much a function of our "mind" as it is of our "body"—our multiple nervous systems. Studies in "the placebo effect" have given us a much more extensive understanding of the mind-body interaction. And because every drug is tested against a placebo, an inert sugar pill to determine the effect of the drug, we now know a lot about placebos. What's amazing is that while there are valid chemical effects within drug, there is also another valid chemical effect, the one created due to what a person *believes* about the false "medicine" of a placebo. Testing drugs against placebos, we now have an immense literature of comparison. Experiments have shown that placebos can produce significant reduction in symptoms. Generally placebos are between 30 and 50 percent effective. In some cases, even higher.

If mind-body is a single system, then what we do in our mind—the beliefs we develop, the understandings, identities, decisions, permissions, prohibitions, etc.—will affect our bodies. That's why *state* is a wonderful systems term including state-of-mind, state-of-body, and state-of-emotion. This is also why we focus on integrating these variables in the system—for congruency and ecology.

Because what and how you think and believe influences your emotions and body, stress plays a significant role in most illnesses—ulcers, ulcerated colitis, migraine headaches, arthritis, asthma, allergies, cancer, etc. In NLP we have achieved very little in this area. Dilts, Hallboam, and Smith came up with an Allergy Cure Pattern, but that's about it. We published in *Innovations in NLP* (2011) what some NLP medical doctors are doing regarding cancer in Tokyo, Japan. Yet with the existence of some 90 auto-immune system diseases, there is so much more for us to discover in this area.

System Ecology

We speak a lot about ecology in NLP. This speaks about the overall health, functioning, and well-being of a system—individually or a collective system (family, company, community). We do that by checking the ecology of our words, actions, decisions, beliefs, etc. Does this or that action or choice enhance your overall system's health and functioning? That is, is this ecological? This is shorthand for asking if a particular choice will ruin or mess up something else in your life that you value.

What we think, believe, feel, say, and do does not occur in a vacuum. None of these responses occur apart from the human system. So running an "ecology check" refers to taking the total system into account. How will this affect your health? Your finances? Your relationships? How will it affect your long-term success? Whenever you make a change in yourself, there will be systemic changes. What else will be affected? What unintended consequences may occur?

Running the ecology check enables you to evaluate a behavior, belief, change, value, etc. Doing this also raises your awareness of the potential impact that your actions can have. Because we are systems, when you make a change in yourself, there will have systemic changes. It will have consequences in other parts of the system. We say therefore that we need to consider the full "ecology" of the system when we work with any aspect of the human system. "Will this have any negative consequences that I need to consider?"

We can also extend *ecology* to the person's larger relational systems: "Would this change in a congruent way with the other people in this person's life?" By considering the larger frames of reference, you can at least begin to check on what will happen.

Systemic Flexibility and Influence

The third premise speaks about flexibility within a system. The variable that has the most flexibility will have the most choices in that system and will therefore be able to exercise the most influence in that system. When you can only do one thing, you don't have much ability to adapt to changing conditions. You are stuck with that singular choice. When you have the capacity to do many things, that increased flexibility offers you more choices and that means more options and that means you can have more influence.

Here then is a fundamental premise of NLP —and yet one that many people in this field do not understand very well, if at all. Sadly, there are many practitioners of NLP who think in linear ways rather than systemically, who posit things as polar opposites when they are variables in an interactive system, and who cannot even imagine how things can be occurring simultaneously rather than one at a time. To address this and to take NLP to a higher level, in Neuro-Semantics we have introduced two additional systems models, *the self-reflexivity of Meta-States* and *the Matrix Model*.

For more about systems, see the books (on the website, www.neurosemantics.com):

The Matrix Model (3rd edition, 2016)

Systemic Coaching (2012 with Pascal Gambardella, Ph.D.)

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #60
December 19, 2016
Basic NLP Concepts #5

EXPERIENCE IS STRUCTURED

Basic to NLP are the ideas that we *construct* our understanding of reality and create mental maps to navigate the world (#2), and that we create *meaning* within our mind-body systems to define what things are, how they work, their significance, and what we are to do (#3), and that all of this occurs as a system within systems (#4). Given all of that, there is *structure* to our experiences. And that's another fundamental NLP idea— *all of our experiences have structure*.

Above and beyond the content of what we are doing and why, there is the form or structure of how we put it together. And given that, this is the reason that we can actually *model the structure of subjective experiences*. Now NLP did not start here, it started with the “linguistic magic” of Perls and then of Satir and then they began imposing the structures of Transformational Grammar upon the distinctions they found. Slowly, out of that came the awareness that what enabled the “therapeutic wizards” to do their “magic” was the form and structure of the language. Later the realization arose that *any experience could be modeled by identifying its structure*.

How do we do this? This introduces another basic NLP idea. Subjective experience and skills operate by the sequence of representational systems. Every experience and every skill arise from how we use our representation systems in thinking-emoting and behaving. First we take in information via our senses, then we process that information to create *strategies* which sequence sights, sounds, sensations, etc. These make up the structure of the experience.

This means that a strategy is *a sequence of steps* that make up the component pieces of an experience. Like a recipe, a strategy tells you the ingredients that you need and the order for putting them together. This structural view enables you to think of a skill as a function of “developing and sequencing of representation systems.” The term *developing* speaks to the fact that there is capacity within our sensory systems for development and the term *syntax* refers to how we order, organize, or sequence the representational systems.

Consider the experience of getting out of bed in the morning. While we all do it, we have different strategies for achieving that outcome. *How* do you accomplish that task? What is your strategy? How easy or difficult do you find it? What do you do inside your head that enables you to move your body from under the covers to getting yourself out of bed in the morning and going? Here is a strategy:

You hear the alarm clock: A^c - (auditory external).

Then you say to yourself, "Oh no, it is time to get up" (Aⁱ_d -) (auditory digital, internal).

Next you feel that you do *not* want to get up (K^{meta} -) (kinesthetic meta or "emotion"). This sensation consists of feeling stiff in your back (Kⁱ -) (kinesthetic negative).

Next you think: If I don't get up, I will be late to work, I could lose my job (A_d -) (more words about

the job, your future, cause-effect events).

Internal dialogue with self continues about the necessity of getting up to go to work, "I have to get up!" (A_{d-mo}^-) (auditory, words using the modal operators of necessity).

When this conversation reaches a certain threshold (kinesthetically), it cues your motor cortex to move you out of bed (K^e) (kinesthetic external).

All of these sequential pieces work as a step-by-step formula for a *motivation strategy* for getting up in the morning. With it we now have the following:

$$A^e \rightarrow A_{d,i} \rightarrow K^{i-} \rightarrow K^{meta-} \rightarrow A_{d,i} \quad A_{d-mo} \rightarrow K^e$$

In NLP, a strategy describes the sequencing of representation systems as a design for producing a certain outcome. Robert Dilts (1980) describes it in these words: "All of our overt behavior is controlled by internal processing strategies." (p.26). Your brain has a strategy for generating all such experiences such as learning, teaching, motivation, preaching, spelling, loving, hating, paying attention, as well as any other observable behavior. Formally, *a strategy* refers to any internal and external set (order, syntax) of experiences which consistently produce a specific outcome.

Obviously, a great many strategies that you use for relating, thinking, interacting, etc. were developed at a young age. Unconsciously you learned that a specific sequence of the representation systems would produce a certain result. You then generalized that strategy to all occasions calling for that result.

Consider the power of a good strategy versus a poor strategy regarding the task/behavior of spelling in English. A useful and productive spelling strategy goes along the following lines.

First, you hear a word (A^e) (auditory external).

Then you make a picture of the word (V^e) (visual construct).

Looking at it feels right about its correct spelling (K^{i+}).

Then, to rehearse the spelling, you retrieve your picture of that word (V^r) (visual recall).

How do good spellers succeed in the experience of being skillful spellers?

They usually look up, or straight ahead, and internally see the word they heard.

They then have a feeling (K^{i+}) that gives the person a sense of it being right.

Seeing the word inside, they spell the word verbally ($A_{d,i}$) (auditory digital, internal).

With the feeling of familiarity for spelling it correctly (K^{i+}) (kinesthetic internal), they spell it externally ($A_{d,e}$) (auditory digital external).

The spelling strategy goes: $A^e \rightarrow V^e \rightarrow K^{i+} \rightarrow A_{d,e}$.

O'Connor and Seymour (1990) identify that dyslexics have demonstrated the usefulness of the spelling strategy. Teaching this strategy to dyslexic children often cures many of their dyslexia. Most dyslexics do not visually see or visually recall the words they wish to spell. They attempt to spell the word auditorially or kinesthetically. But spelling an English word auditorially (phonetically) means sounding out the word to oneself—a strategy that does not work very well with English.

Korzybski made the point that *experience is structured* and, in fact, took the idea further arguing that it is the "only source of knowledge." It is this idea that then led to the art of modeling—the subject for the next Neurons' post.

From: L. Michael Hall
2016 “Neurons” Meta Reflections – #61
December 26, 2016
Basic NLP Concepts #6

EXPERIENCE CAN BE MODELED

If experience is structured, and if *structure* is the only source of knowledge (Korzybski), then when we see someone do something at a high quality level or especially at a level of expertise, we can model that experience. We can examine that behavior or activity, explore how it is formed, how it works internally (the inner game), and then replicate it at least to some degree as we copy the structure. Isn't that great news? The achievements and accomplishments of the best among us can be replicated and perpetuated through the process of modeling.

This is a basic NLP concept. And it was an accidental discovery. It occurred after young Bandler was mimicking Perls' voice and language patterns by listening to the tapes. He was apparently just fooling around and having fun with copying the way Perls talked. But then he and others discovered, to their surprise, that he could replicate much of the results that Perls was able to achieve. Now that was weird!

“How is this possible?” was their question. And at first, they did not know. Ultimately they discovered what is today a basic NLP concept: *there is inside of every “experience” an internal structure that makes up of both what and how a person is thinking-feeling and doing*. They first looked at language patterns themselves. There was something special about how Perls dealt with language. There were certain words that caught his attention and that he would systematically respond to. That led to the Meta-Model of Language (the NLP communication model). Then they looked at all of the supporting activities of the use of language— one's tone, tempo, pitch, gestures, etc.

Today we use five basic models of NLP to model experience. Those following the Meta-Model are the Strategy Model (#5, the last post), Sub-Modalities, Meta-Programs, and Meta-States. These are redundant models. They all speak of the same thing— *the experience*— they differ in that they view it from different perspectives and so present different facets of the same thing.

Now to burst one myth. The developers of NLP did not invent modeling. In fact, they took most of what they created of the Strategy model from the blossoming Cognitive Psychology Movement. The two persons credited with founding that movement, Noam Chomsky and George Miller gave NLP the Meta-Model and the TOTE model. Interesting enough, it was John Grinder who knew both and who even worked for Miller in his laboratory. Miller's book, *Plans and the Structure of Behavior* (1960, Miller, Galanter, Pribram) provided the TOTE model which NLP enriched by adding to it the representational systems.

Sub-Modalities was also added and provided more details to the modeling process. though a mis-

nomer, “sub-modalities” actually describe the cinematic features of our representational thoughts. Sub-modalities is a false term because they are not members of the class of a modality, instead they operate as a classification themselves. The three primary modalities as modes of thinking give us the ability to code our thoughts in terms of pictures, sounds, and sensations. It was not until 1997 that Bob and I discovered that the cinematic features of these sense modalities (“sub-modalities”) work symbolically. As *symbols* they stand for meta-level concepts. By these cinematic features we can make new distinctions in our experiences because they are actually meta-modalities or meta-frames that we can use in modeling experience.

How does an expert make a difference between things? It could be in language, it could be in representations, it could be with different cinematic features. How does a person face an event that one finds disturbing? She probably does not step into the movie, but stays out of it just observing it from a state of interest and curiosity. Yet *distance* and *association* are concepts, you cannot see hear or feel these categories.

What is the difference between what you imagine as “real” and what you imagine as “imaginary?” Most people will code the movie in color for “real,” and as a black-and-white snapshot. One codes it close, the other as far off. Recognizing that we think using these structural features gives us the ability to replicate experiences of expertise. Again, *color* is a classification, members of the class would be red, green, blue, black-and-white, etc. *Distance* is a category, and within it are be close and far that could be ten meters, one block away, one mile away, a thousand miles away. The original sub-modality model failed to distinguish classification and members of the class. Brightness is a category: various degrees of light and/or dark would be members of the class.

This is where the Meta-States Model took modeling to an entirely new level and opened up new dimensions for modeling. The basic NLP idea of identifying the internal structure of human experiences worked wonderfully for mini-behaviors—for behaviors that occur *in the moment*. So modeling short behaviors such as getting up in the morning, making a decision, spelling, buying, etc.—all of these *immediate activities* can easily be tracked and their structure identified. How? Follow the representational steps! Watch eye accessing cues, listen for predicates, induce the person into the state, ask questions between original trigger and final output. It’s not a “piece of cake,” but it is a learnable skill.

All of that kind of modeling was based upon *representational and linear thinking*. But what about when a person’s experience is more complex? What about when it involves self-reflexive moves to beliefs and then beliefs-within-beliefs (belief systems) and when it transpires over years, even decades? What about strategies that include multiple strategies for multiple actions and contingencies? For simple states, you can ask the person to “go into state,” and then you can do “an unconscious uptake” on the person’s kinesthetics. But for complex states, this does not work. “Go into the healthy state.” “Go into the leadership state.” “Go into the entrepreneurial state.” Even forgiveness, self-esteem, resilience, magnanimity, etc. are not simple kinesthetic states. To model these complex and long-term states, you need to model the self-reflexive consciousness that governs them—and that’s what you can do with the Meta-States Model.

Interested in modeling? Then see *NLP, The Study of the Structure of Subjective Experience* (Dilts, 1980), *NLP Going Meta* (1997), *Meta-States* (2005), *The Matrix Model* (2016), etc.

