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META REFLECTIONS NEURONS 2020

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START WITH *BEING* GOALS

Inasmuch as a new year has arrived, let's set some 2020 visionary goals. This means setting clear-eyed goals that come from clear thinking and understanding about goals and goal-setting, and about achieving what you truly want to achieve. We all know that all too often New Year Resolutions do not work or do not last. But why? One reason is that they arise from fanciful thinking, unrealistic ideals, and unecological processes.

Yet for all of those things, we can correct things. And that's the purpose of the next set of posts here on Neurons— to address problems in goal-setting and to set some clear-eye 2020 Visionary Goals that will enhance the quality of your life. Let's begin by examining three types of goals: having, doing, and being.

You can see the ineffectiveness of goal-setting by distinguishing these types of goals. I see this in coaching, a profession designed to enable people to achieve their goals. The problem with many of the goals that clients present in coaching is that they are *extrinsic goals*—goals about something external (e.g., career, money, promotion, recognition, leading, managing, etc.). It is not that clients do not also set *intrinsic goals*— changing a belief, developing an emotional resource (persistence, resilience, etc.), understanding something, etc. They do; yet to a lesser degree. So while all goals are important, *goals are not equally important.*

The aspirations that people have which are external are those that fit "the American Dream"—"I want to be wealthy, healthy, famous, good looking, and popular." "I want a new car, a home in the suburbs, a great job, lots of time for holidays, lots more money, etc." It is not that these things are bad, it is that they are *superficial.* And contrary to what many people (probably most people) think, these goals will not, in themselves, deliver inner joy, happiness, contentment, resourcefulness, confidence, self-value, etc.

Extrinsic aspirations focus on *having* (receiving) whereas intrinsic aspirations focus on *being* and *doing.* In terms of *being*— human beings want a sense of personal value (self-esteem), confidence, efficacy, autonomy, independence, developing (growth), freedom, connection, relatedness, etc. In terms of *doing*— we want competence, skills, to contribute, make a difference, etc.

An obscure meta-program which we do not often talk about is the *being, doing, having, giving* meta-program which governs the outcomes people focus on. Sequentially, the inside-outside principle organizes things in this way— focuses first on *being* so that a person can *do, give,* and then *have.* Trying to *have* without being, doing, and giving ignores, or fails to understand, the natural and logical sequence of life. When a person focuses on *being*, then *doing* so that a person

can then give, *having* takes care of itself.

Those who over-focus on money, fame, beauty, control, etc. generally display poorer mental health. That judgment comes from the result of research (Deci, 1995, p. 128-129 quoting from *Personality and Social Psychological Bulletin*). This means that one's inner *being* suffers when you prioritize extrinsic goals over intrinsic goals. So there are consequences, significant consequences, to mixing up the order of *being* and *doing*.

> "Kasser and Ryan, in their research on life aspirations ... indicate that if people held extrinsic goals very dear, they had tenuous mental health."

Deci writes, "people who are the healthiest focus on developing satisfying personal relationships, growing as individuals, and contributing to their community." Here then is a great question What primarily occupies your consciousness when you think about goals, your future, or moving forward in life? It's okay to start with extrinsic goals *if they imply and lead you to intrinsic goals*. To facilitate that with yourself and your clients, ask these kinds of coaching questions:

- Is your focus on what you *have* more than what you *are*?
- How much is your focus on external possessions versus internal *being* (who you *are*)?
- What resources do you need inside yourself to be able to *do* what needs to be done? What resources do you need within to eventually achieve or *have* what you want?
- Who do you need to become in order to be who you need to be to achieve your goal?
- What changes do you need to make in your sense of self to *be* the person you want to be?

One of the most serious things that happen when people prioritize extrinsic over intrinsic is that it subtly leads people to frame their self-esteem as contingent— conditional. Focus on what you *have* or even *do* subtly implies that in some unspecified manner, you will be more or better when you succeed. From there it is but a small step to want to do more and have more in order to think of yourself as "more," and to feel better about yourself. And when that happens, you have put your self-esteem on the line.

The solution? Set *being goals* for this new year. Set goals for becoming the kind of person you want to become.   To figure that out, how do you want your friends and loved ones to think about you? What kind of character legacy about yourself do you want to leave?

WHEN A NEURO-SEMANTIST GOES TO THE GYM

Many people start the New Year with a New Year Resolutions to get (or stay) in shape by exercising, running, losing weight, becoming more fit, etc.   So I thought I'd write about how one Neuro-Semantist approaches this subject—me. On the surface, "going to the gym" seems like a strictly physical thing. It's a performance. But it is not. It is so much more.

Behind or above that surace performance, and deep inside each person, is a series of meanings. It's the meaning that actually determines whether you will be successful or not. It's the meanings that determine whether you will stay with it and make it a lifestyle. It is meaning which determines whether you will enjoy it or endure it. Having made "daily exercise" a lifestyle in 1975, I now have 45 years of continual practice. So I think I can safely say that I have made it sustainable.

What I do and have done is established a habit of exercising at least 30 minutes a day, six times a week. Over the years I have run marathons, triathelons, and now run mountain trails. I have lifted weights, done calisthetics, and stretched. That's the performance of the external activities. Nothing remarkable about any of that.

The meaning within and about that are also unremarkable except for one thing. They are *my* meanings. And that's what makes exercising sustainable for any person— when you create personalized meanings about what you are doing and why you are doing it.

Intentional meaning. I began running in 1975 to lose weight. In the process I discovered that running provided many, many other benefits—it gave me a great shot of good feelings as the endorphins flooded through my body. It gave me "thinking time" for working out ideas and solving problems. Via running I learned to relax more fully, enjoy nature, and challenge myself. With running I felt better and looked better. For years I did not have a *big why,* just lots of highly significant *whys.*

The *big Why* came later. Discovering that daily exercise released stressed and rejuvenated my energy— today I go to the gym and/or run mountain trail (well, actually a slow jog) for *ongoing sustainable energy and vitality.*   I don't just "go to the gym," or "work out." That's too boring and mundane. I exercise for energy and vitality so I can get up in the morning with zest and last into the evenings when trainings go to 9 or 10 pm. with plenty of mental and emotional energy. I do it to feel *more alive* — mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Years ago, reading Arnold S. Biography, I came across a line about intentionality in exercising. He wrote, "One curl with intention is worth ten without." Intentionality— to act with purpose. Since then I found that some fitness instructors say, look at, even tap the muscle that you're going to work so as to send a message to it— and to build an anticipation of developing it.

Understanding Meanings.   Part of the meanings I activate when exercising is an understanding of what I'm doing in addition to why. Recognizing that the body needs to move— I look forward to doing things that *move the body.* Often at trainings in various hotels that means walking the stairs rather than taking the elevator. I walk where I can and stretch. Knowing also that muscles need tension, I look forward to figuring out to find new ways to fatigue a muscle so that it can grow. I look forward to flushing a muscle with blood knowing that in doing so it brings oxygen and nutrients and cleanses out toxins. Knowing that the heart and lungs are designed to be pushed and stretched, I look forward to exerting effort on one of the machines and watching my heart pulse rate.

I understand that I need three kinds of physical strength — cardio-vascular strength for my heart and lungs, skeleton strength for all of the muscles that hold the bones and organs in place, and flexibility strength that comes through stretching. Exercises in the gym on machines and with weights can be done properly or improperly. When done wrong, a person can do damage. So learning how to do an exercise right is important.

A new phenomena has appeared in gym in recent years— people sitting on an exercise machine texting, checking emails, watching movies. Incredible! What I wonder is, "Why in the world do you even bring your phone to the gym?" Quite often I have to ask people if I can use the machine. Often they are in a trance— and I have to first get their attention. To get the most out of the gym, I go from one exercise to the next *without waiting or resting at all.* I do "super-sets" that is, multiple sets one after the other. In doing so I make the exercising as aorobic as possible. That's why I only need about 30 minutes to work out. I have had others do the routine I do and it took them an hour or more. They spent a lot of the time resting.

Personal meanings.   The meanings that uniquely speak to us are personalized meanings. For me, I begin with the fact that I only get one body and so it's my privilege to take good care of the one I have. Doing so makes me feel better, experience more zest and vitality, and even look better. Yes, gravity gets the best of all of us— *and* exercise can keep us young-thinking and looking longer. All of this enables me to access effective states for exercising. It enables me to positively look forward to exercising each day as a time for rejuvenation of energy.

Once upon a time I thought, "I'm too tired to exercise." No longer. Over the years, time and time again, I have discovered that when I don't feel like it, *that's the very time I need it most.* I say, "I'm just going to do a little bit. Just to warm up."   But once I start, an amazing thing happens. I feel like I can do "a little bit more." And I do. And that increases it even more. In the end, I work out a full 30 minutes and feel like I have achieved a victory over self in doing so.

Challenging meaning. Exercising that takes the form of participating in a "fun run," or with a group doing a program together, or group sports (tennis, golf, basketball, racquetball, etc.) adds

another dimension— the social dimension of competition and encouragement from others.   Over the years I have had many running buddies. We'd meet at a certain time and run a particular route. Or we encouraged each other for a road race coming up.   Alone, I would challenge myself either in terms of time, distance, quality of the run, etc. The fun was the stretch that pushed me out of the comfort zone.

Exercise— it does a body good. It does a brain good. It will do you— as a person— good.

From: L. Michael Hall
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REPORT ON THE NLP LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

We have now completed the **10th NLP Leadership Summit** which was a great success if we measure it by the conversations had, insights developed, new intentions set, passions rekindled, and an overall hope for the future of NLP. And the amazing thing is that it was not through the making of speeches and speaking AT each other, but through authentic conversations WITH each other.

A people who can talk authentically together can co-create and co-lead together! And that seems to me to be the foundation of our hope of co-creating a bright future together.

Heidi Heron who co-facilitated the process with me has just posted the following summary of the NLP Leadership Summit --- which will give you a little bit of the feel of the experience.

For more about the Summits --- see www.nlpleadershipsummit.org There you will find two **free** books--- *Powered by NLP, Volumes I and II* that Joe Cheal has collected and edited. In these you can read reviews and summaries of the previous 3-day Summits.   Powered by NLP, Volume III will be available later this year. One thing that you can take away from this---
>   The actual leaders in the field of NLP are talking and listening and learning from each other!

From: Heidi Heron
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Buenos dias amigos!

What an amazing NLP Leadership Summit we had! I am so proud of our community for having the courage to have some of the challenging, and at times heated conversations that are so necessary for progress. The learnings, connections and intentions we are each taking away from these 3 days will make a global impact on our own individual worlds and the world of NLP at large.

On Day 3 we discussed in small groups how we continue to foster the fellowship of NLP into our futures. As we future paced our take-aways from the weekend it was apparent that a shift had happened within these 3 days; a desire for more collaboration, a yearning to positively effect climate change and a demand for more credibility and ethics within NLP trainings.

The Global Body discussion continued and the KPI set for the meeting was achieved. This was no small feat, and I personally thank everyone involved in these discussions. The passion and desire for excellence emanating from this group is extraordinary. I believe we can all rest assured that the integrity and positive intention for the future of NLP is held in the hearts of many, and the aim to reclaim NLP for what it means to us is very clear.

After outlining a proposed strategy to approximately 15 people representing various associations around the world, I shared the Global Body report to the whole group after lunch. A impassioned conversation occurred after the presentation and it was agreed by most present that we continue to *work toward* the creation of a Global Body. This session was video recorded and within the week I will send the video and slides to everyone along with more information about the proposed strategy.

Robert Dilts then presented some of his collaborative work with Ian McDermott on Intentional Fellowship with an invitation to create connections between the participants and a plan of how to maintain the intentional fellowships we began this week and move them into the future.

Finally – we wrapped up the weekend with a large group round-up sharing our intentions for the future from this summit.

What an amazing summit! Thank you so much for all that were involved, even those who were not present but were they with us in spirit.

The Next Leadership Summit

We will be meeting again at the London NLP Conference in May (15-17 May) and our next 3 day event will take place **14-16 January 2022**. Normally the event is held on the 2nd weekend of January, however an overwhelming number of participants have already expressed an inability to attend on that weekend so we have moved it to the 3rd weekend in January. Please put it in your calendars soon.

In the next few months we will start to choose the next venue for the 2022 Leadership Summit – **Santa Cruz** is a hot contender as a great location to be able to involve more of our North/South American and Asian colleagues to be more inclusive of our members worldwide. We will choose by vote, in the same way we have in the past.

Attached are some group photos, and I will encourage you to please share any photos or other documents to the [NLP Leadership Summit Facebook Group](#)

Those travelling today, have a safe journey and a wonderful tomorrow!

Best regards,
Heidi Heron

From: L. Michael Hall
2020 Neurons #3
January 14, 2020

LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE
AS A PROFESSIONAL

Last year I sent out 10 articles on *Communication*— How to be a Professional Commnicator. Those articles consisted of the basic principles for effectively communicating and descriptions about how communication works. If you would like to learn that in much greater depth, first take a study in the NLP Communication Model, and after that, take the ACMC Coaching Mastery training.

Yes, this training is most directly for coaching communication and yet it is also for so much more. It is for becoming a professional communicator as you use conversations to influence people, persuade, motivate, enable, empower, grow and develop, and transform. That's why this Module III training is a communication bootcamp that meets the needs of any and every leader, manager, consultant, and parent.

If you are a person who seeks to *win the minds and hearts of people* to an idea that you have— then this Coaching Mastery program is precisely for you. As you know, when you seek to communicate to most people, to influence them, to get them to see your point of view, or act on something that you are offering — a great many people (probably most) will not respond positively if you are too direct, perceived as demanding or pressuring, or if they think you do not understand them. So you get resistance. Then "communication" becomes "hard," sometimes impossible.

What is a leader to do? *The answer is to initiate a conversation that invites that person into a co-created state of mutual understanding which is the prelude to winning one's mind and heart.* Interested in doing that? We say that "coaching" is a unique conversation unlike any other conversation. It is not a normal conversation. It is *not talking at* a person. It is *talking with* a person so that the person comes along to understand you and/or what you are presenting (winning the mind) so the person then cares about it (winning the heart). Now how skillful are you in doing that?

My invitation to you is to join us in Bali Indonesia as we begin 2020 (March 14-21) for the eight-day intensive coach training and start your journey to becoming a professional communicator. And because it is in Bali Indonesia, you could possibly take a holiday there (before or after the training) and write the training off as a business development expense.

AND YOU THINK YOU CAN PLAN?

Most people do. Most organizations think they can. It's a human tendency. We think we are fully competent to plan for things of the future. When I lived half the year in Australia, I visited the famous Sydney Opera House on numerous occasions. That led me to became acquainted with some of the facts about it. When it was first planned, the designers estimated that it would cost $7 million and would be completed in 1963. It was not. It cost $102 million and was not completed until 10 years later, in 1973. Oops. Someone mis-calculated!

Then two decades ago, here in Colorado, the new Denver International Airport opened. But it was 16 months late in opening and worse than that, the planning that estimated the cost went over-budge by $2 billion dollars— that billion with a **b**. That was a big Oops! More mis-calculations. And such mis-calculations seem to be built into our basic thinking patterns.

In NLP, Neuro-Semantics, and Meta-Coaching I regularly see and experience this *planning fallacy.* It doesn't just happen ever-now-and-then, it happens nearly all the time. Because we use the NLP Well-Formed Outcome pattern so frequently, we are constantly dealing with the human capacity (or incapacity) for effectively planning and estimating costs, time-frames, and effort.
* This becomes obvious when we ask question #4, "*When* do you realistically think you can achieve this objective?"
* When we ask question #7, "*What* do you have to do to achieve your outcome?"
* Question #14, "*What could stop you* or interfere with you achieving this goal?"
* Question #16, "Is reaching this objective *ecological*?"

The *Planning Fallacy* is a common cognitive fallacy and one that's been researched, described, and explained in multiple books. It is driven, in part, by the *Understanding Bias*— we think we understand things when actually we do not understand— what's involved, how much time things take, how much effort and how many resources will be required. It is further driven by the *Availability Bias* inasmuch we plan things based almost solely on what we know without even taking consideration that there are and will be multiple things we don't know.

Then there is the *Confirmation Bias* that further complicates things given how our beliefs and inputting of information as well as our processing of information tends to be biased by what we already believe and expect. All of these distorted and biased ways of thinking seriously undermine our ability to effectively and realistically plan things.

The fact is that *planning, estimating* how long things will take, how much they will cost, what it will involve in terms of effort and discipline, all of the things that could interfere, and creating an effective and actionable plan is much more difficult than imagined. To check this out in your

own life, pull out your list of goals that you intended to achieve in 2019 and the time-frame that you set on those items. Then examine how long it did take (or is still taking) to achieve.

There is a structure and a strategy to effective planning. The delusion is thinking that it is easy and natural. It is not. That's one reason the eighteen questions in the Well-Formed Pattern provides such a powerful tool, and why it takes skill to be able to use those questions effectively. That's also the reason why the Decision Conversation in the Axes of Change Model further provides a way to think through a decision before jumping in.

Effective planning inevitably also involves systems thinking because whatever you are planning occurs in a system and that system is also within yet other systems. For that reason there are inevitably systemic factors, contributing factors, and systemic effects that need to be brought into consideration as you plan. The good news is that we have lots of tools in Neuro-Semantic NLP that can enable your very capability for effective planning. More about that in the coming posts.

PLANNING
AND UNINTENTIONAL CONSEQUENCES

When it comes to setting goals, planning, estimating time frames, costs, etc., we often forget to take into consideration *unintended consequences.* And why do we forget to take these into consideration? Mostly because they are not obvious. They are not a part of the information that's *available* to us. Additionally, they are estimates about what could go wrong which typically we do not even think about when we are putting together plans to achieve something. Our focus is on what *to do,* not on what to avoid. It is not on what could go wrong, what we are *not* thinking about. We are focused on strategy, resources, personnel, implementation, etc.

Additionally, another problem with *un*intended consequences is that our focus is on *intentional* consequences — the effects that we imagine that will resent when we achieve our goals. That is, after all, why we set goals in the first place— we seek to do what's required in order to get the desired effects (consequences) which will result from reaching our outcomes— effects experiences like happiness, relaxation, confidence, etc.

An old statement that's often quoted asserts that "The pathway to hell is paved with good intentions." We intend well. We have the highest aspirations and the most noble intentions. Yet sometimes in spite of the good intentions, bad thngs happen. That's the unintended consequences.

Unintended consequences takes several forms. One form arises from having every intention of eating right and exercising regularly, but then "life" happens. Excuses are used, plans are put off, and we find ourselves suffering from our poor eating habits and lack of exercising habit. We suffer obesity, diabetes, etc. and wonder why these consequences since we had the best of intentions. That's one form of unintended consequences.

Here's another. We set out to create wealth and to establish a stream for passive income for later in life. In the process, we work 80 hours a week so that our family will be provided for and safe. What we didn't expect was that we would lose the family. We did not expect that a wife (or a husband) and children would not feel loved or that perhaps would leave. Or if not physically, they would leave emotionally and relationally. Unintended consequences in spite of good intentions.

An unintended consequence, that I suffer today, arose from putting my focus on spreading NLP and Neuro-Semantics around the world. As that occurred and as it succeeded, I eventually was away 80 percent of the time for many, many years. Then as I started cutting that back to 70

percent, and 60 percent, I discovered that nearly all of my friends and acquaintances which I had cultivated for 12 years before closing shop on my therapy practice and going on the road – they had died, moved, or somehow got lost in the shuffle. Consequently, today I am vry much a stranger in my own city— a place where I have lived and paid taxes (mostly paid taxes) for 36 years. I didn't anticipate that. Today about the only people I know in Grand Junction are business associates— people I hire to do various things.

Unintended consequences represent a hidden but new powerful aspect in goal setting. Typically you have to specifically ask about them and search for them because they are usually not readily available for your reflection. It's what you need to do to avoid missing the unintended consequences. It's what you need to do to avoid getting blindsighted by consequences that show up in surprising ways and in the most inopportune times. What unintended consequences should you check out today? Of the goals you've set, what are all of the possible results that could occur?

LIVING FOR A BIG REASON

To set a great 2020 visionary goal, set a goal in such a way that you can live for *a highly significant reason,* a reason that answers the *why* question. "Why are you doing that? Why is that important to you?" "What is your biggest why?"

For those of you who know the Well-Formed Outcome questions, this is question three. It is a question that works with a person's goals, we use it to elicit the person's unique set of values. What's the rationale for this? To facilitate synthesizing the person's goals with his values. Obviously to go after something that you don't value, don't believe is important, and don't ultimately care about is to set up a self-defeating goal. That is what sabotages the goal-setting of many people.

If you ask question three in a meta-stating way, you will elicit or create your own unique *hierarchy of values.* At first the values will be low level and probably the values of survival, safety, social belonging, self-importance that correspond to Maslow's list. If you "hold" a given value (X) in place, and again ask, "Why is X important to you?", and give yourself time for reflection and discovery, you will make explicit your set of values. [This is also something that you will learn to do in the APG training.]

Now the power of living your values and letting your values set your goals is that *it gives you a reason for living,* a reason for taking action, and a reason for thriving. This is a process that can save you from frustration, mediocrity, depression, feeling like a victim, and many other unpleasant emotional consequences.

That's what happened to a Mr. Fuller at age 32 when he was living in low-income public housing in Chicago. His daughter had recently died from polio and spinal meningitis. Consequently, he became chronically depressed, began drinking heavily, and then seriously considered committing suicide. One night, while standing on a bridge and trying to decide whether to jump to his death, he asked himself some questions about the meaning of life. "What would make life worth living?" At first he had no answers. But he continued to reflect.

Suddenly in a flash of spiritual insight, the answer came to him. He would begin *an experiment,* to determine how much a single individual could contribute to changing the world and benefitting all humankind. The answer, it turned out, was "quite a lot." Over the next 55 years, he patented over 2000 inventions, wrote 25 books, and went down in history as one of the greatest thinkers, inventors, and servant leaders who ever lived. If you haven't yet guessed, I'm describing Buckminister Fuller. The experiment that he gave himself to was that of seeing what would happen if *he did as much good as possible to benefit the world.* That's also an experiment

that you can attempt. Implied in that idea are multiple values.

Contribution —	"Doing good."
Abundance —	"As much as I can."
Making a difference –	"To benefit the world."
Unselfishness —	"To benefit the world."
Discovery —	What would happen if?
Experimentation –	Give it a go.

Values drive behavior and because of that, values also create motivation. It gives you a motive for acting, a reason for living. Consequently if you have a so-called motivation problem, elicit your values and give yourself the opportunity to live them. Do you have a big enough *why* for your goals? If not, you now know how to create that big why, repeatedly ask question 3— *Why is that important to you?* If you have any difficulty, contact your closest Neuro-Semanticist.

MAKING PERFORMANCES MEANINGFUL

At Starbucks after the turn of the year, I heard four people talking about New Year goals. When one of them noticed that I was listening (either he had great calibration skills or I was pretty sloppy as I was listening in), he explained, "Our friend John here doesn't believe in goal setting or New Year Resolutions."

> "Yes, in spite of the power of goals, there's actually lots of people who share that view of disbelieving in goal setting, and something they actually have good reason not to believe in."

Having agreed with and validated both sides of the argument, another person said, "I don't get that, what do you mean?"

> "Well, because there is a structure and process for goal setting —which makes it a powerful process ... to attempt goal setting without it being well designed, people would not believe in it, having not experienced how to do it effectively."

The man who first noticed my interest in their conversation then spoke up. "Okay, I get it that there's a formula for doing it well, but I don't get that they have a good reason to *not* believe in it."

> "Imagine asking someone about a desired goal. When you ask, 'What do you want?' what will they tell you? [pause] ... Will they not tell you the long-term effects of their goal? What they will not tell you is what they have to do to reach that goal. They will say happiness, relaxation, confidence, health, love, and other emotional behavioral effects. They won't say that they *want* to diet, sweat, exercise, etc."

He agreed that yes, that's what most people will say.

> "So imagine setting a goal about eating more healthily and exercising. So in setting this goal, 'What do you have to *do?* What things do you have to perform on a regular basis?'"

That started a conversation at the table about going to a gym, doing specific exercises, and so on. Once a respectable list had been elicited, I then ask "So this is your goal— to *do* these things. Right?"   There was a pause and then some hesitation, "Well, it's not that I *want* to do these things as I need to ..." "And I have to..." Everyone laughed.

> "So how much capacity do you have to *do* those things right now? Do you need to develop or expand your capacity for these actions in order to do what you have to do to get the results that you desire?"

That's when John piped up, "That's precisely why goals don't work and why I don't believe in setting goal!"

"Exactly!" I chimed in. "Effective goal setting not only catches a vision of the end-result and the effects of that final outcome, you also have to identify what you have to do to get what you want and see those actions as *valued activities* which will deliver the goods. You also have to see yourself as *empowered* to be able to perform the required actions and *the strategy* for making it happen."

They all agreed, "That's a lot." This highlights a fascinating dynamic about goal setting, namely, people often don't know, are unaware of, or simply have not come to terms with *the actual performances* which they will have to do if they are to reach their goal. Envisioning the final outcome is one thing. Stepping in to anticipate experiencing the emotional and behavioral effects of the goal is another.

Yet most important is *the pathway to the goal* which is made up of lots of specific behavioral activities— things you have to *do*. To effectively set a goal, be sure to focus on the required performances. Then as you focus on what you have to *do* to achieve the desired results, make sure these behavioral performance are *meaningful* to you. If you don't make the process for reaching your goal *meaningful* and significant, then eventually your *performance* itself will suffer. That's when the activities will begin to seem like a lot of effort— like work. And that will lower your motivation; it will tempt you to procrastinate, it will set you up to become impatient and discouraged.

What you *do* to achieve your goal must not only make sense but also provide you a sense of meaningfulness. You also need to bathe those activities in significance. Then you will care about two things— the end result effects and the processes for getting there. Then you will have two kinds of goals — end goals and mean goals.

SETTING A GOAL TO
SELF-ACTUALIZE SOMETHING

> "The biggest puzzle is not solving and fixing problems, per se, it is fixing *the thinking* that causes problems." (LeGault, *Think!* 2006, p. 309)

In spite of the current world-wide inundation of information and the mythology that information is power, information by itself actually amounts to very little. The reason is because in order for *information* to be useful, you have to transform it into *knowledge* so that you can "know" something specific in a specific area.

Yet even that is not enough. After that you have to transform your knowledge or understanding into *comprehension.* Only when information has become comprehensible understanding of something (e.g., how it works, what you can do with it, its value, etc.) can a person then actualizes it in action and use it for developing personal excellence and mastery.

This means that today our problem is not the lack of information. Actually, we are inundated by so much data, facts, and information and to such an extent that we are overwhelmed by it. Sometimes we are even defeated by it because we don't know where to start. With it we have too many choices, too many possibilities. Sometimes it is so much so that we are disoriented and don't know where we are or what to do— paralyzed.

For a template for thinking about setting a goal to *actualize* something in Neuro-Semantics, we use the Meaning—Performance Axes.
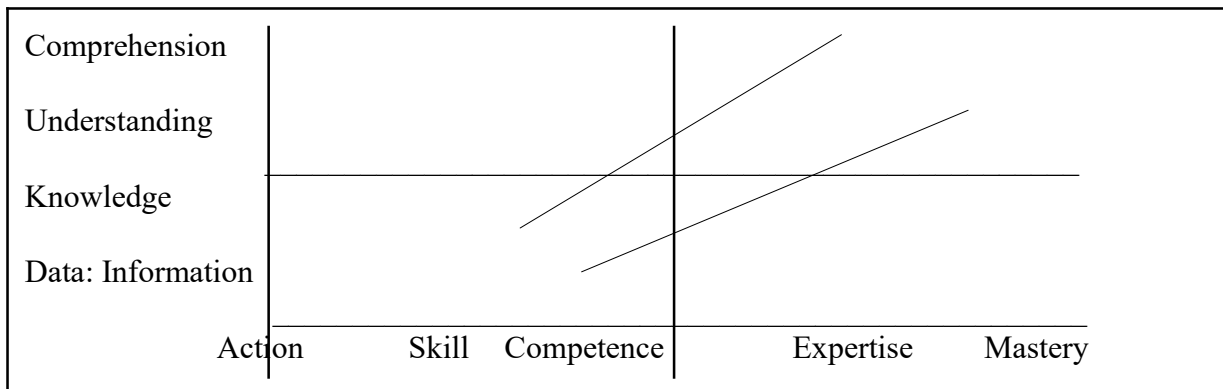
The key to *actualizing* anything is unifying meaning and performance so that they come together. When you do that, you have the possibility of *a synergy*— a unifying of what is highly significant and meaningful into an action, or set of actions, that translates the meaning that you comprehend. When the action is at a high level of competence— when it has a high level of expertise, then the resulting action is at its highest meaning and best performance.

On the meaning scale (the vertical line to the left) identify some information that you have. As you do, be sure that you *clean it up* with the Meta-Model questions. Where did you get it? Who said? How do they know? Can you corroborate the information? What evidence are you relying on?

Next turn it into knowledge. What do you think you "know" given that information? This knowledge falls into what area or category? How does it fit or not fit with what is already "known" in that domain?
> "Good information is still a rarity, and rarer still is the intellect that can polish it and turn it into knowledge." (LeGault, *Think!* 2006, p. 180)

Next, *turn the knowledge into comprehension*. Now that you *know* what you have learned, how does that enrich and expand your comprehension of X-category? What does it allow you to do? How does it affect the way you relate to X? What questions does this comprehension answer?

Finally, *turn the comprehension into action.* What will you now do that you know and understand that? How will you do that? What practice will you give yourself to in order to become skilled in doing that?

Along the horizontal line at the bottom are the actions and activities that actualize what you know and understand. As you practice an activity and become increasingly skilled with it, typically within 30 to 60 days you can become competent. Ten years more and you can move to the place of expertise (the 10,000 hour rule of deliberate practice, Anders Ericsson) and thirty years of expertise practice will take you to the place of mastery. All of this gives you a way to *actualize* information so it becomes transformational in you as you set and achieve your goals.

COMPLETING WHAT YOU START

Setting goals is one thing, *completing them* is another. Success often depends more upon persistently staying with a goal than starting. In that way, when things get tough, you persevere and complete what you started. That's not easy, yet it is more often than not, the key. How many times do you quit because it's taking longer than you thought? It's harder than you thought? It is requiring more time, energy, effort, money, etc. than you thought? It is creating unintended consequences that you didn't expect? This speaks about planning— being able to forecast by thinking things through and anticipating what may be difficult to anticipate (#3 and #4 in this series).

Obvious when you start, you want to complete what you started. If you have set some visionary 2020 goals, they reflect your highest values, especially your *being* values, then—of course, you want to see them through. You want to complete them and reach your objective. Why start something if you don't plan to complete it? What would be the value of starting something which you later give up on and not complete it? If it comes to naught, if it dies out due to lack of resources, if it peters out due to factors that you did not plan for— how much time and energy and effort, etc. did you waste? Let's now assume you have done an excellent job in setting the goal, you have made sure it fits your values, and that it's ecological. It deserves to be completed.

The challenge with completing what you start is that there are so many factors that can interrupt, slow down, and disrupt the goals that you set. And further, you cannot even anticipate all of them. Those that you can anticipate, you can build Plan B and Plan C into your plan. That's part of risk management. This is the famous Question #14 in the WFO questions, "What could stop you?" Here you consider the many possible things that could go wrong and the problems that could arise. Here you identify what would happen under those conditions. In that way, you *put at risk* what is reasonable and appropriate and no more. In that way, you protect yourself at risking what's crucial.

What you cannot anticipate, those Black Swam events that can arise which no one considered even possible. 911 was such an event. Until then, terrorists had always hyjacked planes and used them to negotiate for whatever they wanted. Who would have thought using the plane itself as a bomb? Obviously, we cannot humanly anticipate everything.

Accepting that, what then? What resources will you need to complete what you have started? Resources —keep your intentionality strong and fresh by renewing your biggest reason why. Then develop an overall flexibility and build an inner sense of "bounce" within you so that whatever happens, you have the inner capability of resilience. Resilience is the practical expression of being flexible and adaptable, able to keep thinking, learning, and adjusting in the

moment.

Resilience means that when you are knocked down or when you suffer a set-back— *you land on your feet*. What this implies is something truly powerful. It implies that you do not let a trauma traumatize you. Now, is that possible? Is that just for the super-human or can any man or woman learn that?

What makes that possible for anyone, for you and for me, is that whatever event occurs, it is just that—*an event*. What you *do* with that event in your mind and emotions is an entirely different thing. Here you have choice. And the choice goes to your *thinking*. What kind of thinking are you doing about the event? If you use the thinking patterns of childhood, what is called the Cognitive Distortions, you will make yourself miserable. That's because by those thinking patterns you will make yourself a victim of the event. You will over-generalize it, jump to conclusions, put it in an either-or framework, personalize it, awfulize it, emotionalize it, etc. No wonder you will come out the other end feeling like a victim.

Because the choice always goes to your *thinking*— when you engage the highest levels of your brain functioning, your executive pre-frontal cortex, and engage in executive thinking, you can refuse to turn the event into a trauma. Ultimately, your experience, your resilience, your ability to stay flexible is a function of the meanings that you give to the event. Oprah did that when she was raped as a child. Frankl did that when he was forced into a Nazi concentration camp. The meanings you give determine the life you live. The meanings you give and the thinking that you engage in determines how you can complete what you start.

For more, see *Executive Thinking* (2018).

UNDERSTANDING & MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT FALLIBILITY

When you set a goal, a vision for your life or for this year—remember that you will be making mistakes. After all, you and I are fallible human beings. This is a good thing, a really good thing. Being *fallible* and embracing your *fallibility*, in fact, this is what makes you human, it also makes you real and loveable. Yet many people fear it, dread it, run from it, pretend that it is not so, and use all sorts of defense mechanisms in an attempt to escape it. If we ask, Where do all of these responses come from? The answer is obvious, from misunderstandings about fallibility. That then leads us to another question, What do we misunderstand about fallibility?

First, there is the misunderstanding that being fallible means being deficient as a human being. Now it is certainly true that we all experience the feelings of deficiency about all sorts of things. After all, we are not sufficient to do everything or to be everything. If we are measuring ourselves by others, especially by those who are especially skilled or competent in a given area, then of course we will feel deficient. But deficiency in a given area is not the same thing as being deficient as a human being. All humans are deficient in numerous things and is inevitable and okay. What's not okay is to assume *perfection* or think that it is possible.

Second, misunderstanding that confuses fallibility with negative emotions. Actually, to be fully alive and fully human is to experience not only the full range of positive emotions, but also the full range of negative emotions. And negative emotions are good. Without them, we would not have a strong kinesthetic aversion to things that can be dangerous. The so-called "negative" emotions essentially provide us the *move-away-from energy* within our mind-body system so that when we find that something does not fit our mental model, we are equipped to make a change.

Fallibility, which literally means "liable to error," is an essential condition of being human. It is essential in that it is a built in condition for being free, for thinking, for problem-solving, for learning, for growing, etc. If we were not "liable to error" we would be completely determined and have no choice, not even the choice to make a mistake. Without that determination we have room or space within our minds and actions to make other choices. And to have that freedom means to be free to make mistakes. This is our glory.

Are you wondering, How can making mistakes be a glorious thing? The glory is that we can learn. We can test something, see what works and what doesn't and constantly learn better. This is the foundation of science. It is the basis for the ongoing development of the human race.

Yet how much parenting and schooling conditions us to fear mistakes? It seems endemic— in

nearly every family and in every culture. The problem is that with that fear is that not all mistakes are the same. There are all sorts of mistakes— they range on a continuum from minor inconsequential mistakes to fatal mistakes. There are also mistakes in all domains— mistakes of the mind, of the mouth, of actions, of relationships, etc.

With mistakes, we can also ask about the intentional state of mind of the person who made the mistake. Was it an accident or was it intentional? Was the person just clumsy and awkward in handling something? Were there other factors involved (weather, health, relationships, pressure, etc.)? Was the mistake a result of a plan to harm someone or destroy something?

These distinctions give you critically important questions to ask when you or someone else makes a mistake.
- What is the mistake? How is that considered a mistake?
- How big or small is the mistake? What are the potential consequences of the mistake?
- In what domain is the mistake?
- Who made the mistake? How knowledgeable and/or skill is that person in that domain?
- Was the mistake an accident or intentional or some mixture of the two?
- What is needed to correct the mistake? How long will that take? How much effort will be required to correct the mistake?

When we engage in "trial and error learning," we are using mistakes to learn. Sometimes this is the best way to learn— try something, see what happens, reflect on what to do, or what else one can do, and try it again. A big mistake that has lots of negative consequences need to be recognized as soon as possible and the person needs to make things right as quickly as possible. That's about responsibility and ownership.

Mistakes— an inescapable fact of life and therefore one that we need a good relationship to. That's especially true if you are a parent— as you enable your children to learn from mistakes and not fear them. If you are a manager and enable your people to own mistakes quickly and responsibly. Perfectionism is the myth, the fallacy, the lie, and the goal that will defeat you in the long run.

THINKING FOR A LIVING

Some people *think* for a living. Actually lots of people do. They are knowledge workers. Are you? Depending on how this is defined, it is now predicted that somewhere between 25 to 50% of people *think for a living.* They are called *knowledge workers.* From teachers and professors, to leaders and managers, to people in IT, architecture and engineering, scientists, legal, healthcare practitioners, arts, design, entertainment, and the list goes on and on. Even front line people who deal directly with customers cannot leave their brains at home— to be effective they have to *think* about what they are doing and how they are doing it. The same is true in manufacturing and other industries that once only needed able-bodied workers. All of this is especially true for the cutting-edge companies who have integrated structures for self-actualizing.[1]

How about you? To what extent do you *think* for a living? Or conversely, to what extent could you get by by being "on automatic?" Increasingly as automation is replacing many low-level jobs and even more complex jobs— the jobs that are left are for *knowledge workers.* Today, knowledge workers are the ones responsible for sparking ongoing innovations as they invent, design, and create new approaches, new strategies, new possibilities. Knowledge workers are also the ones who are able to customize products, services, and information to individual needs.

All of this highlights that we are increasingly moving to *a knowledge economy* where thinking is of a premium and the context is more and more knowledge-intensive. This is not just a Western or an American trend, it is a world-wide trend. Yet many, if not most, people are not ready for this. After all, thinking for a living is a new challenge and it poses numerous challenges— challenges which for many are not equipped to handle.

In the process of becoming effective as a knowledge worker—as a person who thinks for a living, there are two primary requirements— willingness and ability.
*   First, is *the willingness* to think clearly. This requires personal development and maturity so that when you find an error, you rejoice. You do not take it personal, you treat it as something about "thought"— something to adapt and adjust.
*   Second, *the ability* to think clearly. This requires having developed the back thinking-skills and the ability to avoid the common thinking errors.

For both of these prerequisites for *thinking for a living,* most people are not ready. For the first, a person needs to learn how to separate person and behavior, distinguish who they are and what they think, and develop a great relationship to not-knowing, to errors, to mistakes, etc. For the second, a person has to learn the many expressions of non-thinking and break out of reactionary thinking, automatic thinking, lazy thinking, agenda thinking, etc. The person also has to learn to

identify cognitive distortions, cognitive fallacies, and cognitive biases and be able to detect in real time and step out from them.[2]

In both of these, where there is stress, threat, danger, pressure— a person will not be able to think so well. Here's an occupational hazard of thinking— staying calm and cool while under pressure. Yet what normally happens is that a basic human instinct arises so that instead of thinking, we set out to defend ourselves. And when that happens, *clear and accurate thinking goes out of the window.* We then fall victim to cognitive fallacies and distortions.

In this new knowledge economy, knowledge management becomes a central competency. This is essential given the information overload that we're all exposed to. How do we manage all of the information? How do we determine what's relevant from what is irrelevant? How do we process the information so it becomes knowledge and then comprehension for practical action? How do we make time for reflection so that we can effectively *learn*? How do we best use our cognitive powers to create common sense? These, and many other questions, will be our focus in this series of posts of *thinking for a living*.

References
1. See *Unleashing Leadership* (2009).
2. See *Executive Thinking* (2018).

THE REAL PANDEMIC—
THE FEAR VIRUS

While the coronavirus (covid-19) is a new and unknown medical problem, and like the flu and other viruses, it is to be dealt with intelligently. The real pandemic that we're facing today, however, is the pandemic of fear. What we know today is that the great majority of people who will catch the virus will recover. That's been the case in China.

The real pandemic is not even fear. Fear is a good healthy emotion *when there is something truly threatening and dangerous.* Fear motivates us to take precautions. In this case, washing hands regularly, social distancing, staying healthy, etc. Fear, however, becomes unhealthy when it is unrealistic and exaggerated. And fear becomes toxic and dangerous when we are fearing fear. With healthy fear, the energy that the emotion of fear evokes gives you something to do —a way of directing your energies to do what you can.

With unhealthy fear, the energy that is evoked has nowhere to go except to your mind, your emotions, and your body. You become fearful of yourself, your experience, and all sorts of concepts— like the future. This is what has been happening— mostly thanks to the media who puts it front and center 24/7. People are fearful of what the coronavirus *means,* or could mean, and that has led to a lot of panicking. It has led to runs on goods at grocery stores, the sell-off of the markets on Wall Street, cancellations on traveling, non-medical people wearing masks (which does nothing), etc.

What happens when you fear *fear,* when you become fearful, anxious, worried, and apprehensive about what *could happen*? You enter into a trance state of fear which then enables you to see fearful dangers and threats everywhere. You color your perspective with a dark fear that makes you imagine the worst, feel paranoid, and invent conspiracy theories. With the feeling of fear driving your psychology, you exaggerate real problems, personalize the danger, forget the actual statistics, awfulize, and develop a dark tunnel vision. All of that, in turn, creates psycho-somatic problems— headaches, ulcers, asthma, etc.

The panicking that happened during the Great Depression led Franklin D. Roosevelt to utter the famous words, "We have nothing to fear but *fear* itself." He made that statement in his inaugural statement in 1933 as he also described the problem with unreasonable fear.

> "So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is ... fear itself— nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and of vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people

themselves which is essential to victory. And I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days."

While realistic fear can be healthy and useful, unrealistic fear generates self-created problems. Then, as people panic— the panic itself gives people yet one more thing to fear. Investors, fearing the financial panicking, themselves panic which then amplifies the panicking. Like little children imagining the shadows are monsters hiding in the closet— so we are creating all sorts of monsters which only amplifies the panic of fear. Add partisan politics to the mix as many are doing, and you have a perform storm of panic about panicking.

What's a better approch?
- Remind yourself of the statistics—80% will recover quickly, 20% will have some complications, and the 2% with immunity-deficiency, resperatory problem will die.
- Stay calm and cool, prepare, don't panic.
- Don't empty the shelves at the grocery store.
- Wash hands regularly.
- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables for the required nutriments.
- Realize that *this too will pass.*
- Set aside a 3 to 6-months emergency fund so you can easily handle the lack of employment for that period of time. (See *Inside-Out Wealth*).

THINKING
WHILE THE WORLD SHUTS DOWN

It is an amazing thing to watch *the world shut down.* Malls have closed, stadiums have cancelled games, political rallies have been cancelled, churches have transferred services to be watched on the internet, trainings have been postponed, schools and universities have closed their doors, and the list goes on and on.

The last time I recalled *the world shutting down* was nearly twenty years ago as an aftermath of 9/11. As I was scheduled to fly to Washington DC on September 11, 2001, I got up early to get ready when I heard the news about the first plane flying into one of the twin towers. By the time I had finished packing and was ready to go to the airport, the second plane hit. Then came the grounding of all airplanes. "Maybe I'll fly tomorrow." But on the morrow, continued grounding and cancellation of all flights. And so it went for over a week.

Nassim Nicholas Taleb called 9/11 *a Black Swan event.* It was an event that no one saw coming, an event that was unpredicted (although it was a predictable event) and it was an event that changed the world. Coronavirus (covid-19) is likely to be another Black Swan event. It will make us *re-think* many aspects of our lives. Here are some of my thoughts as the world is shutting down.

First Thought
In spite of all the urgent and frantic plans, demands, and deadlines that organizations, companies, and families invent and put on themselves—when the world shuts down, they all become irrelevant. Suddenly7 we see them for what they are—*human constructs.* In the months after 9/11 I saw and heard first-hand how plans which seemed written in stone were actually quite flexible. It is as if we had all been in a trance— assuming that deadlines and plans were *real,* that they were static, impentratable, unquestionable, and "that way it is."

In the days of no travel after 9/11 and after the cancellation of so many events— we suddenly had time to think and to reflect. Some did, some did not. Why were we all in such a rush, such a hurry? What did all of that rushing generate except stress and pressure and psycho-somatic illnesses? *Realization: we can* (and should) *slow down the pace of life.* We can and should focus more on *the quality of life,* than on the quantity of appointments or money.

Second Thought
Why exactly is the world shutting down? Because of *the fear* of a virus. But the virus is not the virus of Zombie Movies where it spreads with a bite and within 15 seconds turns you into a mindless, teeth-chattering, inhuman zombie. Nor is it like the contagion movies where 95% of

the planet, some six-billion people, die. No. I think somebody has been watching too many sci-fi virus-contagion movies!

Instead it is a virus that's more like the flu. The great majority who get it will have mild symptoms and as with any flu, a very small percentage will die. Yet the indulgent and never-ending 24/7 communication of social media has turned things into *an intense fear-and-panic trance.* People are emptying stores, stocking up food and supplies for months, wearing masks, and behaving as if actors in a zombie virus-contagion movie. Geraldine showed me some pictures that are all over the internet of people strapping water-bottles to their mouth and face, some putting their entire head in a large plastic bottle, wearing layers of masks— 6 at a time, some wearing panties, some wearing half-of-a-bra over the mouth(!), covering themselves up in plastic like spacemen, even covering up their dogs in plastic. It is a case of stupidity run wild.

What are people so afraid of when, even in the worst case scenario, they catch the virus, they will recover and then be immune? And why? *They are in a fearful-panic trance.* They have been induced into that trance by social media and are fully hypnotized. *Realization: Information from social media,* like any state-induction information, *induces people into trances*— if they are not conscious and able to catch it. The cure is to be de-hypnotized from this fear- panic.

Third Thought
There is so much negative and unhelpful spin going on.   Not only by people who want to make a quick buck by intensifying people's fears, but especially by politicians. It's an ideal opportunity for those not in power to complain about *everything which is imperfect* about the current administration's responses. And they are. Their message is, "Everything would be great if I was running things."

Now when it comes to communication, *spinning* news to fit one's agenda is not only common, it is to be expected. Everywhere it dominates the news media and social media. It is the rear event when news is simply reported in terms of what happened, to whom, where, and how. Mostly, when we get the news, someone has put their own spin on it so that we get the news as filtered and colored and perceived through that person's filters and biases. Today we even talk about different news outlets in terms of their spin — New York Times —left spin, CNN —Trump hatred spin, Fox — conservative spin, etc.

About spin, we all do it; we all spin. We do it both in receiving and in giving information. We do it, in part, because it is inevitable—inevitable unless you have trained yourself to catch your spin. Why is it inevitable? Because we all have perceptual filters, beliefs, preferences, understandings, and biases. We also have agendas (goals, objectives, intentions) which we are seeking to achieve. All of this explains why we do not *think* very clearly or accurately.

Spin is the dark side of communication. It distorts the facts, it convolutes the news, it prevent us to knowing how best to respond. It also creates a false presentation of the world, a false map, a map that will not lead us where we want to go. *Realization: Instead of passively receiving information— **think** critically about the source's agenda and take it with a grain of salt.*

FACTS OR FEAR?
Are you doing Fact-Thinking or Fear-Thinking?

I saw a News Conference with the Democratic Governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo this morning (March 19) in which he said we are in a war— actually we are engaged in two wars. One war is with the coronavirus epidemic and the other war is with fear. That's when he said, *"fear is more dangerous than the virus."*

To illustrate he then talked about a conversation he had with a well-known business man in New York City. The business man said that he heard that they were going to lock down New York City, put the city in guarantine, send out the National Guard, set up roadblocks, declare Marshal Law, and on and on. Governor Cuomo asked, "Who said that?" "Well, I heard it." "They said it." "It's all over the internet." The Governor then tried to reason with the man:
> "Listen I have not heard any of that, besides none of that will happen unless I authorize it, and I am not authorizing it. I will not."

Andrew Cuomo then said the conversation went on for twenty-five minutes (!) as he tried to reason with this normally rational man out of his irrationality. "Fear is more dangerous because when people are caught up in irrational fear, they don't think normally."

That's pretty good for a politician! I have to commend him for that News Conference. He spoke calmly and called for calm. He identified *the problem that is above and beyond* the physical problem of the virus— fear. Irrational, unreasonable, anxiety-producing, and panic causing *fear*. That's a much harder battle to win and it is a "virus" that's much more contagious than the physical virus— it is a *mental virus that causes people to think irrationally.*

We see it here in this small Colorado town on the Western Slope of the Rocky Mountains. People have gone to all of the grocery stores in the area and have hoarded just about everything— toilet paper, canned goods, water, eggs, etc. Shelves are empty everywhere. And right now we do not have a single case of coronavirus! Talk about irrational fear driving irrational panic-behavior!

For myself, I have refused to go to the store and hoard items. The least I can do is model *calm thinking* behavior. While everything is closed— I can't go and read at Starbucks, not even at McDonalds, and I can't go to the gym— they closed that. I can go for a run in the mountain trails; I can get out and work in the yard, I can meet with people that I'm doing business with and I am doing that.

To survive the covid-19 virus is easy. The information is clear and has been repeated a thousand

times— wash hands, give a meter's distance around people, be cautious, etc. To survive *the more dangerous pandemic— the irrational fear pandemic—* that's going to require a lot more of people. It's going to require that people learn to truly *think,* to think critically, and to based their thinking on facts rather than emotions. Only then can one avoid going into a panic state of irrationality.

If you are new to NLP or to Neuro-Semantics— this is basic "State Management #101." To manage your emotional state and truly exercise emotional intelligence, you first have to take charge of your brain— to "run your own brain." You have to manage the *thoughts that you think* so that you refuse fear-oriented thinking and to base your thinking about facts.

Fear is more danger than the virus precisely because *irrational fear makes you stupid.*   You can't think clearly and rationally when driven by fear. As you experience the stress of fear, blood is withdrawn from brain and stomach, sent to the larger muscle groups— and you are in a state that makes clear thinking much harder (not impossible, but definitely harder). That also puts you in a state where you are much more likely to do additional physical harm to yourself —headaches, ulcers, and dozens of other psycho-somatic illnesses.

Depending on where you are and what your life conditions are, there are lots of ramifications from the "shutting down of the world." For most people the *disruption of everyday life* itself will bring about lots of changes ... and *imposed change* such as this is felt by most people as highly stressful. Additional stresses that will occur for many are loss of income, loss of revenue from business, lack of things to do, cooped up with family for weeks, and on and on. Given all of the possible unpleasant ramifications— being able to effectively cope is at a premium. Yet one thing we know for sure— *being fearful will not help.*

So, what will help?   Problem-solving thinking skills! For most people, this is a time for problem-solving. And if you know how to do that, the good news is that you now probably have time to do that. If not, then this is the time to learn how to solve problems. But first — be sure to manage your state. Watch your thoughts— and *do not feed fear.* Instead face fear with calmness, objectivity, courage, resilience, and other resources. For many, that will be a big task because they are naturally prone to fear and to feed their minds fear-thoughts.

There are answers to the Fear Pandemic. If you have been infected by the mental virus that causes you to think irrationally, to be filled with panic and anxiety, then the place to win that war is inside— in your head. Here are some recommend books:
    Consider *Games for Mastering Fear* (2001) on the Neuro-Semantic website.
    Consider *Creative Solutions: Problem Solving* (2017).

WHEN INFORMATION COMES TOO FAST

When you *think for a living,* you deal with lots of information and in today's world, it can be overwhelming. Many struggle to just keep up regarding what they need to read. Then there's the problem of integrating what you are reading and learning. This is *the knowing—doing gap* that we speak about a lot in Neuro-Semantics.

Now dealing with information, *thinking* about information, *processing* information, *communicating* information, is similar to dealing with food. With both, you have to take it in and chew on it. That's the metaphor Max Wertheimer used in Gestalt Psychology and which Fritz Perls later used in Gestalt Therapy. They compared how you respond to information with how you deal with food.

To eat healthily requires that you cut up your food, chew it thoroughly, swallow it, and digest it. Only then can your body turn the food into fuel for the body (metabolism) as well as new cells for the body. But what if, instead of chewing and digesting food, you swallowed it whole? That would not be good.

Analogously, when a person swallows an idea, a belief, value, or a process (ritual, pattern, habit, way of being) *whole,* that isn't good either. Then it doesn't get digested. Instead it gets lounged inside and experienced as something foreign. It doesn't get integrated. In Gestalt Psychology and Therapy the process that describes this is called *introjection*. Instead of digesting information, you *introject* ideas and learnings thereby preventing integration.

People who *introject* an identity, a belief, their parent's values, their culture's operational patterns experience, don't make it theirs. Lacking integration they struggle to know who they are. They live with alien aspects within themselves. Attempting to be accepted and approved, they accept introjects from others. But since they do not integrate them, they feel foreign. In the end, they don't know who they are. An introject often shows up a rigid programmed way of responding.

The solution is to take the introjects of family, society, religion, media, etc., cut them up, to chew them over, and masticate them thoroughly—to truly digest them. Only then can you sort out what fits for you and what does not. Only then can you truly become *an integrated person—* your true self and true to yourself.

Conversely, anxiety is highly correlated to living with lots of introjects. You will tend to fear failure, loss, disapproval, rejection, and criticism. What others think of you and say of you, and how they may blackmail you to fit in, do as they want, etc. —these are things that operate as your

primary concern. No wonder you will feel yourself torn, alienated, and disingenuous. You can't be real and authentic and feel good about yourself by living with the introjects.

Living with introjects may also explain why you might find *discipline* unacceptable, even intolerable. After all, if you spend your time and life fighting against what everyone else is telling you to do and imposing *shoulds* on you, then you might also be fighting yourself when you tell yourself what to do. Your *shoulds* may be introjects within you.

How do you relate to the instructions, rules (at home, school, society), understandings, identities, etc. that you encounter in life? Have you *integrated* them? Or have you *introjected* them? If you have introjected them, then no wonder you find these meta-dimensions alien. No wonder you have internal conflict around them. No wonder they feel like rigid and unreasonable demands. If that's the case, the challenge today is to free yourself from the introjects.

But how? The integration process begins by flushing out *the conflictual shoulds* in your mind. To do that, simply begin to listen to the times when you use the word *should*. Many *shoulds* are introjected reasons for acting. Ask, "Why *should* I follow this or that rule or instruction?" "Is there a good reason?" If so, choose it. If not, discard it. In this way you can begin to clean out the imposed and introjected *shoulds* that come from other people.

Next, take responsibility. This process also requires that you step up to own your choices about beliefs, values, lifestyle, rules, etc. A *false should* is a should that someone else wants for you, but that does not fit for you. Once you've done your mental processing and critical thinking, you can reject it. Then you can choose the *shoulds* that are empowering and which fit your values. That presupposes both recognizing and acting on the actions and responsibilities as an expression of your *ability-to-respond*.

While all of that is taking place, unpleasant emotions may arise. Worries, anxieties, fears, angers, etc. may emerge as you explore introjects and step up to responsible ownership. For these emotions, simply allow the feelings to arise so that you can delve into them— find out if they are legitimate or illegitimate. Are they dated emotions due to a childish "need" to fit in and gain the pleasure of others.

Some introjection is subtle. It may occur when you read too fast, rush your studies, and do not take the time to *thoroughly chew on a thought.* You swallow an understanding or belief without thinking it through and exposing it to critical thinking. Thinking for a living means taking the time to truly think things through. It means digesting your mental and intellectual meals. It means slowing down and chewing on an idea, rather than reacting. Probably a really good idea in the current pandemic of fear.

From: L. Michael Hall
2020 Neurons #15
March 30, 2020

USING META-STATES
FOR COPING WITH EMOTIONS

Robert Dilts recently wrote an excellent article, ***Holding Difficult Feelings,*** and offered it to the NLP Leadership Summit for how to deal with the difficult emotions that many people are experiencing now with the coronavirus. The pattern corresponds very closely with the ***Meta-Stating Troubling Emotions*** that we do in APG. Because of that and because he used Meta-States in his article (although not acknowledged as such), and because many people are struggling with difficult and troubling emotions, I am presenting this long piece.

What follows is what I would consider a Meta-State Pattern even though Robert has not studied Meta-States (as far as I know) and never mentions meta-states in this article. Congratulations Robert! He talks about "first feeling," "feelings about feelings," applies a lot of feelings to other feelings, and utilizes a lot of meta-linguistics.

Structurally, to see the *Meta-States Model* within this pattern I have added my comments **in bold print** and I have *italicized the words* that refer to states and meta-states. I conclude with a brief description of the basic Meta-Stating process,

Extra: Because I suspect that some will want to see the original article by Robert Dilts, I have put that after the structural analysis. Then you would like to compare it to the *Meta-Stating Troubling Emotions* pattern, it is here also.

Structural Analysis of "Holding Difficult Emotions"
Robert writes (second paragraph):
> Family therapist Virginia Satir used to frequently ask her clients two questions. The first was, "How do you feel?" **(A primary question, primary state)** A client might respond to this question by answering that he or she felt angry, sad, afraid, guilty, or some other type of difficult feeling **(primary state— states about something in the world)**. Then Virginia would ask a second question: "How do you feel about feeling that way?" **(A meta-question, a meta-state about the first state).**
>
> The answer to this second question is quite significant and determines a lot about the impact and meaning the answer to the first question will have. It is quite a difference if someone *feels calm or curious* **(meta-state) about** *feeling angry* **(primary state)** than if that person *feels guilty or frustrated* **(meta-state) about** *feeling angry.* It is these *second feelings* **(meta-state)** that determine the ease and quality with which we are able to stay present and hold the first set of feelings. **Here we have positive +meta-states versus -negative meta-states.**

This same dynamic occurs with respect to our relationship with our own feelings. When we are *fearful **of*** them and *refuse or fight them,* **(negative meta-states structure),** we actually increase our degree of contraction, reaction, disconnection and discomfort. As it has been pointed out, "What you resist persists." When we can *acknowledge and hold those feelings* **(meta-state)** with centeredness, openness, awareness and connection, **(meta-state resources to apply to primary state)** they are no longer a "problem" and their energy can either be released or transformed into a more resourceful expression. The following qualities are helpful for holding difficult feelings:

List of meta-level resource states
• non-reactivity • unconditional *acceptance* of the feeling exactly as it is • no agenda to change anything about the feeling • *patience,* taking time • unwavering *attention* to the feeling • *trust* that all is well as it is, that the feeling has a positive intention and purpose • a sense of being held in a field greater than oneself • *kindness* toward the feeling • a non-intrusive curiosity about the feeling

As Virginia Satir demonstrated, it is also useful to *identify and acknowledge* **(+ meta-state)** *unresourceful feelings or attitudes* **(primary states)** about the difficult feelings. In this way, these feelings about the difficult feelings can also be *included, transcended and held* **(meta-state structures)** from a larger and more resourceful field of awareness. Such responses to the difficult feeling can include:

List of negative meta-stating:
• wanting it to go away • wanting it to be different, to change • analyzing or explaining it • identifying with it (getting lost in it)

The next paragraph:
It is important to realize that *the second feeling* **(meta-state)** is as much a part of the problem state as *the first feeling* **(primary state)**. If we are not aware of this, we may find ourselves *aligning with the second feeling* **(meta-state)** to try to get rid of *the first feeling.*

Pattern: Gathering the Resources Necessary to Hold Difficult Patterns
The purpose of this exercise is to help you discover and apply the resources you need to stay present and hold difficult feelings that may arise and take you out of the present.

1) Identify primary state of difficult feeling— a troubling emotion.
1. Identify a challenging situation in which you experience *a difficult feeling* that you are not able to hold and, consequently, brings you into an unresourceful state. Experience that feeling and the associated sensations and allow your body to express it as gesture or movement. Bring *acknowledgement and awareness* **(meta-states)** to the feelings and sensations without any attempt to change, analyze or explain them.

2) Meta-state by stepping back for reflection. Access observation state.
2. *Step back* from the location in which you were experiencing this difficult feeling and *reflect* upon *the you* who is experiencing the difficult feelings **(meta-state of reflection**

about self). How do you feel about those difficult feelings? How do you feel about yourself for feeling them? **(Meta-Questions)** What is your relationship with those feelings and with yourself when you are feeling them? There may be a number of feelings about *the first feeling* (shame, guilt, despair, anger, helplessness, etc.) **(primary states)**. Allow your body to express these feelings as a gesture or movement as well. As in the previous step, bring *acknowledgement and awareness* **(meta-states)** to these feelings and sensations without judgment or any attempt to change them.

3) Meta-state second time to interrupt, access, and set frame.
3. Now *step back* to a third location, shift your state by turning around, moving your body **(interrupt)**, shaking your arms and legs, etc. Take the time necessary to put yourself into a resourceful state in which you are centered, open, awake and connected to a field of resources that is bigger than you **(access a +meta-state)**. What *resources* (e.g., trust, acceptance, curiosity, strength, love, etc.) could help you to more lovingly, respectfully and resourcefully *hold* the second set of feelings? **(Set frame with these meta-states.)** *Open to the larger field* **(meta-state of perspective)** and allow yourself to receive the resources without thinking about it. Notice what emerges from the field. It may come in the form of images, symbols, feelings, etc.

4) Appropriate the meta-state and apply to primary state.
5. *Bring* the resources that have emerged from the field *fully into* your body and being **(apply meta-states).** (If you need to, you can facilitate this by finding reference experiences for these resources and reliving them as fully as you can.) *Find a symbol* and a gesture or movement (somatic model) that expresses these resources and brings them present in your body **(meta-states of a metaphor)** . Allow the energy of these resources to flow fully through you both from the field and into the field around you.

5) Apply the meta-state to the primary state.
6. With these resources fully present in your body, return to the second location (the feelings about the feelings) **(meta-states)**. Don't attempt to change anything. *Just hold* the feelings and responses associated with the second location within the larger field of the resources. Make the gesture and movement associated with the resources you have received in the previous step **(a meta-state anchor)**. Notice what shifts in your perception and attitude toward the second set of feelings **(meta-state of observation).**

6) Hold the meta-states as the new frame of reference.
7. Now *step into* the location in which you placed the original difficult feelings and *bring with you* the resources you have identified **(apply meta-state)** . Again, don't attempt to change anything. Just hold the difficult feelings and responses within the larger field of the resources. Make the gesture and movement associated with the resources you have received. How do you feel now about those difficult feelings? What changes in your ability to be with those difficult feelings.

THE BASIC META-STATING PATTERN
The process of meta-stating is actually simple— *accessing* a thought or emotion and *apply* it to

another state (i.e., thought, emotion, or physiology). Short and quick: *Access and apply.* With *accessing* you may need to *amplify* to get enough energy in the state. Within *applying* is *appropriating to life contexts and analyzing* to quality control the end result and effects.

1) *Access a resource state*.
       What resource state do you want to *bring to bear on* or apply to the primary state?
       A *"resource"* can be a thought, feeling, idea, belief, value, memory, imagination.
2) *Amplify fully and anchor.*
       Juice up the resource state and establish an anchor for it by touch, sight, sound, word, etc.
       Do you have a sufficiently strong enough state with which to work?
3) *Apply* to the primary state.
       Bring the resource *to bear* on the primary state (this creates meta-level anchoring), or embed the primary state inside a resource state.
4) *Appropriate* to your life, to specific contexts, or to the future (future pacing).
       Where do you want to experience this meta-state?
       Imagine having this layered consciousness in your mind as your frame as you move out into your future.
5) *Analyze the quality, health, balance (ecology) of the system.*
       Would it enhance your life to set this resource as your frame-of-reference for the primary state experience?
       Would every facet of your mind-and-body align with this?

Original Article
Holding Difficult Feelings

By Robert Dilts

This being human is a guest house Every morning a new arrival. A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor. Welcome and entertain them all! Even if they are a crowd of sorrows, who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture, still treat each guest honorably. He may be clearing you out for some new delight. The dark thought, the shame, the malice, meet them at the door laughing, and invite them in. Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond. – Rumi

Transformational teacher Richard Moss points out that the distance between ourselves and others is precisely the distance between ourselves and ourselves. This implies that the way we relate to others and to the world around us is a mirror for how we relate to ourselves. It is from this fundamental relationship with ourselves that our relationships with others and the external world emerge. This self-to-self relationship is frequently limited by those feelings that we don't know how to meet, accept, hold and love in ourselves.

Family therapist Virginia Satir used to frequently ask her clients two questions. The first was, "How do you feel?" A client might respond to this question by answering that he or she felt angry, sad, afraid, guilty, or some other type of difficult feeling. Then Virginia would ask a second question: "How do you feel about feeling that way?" The answer to this second question is quite significant and determines a lot about the impact and meaning the answer to the first question will have. It is quite a difference if someone feels calm or curious about feeling angry than if that person feels guilty or frustrated about feeling angry. It is these second feelings that determine the ease and quality with which we are able to stay present and hold the first set of feelings.

Most of us learn to hold ourselves and each other depending on how we ourselves were held. Psychologist Donald Winnicott developed the notion of "holding environments." This refers to the way a child is held physically, emotionally and psychologically by its primary caretakers. The child in response and reaction to this holding environment then learns to hold itself in ways that unconsciously reproduce the deeply familiar holding environment of infancy and early childhood. Research also indicates that the way a baby is held in the womb influences the way it learns to relate with itself and the world later in life. It can be useful to learn to hold ourselves and our own feelings in a way that may be more resourceful than the way we originally learned.

"Holding" implies a relationship between two things: the thing holding and the thing being held. The metaphorical image of a mother holding a baby can help us to envision this relationship. The baby represents the primary somatic feeling, sensation or reaction that we are experiencing. The mother represents the response of the rest of our nervous system to this primary response.

If a baby is crying and the mother becomes tense, angry or nervous, the baby is likely to experience even more distress. If the mother is able to hold the baby from a state of nurturing

support, the baby is more likely to be calmed by that presence (via mirror neurons) and move through the discomfort in a flowing way. This same dynamic occurs with respect to our relationship with our own feelings. When we are fearful of them and refuse or fight them, we actually increase our degree of contraction, reaction, disconnection and discomfort. As it has been pointed out, "What you resist persists." When we can acknowledge and hold those feelings with centeredness, openness, awareness and connection, they are no longer a "problem" and their energy can either be released or transformed into a more resourceful expression.

The following qualities are helpful for holding difficult feelings:
- non-reactivity
- unconditional acceptance of the feeling exactly as it is
- no agenda to change anything about the feeling
- patience, taking time
- unwavering attention to the feeling
- trust that all is well as it is, that the feeling has a positive intention and purpose
- a sense of being held in a field greater than oneself
- kindness toward the feeling
- a non-intrusive curiosity about the feeling

As Virginia Satir demonstrated, it is also useful to identify and acknowledge unresourceful feelings or attitudes about the difficult feelings. In this way, these feelings about the difficult feelings can also be included, transcended and held from a larger and more resourceful field of awareness. Such responses to the difficult feeling can include:
- wanting it to go away
- wanting it to be different, to change
- analyzing or explaining it
- identifying with it (getting lost in it)

It is important to realize that the second feeling is as much a part of the problem state as the first feeling. If we are not aware of this, we may find ourselves aligning with the second feeling to try to get rid of the first feeling. When we don't know how to be with a feeling, we want it to go away.

In summary, our difficult feelings, like a baby in distress, need more than anything else to be held. Through this holding, the feelings, like the baby, transform from a state of contraction and a sense of separation to relaxation and a sense of connection. Thus it is not a question of getting rid of difficult feelings, but rather of relating to them in a way that allows them to transform. The energy of the difficult feeling is then released back into the flow of our lives. We recuperate the energy that was previously spent in avoiding meeting the difficult feeling, allowing us to be more fully present with even more of ourselves available to engage in the present moment.

Gathering the Resources Necessary to Hold Difficult Feelings
The purpose of this exercise is to help you discover and apply the resources you need to stay present and hold difficult feelings that may arise and take you out of the present.

1. Identify a challenging situation in which you experience a difficult feeling that you are not able to hold and, consequently, brings you into an unresourceful state. Experience that feeling and the associated sensations and allow your body to express it as gesture or movement. Bring acknowledgement and awareness to the feelings and sensations without any attempt to change, analyze or explain them.

2. Step back from the location in which you were experiencing this difficult feeling and reflect upon the you who is experiencing the difficult feelings. How do you feel about those difficult feelings? How do you feel about yourself for feeling them? What is your relationship with those feelings and with yourself when you are feeling them? There may be a number of feelings about the first feeling (shame, guilt, despair, anger, helplessness, etc.). Allow your body to express these feelings as a gesture or movement as well. As in the previous step, bring acknowledgement and awareness to these feelings and sensations without judgment or any attempt to change them.

3. Now step back to a third location, shift your state by turning around, moving your body, shaking your arms and legs, etc. Take the time necessary to put yourself into a resourceful state in which you are centered, open, awake and connected to a field of resources that is bigger than you. What resources (e.g., trust, acceptance, curiosity, strength, love, etc.) could help you to more lovingly, respectfully and resourcefully hold the second set of feelings? Open to the larger field and allow yourself to receive the resources without thinking about it. Notice what emerges from the field. It may come in the form of images, symbols, feelings, etc.

5. Bring the resources that have emerged from the field fully into your body and being. (If you need to, you can facilitate this by finding reference experiences for these resources and reliving them as fully as you can.) Find a symbol and a gesture or movement (somatic model)

Diagram

First Feeling How Do You Feel?

Second Feeling(s) – How Do You Feel About Feeling That Way?

What Resource Do You Need To Hold The Second Feeling(s)?

Inner Zone of Excellence

that expresses these resources and brings them present in your body. Allow the energy of these resources to flow fully through you both from the field and into the field around you.

6. With these resources fully present in your body, return to the second location (the feelings about the feelings). Don't attempt to change anything. Just hold the feelings and responses associated with the second location within the larger field of the resources. Make the gesture and movement associated with the resources you have received in the previous step. Notice what

shifts in your perception and attitude toward the second set of feelings.

7. Now step into the location in which you placed the original difficult feelings and bring with you the resources you have identified. Again, don't attempt to change anything. Just hold the difficult feelings and responses within the larger field of the resources. Make the gesture and movement associated with the resources you have received. How do you feel now about those difficult feelings? What changes in your ability to be with those difficult feelings?

META-STATING TROUBLING EMOTIONS

When you bring *negative emotional energy against* yourself, you put yourself at odds with yourself. *You have put yourself in self-attack!* This turns your psychological energies against yourself in destructive ways and it will diminish you. This generally creates "dragon states." Use this pattern for handling emotions that trouble you, positive or negative. This gives us an art of handling emotions effectively and intelligently.

Distinctions:
- An emotion is the difference between your mapping of the world and how you experience the territory of the world.
- Emotions give signals and messages about that difference between map and territory.
- Yet emotions are just emotions and not commands, and not infallible orders.
- You manage your emotions well when you accept them and use them for information about whether to adjust your map or improve your coping skills.
- This pattern is about primary emotions. If someone gives you a meta-emotion, question it to identify the primary emotions within it.

Elicitation Questions:
>What emotion occurs, appropriate to the context, but you don't like? You don't have a very good relationship with?
>What emotion or emotions do you try to banish from your life?

The Pattern:
1) Identify an emotional state that troubles you.
>What emotional state do you not like? Which one can you not stand? What state do you hate and wish you didn't experience? What states do you feel as "taboo?"
>Is it appropriate to the trigger? Realistic? How realistic?
>If the emotion is not appropriate, what emotion would be?
>*Menu list:* anger, fear, disgust, sexual feelings, sensitivity, embarrassment, sadness, etc.
>[Make sure the emotion is a *primary emotion,* and not a meta-feeling which is actually a judgment. Use the Concept pattern for those.]
>Describe this state. How is this a problem? What do you think-and-feel about this?

2) Check your permission level with that emotion.

Quiet yourself and go inside. Now say the words: "I give myself permission to feel ...."
Notice your internal responses as you say these words. What are you aware of? What happens?
How well does that settle inside? How many more times do you have to give yourself this permission before it will settle very well and be okay within you?
Are there any objections to this permission? If there are, what are the objections?
[Repeat the permission incorporating the objection into the permission.]

3) Keep framing and reframing the permission so it becomes well-designed.
As you give yourself permission congruently with a resourceful voice, set frames and reframes to the objections that set new meanings. How does that settle?
Examples:
"I give myself permission to feel anger because it allows me to recognize things that violate my values and to take appropriate action early."
"I give myself permission to feel the tender emotions because it makes me more fully human."

4) Add resources to qualify and texture the emotional experience.
What resources would you need to access in order to more fully accept this?
Menu List: Acceptance, appreciation, calmness, patience, resilience, curiosity, etc.
Access each and apply to the permission for a new meta-strategy.

5) Quality control the permission.
Imagine moving into tomorrow and the day after and next week and next month with these new frames in your permission for welcoming the emotion that did trouble you ... are you fully aligned with this? Do you have any objection to letting this operate as your way of being in the world?

6) Future Pace to install.
As you imagine this, do you like this?
Are you ready to make this yours?
Will you keep this?
How will you remember it?

From: *Secrets of Personal Mastery* (1997) also from the APG Manual (Accessing Personal Genius).

WHEN YOU'RE STUCK AT HOME
Will You Make it Better or Bitter?

All sorts of things could be happening these days when the "world has shut down," and you are stuck at home— good things and not-so good things. Among the good things— you have more time to catch up on your sleep and exercise. You have time to catch up on your reading. You have more time for quality time with family and friends. You have some time for reflection about life, career, family, etc.

Yet these good things could become not-so-good things if you don't *know how* to achieve these activities. Without the skills to be able to be productive doing these things— the extra time may turn into insomnia, dosing during the day, fighting and fussing with loved ones, worry, anxiety, panic, and so on.

Those *good things presuppose certain skills.* For example, how to exercise at home if you don't have your own personal gym. How to organize your day and operate from some sort of schedule. When your normal schedule is disrupted as it is for millions and perhaps billions of people—you have to be able to create your own schedule and follow it. That requires discipline. For many people, their days are determined by others and external influences, not by their own choice— so having "nothing to do," becomes a big problem for them. They now need the skill and discipline of ordering their lives by their own choice. Without that, they can feel lost, bored, out-of-control, frustrated, angry, etc.

Skill is the first thing that you might have noticed that you need. And, of course, where there is *skill* there is background *knowledge and understanding.* You have to know *how* to do certain things, how to organize it, and how to decide to make it happen. If *skill* refers to your behaviors and actions— what you *do, knowledge* refers to your mental state of understanding and being able to "manage your mind" so it doesn't run away in an undisciplined way and create all sorts of grief for you.

The solution begins with *skill* and *knowledge*, but it doesn't end there. Behind skill and knowledge is a higher level of your mind— your ability to *set values* (to value), *make decisions,* and *inspire* yourself to do what needs to be done (motivation). Knowing what to do and having the competent ability to do it is the first thing. But will you? This highlights *the knowing—doing gap*. You know more than you do. If only you could get yourself to do what you know.

Here in Colorado we have been in a stay at home order for about five weeks. Long before the

official "Stay at Home" order came by the governor, everything closed down— Starbucks closed the reading room, the gym closed, all restaurants closed dinning rooms, even McDonalds closed. Essentially there was no where to go anyway!

I immediately set up my own reading room, bought a small coffee peroculator and created my own "Starbucks." So to keep with my schedule, I arise, do 300 crunches, cook breakfast, and then read for two hours in my "Starbucks" dinning room. After that comes checking emails and working on the computer writing articles. That takes me to about two in the afternoon— exercise time. I change into exercise outfit and head to the garage where I have a few weights and a place to work out. After that, there's shower, more work at the computer, maybe more reading, and from time to time a trip to the grocery store. Then about every third-day we drive to some mountain trails and hike/run them. Eventually it is dinner time (six o'clock for us). The evening is for watching movies. Geraldine shares the schedule with me and does some coaching sessions either in the day or evening.

A schedule can keep you sane. By giving structure to your day, it allows you to do things that are meaningful, introduce enough variety to keep you alert and active, and at the end of the day enables you to feel that you have been productive. A schedule also stabilizes your mind as it gives you direction and focus.

Now if you don't do these things — here is the nightmare that you can create for yourself. First because you "have nothing to do" and because what you want to do, you can't— you start to feel frustrated and upset. That then gives you the time and situation to worry about all sorts of things that *at that moment* you can do nothing about. This is a great formula for misery, unhappiness, and irritation. As this builds, you feel more and more stress. Then with irritable stress, you are more likely to take it out on someone. That someone could be you— feeling more and more stress, you might turn it into headaches, backaches, stomach problems. That someone could be your loved ones, your kids, your friends. You could start to become "a pain in the ass" to them with all your complaints, accusations, irritations. If they respond in kind, you could now create fights and arguments.

Will your home life become better or bitter as you are stuck at home? Will it lead you to feel unresourceful— anxious and depressed, or stressed-out and suicidal? Will it lead to the kind of interpersonal stress that so many families experience during the holidays? Or will it lead you to become *more resourceful*— and use the experience creatively to build up new competencies?

What many are doing in the field of NLP and what we are also doing in Neuro-Semantics is providing some of the courses online. Additionally, many Meta-Coaches have shifted to do all of their coaching via skype, zoom, or another platform. And that could very well be the opportunity that you need to begin building up your ability to stay personally resourceful regardless of the circumstance while we're waiting for the world to start up again.

WHEN YOU'RE STRESSED OUT AT HOME

In addition to mastering the art of being "stuck at home," (Neurons #16), you could be stuck at home — stressed out about health, finances, kids, career, etc. *and constantly seduced to get into arguments and fights.* It happens. Being locked up and in close proximity with anyone for an extended period of time challenges our patience, tolerance, state management, compassion, personal discipline, etc.

It also challenges your stress management skills. In the end, it is not just a matter of having good stress releasers, it is a matter of being able to manage your mind regarding your thinking and framing about the stressors. When it comes to stress releasers— there are a great many ways and methods for getting the built-up energy (e.g., anxiety, distress, frustration, fear, sense of danger, etc.) out of your body.

> You can *talk it out* if you have someone who will *just* listen and let you download or vent. In that way you can use conversation to release what you have been building up inside. By articulating and expressing the internal energy and emotions that have accumulated, you let it go.
> You can do the same by *writing it out*. This utilizes the neuro-muscular activity that translates from mind to paper. Of course, once you've done that— burn it! Or shred it. By all means, if it involves others, do not send it!
> You can also *act it out.* This is especially true of anything cardio-vascular. You can walk, jog, run, dance, bounce on a trampoline, or do almost anything physical to release the stressful emotions and thoughts. A long time ago Jim Fixx who started the running craze in the United States wrote that you cannot run mad for thirty minutes.
> Finally, you can also *think it out.* That is a possibility, but it requires a lot of cognitive skill. Here you think out and get distance from your thinking, which is what actually creates the stressful emotions.

One form of stress release that also involves *thinking* it out involves eliciting a calm and relaxing trance state. While it is easiest to let someone use do the induction, you can learn to do your own self-inductions.

Yet more important that the stress reducers is the ability to catch and change the *stress creators* in the first place. While tension is in the body and refers to how we tense our muscles to create muscular tension resulting in headaches, backaches, etc., stress is in the mind. Stress is psychological. And if it is psychological, it is self-induced, self-created. Others are not and do not cause your stress regardless of how intensely you might accuse them of doing so. All they are doing is offering *a stimulus.* What you *do with that stimulus*— that is how you create your stress.

Stimulus—Response. There are external stimuli that make up the factors and variables to which you are responding. *What you think and believe about* those factors and variables (the stimulus) is your psychological response which, in turn, leads to your emotional, verbal, behavioral responses. Here every Cognitive Distortion (childish thinking patterns), Cognitive Biases, and Cognitive Fallacies *set you up for psychological stress.*

This calls for some high level *thinking skills* so that you can catch *the thinking* that's stressing you, cranking up your blood-pressure and inducing you into a state where you are less effective than usual.

       Are you exaggerating, over-generalizing, and blowing things out of proportion?

       Are you negatively framing things, discounting good things, and/or awfulizing?

       Are you personalizing, emotionalizing, and/or over-identifying?

       Are you engaged in all-or-nothing thinking, either-or thinking, dichtomizing?

These are the key cognitive distortions that amplify stress and unless *this kind of thinking* is changed (or challenged), the stress will not go away.

WHEN HOME IS YOUR PERSONAL FIGHT PEN

When you are stuck at home (Neurons #16) and your stressing yourself out about things (Neurons #17), there is an increased likelihood that you can get into arguments and fights with those you love most. Crazy, right? And to make it even more crazy, such fights are usually *not* about anything really important or significant. More typically they are about irrelevant "little" things that get on our nerves and creates inner distress. For this reason, lots of mental health agencies are warning about the danger of increased domestic violence, child abuse, alcoholism, and suicide, during "stay at home" order solution.

Given the state of stress, and how certain *thinking patterns create miserable levels of stress,* it is easy to get into irritable and grumpy states. When that happens, things that you normally handle with grace and patience, now push your buttons. Being cooped up at home and unable to do what you normally do and having people constantly "in your space," with little room for some quiet time, can create a context where everyone is on edge— an atmosphere where a casual word or tone can push someone over the threshold of how much one can take. It's one of those "last straw" moments and suddenly the nice quiet person blows up with anger and frustration.

Therefore when your home becomes what seems like a fight pen, and the fighters are locked in the cage, and there seems to be no escape route— what then?

1) Expand your understanding. A good beginning place is to understand what's happening. Understand first that it is normal. Understand that everybody is experiencing certain degrees of stress, pressure, worries, cabin fever, etc. Use this to bring some compassion and kindness to the situation. It's probably not easy for anyone. It's not easy being in close proximity with each other and separated from what we are used to.

2) Develop de-stressing mechanisms. Some people destress by talking things out; others by getting away and having some alone time wherein they can think things out. Others need to be active to get the energy out of their bodies. Let the others that you are stuck at home with know what you need when you get irritable and grumpy.

3) Do what you can. What can you do today, at home, that can improve the quality of your life? What are things around the house or apartment that you've been putting off for a rainy day? I have cleaned out my garage. Now I am taking an hour or so each day working through old files that have collected for decades. Doing what you can, and letting it "count," can enable you to feel productive, that you are doing something important. Create a regular schedule and stay on it

(Neurons #16).

4) Stay in touch with others. While we are physically limited from getting together, you can call and/or use skype or zoom and create virtual meetings with friends and loved ones. The important thing is stay connected.

5) Keep your spirit inspired. Motivation, which is always such a big theme and problem in business, is equally important when you're stuck at home. Otherwise you can get down and discouraged and turn lethargy into depression. How are your self-motivation skills? Of course, to feel motivated you have to have a *motive*— a purpose, agenda, intention. That's why there's really no such thing as a motivation problem— only *challenges to your intentionality.* This speaks to the human need to have *a reason* for getting up and getting on with the day. What goals can you set?

6) Remind yourself— "This too will pass." The "Stay at Home" order will end, the economy will be opened back up, and people will be getting back to work. There will be aspects of a "new normal" that will be emerging. And the old "normal" also will re-emerge. Restaurants will re-open, there will be weddings and funerals, seminars and trainings, etc.

7) Resolve issues quickly. If you get irritated and yell at someone, if in your stress and frustration you say things that you shouldn't —apologize. Acknowledge your unresourceful state and make things right as soon as possible. The worst thing is to live in angry silence or resentful annoyance. The worst thing is to stuff your negative emotions because when you *live in those negative states,* you will do damage to yourself. We all make mistakes, those who rise above them and learn from them are those who know that human fallibility is part and parcel of life, to be expected, and to be transcended by forgiveness and apology.

8) Make the main thing the main thing. In relationships, the main thing is *love.* So remind yourself to be loving. In life, the main thing is *meaningfulness.* So learning to give rich and robust meaning to whatever you are doing. Make it meaningful in your mind, then live out that meaning by what you do.

A fight pen is a caged mat where combatants fight and there's no escape. But while you may feel that there's little or no escape from being cooped up at home— it does not have to be a fight pen! Actually, it can be whatever you want to create it— a study den, a play room, a serenity garden, or any combination. The key is to *take responsibility for your responses* — what you are thinking, feeling, speaking, and doing.

WAKING UP FROM THE TRANCE

In *Brain Camp* (the Neuro-Semantic Training that teaches *Executive Thinking*), the first and main point I seek to drive home is the shocking realization that — *most of the time we are not thinking.* Oh, the mind might be active and engaged in something, but it is not engaged in the task of the actual skill of "thinking." And we all know this— well, we come to *know* it after it is mentioned, although we may not know it when we first hear it.

The reason is because anything repeatedly practiced eventually becomes routine and automatic. Autonomous. Oh yes, of course! We call this *habit formation.* Do anything repeatedly and eventually it "drops out of consciousness and into the unconscious mind." If you are reading this, what was once (when you were 5 or 6 years old) a really difficult task (reading) is now so easy. Today reading is even inescapable for you. Today you cannot *not* read. See word —the meaning pops into your mind. It has become automatic. It operates as an autonomous program.

And like reading, most of the practiced actions of your life have now moved to become automatic. And the result of that is that now you are not thinking. Instead you are just responding (or worse, reacting). In fact, thinking about what you are doing may mess them up.

With habit formation, you turn something difficult and challenging into a skillful set of actions that are smooth, easy, and that can be performed inattentively. You do that when you type, drive, rollerblade, ski, get dressed, cook breakfast, and a thousand other things. With conscious attending and thinking, you learned how to do something and that "learning" is now integrated into your mind-body system. We say that you now *"know" it unconsciously* or that "your unconscious mind" knows it. Now the behavior is integrated as a unit or as a whole, so that the components of the activity can now occur outside of conscious attention.

This is both good and a challenge. It's good because it *frees* the higher levels of your nervous system, brain, and frontal cortex for new and exciting next-level challenges. It's a challenge because your attention is so easily lulled into relaxing and not engaging in the effortfulness of actually *thinking.* Now you can default to not-thinking. You can default to your previous thinking and go on automatic. And while being on automatic has its benefits— when you are there, you are non-attentive, programmed by your past experiences, not-learning, not in sensory awareness, drifting, and in an unconscious trance.

There are numerous ways of being *on automatic.* In *Brain Camp* we list— reactionary thinking, borrowed thinking, lazy thinking, agenda thinking, and being "sure" (knowledge thinking). In all of these semi-conscious states, while you brain is working— you are *not mindful.* You are unconscious. Think about it as being in a trance that you need to wake up from— because only

then can *thinking truly begin.*

Sometimes what we learned becomes outdated. The activity, as such, no longer works due to a change in context, the environment, our stage of life, or other factors. Now we need to update what is out-of-date. And that requires becoming consciously mindful once again so that you can unpack the pieces and establish a new level of learning. This is *the unlearning process.* To break the habit that was formed, you have to come back to awareness. You can't change what you're not aware of. You could also think of this as *waking up from the trance you've been in.*

Fritz Perls had another way of describing it. He said we need to "lose our mind and come back to our senses." Here he was speaking about the "mind" that encodes the old program but which is no longer effective. That "mind" is the mind that holds an old belief, decision, understanding, knowledge, identity, etc. which imprisons one in the old learning, the old program for functioning.

"Coming back to your senses" refers to identifying the building blocks of the old learning so that you can re-arrange things and construct a new learning—a new program. We do this in NLP in numerous ways. We model out the sensory components of a behavior, experience, or skill which then reveals the old TOTE (test-operate-test-exit) program— the strategy we have been using. This *deframes* the old learning.   It is the *fragmentation pattern* that Milton Erickson so frequently used with clients.

All of these are ways of talking about *unlearning*— waking up from the trance, coming back to your senses, breaking down the strategy, deframing, fragmenting the old pattern, etc. It is to shake yourselves free from the old automatic program so that you can *re-think* about what you are doing, and why, and how. It is about becoming *mindful* again so that you can *learn afresh and stay current in an ever-changing world.*   And if you are someone who needs to "think for a living" this is crucial.

> For more about all of this, see *Executive Thinking* (2019), *Mind-Lines* (2005), *Winning the Inner Game* (2007). www.neurosemantics.com

YOUR "RATIONAL" MIND

When it comes to the word "rational," there are two very, very different meanings for that term. One is positive, the other is negative. One supports and validates you as a reasoning and reasonable person, the other questions just how reasonable you are as it assumes you are mostly irrational, unreasonable, biased, and blind to all of this. In critical thinking, we define "rational" as using reasons to reason or figure things out. It identifies legitimate explanations and creates correct understandings about how things work. By contrast, "rationalizing" mis-uses reason as it comes up with false explanations and understandings to justify an idea or behavior. So which is it? Are humans rational or irrational?

That last sentence, as a question, illustrates the problem. "Are humans rational or irrational?" makes a gigantic assumption. It frames the answer as *either/or*. In the background of the mind it dichotomizes the situation by presupposing that the answer has to fall to one side or the other— as polar opposites. By leaving out any room for something in-between, it presupposes that there are only two incompatible answers. Yet in doing this, the question itself sets up an irrational choice.

Does that mean we are by nature and innately irrational? Or could it be that using reason in a reasonable, mature, and healthy way is a skill that has to be learned? Could it be that there are language formats (templates) that lend themselves to thinking and formatting things in an irrational way? And if that is so, could there be other language formats as templates that can help us overcome such cognitive fallacies and biases and be more rational?

Because I think the answer lies in the latter, I also think that to "think for a living," we need to understand *how to use our higher cortical functions for critical thinking*. When you can do that, you can do *smart thinking,* in contrast to dumb thinking. An when you can think smart—you can do all sorts of creative thinking. This brings us back to the brain by which we engage in this essential skill— thinking.

The brain operates with multiple modular parts— parts which do a great many different things. Instead of being a single monolithic unit, the brain is a collaboration of many aspects, some conscious and some unconscious. Consequently we can identify different brain anatomies which have different functions.

For example, there's a part of the brain and our mind which *registers* what we see (encodes it, represents it) and there's another part by which we *interpret* what those things mean. In interpreting you evaluate, make decisions, make choices, theorize, understand— in a word, you *explain things* (or at least attempt to). There's another part that activates the motor cortex so that

you *act* on your thinking. Because you have different areas of the brain and different parts having different functions, and because they operate somewhat independently of each other, you can expect that there will sometimes be conflicts between the parts. If the interpreting, rationalizing part is too strong, you can be jumping-to-conclusions and coming up with inadequate "explanations."

The fact of your rational mind does not determine *how* you use it, *for what* you use it, or *how effectively* you use it. The fact that you can reason, that you seek to explain things, that you use your current understandings to grabble with things you do not yet understand is simply a description of one aspect of thinking. *The quality* of your thinking, of reasoning, is a function of how educated you are to think through things, think critically, question, explore, search for facts, hold evaluations and judgments in abeyance until you have sufficient information, etc.

The rational mind can be certainly be misused. A person can use "reasons" and "explanations" in a way to justify whatever he wants to justify. That's *agenda thinking*. You start with your conclusion and then you go find so-called "evidence" to prove it. The problem with that way of thinking is that you are "rationalizing" and will become a victim of Availability Bias and Confirmation Bias. Could you convince yourself that your conclusion is true? Yes. Millions of people do. This is what gives the term "rational" a bad rep.

In contrast to that kind of sloppy, lazy, and irrational thinking, you can learn how to develop the ability to think clearly and rationally. You can learn how to reflect on data, turn it into information, then turn it into meaningful ideas. You can learn how to evaluate your ideas by measuring it against criteria, solve problems systemically in a disciplined way, challenge hidden premises, and think with precision and inspiration. You can learn to develop the ability to reason intelligently as a powerful skill.

It is not the case that reason or rationality is the problem. It is not. Yes, human reasoning will always be fallible— "liable to error," yet that doesn't mean it cannot be used effectively and productively to solve problems. It can. How? By learning to step back and "reason about reasoning" and "think about thinking." Ultimately, such meta-thinking and meta-learning allows you to quality control how you use your brain so that you can be a great thinker.

> For more, see *Executive Thinking* (2018)
> There is a special deal still on for the newest book from Neuro-Semantics, *Hypnotic Thinking*.
> - o   1 copy --- $20 (normally $25)   --- $27 in US
> $57 outside of the US
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> Click on   https://www.neurosemantics.com/pay-a-statement/   Accepts any credit card.

From: L. Michael Hall
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Thinking for a Living Series #8

OH FOR MORE COMMON SENSE!

Since we all have a vested interest in actually *thinking* for a living, it makes sense to develop what we call "common sense." But what is common sense? Is it truly *common*? If it is so common, why would we need to develop it?

There's recently been a lot of *lack of common sense* in the "Stay at Home" orders that various State Governors have issued. The most outrageous has been the Michigan Governor when she locked down and forbid people buying garden supplies, paint, household goods, flooring, carpet, etc. It didn't make any sense. How could any of that spread the virus or cause people to be in more danger? Simultaneously, she allowed liquor stores to stay open and the selling of lottery tickets. You can go get a pint of whisky and buy a lottery ticket, but you better not be painting a room at home during the time that you are locked down and have to stay at home! Rational? It doesn't strike me as rational. No wonder people have been, and still are, out in protests in Michigan. No wonder many have filed law suites against the governor.

When elected officials are seen as inconsistent and as lacking "common sense," we feel it violates our sense of rationality, our sense of "sound prudent judgment" and "the unreflective opinions of ordinary people." Those are descriptions which the dictionary uses in defining "common sense." Now if we are to take "common sense" as being *sound prudent judgment*, then no wonder it is often said that common sense is not very common!

Actually, for there to be common sense, you need to be using a lot of your cognitive powers. You have to be using a lot of the executive functions of your frontal lobes. That's becomes to have *sound prudent judgment* you have to access information, transform it into useable data, convert the data into information that applies in a given area, and then make intelligent decisions based on that data and the full context.

Prudent judgment means that there is a clear connection between doing one thing and experiencing the result of another thing. For example, how does buying garden supplies relate to containing the virus or "flattening the curve?" "What makes buying beer okay and paint not?" What the protestors have argued is that the restrictions are not rational, not consistent, and not reasonable. And when something isn't reasonable, then we naturally suspect that something else is going on. We suspect that there are other agendas at play— perhaps personal agendas, perhaps politic agendas, something.

Originally the lock-down orders and the closing of businesses was to "flatten the curve" and the reason for that was in order to prevent the hospitals to get overwhelmed. We achieved that. The hospitals have not been overwhelmed and the medical boat, Comfort, which was sent to New

York City, only housed 200 patients with the virus. And now, not being needed has left. If the purpose and design of the Stay-at-Home order has been achieved, then why does it continue? It seems that someone has changed the purpose. Now they want to prevent any spread of the virus. Instead of quaranteeing those most susceptible to the virus, they are still quaranteeing everybody. How reasonable is that?

Prudent judgment always has to go back to the facts and reason from the facts. What are the facts? We now know that both the infection rate is much greater than originally thought and the fatality rate is much lower than originally anticipated. Recent numbers indicate that 1/4 of people in New York have been infected and even with high number of deaths, it is between .02 and .01 percent. 50% who get the virus are asymptomatic.

In California, the Governor there has closed all parks— local parks and national parks. Now in terms of social distancing, if we can maintain 6 feet apart *inside a grocery store* then how is it that people cannot use their common sense and maintain six feet, or twenty feet, of social distancing in a park? Besides, allowing people to go to the parks has many other benefits— to be out in the fresh air and sunshine, to relax on a beach with family, to get some exercise. How then is it rational for going to a park to be "bad" or "dangerous?"

Given that "common sense" is not all that common, and that we all think we have common sense whereas others do not, how can we develop more *sound prudent judgment*? There are several things you can do to begin to develop a sounder common sense.

> First, commit yourself to *the facts* above any and every agenda. Let every judgment start with the grounding facts.
> Then consider the ever-expanding larger sets of contexts within with the facts are embedded. What is the context? What context is that context within? This systemic thinking will identify what's relevant and what is not.
> Next, quality control your judgments. Identify the criteria that you're using to make the evaluation and then check if the criteria and the ecology of the judgment.

REAL *THINKING* CONVERSATIONS
Looking for Good Points

If no one person has *all of the truth,* and if all of us have bits of the truth, then one of the reasons we need each other is so we can be exposed to the bits of truth which we don't have. But there's a problem with that. Most people think that they have the truth. Don't you? It's one of the cognitive biases that all of us humans have and naturally default to— until, of course, we learn better and learn how to question our understandings.

Question: Why or how is it that we all think we have the truth? Answer: It arises from how we construct our mental maps. Throughout the early days of our life we *received* mental maps from parents and teachers. Then as we grew, we began *creating* mental maps about all sorts of things by ourselves. What we so typically forget is that *it is a map about reality and not reality.* Yet it feels real. Once integrated, our neurology and brain does its best to make it real in our lives. No wonder we think we understand!

Then we meet other people who have very different maps. Our either/or thinking which develops in childhood as one of the first stages of thinking, then puts us in intellectual conflict with others. "Either I'm right or you are." Actually, both may be right and equally, both may be wrong. Depending on the perspective each person takes, they could be describing truths that are simultaneously true. Each could have a piece of the truth. In that case, ideally we would want to get everybody's truth on the table. Then we could ask challenging questions to interrogate that "truth." We could ask clarifying questions to find out what's real.

Susan Scott calls this *interrogating multiple realities.* She asserts from her experience that this is what makes people begin to truly *think.*

> "What's the payoff for interrogating multiple realities? *People learn to think.* Many so-called learning experiences don't *provide opportunities for real thinking.* Meetings are just thinly veiled attempts to persuade others (employees, family members) to agree wit the teacher's (manager's, parent's, spouse's) conclusions. Real thinking occurs only when everyone is engaged in exploring different viewpoints." (2002, p. 26, italics added)

Now *getting people to think— to really think and think things through—* is an incredible valuable way to be a learning organization and to be on the cutting edge of creativity and innovation. Yet that is not easy. It's not easy in organizations due to the influence of group-think, the pressure to conform, and the fear of exposing oneself to criticism. So instead of *real thinking,* people keep quiet, keep their thoughts to themselves, play it safe, conform, etc.

Yet most of the time this doesn't happen naturally or inevitably. People have to learn how to interrogate reality, their own and others, and how to do it in kind and respectful ways. When we don't, we argue, fight, accuse, mind-read, judge, condemn, and many other things that undermine relationships and cause everyone to feel bad. Yet there's a better way. It begins with the basic idea of Alfred Korzybski, "The map is not the territory." It begins with the basic NLP Communication Guideline, "People operate from their maps of reality, not from reality." To understand this is to understand that no one has a monopoly on the truth and that we can learn from anyone. It is to understand that a person can hold a position diametrically opposed to yours and still make some "good points."

I was recently engaged in some back-and-forth arguments about a position. I argued my side as best as I could and the other person did the same. In one of the exchanges, I acknowledged that one person has made "a good point," and then another. A friend who shared my view then questioned me as to why I would "give in" to agree with anything that "my opponent" said.

> "Ah, the combat frame. Do you think that's what we are doing? Fighting and combating each other about who is right?"

He did. He even said, "what else is it about?" I said I appreciated him asking that question. To ask that question at least provides an opportunity to see if there is another way to frame things other than a battle. I then said I thought we were in a search for the truth and the best way to move forward. I said my frame is that of searching together for how to understand the situation and how to find a mutually satisfying solution. For me it was not about winning or losing a battle. If I were to use that metaphor, then the enemy would be ignorance, confusion, and mis-information, and certainly not the other person.

Later my friend said he thought about that and liked that perspective. "Next time, I'm going to see if I can hear and validate a 'good point,' before I start disagreeing." This is the way to have *thinking* conversations. Instead of looking only for the other side's weak points, look for and valid when the other side makes a "good point."

THINKING DIFFERENTLY
ABOUT VIRUSES

Two years ago Dr. Zach Bush, M.D. predicted that one of the next viruses would come out of Wuhan China.   As a triple board-certified medical doctor, Dr. Zach, has joined an interviewer in an evolutionary discussion on why Coronavirus is here, what it's trying to tell us, and how we emerge from the mental and emotional darkness that has surrounded it. If you would like to hear this astonishing interview, it is on youtube:

> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RAtFBvKrVw

I found it a riveting interview although I can't say much about the person doing the interviewing. He takes a long time in posing questions and sometimes asks as many as ten questions inside of asking a question. Nevertheless the answers go to the sciences about viruses and the environments that we now live in. What I liked was how he speaks to the assumptive frames behind so much of the misinformation that's out there.

If you stay with it the last ten minutes of the interview, you will hear some really fantastic learnings. Dr. Bush ends by relating some *lessons to be learned* from the pandemic. There he presents a hope that we "will not go back to normal." "Don't go back, go to a new normal. See the beauty everywhere." But learn how to live the beauty and love of life.

Here, as an educated man who thinks systemically and integratively about the coronavirus that has sucked all the air out of the room for months. Here he thinks critically about the subject and presents information that you might not otherwise hear. While he has no simple answers, he speaks to the *context* as well as the *content.* Though educated in the traditional medical schools, he does not quote what is politically correct, but offers a fresh and optimistic view of things.

He speaks to the pandemic of fear that has gripped the world and offers his explanation as to why the statistics in the United States is far worse than every other country. Simultaneously he points to many things that are so obvious about how to respond. You may like it, you may not like it. If you don't like *thinking,* you definitely will not like it. If you are open to real *thinking,* it will give you lots to think about.

Check it out on youtube — https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RAtFBvKrVw
> ***The Doctor who Predicted Covid-19 Answers All***
> It is on HighWire with Del Bigtree.

DOING PERSONALITY
A Review of *"The Structure of Personality"*

Some years ago Te Ruru of New Zealand wrote a book review of *The Structure of Personality: Personality Ordering and Disordering with NLP and Neuro-Semantics,* which was published by Crown House Publications, UK, in 2001. The book continues to sell and is frequently purchased by psychologists and Universities for studies in Personality. What follows is what he wrote which was published in *Trancescript,* The New Zealand Journal of Neuro-Linguistic Programming.

Book Review
Occasionally a book is published in the field of therapy that has the potential to radically altering the way those working in the helping professions think about certain types of challenges their clients are experiencing. *The Structure of Personality* could well be such a book. On the basis of their extensive casework, research, training, and modeling, the four co-authors of this book presents a fresh understanding of the theory and treatment of personality disorders, from an NLP perspective. Their central premise is that personality is something people *do*, rather than something they have (or *are*).

This handsome hardback challenges the current paradigm for the assessment of personality disorders, which tends to view such conditions as negative, crippling, and resistant to change. Rather than engage in useless inter-disciplinary polemic, the authors demonstrating that people already have the ability to reorder personality in ways that will allow them to function well. The book also reframes personality "disorders" as expressions of personal strengths utilized ineffectively.

In his introduction, Professor Carl Lloyd introduces this theme by quoting research conducted by the US Navy in the 1990s, which suggested that the submariners best qualified for crewing nuclear submarines evidenced three distinction DSM-IV personality disorders: Obsessive-Compulsive (OCPD), Schizoid (SPD), and Avoidant (APD). In other words, these "disorders" were personal strengths in the context of safely harnessing the awesome energy of nuclear powered and armed submarines, because crew members needed to be "preoccupied with orderliness, perfectionism, and control," "socially independent," and able to "fully function even in total isolation." In other words, personality was ordered in that context, in a way that actually reflected crew members' strengths.

In their enthusiasm, some highflying proponents of Neuro-Linguistic Programming have tended to nudge NLP into the pop-psychology category in people's perception. *The Structure of Personality* places NLP where it best fits— at the leading edge of serious psychological research.

NLP practitioners will be familiar with some of the material presented in this book, as both sets of authors have been developing models, publishing articles and books, and offering trainings that include processes based on the material presented in this new book.

However, *The Structure of Personality* pulls together in a comprehensive and integrated text, perhaps for the first time, the most useful contributions of NLP for addressing the personality disorders. Part I presents the theory and research supporting the authors' position, as well as outlining processes for ordering personality. Part II details how twelve DSM-I involves both conscious and unconscious defined personality disorders can be reordered, based on the material presented in Part I. This structure means the book is eminently usable because it is both an authoritative presentation of theory and research, and a manual for the practical application of that theory. The book is also part of a wonderful legacy left by Margot Hamblett. She died in 2005, and her co-authors have fittingly dedicated the book to Margot.

The name of the book is well chosen, for it echoes another title, *The Structure of Magic*, a book many will associate with the original developers of NLP. By this means the authors have set up a resonance that places them firmly in the continuum of NLP developers. Perhaps a slight change to *Structuring Personality* may have reflected the focus of the book more accurately.

The style of presentation is worth noticing. Rather than provide a collection of articles, two sets of experts with slightly different maps in the field of NLP have collaborated to produce an integrated and groundbreaking text. This elegantly models the practice of discussing, exploring, and discovering the enriching differences and commonalities in maps for the same territory.

Chapters alternate between authors. Hall and Bodenhamer achieve a fairly technical and conceptual register, while Bolstad and Hamblett's voice is softer, and they continually enliven their theory with case examples, including soe from their work in the war-torn Balkans. Despite these stylistic difference, the text is woven together in a relatively seamless manner, although certain ownership sensitivities are evident. This is probably just a reflection of the penchant some NLP developers have for designing processes, coining or resurrecting significant labels, registering them and marketing them as discrete models. The constant use of the terms Neuro-Semantics and NLP gives the impression that the two sets of authors are working out of separate models. This fictional distinction tends to fudge the fact that both sets of authors are actually using the same approach, only differently.

The Structure of Personality is both an advanced *and* a readable text. Although over editing has produced awkward syntax in one or two sentences, readers will recognize the authors' practice of converting nouns into verbs. This give sthe language energy and movement, as well as keeping the focus on personality as something people *do.* A rather minimalist index is a bit of a surprise for a book of this caliber. If readers wanted to look up *anxiety,* or *anchor*, they might be disappointed to find the index actually starts with the letter "B." However, the detailed contents, frequent headings, bullet points, and extensive bibliography are excellent features.

Both its ground breaking content, and its user-friendly format, make *The Structure of Personality* "a text to have" for NLP practitioners, students, and practitioners in the mental health field, as

well as for supervisors and training institutions. Carl Lloyd's view seem accurate enough when he concludes that this new book "is impressive both in scope and depth, staggering in its implications for treating personality disorders, giving the clinical world an utterly new way of looking at the etiology and treatment of personality disorders."

To purchase the book: contact Crown House Publications, UK
       www.crownhouse.co.uk
       Or www.neurosemantics.com/products/
       For a description, www.neurosemantics.com/products/the-structure-of-personality/

PROTEST OR RIOT?

Protesting and rioting are not the same. To **protest** something is to *verbally* express a disagreement with something and to let your *ideas* be known that you think there's a better way or that it's time for a change in some policy. Protesting is an time-honored way of bringing about change. Rioting is an entirely different matter. One is a *thinking response,* the other is not.

To **riot** is to create chaos and destruction. When people become a mob and "a mob mentality" arises, people do things that they would never think of doing. As personal inhibitions break down, people engage in immoral activities— hitting, fighting, lighting fires, looting, stealing what belongs to another, destroying a person's business, home, car, or personal property.

Whereas *protesting* is a legitimate form of action that can bring about creative change in a society, *rioting* is an illegitimate form that undermines civil life and civilization. Often it aims at destroying the very structures and institutions of society that keep order and peace. It is not only the opposite of *thinking,* it is a form of anti-thinking— of mindless mob mentality.

With regard to George Floyd's death, I have not heard a single person defend what happened to him. Quite the opposite. Everybody from every group, from every government agency has condemned what happened to him and have said in no uncertain terms that it was wrong. *And* every agency in Minnesota has said that justice will be done. The officer or officers will be arrested. So what is anyone protesting? Who are they protesting against? Who is pushing back to their protests? As far as I can tell — *no one,* and thank God, no one is arguing the opposite.

The Governor of Minnesota, Tim Walz, said that Monday and Tuesday nights the protests were mostly peaceful and were actual *protests.* Then things changed. Then outside agitators stirred things up and began the destruction that has now destroyed 170 businesses. Videos on all of the media channels shows a *mob mentality* in action and people swept up in completely irrational actions.   People looting the stores are not *thinking.* People throwing objects through windows, burning cars, and yelling are not *thinking.*

Recommendations —
>   1) *Think!* If you are protesting, do *that.* Do not riot, do not say irrational things, do not act irrationally. Don't encourage those who are not thinking.
>   2) *Schedule protests to occur from 2 to 4 pm.* That will allow full expression and freedom of speech for people to express themselves and protest current practice or policy. It will keep the protests *in the light of day.*   Riots occur in the dark—when people think they can escape accountability.
>   3) *Put a limit on the protests at 4 pm.*   This will curtail those who would stir up negative emotions so that they cannot induce a mob-mentality and irrationality. All of the gapers

who come to see only make things worse. It feeds the chaos of the situation.

4) *Establish* a firm curfew and enforce it. This will prevent people from getting worked up into a mob mentality.

5) *Open up the economy.* With 40 million people out of work for the past two or three months, no wonder we have a powder-keg of frustration that's ready to explode.

COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS
AMONG PROTESTORS

For anyone who wants to protest something, if you want to truly win minds and hearts and bring change to a system, a community, or an organization— you're going to have to use your *best thinking* and your *best intelligence.* If you are protesting out of mindless anger, if you are just *reacting,* your protest will be contaminated by the cognitive distortions. These are the childish thinking patterns that we all tend to regress to under stress. Today you can see them in the raw in the protests and riots occurring in many American cities. Here's another place where *thinking for a living* is so critical.

Over-Generalization and All-or-Nothing Thinking. This cognitive distortion takes one or a few instances of an action and generalizes it to everybody in a category. Factually, however, when one person misbehaves, that does not mean all related persons do the same. One policeman who doesn't listen to bystanders, doesn't follow protocol, and whose actions lead to a death doesn't mean all police do the same. Among any and every profession there are going to be "bad apples." 99.9 percent of police never do what Derek Chauvin did in Minnesota last week. Protesting against "Police violence" is an over-generalized hallucination.

Labeling. This cognitive distortions fails to recognize the difference between a name or a term and reality. Derek Chauvin may be convicted in a court of law of "murder," but calling him a "murderer" before that conviction is name-calling. The video certainly indicates that his "knee to the neck" actions were responsible for George Floyd's death. We will know more when the autopsy comes back. Protest signs, "Blue Lives Murder," combines over-generalization with labeling to aggravate the situation and induces unreasonable hatred and anger.

Emotionalizing. Protest signs, "No Justice, No peace" emotionalizes the situation using two vague nominalizations. What does "justice" mean? It doesn't mean anti-vigilant revenge. "Justice" is a matter of the legal system—a process now underway. Reider has been arrested and charged with manslaughter. Officials say the others will be charged. "No Justice, No peace" is a *threat to riot* if one doesn't get his way, that's not how civilized people operate.

Personalizing and Identification. Many speakers on TV have said things like, "I could have been George Floyd." Oh really? You try to buy things with counterfeit twenty dollar bills? You have done time in prison? The identification based *only on skin color* and not on character, profession, lifestyle, etc. is a cognitive distortion.

Blaming. Over-generalizing about "black" people and "white" people and using vague phrases about "racism" (another vague nominalization, especially when there is only one human race)

leads to childish and non-responsible blaming. Adults assume responsibility for their lives, their finances, their education, their skills, etc.   It's easy to blame, it's much tougher to take responsibility. A person is a *victim* to the extent that one *thinks and acts like a victim.* If you *believe* circumstances make you and you are powerless to help yourself, then "so be it unto you." Your belief is the problem. You are just giving your power away and endowing others (or "the system") with the power to victimize you. Nelson Mandilla did not do that. Martin Luther King Jr. did not do that. Viktor Frankl did not do that.

Blaming someone else for acting badly often distracts us from the bad behaviors of the blamers. Blaming one (or four) police for what happened to Floyd while throwing bricks, setting fires, fighting, looting, etc. makes the blaming just an excuse to act badly.

Awfulizing. "Isn't it awful the plight of minorities!" Here again we have all-or-nothing thinking and over-generalization. All minorities? Many minorities, especially first-generation emigrants to the US, typically so thankful to be in a country of opportunities, go out and make things happen so that they enter the middle class by the second generation.

Entitlement and "the musts." This is the cognitive distortion that starts from the premise that "the world owes me," "the government owes me," etc. Little children think this way and think that "everything always must to be fair." And when it's not fair, they throw a tantrum. When people grow up and put away childish things, they get over this distortion and put in the effort to earn and achieve the things that they want.

These cognitive distortions prevent people from *thinking clearly* and, in the end, make things worse for everyone. A great way to handle the current torrent of mis-information is to listen for, and learn to identify, cognitive distortions. Once you can do that— you are in a position to clean out the distortion and think more clearly.

THOSE WITH WHOM
YOU CAN'T HAVE A CONVERSATION

To have a real and authentic conversation, you have to have two persons who are willing to be open-minded and think critically. Each person has to be willing to start from the position that they do *not* know-it-all and that they *may be mistaken.* If you cannot start on this premise, you really cannot have an authentic conversation. You can have a debate! You can banter back and forth trying to see who can "win" points over the other and "defeat" the other, but you cannot have an open conversation that encourages true *thinking, exploration, and learning.*

I learned this afresh during the past two weeks with some NLP Trainers. Yes, *NLP trainers!* And yes, you would think (well, I would think) that someone who has been trained in the Meta-Model of Language would know better, but lo and behold, I found out that it is not so. When I invited them to at least *consider* the idea that there are other views about viruses, epidemiology, microbiology which the mainstream media has been presenting, some *cannot* and *will not even consider* that possibility. They closed down the conversation before it began.

> [And *considering* is the first step in real *thinking,* after that comes *questioning, doubting, inferring,* etc. See *Executive Thinking* (2019)]

Instead, three or four of the well-known trainers immediately went into *attack* against me, against the person presenting the ideas, and used all sorts of fallacious arguments. They attacked the person— the *ad hominem* argument, attacking the character of the person, *non sequitur* argument by bringing irrelevant side issues, and *straw man* argument, exaggerating the position until it was ridiculous and easy to defeat.

Now it has been said that when you cannot reason logically about a position, the best thing is to raise your voice, passionately pound your fist on the table, and accuse the person presenting a radical idea or an unthinkable idea. And that's pretty much what happened. I asked a question, "Is there anything that this person said that was true, good, and you could agree with?" No reply. Later I repeated the question, "I refused to listen to him from that perspective." When I asked why, he said, "That's the way to get seduced into falsehood."

> "Oh really? You cannot think critically sufficiently well enough so that you could tell what's right and what's wrong? [pause] ... Does the fact that someone might make some good points mean that you have to agree with everything the person says?"

What I walked away from the furor caused by *the invitation to think* was that even in the field of NLP and even among those who are trainers and leaders— *critical thinking is severely missing.*

That's because critical thinking requires more than just the intellectual understanding of how to ask questions, how to following a line of thinking, how to recognize cognitive distortions, fallacies, and biases. *It requires an emotional state of openness and vulnerability.* For myself, I am quite willing to listen to, read, and have a conversation with someone I disagree with, even strongly disagree. Why? Because I might learn something. Because I might be wrong. Because I might not have the critical information that I need. Because whatever the person says is his or her understanding ... and there will always be *good points* in that person's position.

Conversing over areas of disagreement does not mean you have to agree. You are just talking, considering, thinking things over, thinking things through, sorting out sources of information, asking about what science the person is depending on, etc. It is when people *cannot and will not talk with each other* that they then fall back to power maneuvers, the last of which is violence. That's how the human race has pretty much behaved in all of the millennia until now. But today war and violence is far too deadly. Plus, and more importantly, using violence to solve differences of opinion really does not *solve* anything.

We solve differences of opinion by talking things out, reasoning together. Now we are to "communication" and why it is so important. By talking through difficult issues, taking the time to listen to each other, to understand each other, and to think about our thinking—the meta-thinking of examining the quality of our thinking— that's how we resolve conflicts and differences.

Yet most people do not know how to do this. That's because it requires certain competencies and the ability to manage one's states. The person who doesn't know that gets his "buttons pushed," becomes defensive, and then the "conversation" degrades into a debate, a battle of wits, a bantering of name-calling. This happens in business, it happens in politics, it happens in families, it happens on a regular basis among us humans.

One insight from this is the *essentiality of clear, effective, and respectful communication.* And that's the domain of NLP and Neuro-Semantics. Yes, the US government, and most other governments, classified "training" as non-essential. Training in communication is non-essential!? Actually, it is *the most essential thing of all.*

From: L. Michael Hall
2020 Neurons #28
June 8, 2020
Thinking for a Living series *#14*

THINKING ALOUD ABOUT "JUSTICE"
What does "Justice" Really Mean?

What follows here is some *critical thinking* about the ideas of *protesting, protesters,* and the call for *justice.* Here I want to apply the Meta-Model to the things being said and a lot of the spin being perpetuated that's creating dis-information and confusion. I do this as a way to use NLP to help us sort things out and ultimately have respectful conversations.

The protesters say that they are protesting to get *justice.* They want justice for George Floyd who was cruelly killed. Sounds reasonable. And it is also the American way, "justice for all." Further, that's the purpose of the law and the legal system, namely, to enforce the law. That means *the courts,* trials to determine the facts of what happened and who is responsible for the actions under investigation, a "jury of one's peers," and sometimes the verdict from a judge.

Okay, so far, so good. Now let's ask, has there been *justice for George Floyd*? If *justice* is the beginning of the legal system which takes actions to determine cause, then yes. After all, the officials in charge of the local city of Minnesota immediately fired the policemen, then 3 days later they charged the primary policeman with first degree murder. Then they put him in prison. Charges will be brought for the others. Eventually there will be a jury called, then a trial. *All of that constitutes "justice" according to the law.*

Given that, another question: What do the protesters now want? "Justice" *as a process* as we practice it in the US has begun. What more do they want?

Many of the signs the protesters are carrying say, "No justice, no peace." As *a principle,* that is true. Where there is continued and systemic injustice, there's no true peace or tranquility. But the sign is not an abstract principle, it is a threat. It says we will violently protest until we get death for death. They will riot, loot, tear things up, throw bricks, shot guns, deface buildings, burn cars and businesses, etc. until they get what they want. That is an excellent formula for continued *injustice and non-peace.*

In the legal sense, *true justice takes time.* In a murder trial, it usually takes months, sometimes years. So what? Will people keep rioting for a year? And what if the final verdict does not satisfy them? What then? This brings up the process by which *justice is determined and delivered.* Legally, it is delivered by the judicial system, by the court, the judge, and then by the persons he or she commissions to imprison or put to death.

This means that justice is not, and cannot be, in the hands of the protesters. That's called a mob

and "mob justice" by lynching, hanging, shooting, beating, etc. is *not* the way of civilized societies. For emphasis, I will repeat that. *Justice is not (and cannot be) in the hands of the protesters.* That's not their role.

What then is the role of protesters? Their role is to make their voice head, to call attention to an injustice and to communicate their idea of justice in a particular case. This brings up additional questions: How long do they have to protest until they have communicated? Have they not communicated or been heard? For a full week they have been marching and protesting and the media has carried it 24/7 ... so have they not been heard? With national politicians from both parties have commented on this case.

Haven't they heard? And *being heard*, I must repeat, is not the same as *carrying out justice,* it is letting those in charge *hear* their voice. And to this day, I have not heard one person think that the policeman was justified in what he did. None! Not a single one has excused him or think that maybe he had a legitimate reason. No one! So when *everybody agrees,* and the *authorities know full well* what the protesters want — what is there to protest?

Yes they have been heard. So how long to protest? If the purpose is to communicate, and the idea has been heard, has not the protests achieved their goal? And if yes, then why continue?

Regarding the unjust and cruel death of George Floyd, *there is no controversy.* No body wants more of that. Everybody who has spoken has said we want no more of that. Everyone agrees it was inhuman and degrading. So signs asking for "no more killing black men" is assuming a controversy where there is no controversy. An exception never establishes a rule. The exception in this case which *everybody abhors* does not mean this is the basic rule of law officials. That's a false argument.

Finally we are all okay with *peaceful* protests. What does that mean? A peaceful protest means no one is attacking, throwing rocks, starting fires, looting, etc. Protests are also peaceful when the time for the curfew begins, people disperse. When they do not, they are no longer peaceful. If you set bedtime at 8:30 and your kids refuse to go to bed, are they "peaceful?" Are they not being passive-aggressive? Yes, resistance to law (i.e.., lawlessness) is a form of aggression.

THINKING ALOUD ABOUT
"SYSTEMIC RACISM"

Alfred Korzybski warned that there are pseudo-words— terms that do *not* refer to anything real or actual. He warned that *pseudo-words* undermine the scientific attitude and prevents the discovery of truth because it misdirects people. He illustrated that with the word "heat," the word "unicorn" in zoology, and the words "time" and "space." New scientific discoveries arose when the language was corrected. I added *Pseudo-Words* to the Meta-Model in 1997 in the book, *Communication Magic.* You can read about it there and in *Science and Sanity* by Korzybski.

When we think critically about the term "systemic racism" that is now being tossed around, we find several significant problems. First of all, the phrase is comprised of two vague, non-specifying nominalizations. Each sounds like a noun, but neither is a true noun. In each there is a hidden verb (that's what a nominalization is— a verb masquerading as a noun). It is part of hypnotic language and a great way to hypnotize people.

Racism as an attitude of thinking yourself as superior to those of another ethnic group, and they as inferior, and then acting on that prejudice is *a particularly toxic attitude.* It discriminates between people based on one or more traits, usually on the most superficial things— skin color, hair, facial features, family of origin, etc. Opposite to racism is an attitude of treating all people as *people, as equal human beings, as valuable and precious persons.*

Our legally system announced from the beginning that all people are "created equal by their creator" ... and it has taken centuries to fully incorporate that sense of equality into our laws. The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s primarily led to making that happen. Once the laws are in place, the next step for *making it real* lies in getting everyone who is a part of the legal system to *live and practice* those laws.

Now this *system* involves something *conceptual* (the law, the rules, the procedures) which we can write down, publish, and use to inform people. The *system* also involves *human beings* who are by nature imperfect, fallible, biased, and who suffer from incompetencies in actions and cognitive distortions and fallacies. As a human system with *great ideals* (the law) *and fallible humans* (the people) we have a situation that will always be imperfect. Yet however imperfect, it is to our glory that we work to make it a "more perfect union." That's the ideal and the vision.

So what is this thing that's bantered about, "systemic racism?" Those wh use it *assume* that the whole system is corrupt and flawed, that no white person could possibly understand the plight of any black person. Then to deepen the problem they say that the "systemic racism" is

"unconscious." That allows them to now *engage in circular thinking* so that if someone says "I'm not prejudiced against X" they can say, "Well you are, you are just *not* conscious of your racism." Now the person is forced into a corner, assumed to be prejudiced, and there's no way to escape the accusation. Of course, all of that is fallacious thinking.

To Meta-Model this and gain specificity and precision in understanding, we have to ask questions around the two different aspects of justice and equality. One has to do with our *conceptual mapping* of these things. The other has to do with *the hands-on practice* of the ideal.

> *1) The Conceptual Aspect.* Where in the system is the racism? Is the law unfair to anyone? If so, let's fix it. Are the rules out-of-balance and discriminate against some people? If so, let's fix that. Once we clean up our concepts of equality so that "justice is blind" and operates the same way with everyone, then we can talk about the human part.

> *2) The Human Aspect.* Is X-person showing favoritism to one person or a group? Then let's address that person. Is X-person discriminating against some people and not giving them the same break that he would give to others? Again, let's address that person.

In the end, this demystifies the convoluted and unspecified pseudo-term, "systemic racism." The idea of an unconscious conspiracy of "systemic racism" is a myth. All racism occurs *in some person* —individually or as a representative of an organization. When you know that you know how we can fix this problem. It enables us to know precisely where to focus our attention and energy in order to bring about a "more perfect union." Now we can do something specific and concrete when we find injustice and discrimination.

Discrimination itself is not the problem. Marin Luther King Jr. argued that we should make distinctions based on a person's *character,* not color of skin or other superficial things. Finally, if we note where the protesters are protesting and calling for those in charge to hear them and respond to them — they are predominantly in Democrat cities and states. If the so-called "systemic racism" is the cause— how is it that cities like Baltimore are racist when every public official is an African American Democrat? Does this mean the Democrats are not and will not listen to the call for equality under the law?

> New York —   Governor is Democrat, Mayor is Democrat
> Minneapolis – Governor is Democrat, Mayor is Black Democrat
> L.A. Ca.   Governor is Democrat, Mayor is Black Democrat.
> Chicago IL.   Governor is Democrat, Mayor is Black Democrat.
> Seattle WA   Governor is Democrat, Mayor is Democrat
> Wash DC   Governor is Democrat, Mayor is Black Democrat.
> Boston –   Governor is Republican, Mayor is Black Democrat
> Baltimore   Governor is Republican, Mayor is Black Democrat.

The statistics *facts* also do not show any systemic racism. In 2019 a total of 47 unarmed persons were shot by police. Of those 47 persons— 9 were black and 19 were white. And in the same year, 89 police were shot on duty. If in 2019 there were 9 shootings by police, there were approximately 5,000 shootings and killings of black people by black people. Where is the outrage for that? Where is the racism when black kill black?

> www.wsj.com/articles/the-myth-of-systemic-police-racism-11591119883

WE WERE UNITED, THEN WE WEREN'T

For the days immediately following the gruesome death of George Floyd, *the nation was united.* With one voice everybody on the right and on the left said, "Enough is enough, that is not right, no policeman should ever do that." The justice process went into gear— the men were immediately fired and within a couple days, the chief perpetrator of the unjust violence against an unarmed man was arrested and charged with murder. So far, so good. Immediately also the president of the United issued an executive order to *expedite the pursuit of justice*. Even better!

Immediately there were protests and they were fine— they were respectful and peaceful. But after two days of protests something happened. *Riots.* Not respectful and not peaceful people (hoodlums) hijacked the protests and when darkness came— out came their darkness as they set fires, looted, threw stones, started fights, attacked the police, destroyed 100-plus businesses, and many other criminal acts, felonies and after two weeks, several people were dead, including police who were there to provide security and protection.

What kind of thinking —or lack of thinking(!)— engenders that kind of barbarity and chaos? Obviously lots of cognitive distortions (childish and primitive thinking) amplified by fear, anger, hatred, etc. People *over-generalized* that "all" police are the same. False. People *judged, blamed, and mind-read* ulterior motives and drew false conclusions. Wrong. People *personalized and awfulized* one (or a few) outlier events. Dysfunctional. [See Neurons #26, Cognitive Distortions Among Protesters.]

The *kind of thinking* that creates such chaos and hatred also included multiple kinds of Cognitive Biases such as *unjustified assumptions* like "systemic racism" which is nonsense when you consider that the Police Department in almost all of the major cities with the riots are made up of a *majority of minorities*. [Neurons #29]

Then there is the *group-think bias*. This social bias occurs within nearly every group and is an occupational hazard for a highly cohesive group. It leads to ethnocentricity bias, the bandwagon bias and lies at the heart of *mob mentality*. Why is it, or how is it, that individuals will do things, unethical things, immoral things, things they would never consider doing—then they are caught up in a mob. How is it that, in those moments, they lose their individuality and the mentality of the group takes over?

It usually occurs at night. When darkness comes and people's voices rage in chants and calls for mindless, thoughtless ideas — people then *get into state,* perhaps a state of anger and rage, perhaps a state self-righteous revenge and destructiveness. Curfews are designed to limit things so people don't get more and more stirred up until they are in an irrational and out-of-control

state. So resisting the curfew is passive aggression and soon becomes full-fledged aggression. Then businesses burn, neighborhood communities are destroyed, more violence and injustice is perpetuated and the cycle continues.

We were united, then we weren't. Some city counsels, mayors, and governors took the route of trying to *appease* the rioters (not the protestors). Others mayors and governors took a stand for law and order and established a firm stance against looting, shootings, burnings, etc. Now we became divided all over again, this time about how to handle social unrest and riots.

The irrationality of "defunding the police" foolishly assigns blame to those trying to solve the problem. 99% of police are not like Derek Chauvin. 99% disavow what Derek Chauvin did and would never do such. One bad apple is exactly that— a bad apple. We have bad apples among therapists. Every year there are therapists who are exposed having physically or sexually violating a client. That doesn't mean every therapist is the same. Every year the same thing happens among doctors, lawyers, politicians, and every other profession. An exception does not create a rule. One or even several outliers does not create a pattern. They are exceptions.

In all of this we are failing to *think*— to truly think critically, scientifically, and creatively— when we allow thinking distortions and biases to contaminate our thinking. Such prevents clear reasonable thinking. *Blaming* all police for what a corrupt policeman does is inadequate reasoning. A more reasoned approach is to identify how the violent policeman got that way, how he wasn't confronted by his peers and supervisors and disciplined to prevent the tragedy in the first place. If that means *reform* in law enforcement practices— then we need to do that. If it means *more and better training*— we need to do that.

It is time to think— *to think more clearly* and this is where overly intense emotions, especially fear and anger, do not help. It doesn't help at home domestically, it doesn't help in the street. It is also a time to get training in how to think clearly ... which is the domain of Neuro-Semantic NLP.

PROTESTING FOR REFORMS
On Both Sides

I'm waiting for another set of protests. This time, it's a protest that I think is a truly worthy one. It seems that during the riots ... when the looting, stealing, burning, etc. was in St. Louis, an African-American by the name of David Dorn was shot.   Killed. Murdered. One (or maybe more) of the protesters brought a gun to the protest (!) and in the process of looting the man's store, he shot this innocent man.

Now who was David Dorn?   He was a man who had spent his life fighting for justice as a policeman and who eventually became a police captain. He was a man who served his community. In other words, *he was a true hero* who worked hard to contribute to making life better for everyone in his community. Then during the protests not only was he shot and killed, but he was murdered by people who were looting his store. That strikes me as much more *injustice* than some rogue policeman misusing his powers in seeking to hold a criminal accountable.

But that was two weeks ago. Since then there has hardly been a word about him in the media. Further, I have not seen any banners or signs with his name. I have not heard people singing his name. So I ask, "Who is marching for justice for David Dorn, an African-American?" If all of this is about race, then were is the "no justice, no peace" for David Dorn? As far as I can tell, no one is protesting for *his justice.* If the groups promoting "Black Lives Matter" were truly for black people, would they not be marching to protest and to get justice for David Dorn? It's a legitimate question. If not, then what does the phrase "Black Lives Matter" actually mean? Is it only for those of a particular political view?

Here then are some important questions: *Why* are the protesters *not* protesting and asking for justice for a true hero who did not get justice? Why do they seemingly not value the life of this man who was a first-responder and a hero? Could it be that it is because he was also a policeman?   Could it be that being a policeman, being "blue," his story doesn't fit the narrative which the media is constantly pushing? Does *blue* cancel out *black?* What kind of logic would "reason" that way? Actually the same can be said of many other African-Americans who are (or were) police men and women. And with *the majority of police* in a great many of the major cities in America being *minorities,* that also messes up "the racial narrative" that the mainstream media is pushing.

Conversely, instead of protecting justice for *anyone and everyone* (regardless of skin color) the media often ends up celebrating criminals. They call for justice for people who were actually

being quite unjust themselves. These were people who were committing crimes, resisting arrest, doing something they were not supposed to do, who then got caught, or were in the process of being caught and then shot or killed. By doing this, the media thereby *turns ethics upside-down* and present these criminals or semi-criminals <u>as if</u> they were heroes. Of course, they are not. Now they may not be bad persons, but they certainly are not upstanding citizens. They sing the names of George Floyd and Rayshard Brooks, yet what were they doing when they came to "fame?" One was trying to pass a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill to cheat a store owner. One was drunk, sound asleep in his car in the drive-through lane, seemingly okay and then violently resisted arrest, stole one of the policeman's weapons and ran.

So while they were acting unjustly and while protesters are calling for justice, the deafening silence of the protesters is about anything and everything *unjust* that the perpetrators (who became victims) initiated.

True enough, their deaths are unfortunate and an injustice. Certainly, they did not deserve *death*. Yet they were also doing things they should not have been doing. Why are we not hearing that regarding people who are stopped by the police? Don't we need some Citizen Reform as well: Don't resist, don't fight, don't steal their weapons, don't run, etc.? I have not seen that on any of the mainline media. It is as if the interactions are all one-sided, as if the other participant in the conflict had nothing at all to do in how it fell out. *Police reform* has been occurring for the past two decades, more has come this past week, and more will be coming. That's good. It's needed and it is good.

When I say for awhile, I recall back in the 1990s working with Police Departments presenting *Defusing Skills.* These de-escalating skills are to enable a person to bring the tension level down so that we can use our intelligence to solve problems rather than guns. I ran the program in 1997 with the Sugarland Police Department in the greater Houston area.

Then there is the complaint that black fathers have to have "the conversation" with their black sons about complying when pulled over by a police. Some think that's uncalled for. Really? My father had that "conversation" with me in 1966. Not as a black boy, but as a white boy— with a quickness to react, a hotheaded temper, and a teenager with far too much energy and far too little mindfulness (!). "Be nice, just comply, not make things worse for yourself," that's what my dad told me. I needed that conversation.

If we need *Police Reform,* we also need some *Citizen Reform.* Every relationship is two-fold as it is between two interacting persons. People who are committing crimes or thinking about committing crimes, or caught doing something that could look like a crime, need to control reacting, over-reacting, and engaging in a conversation to bring the best out in each other. Will this solve all of our cultural problems? Of course, not. Will it move us in the right direction? That is my hope!

From: L. Michael Hall
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Thinking for a Living series *#18*

FRAGILE THINKERS

Some people are mentally and emotionally fragile when it comes to their ability to *think*— to entertain an idea, to try it on in their minds and then to question and explore it. After all, that is what *true thinking* is. The activity of actually *thinking* begins when you mentally consider a thought which is new and different. If you are just mentally repeating what you already know, you are not actually thinking, you are rehearsing known information. [You can find a detailed description of this in *Executive Thinking.*]

Yet for some people— those mentally and emotionally fragile, perhaps untrained, undisciplined, insecure— they cannot do that. When they encounter a new thought or one that differs with what they already know, they *automatically* disagree and reject it. As a mental *reaction,* this is not thinking, it is the opposite. It is non-thinking reactivity. And why? Precisely because it differs with what they currently understand, because they don't understand it, and because it puts them out of their comfort zone —they feel insecure and anxious. As a fragile thinker, they need others to agree with them and to confirm them. And because they are fragile— inwardly weak and insecure, their basic ploy when someone contradicts them is to react, to act like a tantrum-throwing child, a fascist dictator who has to have things his way.

The very idea of entering into the intellectual arena where there can be a battle of ideas scares the hell out of them. They wouldn't dare. And why not? Because of their worries, "What if I'm wrong?" "What if someone has a stronger argument?" "What would I do then?" What is behind or underneath this? Not only a basic insecurity, but a mis-use of information and knowledge. Instead of letting *ideas battle things out* as both sides of an issue are presented, argued for, and examined for the quality of thinking (reasoning) involved and then choosing the best ideas— people cling to ideas as making them okay. Instead of *being okay as a human being* who then plays with ideas, entertains ideas, tests ideas, etc., they misuse ideas. "My ideas make me okay as a person." "Being politically correct validates me as a person."

The fragile thinker is a victim of the Confirmation Bias— they cannot live in the intellectual environment where there are opposing ideas. If someone holds an idea, understanding, interpretation, or belief different from theirs, they take it as a personal affront. They then attack the person who dares to challenge them. Ironically, Colleges and Universities— which should be places for true thinking, openness to ideas, willingness to hear out different viewpoints— have become one of the most constrictive places for *true thinking.* Conservative views are not only *not* allowed, but are politically unpopular, not "politically correct," and those who hold them are treated as evil persons.

That's the non-thinking attitude of fragile thinkers. Because their thinking is not robust and cannot handle the battle of ideas, fragile thinkers fear differences and any conflict with their views. They whine like little children, "I'm uncomfortable when you say that." Or they accuse the one who differs as offending them and demand that they be deprived of their freedom of speech. They avoid both differences and conflict as if holding a different view was inherently a bad or evil thing. They engage in a pseudo-solution by condemning the opposite side as demonic. They say there are not two sides to an issue, there's only one side— the right side. Their side!

Of course this is what any dictator does. They refuse to allow others to have their say and persecute those who hold different views. Then, in an ironic reversal, they call those who differ and who simply want their voices heard —fascists.

What's the solution? It is psychological. It is to ground one's *person as a human being* in unconditional value. We call that self-esteem (not to be confused with self-confidence, or self-image, or self-belief, etc.). To *esteem* one self on *any condition* constructs *conditional self-esteem* which is the basis for any and all fragile thinkers.

The solution is to *esteem* yourself as a person *unconditionally.* It is to esteem your worth and value as a human being solely and simply on the *fact* that you are a human being and *human beings* are innately valuable, lovable, and of incredible potential. If you base your worth and value on your money, looks, strength, intelligence, racial heritage, religion, education, status, etc., you are setting yourself up for your self-esteem to go up and down according to your conditions. You will then *take things personal* when any of the conditions fluctuate.

To be a *robust thinker who can "think for a living"* and think in a clear, rational, and precise way— start with distinguishing your "person" from your "thoughts." Thinking is something you *do.* It is not what you are. And your thinking, like every other aspect of you, is fallible. Regarding *thinking,* you are often wrong. Everyday you make mistakes in reasoning, remembering, imagining, thinking things through, deciding, evaluating, etc. A fragile thinker tries to avoid that reality. A *robust thinker embraces this as the human condition.* By embracing your cognitive distortions, biases, and fallacies, you can catch yourself in real-time and make adjustments. That will make you an excellent thinker and it will show up in the quality of your understandings, decisions, and choices.

References: *Executive Thinking* (2018). *Secrets of Personal Mastery* (1997). https://www.neurosemantics.com/products/

HOW DID THAT WORK OUT?

In NLP we constantly and repeatedly ask what we call *the ecology question*. This includes any question that asks about the practicality of something, if it is pragmatic, if it is realistic, if it is good for all parties, if it is effective, efficient, if it is holistic, etc. We ask it as a *systems question*— Is something good for the health and well-being of the system? It could be a family system, business system, economic system, and so on. We often ask the ecology question in reverse: Will X do any harm or damage to your finances, health, relationships, mental health, emotional health, etc.?

> The ecology question enables you to **think in terms of the whole,** the system, and as such is an important aspect of critical thinking. It is also essential for thinking for a living.

Let's now ask the ecology question about the protests in the US. Four weeks ago protesters in Seattle went to the streets to protest a mishap in Minnesota over a rogue policeman who misused his powers. But then the protests turned riotous and as the rioters turned anarchists. They "took over six square blocks" of downtown Seattle. It was not theirs, but they hijacked it.

Interesting enough, the female black Police Chef (Carmen Best) thought it was a bad idea while simultaneously the female white Mayor (Jenny Durkan) thought it was "a summer of love." As the Mayor then allowed the rioters take the city as a hostage and abandoned the Police Station in the area (East Precinct)—the anarchists had the brilliant idea of having an "autonomous zone" — a "cop free zone."

Now with the hindsight of nearly a month— *How has that worked out?* First the rioters turned the city blocks into what looks like a hippie fairgrounds. Then instead of being an "autonomous zone" they developed their own "control" systems with members carrying guns and knifes to enforce the new rules. They rejected the police and *then they became the police!* And how has that worked out? Several people have been attacked, others raped, a few shot, and even two were killed. And who was shot and killed? They were — wait for it — two young African American males! But this time, they were not by the police, they were shot by other rioters. Ahh, so I wonder, if they were to now protest about these killings of young black men, who would they against? Themselves? Yet there's been no protests against the killings.

How else has that worked out? Additionally, crime has spiked in Seattle 525%. And nation-wide from all of the protests about George Floyd, there have been 21 deaths. And guess what? All have been Africa American. Does something seem *off* about this?

Then last week the Mayor, Jenny Durkan, had a change of heart and said that she would be shutting down the autonomous zone. *How did that work out?* When she sent large equipment

(front loaders) to clean out the protesters, but when the protestors laid down in the road, the Mayor backed down. Five days passed. Nothing happened. Well, except for four more shootings and another death.

And as June was coming to a close, the protesters went out and surrounded the Mayor's house in protest of her statement that she would close the autonomous zone down. Funny thing, she did not like that! I guess she didn't take that as "a summer of love" in her neighborhood and around her house. Amazing how things change when it gets personal.

Back to the two square city blocks where many citizens live and many others have businesses— *how did it work out for them*? Well, not so well. The stores are boarded up, business has come to a halt, and many of the citizens who live there have filed lawsuits against the city. Gee, what a summer of love this is turning out to be! And when Horace Lorenzo Anderson's 19 year old son was shot and killed— no one let him know. To say the least, that certainly didn't seem to work out very well.

Then on July 1, with the protests at her house, with more shootings and another death in past few days, suddenly with the rising violence, Mayor Jenny Durkan had a change of heart. Now she is more determined to have the police to clear the area. About what's been happening in Seattle, today Police Chief Carmen Best said it has been "lawless and brutal." And when she returned to assess the damage, she said that she was "stunned" by the property damage and all the garbage.

How has rejecting the police and being soft on the rioters worked out? It worked out as most people expected it would— with the protesters in charge, there would be more violence and deaths and chaos. Law and order is what enables us to create a civilized community. Anyone who has a knowledge of history knows that.   If there's corruption in those we train and hire (e.g., police) or elect (e.g., politicians) to carry out "law and order," then we need to do police and political *reform.* Autonomous zones and cop-free zones are self-contradictory terms and idealistic non-sense.

Ecological thinking— asking about the value, usefulness, and long-term effectiveness of an idea or a policy—it is a powerful NLP resource.

      Further reading: *Executive Thinking* (2018)

FEELING GUILTY OVER
SOMEONE ELSE'S HISTORY

With the destruction of statues of historical figures in the US, figures who played a key role in the nation's history, there's been a lot of uncritical and false thinking about history itself. What it represents, what it means, the historical contexts in which things happened. The issue is about people of previous ages who did things that we today consider "bad." For example, back in the 18th century when the United States began, the presence of "slavery" was prevalent and most of the emerging leaders who created the new nation had slaves. Washington did; Jefferson did, most anyone of any wealth did. And given that slaves *at that time* had no rights, no standing, it was often the epitome of compassion and protection to take a slave in.

Why? It was the social environment of that day and had been the status quo for centuries— for millennia. It was only in the late 18th century (1750s onward) that the most advanced nations began to question it and began to end it with legislation. In fact, unknown to most people today, the founders of the US constitution put 1809 as the ending of slave trade. Some had argued to outlaw such trade long before that date.

So here's something very "bad" that happened hundreds of years ago that was a world-wide phenomena. Question: Who today should feel guilty about that? A strange question. Right? Of course, if there was no demand for cheap labor back then, there would not have been slave trade in the first place. So who should feel guilty for the social demand that called for slaves? Who should feel guilty for the slave trade business? And without tribal leaders in Africa willing to provide slaves, there also would not have been a slave trade industry. So who should feel guilty for selling their own people into slavery?

The answer to all of these questions is— *no one.* At least no one living in the 21st century *did* any of that! Nor anyone in the 20th century. And only a few people actually participated in such despicable behavior at the first of the 19th century. With Lincoln's Emancipation Declaration of 1860 and the American Civil War (1860-1865) the evil of human slavery ended— at least in the US (it continued in other countries, but at least it ended here).

Guilt is an appropriate emotion for the person who *does wrong* against another person or persons. But you cannot *be* guilty and do not need to *feel* guilty for something you did not do (if you did, that is another pathology). How could you? You weren't there. You weren't born. The idea of "white guilt" for actions taken two, three, and more centuries ago is a cognitive fallacy. So also the idea of "black guilt" for actions taken by tribal leaders those many centuries ago.

Slavery of human beings has a very long history being the legacy of ancient wars. When one group of people "conquered" another they would gruesomely slay hundreds or thousands and then take hundreds or thousands of them back to their country as slaves. When the "new world" opened up in the Americas, slavery was used as an economic process for cheap labor. That activity began many hundreds of years ago —when the whole world was at a much lower level of consciousness.

The good news is that mankind as been growing up, maturing, and our ethics, morality, and sense of consciousness has also matured. Another cognitive fallacy today is to judge those in previous age by today's values. They didn't know our values nor lived by them. To apply a basic NLP premise— they were doing the best they could with the mental models they had. They had positive intentions, even though it resulted it a lot of hurtful and ugly consequences.

When we fail to *consider the context, the economic and political environment of a previous age* and judge it with our thinking today, we engage in a cognitive bias and distortion. It prevents us from understanding that age, the struggles at that time, the historical advances that they made, and learn from that history.

Ah yes, *learning from history— from mistakes* so that we do not repeat history. That's why we need the statues and memorials, not to celebrate the wrongs, but to *learn from them.* Learning enables us to understand *how we got here* and that enables us to plot the next steps toward creating a more perfect union.

The mainline media and others who are over-simplifying things, looking at things *only from today's perspectives,* creates a false narrative. The United States was *not* created to be a racist country— it was created to become a color-blind country as Martin Luther King Jr. noted. It was created on a premise of equality that had never before been uttered in politics— "that all men are created equal..." King quoted that as a promissory note in his *I Have a Dream* speech and said that he was there to "cash in on that check." He didn't reject the Constitution or the Founders as racists; he quoted their enlightened vision as a guiding light for the Civil Rights Movement. He did not want to promote black lives matter or white lives matter, he wanted a color-blind society where we would not judge a man or woman by the color of their skin, but the *quality of their character.*   Now that is the thinking of a self-actualizing person!

> Want More?   I came across the following links from a good friend in the UK, Kenneth Attwell;
>> https://unherd.com/thepost/coleman-hughes-the-moral-case-against-blm/
>>
>> https://www.spiked-online.com/2020/07/09/blm-rebels-without-a-cause/

THINKING IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Thinking itself is challenging enough. And it is not easy. That's because most of the time we are not actually *thinking,* we are only mentally reacting. We are talking "off the top of our head" quoting things we already know, politically correct bullet points, and from our biases. In *Executive Thinking* (2018) you can find six stages of non-thinking which occur before real *thinking* occurs.   Given that, then add uncertainty.   Thinking in uncertain times and with uncertain information— wow, that is an incredible challenge!

Consider the *thinking* that's been going on regarding the Covid19 virus. Even though President Trump closed travel to China in January, the *information* from the CDC and the World Health Organization *at that time* was that the virus could not be passed from human to human. Later in late February, Nancy Pelosi criticized Trump for shutting air travel from Europe and telling people to "come to Chinatown" there's nothing to fear. Later the CDC predicted two million Americans would die if the President didn't shut the country down to slow the spread and that was to prevent the hospitals and health care system from being overwhelmed.

Since then we keep getting all sort of conflicting information about masks, treatments, social distancing, vaccines, etc. There have been lots of inaccuracies and disinformation and perhaps lies. The Governor of California has been over-zealous in forbidding people to go to church to pray while ridiculously tolerant for allowing protests and riots. Dr. Anthony Fauci, who the media looks to for expert answers, has changed his recommendations 180 degrees over those months. Lots of uncertainty!

So given all that ... *how are you and I to engage in clear, rational thinking in contexts of such confusion and uncertainty?* Ah, that is the question! Multiply that insecurity, that not-knowing-what's-going-to-happen times the economic insecurity, the loss of jobs, the decline of the economy, the not-knowing-when-we-will-get-back-to-normal— and what do you have? What we have is *the best conditions possible for irrational fearful thinking.* And to a great extent, that's what we're getting.

Up against all of that then imagine that a couple of outrageous racial incidents occur— as we did at the end of May. Then suddenly, the people who have been "locked up" at home, fearful, insecure, confused, *and irrational* turn into destructive riots that burn, loot, and destroy. Then that irrationality gets the "bright idea" that *all* police everywhere are the problem and so the "defund the police" irrationality. Talk about the lack of *clear thinking!* Talk about the lack of *critical thinking*!

And as if all that wasn't bad enough, add in the fact that it is *political season* when millions

cannot think straight or clear anyway, but only through the lens of their *political agenda.* Further, some elected officials seem unable to put sanity before party affiliation. The call for Police Reform was lead by an African American Senator, Tim Scott, yet it was rejected outright even though 80% of the reforms is precisely what the democrats say they want. Why? Apparently to have a political issue for the fall. Party comes before doing what's right.

All of this gives us a formula and what a formula it is!

Virus	X	Emotions	X	Uncertainty		Emotions	X	Politics	=	Mob mentality
Pandemic virus		Fear		Disinformation		Frustration/ Anger		Political Agendas		Irrationality
Contagious		Insecurity		Info. Confusion		"Locked up"		Economic stress		
		Uncertainty				Loss of jobs/				

No wonder it is next to impossible for there to be reasonable conversations by reasonable people. I'm talking about people who have the skills to listen to each other, "seek first to understand and then be understood," and bring compassion into the dialogue. It is much, much easier to *think things through* when all is calm, peaceful, and secure. It becomes increasingly difficult to think clearly when things are stressful, chaotic, and insecure. *Yet that is precisely when we most need the understanding and skills for collaborative conversations.*

What can we do? What can you and I do? Since all change always begins at home— each of us has to first "*be the change* that we want to promote." That means learning to access a state of inner peace and security within ourselves. Like everything else human, it is *inside-out.* Then we need to learn the principles and skills of collaborative communication. The good news is that this is precisely the domain of Neuro-Semantic NLP. This is what we most essentially do.

- With the NLP Communication Model, you learn how to handle language and non-verbal conversations effectively so you can be clear and precise. That's "critical thinking."
- You learn how to be reasonable by learning how to listen from a state of rapport.
- You learn self-communication by which you get yourself in a good state so that you can listen, care, be clear, be creative, and solve problems.
- You learn to both embrace and manage uncertainty so you can handle it effectively.

For more, www.neurosemantics.com
    Click   Writings > Neurons Compiled Meta Reflections

For *Executive Thinking* – click
    www.neurosemantics.com/products/executive-thinking/

THINKING OUT-LOUD
DO ALL LIVES MATTER?

For me and I would guess for most people, there's no question, yes, black lives matter. Of course! I also have no question about white lives matter, red lives matter, yellow lives matter, blue lives matter. *They all matter.* I would even go so far as to say that the lives of the unborn matter. Now for the thinking person, how could any of that be controversial?

Well we live in very strange times, and so people don't seem to be *thinking* at all. Accordingly, some members of the Marxist movement known as "Black Lives Matters" irrationally have concluded that to say "All Lives Matter" is racist. Let's see if we can understand the logic or rationale within such a statement.

Let's start with the universal quantifier, "all." Logically *all* means everyone; it means that no one is excluded. Every life matters regardless of color, ethnicity, religion, or whatever. As an inclusive word (all), it makes an inclusive statement. It does not exclude anyone. It is not prejudiced against anyone. Logically, the statement cannot be racist— that is, prejudiced against any group of people. "All lives matter" includes all black lives. Basic logic. Unless, of course, you live in an alternative universe of "1984" where "all" does not mean *all.*

So the question now arises, Why would anyone *not* want to say that all lives matter? Obviously, such a person must think that some lives don't matter. Ah, there we have it!   So while they call the statement, "all lives matter" racist, they are actually projecting their own racism. *They* are actually the racists! They are the ones who have a prejudice against someone. Most often it is the police (even when the police are black, haspanic, etc.).   They cannot affirm that "Blue Lives Matter." That's who they have a prejudice against.

Actually, the most *non-racist* thing that anyone can say is that "all lives matter." The universal quantifier puts the umbrella of love, compassion, and respect around all humans. To say "All Lives Matter" fully embraces the entire human race and every person within the species. Funny then that the statement "all lives matter" is offensive to the black lives movement. And given that, we now know there's *something else* going on for that movement and that the insult of "racism" is a red herring and is being used for the purpose of distraction.

George Orwell warned in *Animal Farm* and *1984* that one way authoritarian groups can attempt to deceive and take over is by distorting language so that the normal use of words means something else.

check out the Youtube Link:

https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=god+says+all+lives+matter&ru=%2fvideos%2fsearch%3fq%3dgod%2bsays%2ball%2blives%2bmatter%26qpvt%3dgod%2bsays%2ball%2blives%2bmatter%26FORM%3dVDRE&view=detail&mid=7365FF01213B8E0E00D57365FF01213B8E0E00D5&rvsmid=4E5ED7ECE1E914451F464E5ED7ECE1E914451F46&FORM=VDQVAP

THINKING AND FEARING

While the pandemic of the cornavirus from China has been problematic, an equally problematic pandemic that's spread around the world is the fear pandemic. And while doctors, nurses and lots of front-line people have rallied to deal with covid19, almost no one has rallied to address the unreasonable and irrational fears that have spread like a virus around the world. When fear is pandemic it will immobilize your life.

As an emotion, fear is not only very useful, it is an essential state for surviving and thriving. Of course, it has to be properly understood and used. Otherwise it can become irrational and thereby destructive. Our nervous systems are designed to register things *dangerous* and things *overwhelming.* These are the things that then activate the general arousal syndrome enabling us to fight or flee (or freeze).

This system works just fine when we face true dangers or overwhelm. Then our neurology prepares us with the energy to shift focus, pay attention to the danger, and take effective action to either face it with care or avoid it altogether. This is also known as the *stress response*.

However this system *goes wrong* when what we define as "danger," or when we fail to recognize the presence of overload or overwhelm. This is where *thinking* plays a fundamental role in the experience of fear. If you falsely define something as dangerous, you send a message to your body to respond *as if it were dangerous.* But it is not. Now we have an *unrealistic fear.* Yet thinking and believing it real— your body doesn't know any better than to go into fight or flight. You will automatically respond and *feel* the same as if it were real.

This is where you can go into a spin. You mis-label something as dangerous, your body and unconscious mind gives you the experience and feel of fear, you then use that as evidence or proof that the fear is true, and so your fear is amplified. Then the more you fear, the more your fear grows. And the more your fear grows, the more you relate *the state of fear* to other things. This makes you more and more fearful and anxious. It's a vicious circle.

Irrational, unrealistic fear feels the same as real and authentic fear. There's no difference at the feeling level. The difference lies at the thinking level. That's why *an objective exploration of the fear* is a great way to begin to manage the fear.

> What are you fearing? How is that object dangerous? What specifically is the danger?
> How much are you fearing? If you gauge the fear, where is it from 0 to 10?
> How realistic or unrealistic is the fear? What is realistic or not?
> Do all people fear this? If not, then what resources do they have that enables them?
> Is this a fear to flee from or to face with courage and resolution?
> If it is to avoid— what are the best ways to avoid it?

If it is to face — what are the best ways, methods, strategies for facing it?

Not only are there thinking processes that create fear where there is no danger or overload, there are also *thinking patterns* that unusefully amplify the fear. Among these are over-generalization, personalizing, awfulizing, emotionalizing, imagining the worst case (playing "what if..." tapes), etc. These cognitive distortions greatly increase the experience of fear.

Over-generalization occurs using all-or-nothing language, using universal quantifiers (all, every, none, etc.) and blowing up one's description leaving out exceptions and conditions.

Personalizing turns a danger into a personal problem instead of an external circumstance to be dealt with.

Awfulizing is describing things with words like awful, terrible, horrible, end-of-the-world, etc.

Emotionalizing is confusing what you feel with the facts of reality. It assumes to feel something means that thing is real.

Imagining the worse is tunnel vision, worst-case scenario pessimistic thinking that plays "What if..." tapes. It borrows imagined problems from the future.

All of these are childish ways of thinking that are sure to create and amplify a state of fear. Therefore when you changes these distorted constructs— you manage the fear and make it appropriate.

How else to manage fear, especially irrational unrealistic fear?

Ridicule the fear so that you can laugh at it and lighten up about it.

Command it. You fear that you will faint? Okay, do that now. Here.

Accept it. Okay, so you are afraid. What do you want to do?

Accept the symptoms of fear. Sweating, shaking, etc.

Externalize the fear. Give it a funny name.

WHEN YOUR CONSCIOUS MIND
IS UNHELPFUL

Conscious minds come in all sorts of conditions. Some are well informed, sharp, incisive, clear and so serve the owner very well. Others are not so well informed, in fact, may be mis-informed, deceived, confused, dull and do not serve the owner well at all. What's the condition of your conscious mind?

When you consider the mind of a young infant, it's obvious that we all start out with a very weak and completely uninformed conscious mind. Then we go through the cognitive developmental stages. Usually, at first our mind is very naive and open to anything and that's where it can become really distorted— after all, the mind of a child is not capable of critical thinking. So depending on the things it hears, the things it is told— it can develop all sorts of misinformation and disinformation.

As a child goes through the learning process, he goes through the ego-centric thinking stage, the magic thinking stage, the concrete thinking stage, and so on. It's in this period of life (0 to 12) that we experience, learn, and sometimes solidify various *Cognitive Distortions—* over-generalizing, personalizing, dichotomizing (either-or), emotionalizing, etc. As a result, the person who does that will inherent a very unhelpful conscious mind.

Here, it's **not** the case that *the conscious mind is the problem*, it is not. The problem is *the programming* that a conscious mind has received and how a person, now a teenager is *using* his or her conscious mind. What is common is that we have learned a lot of judgments, insults, and criticisms and now *that's the way we talk to ourselves.* What is common is that we have learned to use our conscious mind *passively* so that instead of directing and focusing our mind, we tend to react to whatever grabs our attention. Consequently, we live in the world of attentions (and not in the world of intentions).

No wonder then that many people complain about their conscious minds. I would to. As an instrument— the only instrument you have— for navigating life and determining what things are, how they work, and what you should or could do, *a poorly developed conscious mind operates as a poorly equipped tool.* No wonder there are many who then conclude, "The problem is the conscious mind," and try to solve the problem by trusting their feelings, intuitions, the voices of others, etc.

A well-developed and equipped conscious mind enables you to look at yourself, others, and life clearly and adequate and determine what you want. You set goals. You identify *what* you want, *why* you want it, and *how* to achieve it. You use your imagination to construct 'life at its best for

me' and then you set out to make it happen. You create a strategy of feasible actions that you can take to move you from your present state to your desired state. You access your internal and external resources as you mobilize your energies to make it happen. That's how a well-developed conscious mind serves you in an effective and ecological way.

Not so with an unfocused, highly distracted, self-judging, self-contempting, and confused conscious mind. *That kind of a mind is itself the problem.* Those who suffer such may forcibly come to an understanding of what they want and how to get there, then their untamed conscious mind unhelpfully intrudes. They doubt themselves. They fear failure, mistakes, embarrassment, and all sorts of things. They get defensive and say hurtful things to others. They are their own worst enemies. But the situation is even worse! What the person has thought consciously becomes programmed into them at *unconscious levels.* Now all of this occurs automatically. It occurs outside of their control. Talk about locked into a corner!

So, what's the solution? Obviously, to *re-educate both the conscious and the unconscious mind.* To do that, set the realization that *you* are not the problem— the thinking, framing, and programming is the problem. If I thought that way, I would feel and act that way. As you *free* yourself from that personalizing, now you can more clearly work on getting a cognitive make-over.

What the cognitive distortions especially do is activate the lower levels of your brain and mobilize your *emotions* so that you are engaged in distorted emotional thinking. What's needed is the emotional safety so that you can *think about* things with more objectivity and clarity. That's where the frame, *you are not the problem, the frame is the problem*, can liberate you for a cognitive make-over. Try it out.

Thinking is just a tool. It's your tool for creating mental models by which you can then navigate life. And *the quality of your thinking is the quality of your life.*

> For more, get *Executive Thinking* (2018) and look for the next training in *Brain Camp.*
> That's where Neuro-Semantics offers you a cognitive make-over.

FOCUSED OR ECLECTIC
THAT IS THE QUESTION

In the 1980s I came upon Cognitive Psychology and learning it, I chose that I would take a focused, systematic, systemic, and synergistic approach. Previously, I had spent many years studying Psychoanalysis, then Adlerian, Rank, then Transactional Analysis, then Rational-Emotive. And along the way, I had looked into various fads that arose over the years. But once finding Cognitive Psychology, I chose to *not* be eclectic. That choice saved me from being distracted and reactive. I had enough of that. Then I found NLP and I immediately knew what I had. I recognized that NLP was a Cognitive model— and one that filled-in the details for Rational-Emotive and other cognitive approaches.

Now being eclectic, or eclecticism, is defined by Webster in the dictionary in this way: *"Eclectic:* selecting what appears to be best in various doctrines, methods or styles." You can see it in the field of Coaching. ICF proudly announces that it has adopted an eclectic approach to coaching. As a result— *you never know what you're going to get when you ask for an ICF coach!* You could get someone trained in psychoanalysis, Adlerian psychology, TA, Cognitive, NLP or someone with a background all sorts of New Age hocus-pocus. When a person operates as an eclectic, you also never know what he may pull out of his bag of tricks or whether it has any relevance to the issue at hand.

A big danger with eclecticism is that *it sets you up to be highly reactive to fads.* Any "new" thing that appears or that someone sells the person on— suddenly it is the new magical cure. In the field of NLP, eclecticism has been disastrous. People got a brief training in NLP, quickly went through Prac. and Master Prac., maybe even Trainers and then in their impatience to get rich or famous— they were ready to add *anything and everything* to NLP. In many, many countries this has given NLP a really bad name. Further most of these people don't actually know what NLP is. Because they've added so many things to it— they do not know its essence. They are confused when asked, "What is NLP?"

I have seen so-called NLP people add DISK, Myers-Briggs, Taylor-Johnson, Enneagram and other "personality" typing models to NLP who have *no awareness that typology completely contradicts NLP.* They think it will help them get into an organization, and so they are desperate to adopt anything — even if it is a denial of the NLP presuppositions.

> [As an aside, if you have to use such instruments, do so. But do so with an awareness of what you are doing and why— to get in. Don't confuse it with NLP and don't become an advocate of it. NLP has so much better tools!]

The eclectic approach is both fed by impatience and it will generate more impatience. It cause

you to always be chasing after something new. Something different. And what does that lead to? The lack of mastery.

Ah yes, *mastery.* If you are serious about develop *expertise* in what you are doing— then you have to patiently stay with what you have learned. You have to practice it regularly so that it becomes mind-to-muscled into your neurology and trains your "intuitions" so that it becomes unconscious intelligence. That patience, persistence, determination, resilience and commitment over 10 years of deliberate practice to turn basic knowledge into expertise.

That's what I did. I started my studies of NLP in 1986 and by the time I finished my trainers training, I had read every single NLP book [of course, that's not saying that much since there were only 30 or 40 back then!]. Then I read and studied in depth Korzybski's books, I read the books of Bateson (multiple times), I read everything from Virginia Satir, everything from Perls, and half a dozen books from Erickson (only the past couple years have I read just about everything from Erickson). When I started my first modeling project— *Resilience* (1990 to 1994), and in the process discovered the Meta-States Model. It took 9 years of pretty concentrated study and intense application (in doing therapy and trainings).

Learning *one model deeply, thoroughly, systematically, and systemically* allowed me to develop some skills with NLP and open up new areas. When I learned NLP I immediately applied rapport, eye-accessing, predicates, representational systems, anchoring, etc. in therapy conversations. I did that until 1996, then shifting to consulting, coaching and training, I continued until 2002 when I put together Meta-Coaching as a methodology. That was the result of 22 years of focused emphasis on NLP and Meta-States.

After the first 10 years, I began collaborating with Bob Bodenhamer. What did Bob bring to the table? Years of focused experience in NLP! That amplified my own and created a new synergy. Then with his talent for seeing practical applications, while I was quickly reading extensively in some area (wealth, leadership, selling, etc.), he kept saying, "We could apply that piece to this area!" I would have missed many of those applications if he had not brought his complementary skills. What make it work was that each of us had a sense of abundance so there was never any question that we would honor each other's contributions.

What's the point? *Focus on one model! Learn it in depth, go deeper into it and applications of it than anyone else. By thorough, be systematic.* Give up the shallow temptation of being eclectic. In the long run it will not serve you well. It will actually undermine your expertise.

NLP, and especially Neuro-Semantic NLP, is still very, very rich as a model and there are lots and lots of things yet to discover and apply. If you think you understand it— *that is an clear indication that you do not really understand it.*   I still have lots and lots of questions about it that have not been answered. I still read new books and articles on NLP. I go to Conferences to learn from others. We have an incredibly deep and rich model in NLP and Neuro-Semantics—a communication model that can change the world. It is all you need!

THINKING OUT-LOUD
ABOUT POLITICS

From 2012 to 2014 after working out the details of a self-actualizing leader, I took an interest in understanding *politics* and leadership in that domain. I figured that as a *subjective human experience,* it could be modeled. We could model good examples of intelligent and mature politicians and we could model toxic and destructive politicians. Abraham Maslow trigger the idea and wrote about self-actualizing politics. He wrote about what it would take to create "a good people" and he even ran a thought experiment about what kind of politics a group of 100 or 1000 self-actualizing people would create on a desserted island.

That led to lots of reading and researching in the area of politics, political science, sociology, and the writings of the founding fathers of the great American experiment in democracy. I wrote the book in 2014 and published it in 2015— long before the current political polarization that we now have in the US.

It also led me to read biographies of several *politicians*---- Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mohandas Ghandhi. After all, there have already appeared on Planet Earth *some* self-actualizing politicians. So in terms of finding some high quality exemplars to model— we have such and they arose in contexts of division, conflict, polarization, racial bias, etc. Two of these exemplars were elected to office and therefore had an opportunity to demonstrate how an emotionally mature person could handle power in a way that would unleash the potential of a nation. Two of the exemplars, however, never had "official" political power— they only had the personal power of their lifestyle, their voice, their vision, and their ability to communicate and inspire.

Numerous things surprised me in the study which is now in the book *Political Coaching: Self-Actualizing Leaders and Countries* (2015). One is that *we are all political.* By nature, whenever we are with other people, there are "politics." After all we have to come up with ways of getting along, ways of communicating, making decisions, allocating resources, etc. That's why politics is also in the office and at home. Who is in charge? How did he or she take charge? How are things decided? Are the politics healthy and self-actualizing?

As *political beings* our lives are determined by our politics. And our politics are determined by our *thinking* (e.g., ideas, understanding, believing, deciding, framing, etc.). *What you think* of people, of human nature, of differences, of conflicts, of resolving conflicts, of working together, of getting along, of establishing rules, and a thousand other subjects — controls your actions and reactions and the quality of your life.

Your politics, therefore, can be no better than your thinking about human beings. So if you think of people as ravenous animals fighting in the modern jungle for power, superiority, control, material goods, etc., that way of thinking turns politics into a battle— a war. It is a zero-sum game of winners and losers. It is a ruthless competition are the ends justify the means.

Conversely, if you think of people as human beings with vast potentials for loving, contributing, being responsible, being moral and ethical beings— people who want to be their best selves and see others grow and develop and leave the world a better place— that leads to a very different politics. It involves a different kind of political thinking.

Maslow and then Douglas McGregor mapped all of this out in terms of Theory X and Theory Y of human nature. McGregor applied it to business and management of organizations. These two different philosophical frames of human nature lead either to Command-and-Control authoritarian leaders or to the collaborative leadership of the self-actualizing frame. One leads to a view of government as a Daddy or Mommy who takes care of children — who knows what's best for them, who assumes that they can and should do for citizens what they assume they really can't do for themselves. One leads to a view of government as a steward of the people's voice and money. Government is to provide a rule of law so that all have an equal opportunity to be educated and to develop their talents as they become increasingly responsible and informed citizens.

Politics is inevitable. It occurs in every family, every business, and every organization. It occurs at local levels, national levels, and international levels. There's no getting away from it. The ultimate questions are about the *quality* and *kind* of politics that we create. Humanistic politics works from a respect of the dignity of all persons, all lives matter, a belief in human potentials and human responsibility. It satisfies the need for survival and safety by law and order. It satisfies connection, bonding, cooperation, and personal dignity by providing for certain freedoms — speech, assembly, etc. It also satisfies the self-actualization needs by creating a context where there are opportunities to pursue meaning, beauty, excellence, contribution, ethics, etc.

> For more, see *Political Coaching: Self-Actualizing Leaders and Countries* (2015) as a real book — or as a PDF file in "The Shop"   www.neurosemantics.com

NLP IS ENOUGH!

If your aim is to be a full-time trainer, whether you plan to publicly or within organizations or some combination of the two— all you need is NLP and specifically Neuro-Semantic NLP. That is all that you need. You do *not* need to try to supplement it with other things— not any of the personality typing programs, not neuro-science (as if you or any of us are qualified for that), not quantum mechanics (which has nothing to do with what we're doing anyway), not yoga, not wilderness adventures, etc. You do not *need* anything else. The same holds if you want to be a coach, consultant, therapist, etc. NLP is enough.

Why do you *not* need anything else? Because NLP and Neuro-Semantics are incredibly rich domains. It is a domain so rich that you could spend the rest of your life studying it and never come to fully gain mastery of all of its facets. It is also a domain so suggestive that there are many, many more areas (sub-domains) within NLP that are yet to be developed. And because we need sharp brilliant minds working on developing those domains — you could be one of those persons.

There is yet another reason for this, namely, there is far too much over-simplification in NLP, an over-simplifying that has degraded NLP so that what is presented publically is a mere shadow of its full reality. NLP is presented in far too many places in a way that makes it anemic and shallow. From the way it is present you would not realize how dynamic it is and all of the things you can do with it.

What explains this? Several things. First and foremost is the fact that most people not know *what it is.* They do not know that it is most essentially a Communication Model. Look at the first NLP book, *The Structure of Magic.* Look at its subtitle: "A book about communication and change." There you have it! *Communication and change.*

Why then is it called "neuro-linguistic programming?" It is because that's what "communication" is made out of— *neurological processes* (brain, neo-cortex, nervous systems, physiology, etc.) that generates *linguistics* (symbolic systems for encoding and transmitting meaning) and encode them in dependable and repeatable *programs.*

When you communicate to yourself, you create your internal sense of reality and map of reality. That gives you your "reality" and it could be highly resourceful and effective or it could be completely dysfunctional and miserable. Whatever it is— you created it. You learned it and you maintain it *and you can change it if you like.*

When an expert communicates to him or herself, that expert creates a great internal map of

reality and experience of reality. It enables the expert to do things that the rest of us cannot. Yet we could discover it, model it, and then use it to inform how we could do so much better in that area of expertise. We call this modeling and herein lies a whole range of things we have yet to model— ways to find best practices, "programs" that some expert spent a lifetime learning which we could map out and replicate in our own lives.

When people communicate among themselves, whether it is a couple, a family, a team, a business, a community, etc., they co-create their social sense of reality and map of reality. If it is accurate and precise, if it works and produces good results— it creates healthy organizations and even governments. If it is inaccurate and imprecise, then the inter-personal communication will probably result in misunderstandings, arguments, conflicts and ineffective relationships.
> *Communication is everything in NLP — that's what NLP is.* That's why NLP is all you need.

What then about Neuro-Semantics? How does Neuro-Semantic contribute to NLP and expand the NLP Model? It does so by focusing on *self-reflexive communication.*   That is, how we not only communicate linearly and outwardly, but also systemically and inwardly. This reveals *the hidden dimensions of communication*— how we frame and set frames on our communications— frames that give us and others a way to understand or interpret what is said and done.

Personally I have spent three-and-half decades on this one single model. In *Thinking Like A Modeler* (2018) I described the twenty-six modeling projects that I have taken on— projects that became books, training manuals, and a lot of the content of Neuro-Semantics. And I am nowhere near done, in fact, I can now see that I will not live long enough to cover all of the subjects that I'd like to cover. There's too much. There are depths in NLP that have not been plummeted and there are many other areas that we have not even begun to explore. If you want to spend your life in an area and master it and develop expertise in it — NLP is enough, especially Neuro-Semantic NLP.

PRESIDENTIAL CHALLENGES

When he became president, he was actually an unlikely choice. He had so many things against him and yet over a wild selection process up against so many other very able candidates, four of whom were expected to become president rather than him. At the beginning there was no expectation that he could become president, none at all, but that's what happened.   As a Washington outsider, he was viewed widely as completely ill-equipped and unable to handle the presidency. What did work for him was his level of energy and activity, he did get things done. He also had a hands-on approach to his leadership ... and as an extrovert spent most of his time talking with people both in and out of the office.

He thought of himself as the voice of the people, the forgotten man.   At first, he hired and fired associates to help him run the government. There was a lot of turn-over in the first couple years. It took a full three years to evolve things so that they reflected his policies and were effective. His administration suffered in the first year or two from people who were actually spies from his enemies who lacked loyalty and honesty and who did many things to undermine the things that he attempted to do. His enemies tried everything they could to discredit him.

In terms of the press and the press's response to him, "he was publically called just about every name imaginable by the press ..." One newspaper labeled him "the craftiest and most dishonest politician that ever disgraced an office in America." (p. 66). He suffered "severe and unjust criticism." (p. 68).

Now those quotes (above) come from the book, *Lincoln on Leadership* (1992) by Donald T. Phillips. The names that they called the president included "a grotesque baboon, a third-rate country lawyer who once split rails and now splits the Union, a coarse vulgar joker, a dictator, an ape, a buffoon, etc." That was politics 1860. Of course, none of that was about Donald J. Trump, it was about Abraham Lincoln.

Further, Trump is no Lincoln and he would do himself a lot of good if he would emulate Lincoln's kindness, his ability to ignore insults, and forgive violations. He would also do so much better if he did as Lincoln did— stay absolutely focused on one thing and not get sidetracked on personalities. Lincoln focused on uniting the union and freeing the slaves; Trump should focus on "making America great again."

One thing about leaders, especially leaders who get things done, and who take a bold stance for his policies— he will be criticized and mocked. And this becomes even more so when he is not a Washington insider, not someone from the swamp. Put up a non-politician, who doesn't know the deceptive way of talking out of both sides of one's mouth at the same time, against those who

have vested interests and who are indebted to so many others — and you will have a person who everyone in the swamp will hate and do whatever they can to get rid of him.

If all of that happened to the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, I suppose it will happen to others. I also suppose this is politics as usual. We can do better than this— much better.

> For more, see *Political Coaching: Self-Actualizing Leaders and Countries* (2015), Chapter 23 is exclusively on Abraham Lincoln.

NLP IS ENOUGH
IF YOU HAVE THE SPIRIT!

I wrote that "NLP is enough" and now I have to qualify that. *NLP is enough* is actually only valid *if you have the spirit.* What spirit is that? The spirit of NLP. I began developing that idea in 1989 when I was taking notes of the Bandler Master Practitioner Training in San Diego. Eventually I decided to make that the theme of the notes which we turned into a book with the same title, *The Spirit of NLP* (1996, Crown House Publications).

I think I was very fortunate to pick up on that in those years when I was first learning NLP because, above and beyond the content information of NLP, *I learned the spirit.* I learned the spirit that brought about the surprising and unexpected discovery of NLP itself ... and which later enabled me to continue the creative discovery of more aspects of NLP leading eventually to Neuro-Semantics.

What is the spirit of NLP? First and foremost it is *an intense curiosity* that asks all kinds of questions right out of the gate, even "crazy" questions— questions that you might not suspect would lead anywhere. To understand that, remember that the three individuals responsible for NLP were *outsiders* to the field of psychology. They hardly knew the current paradigms of psychology and so when they met two incredible therapeutic communicators (Fritz and Virginia), because they didn't know so much of the *content* (Gestalt or Family Systems), they asked a lot of crazy questions which enabled them to see things others had not.

The spirit of NLP is also one of *skepticism.* Instead of believing everything presented in psychology as "the truth," they doubted it and they questioned it. Of course, too much skepticism can lead to cynicism, disbelief, and even subversiveness. And that is something that the founders actually had far too much of! The founders so happened to live at a time in the cultural environment of the US in the 1960s / 1970s where all sorts of things were being turned up-side-down. Everything was being questioned and doubted. There was the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Right Movement, the Anti-War Movement, and with that the anti-government movement. It was the time of Rock'n Roll, Drugs, Dropping Out, and being skeptical about anything anyone over 30 said (they were all under 30!). So the founders brought a *subversiveness* to the field of Psychology. [A negative consequence of that was the negative image that NLP created in that field. Something we are still trying to overcome and undo to this very day.]

The spirit of NLP is one of *experimentation.* It is one of *try it and see what happens.* This is a spirit that considers there's no such thing as failure, only feedback about what works and what

doesn't and a willingness to *give it a go.* This active pragmatism, in turn, led the founders to wildly experiment with their original groups long before they formalized their discoveries. Three years they experimented with the language patterns of Perls and Satir and then the hypnotic language patterns of Erickson ... long before any publications.

When you add these factors together— intense curiosity, skepticism, wild experimentation— what do you get? You get a person who is passionate for "going for it" trying new and untested things, and being willing to examine one's own assumptions. And if you take on this spirit— you will create an intense committed state that's flexible, playful, and proactive. Do that — and you'll discover how NLP is enough today for you to become masterful in your field.

Is that all? No. If you read *The Spirit of NLP,* you will find more—

Ferocious Resolve	Openness to Feedback
Flexibility	Playfulness and Humor
Solution focus	Installing with trance
Search for excellence	Persistence

Yet while the original founders had a pretty wild and wonderful spirit that generated such an incredible model in such a short time, the original founders also lacked certain qualities. They lacked a true sense of community. They lacked a spirit of collaboration and they failed to model healthy leaders who pull people together for a vision greater than themselves. That was their Achilles Heel. The result was conflict, division, egos getting in the way, people refusing to acknowledge each other's contributions, and the lack of ethics. They failed to model healthy communities and to build in ethics, accountability and responsibility.

These additional qualities give us some more elements for a healthy spirit of NLP — or shall I say, of Neuro-Semantics or Neuro-Semantic NLP.

For more, check out *The Spirit of NLP.*
www.neurosemantics.com/products/the-spirit-of-nlp/

FRAMING AND REFRAMING VIOLENCE

Reframing is powerful and that's because *meaning* is what you create and invent about the events, activities, words, people, etc. around you. Outside of your nervous system and mind, nothing has meaning. *Meaning* is not *in* things, it is what you *attribute* to things. That's why in Neuro-Semantics we constantly say, "You are the meaning-maker." With your nervous systems and your brain (neurology), you invent symbolic symbols, classify things, and thereby construct meaning systems like language. You look outside to what's going on and you construct an understanding about it— you give it meaning. And the meaning you give is the neurology you then live (a Neuro-Semantic principle).

Now if meaning does not exist "out there," if meaning is the ideas, understandings, words, etc. that you use to give significance to things— then you have a lot of leeway in making meaning of things. That's why nearly everything has multiple possibilities of meaning. What does "failing to achieve a goal in a certain time frame" mean? Some people call it a failure, others call themselves a failure, some see it as meaning "not enough time," someone else evaluates it as "not enough resources," another "lack of discipline," another "a learning what to do next time," and so on and on it goes. There is a large leeway from negative and limiting meanings to neutral meanings and on to positive meanings. The bottom line is that your meaning constructs is a choice and a skill, and therefore we can view it as a style. How are you as a meaning-maker?

Meaning attribution may have a large leeway, but it is not infinite. You cannot give any meaning for any thing. There are constraints— there are contexts, historical precedents, a matter of fitness, logical reasoning, critical thinking, etc.

When people in democrat governed cities and states (e.g., Chicago, Portland, Seattle, Baltimore, Washington DC, Minneapolis, Kenosha, Pittsburg, etc.) allow protests to become riots without coming down hard on criminal actions and dismiss it as "a summer of love," "peaceful protests," etc., *and* when the President says all you have to do is ask for the National Guard to control the rioters, then there's no logical, rational way to blame the president for the violence. When Congress failed to pass Senator Tim Scott's bill for Police Reform, President Trump took it upon himself to sign an executive order for Police Reform— most of what the protesters say they wanted. The executive order provides more governance over any policeman who misuses his or her authority, eliminates chock holds, etc.

While those are some of the actions he took to deal with the violence, Biden, the mayor of Portland, and others try to blame Trump for the violence. But that's stretching the framing of

meaning far beyond the constraints of logic. I give them the hutzpah for trying to push the logic of reason beyond logic and common sense, but it goes beyond what is possible for framing and reframing. Facts do count as do social and cultural contexts.

To "incite" violence is to either directly encourage people to set fires, throw rocks, refuse to obey the curfew orders, yell insults, shout obscenities, or in the passive mode, to not discourage it by a strong law and order stance. What is fascinating is that three weeks ago at the Democrat National Convention, not a single word was ever mentioned about the riots— now three weeks later they are accusing the President as being the inciting cause of the riots!

Actually there are lots of videos of Democrats calling for people to "get in the face" of Republicans (Maxine Waters) and to take Trump out behind the gym and "I'd beat the hell out of him" (Joe Biden). It was Kamala Harris who applauded L.A. officials for slashing millions from the Police department. It was also the Biden campaign who funded the bail for the rioters in Minnesota. So who is really *inciting* violence?

Given that the violence is occurring almost exclusively in the Democrat run cities (mayors and governors being Democrats), it strains reason to try to frame the violence being incited by the other party. That doesn't even make sense. The violence occurs where those in charge tell the police to back off, who forbid the police to do their job, and who do not support the police when something goes wrong. They are quicker to support the rioters than the Peace Officers. If they do arrest rioters, they do not keep them in jail or prosecute them. That essentially gives free rein for them to keep doing what they are doing. Any parent knows that you do not "discipline" a child by stating consequences and then dismissing the consequences. It is being soft on law and order that *incites* violence by providing no constraint against it.

> [This series on Political Thinking represents my thinking, and mine alone. It does not necessarily represent Neuro-Semantics which is a psychological model.   L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.]

NLP IS ENOUGH
IF YOU CAN COLLABORATE

If you are a trainer, coach, consult, or client and customer, I believe that NLP is plenty enough for you. Well, another qualifier— it is enough **if** you collaborate. As a communication model, the Neuro-Linguistic Programming model is about *people interacting, dialoguing, seeking to understand each other, work together, create partnerships, build effective teams, and modeling expertise from experts.* And all of that is social. It is interpersonal. It is not an individualistic, "I'll do it by myself" thing.

But NLP goes wrong when it is used individualistically to get your own way. That's when it becomes manipulative and abusive. To the extent that you think of it in individualistic terms and use it individualistically, to that extent it becomes distorted and less effective. You even have to think in non-individualistic terms to use it well with yourself. You have to collaborate with yourself, recognize that you are a system of interactive parts and apply it to yourself. If you don't, you end up with a corrupted form of NLP.

You may not know it, but NLP was **not** created by two men, *it actually began as a collaboration* of some two dozen persons. It began as Bandler and Pucelik worked with a group of a dozen or more students who wanted to learn and experience Gestalt Therapy. Eventually that group morphed into three or more additional groups over the next three years. Grinder entered into the collaboration once the first group began experiencing transformations and didn't understood *how* it was happening.

Even later, in the first years when NLP got its name and original organization— there was another group of collaborators who made that happened. That included Dilts, DeLozier, Cameron, Gordon, McClendon, Andreas', and many others. In this, there were many co-developers and it was in and through *collaboration* that it was so creative and productive.

What messed it up was the raw, rugged individualism that was introduced and demonstrated by two of the founders, Bandler and Grinder. In fact, their first act of *anti-collaboration* was the act that initiated *Meta* (that's what it was called before it received the name, NLP) onto the public awareness. Unknown to the others, Bandler and Grinder wrote up the discoveries of Pucelik and the Gestalt group, "the meta-model of language in therapy" and intentionally left out Pucelik and everybody else. They claimed it to have invented it all by themselves. (All of that is detailed in the book, *NLP Secrets: Untold Stories*, 2018).

Today we understand collaboration and its value much more than ever before. We understand

the potential power and productivity of a highly effective group. That's why we spend money on training people to learn how to be an effective team and how leadership teams can learn the competencies of shared leadership. Ian McDermott and I wrote an entire book on *Collaborative Leadership* (2016) after modeling some good examples of such.

How was collaboration so important at the beginning of NLP? Obviously, it emerged from the creative contributions of numerous people— not only the three founders, the dozen or more co-developers, but also the multiple experts that they either modeled or took their ideas from. That's why and how NLP is an inter-disciplinary subject. It combines *linguistics* (both Transformational Grammar and General Semantics) with *neurology* and *programming* (Gestalt experiments, pragmatic experiences, experiential learning processes, group experiences, patterns, reframing, family systems constellations, etc.).

Collaboration is built into NLP in another way. As a *communication model* it inevitably involves a dialogue and the relationships we build by the many different kinds of conversations that we can initiate.

If you are a professional who uses NLP as your model for communication or modeling— collaborate! Get with others who use it so that you can expand your horizons. Interacting with others will both challenge and expand your own model of the world. You don't know it all— no one does. Others have perspectives you do not, but which you can tap into if you engage them in collaborative conversations. And when you do, then both of you will grow and the NLP model itself can potentially grow. It happened at the beginning and it is still happening.

CRIMINALS AS HEROES?

Heroes— what does it mean to be a hero? It means to act on behalf of others often at a risk to one's own life or well-being. Heroes are unselfish, generous, caring, and they live by higher moral standards. We think of heroes as people who take risky behaviors— not to be recognized, honored, praised, but to help, to save lives, and to prevent disasters. Typically heroes are actually shy about being honored— they do't think of themselves as heroes. They say things like, "I was just doing what I had to do." "I just did what anyone would do."

Who are the heroes today? Often the average person who steps up in a crisis and helps others without regard to themselves. Today those who risk life and limb in the military to protect our freedoms are heroes. The doctors, nurses, firemen, and first line responders who assist them in need — risking their own health are heroes.

Let's now turn the question around. Who are those who we can say are definitely **not** heroes? First on my list would be criminals. Anyone who is doing something illegal is certainly *not* thinking about others and not extending himself for the good of all others. While most of us are not heroes— we just mind our own business and don't interfere with others. Criminals are on the other side of the bell curve— self-focused and not even thinking about how their actions may negatively impact others.

Given that, what is this thing with the media? Nearly all of the protests are about criminals who ended up getting hurt or killed *while doing something wrong.* Yet the media, for the most part, hides that fact. They hide their criminal activities and records and as if that wasn't bad enough, s they simultaneously promote them as if heroes. The media publishes their names, encourages marches *in their names,* and set up funds for them.

Yet 98 percent of them are criminals! Nor does this make any difference about their ethnic background or "race." Whether white, black, Hispanic, or Asian— anyone who gets into fights with the police, resists arrest, and are hurt in the process (which is almost everyone) were doing things that they should not have been doing in the first place. Almost everyone was engaged in criminal behavior, but most of the time that is overlooked.

Michael Brown was no hero. The Obama justice department's report identified him as attempting to wrestle a gun from a policeman who was sitting in his car when Brown was shot— and that was after bullying and stealing from an Asian store owner as the video showed. George Floyd was no hero. While being arrested for using counterfeit money, cheating a store owner, and resisting arrest — that's when his tragic death occurred. Jacob Blake was no hero — there was a warrant out for his arrest when he was resisting arrest, he had previously been convicted of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

What's wrong with the media that they seem to glory in the idea of transforming someone who was hurt or killed while engaged in criminal activities and trying to make that person a hero? And why are some Democrats (especially mayors and governors) joining this. Nearly every one of the persons who Black Lives Matter say was a "victim" of racism was actually a perpetrator of crimes against others. And they would not have gotten hurt, let alone killed, if they had been minding their own business and if they were an upright citizen. Calling a criminal a hero strikes me as an Orwellian inversion of the very meaning of language.

Don't get me wrong. None of the people killed deserved that! And yes, police need the very best training so that they do not use excessive force. We all agree to that. And where there is a "bad" police person, that person should be fired. But the great majority are well trained and are not racist. Police don't need to be defunded— they need the very best funding for training, personal development, and equipment possible.

[This series on Political Thinking represents my thinking, and mine alone. It does not necessarily represent Neuro-Semantics which is a psychological model.   You can reach me at meta@acsol.net   L. Michael Hall, Ph.D. For the book *Political Coaching,* see the link — www.neurosemantics.com/political-coaching/]

NLP AS A META-DISCIPLINE

When NLP began and before it was called NLP, it was called *Meta.* It was called *Meta* from 1971 to 1975 before it received the new name, Neuro-Linguistic Programming in 1976. Why *Meta*? Because of the central role that "going meta" played in the formation of the new discipline. While it originally started as a Gestalt Therapy class and slowly morphed into something else, it did so because the two founders (Bandler and Pucelik), not understanding how the transformations were happening, asked Grinder to come in and see if he could figure it out. He enter the group seeking to understand things from a structural point of view— from *a meta perspective.* Then, as they stepped back again and again from specific experiences to gain perspective on what was happening — the created a meta-model— the Meta-Model of Language.

Actually, this fact that NLP is a meta-discipline is its strength. This also explains why so many people don't know what NLP is. And why there's so much confusion among them about NLP. When asked to explain "what it is," they are at a loss. They jump between various contents and miss the larger picture. There are people who say it is change work, personal development, therapy, linguistics, hypnosis, communication, state management, etc.

Obviously, NLP involves all of that and yet it is more. Because NLP looks at *the structure of experience* and details how the structure of an experience operates, it is a meta-discipline. That's why NLP seems to apply to nearly everything. It especially applies to *any human experience.* Because of that, we can look at any (and every) experience in terms of how it functions in our thinking and feeling, and how we communicate it to ourselves and to others. No wonder then we can apply *the communication structural process* to therapy, coaching, leadership, management, parenting, teaching, consulting, sports, health, and on and on.

Any and every human *experience* has a structure and NLP is the study or field of that experience. The focus is on *how it works.* And further, this applies to experiences that are good and powerful and healing as well as experiences that are bad, disempowering, toxic, pathological, and criminal. In this, NLP can apply to just about everything. But everything is not NLP. Not everything is NLP, yet NLP, as *the study of subjective experience* from a meta-perspective.

When the Meta-States Model emerged in 1994, the role that a meta perspective grew in understanding and application. That's because the Meta-States Model modeled the special kind of consciousness that we humans have— a consciousness that is self-reflexive. We do not just think, we think about our thinking. We do not just emote, we have emotions about our emotions. The consequences of this is profound.

When you move above a primary experience of thinking-and-feeling, and include it in your next

thinking-and-feeling, you do several things. You set the frame for the first experience. You create the category or classification for the first experience so that it becomes a member of the higher class. You now move from mere thought to belief. You move from fluid thoughts to more stable thoughts that you "hold in mind" as your meanings— your definitions, classifications, evaluations, values, decisions, understandings, and on and on. As you do this, you set in motion a higher level "attractor" in your system of thinking-and-feeling. Now what you put at the meta-level becomes a self-organizing factor attracting to your thinking, emoting, perceiving, remembering, imagining, etc. that very factor.

What we discovered with the Meta-States Model is that it could explain all of the hidden, invisible processes that made the NLP patterns work. The techniques of NLP, especially those that have proven dependable, work due to the meta-level framing. Sometimes this framing is explicit, yet most of the time it is not. Most of the time to identify the hidden structure, you need to track out the meta-levels.

After the discovery of the Meta-States Model, Bob Bodenhamer and I remodeled the time-line model of NLP, meta-programs, sub-modalities, beliefs, etc. You can find these in *Adventures in Time* (1997), *Figuring Out People* (1997), *Sub-Modalities Going Meta* (2002), as well as *User's Manual of the Brain, Vol. I and II.*

Meta made the difference. It was there in NLP from the beginning, but for twenty years it was unrecognized and undeveloped. The development of *meta* came in 1994 with Meta-States. To "go meta" is to step back and reflect, now you can do quality control of your experience. To "go meta" is to transcend and include— transcend the immediate experience and include it inside of a higher frame.

To "go meta" is to rise above your experience of fear, for example, and include fear in the larger state of mindfulness, or courage, or appreciation, or any other state that you would like to outframe the fear with. This is meta-stating. Now, you have a subjective experience which is richer and more profound that just fear— you have *mindful* fear, or *courage* fear, or *appreciative of the values* in fear, etc.

> [for more, see *Meta-States* and/or *Secrets of Personal Mastery*]

WHEN JUSTICE SEEKERS ARE UNJUST

Sunday we all witnessed a shooter attempt to murder two Sheriff deputes while they were sitting in their patrol car. The shooter ambushed the officers and shot them at point blank and then ran off. As that happened "Black Lives Movement" members mocked and celebrated the shooting as the video-taped it and sent it out on the internet.   That's a new low. Then we saw more of them surround the hospital shouting "We hope they die!" and using all sorts of obnoxious language.

These Black Lives Movement (BLM) people were manifesting the very worse of human nature— showing their hatefulness, their lack of respect, and their lack of human sympathy. What they were doing also shows their hypocrisy about asking for justice. They want justice, but they give none. They want justice for themselves, but they don't seem to have a single thought about the justice of other people. Did anything they do fight for the justice of the individuals who were shot? Considering how they chanted, "and you are next!" speaks about how bitter and hateful they are. They are repeating their hate speech from 2016, "Pigs in a blanket, fry them like bacon."

If the members of the BLM had any human compassion, regardless of their views of police, when they saw two human beings senselessly gunned down, they would have called 911 and run toward them to do what they could to help. But they did not. Instead they mocked them. They laughed at them. Not only is this kind of behavior despicable, it is propagating a toxic environment for democracy. That's why it has to be stopped. What's adds to this toxic environment are all of the majors, governors, and other city officials who do nothing to stand against it. What does this say about the Democratic party who have embraced BLM?

By way of contrast, even after the 31-female deputy was shot in the jaw, she called in for backup and then helped her 24-year old partner, putting a turquee on him which undoubtedly saved his life. Here was heroism. Here was courage in the face of adversity.

The problem with such intolerance that we are seeing from the BLM all over the country is their hypocrisy. They want racial justice, they want racial tolerance and acceptance— yet they spout intolerance, hate, and human ugliness. That will never work. A wise man once explained, "Judge and you shall be judged. The judgment you give, that judgment will be given to you." (Matthew 7:1-2).

THE "PROGRAMMING" OF NLP

There are lots of people who do not like the *programming* term in Neuro-Linguistic Programming. What is their problem? They have a semantic reaction to *programming* as if it means, and can only mean or carry connotations of, being "controlled, fated, mechanical, brainwashed, etc." Of course, the term programming arose in the early days of computer programming and was a metaphor for how we can become programmed linguistically in our neurology. So as we install programs in a computer, so also in human consciousness.

Do you have *programs*? Has your family, education, religion, culture, etc. *programmed* you? The word "program" (from the Latin *programma* is made up of *pro,* "before" and *graphein* "to write"). It speaks about "an outline to pursue," "a plan or procedure." Computer programmers write codes which give a computer a way of functioning— processing information, pictures, sounds, mathematical symbols, etc.

Similarly, the way you were taught to think, feel, speak, and act has given you your programs. As such you have programs for how to read and study, programs for getting along with others, for resolving differences, for riding a bike, typing on a keyboard, etc. Actually you have thousands of programs which are now installed within you— in your very neurology. That's why once you have learned something very thoroughly (over-learned it), you don't even need to be conscious of it to run the program. Now it can operate unconsciously as a way of being in the world. program.

You have a program for shaking hands. You were not born with it, it came as people repeatedly held out their hand and then shook yours. That happened so long ago you probably have no memory of it. The repetition drove it in and now— lo and behold, someone holds out her hands as a greeting and out goes your hand to meet it. Ah, an unconscious automatic program!

Your program for reading is even more deeply ingrained in you. When you know a language, you cannot look at words without reading them. While you could stop yourself from shaking hands on occasion for various reasons, you *cannot* stop yourself from reading. It is that deeply automatic and now ... outside of your control.

If you don't like the word "program," think *habits*. Or think of them as *automatic response patterns*. You could think of them as the "instincts" that you have learned. That's because, as everything habituates, what you learn (whether consciously or unconsciously) becomes installed in your neurology. Some things, like repeated behavioral actions, are installed in your muscle memories. Now your muscles "know" how to do certain things. Other things, like episodic memories, are installed in your long term memory in your hypothalamus.

Linguistically and neurologically you and I have the ability to *program* ourselves with all sorts of response patterns. You can think of parenting as the place where all of the original programming occurred. In this, parents are programmers (which again should wake us up to the need for anyone who parents to be required to get a certificate of competency!). Teachers are programmers. And yes, the adolescence peer group are a set of programmers (especially be aware of them!). But even worse, television, movies, and the internet are programmers and provide 24/7 programming for those who expose themselves to them. Ah yes, the media is a programmer of ideas, thinking patterns, choices, values, lifestyle, etc.

I think the idea of *programming* in NLP is great. It speaks about how a learning can become so ingrained, so installed, that it becomes an automatic program. In other words, the learning and the changes that you make— *you can keep for the rest of your life.* Just program it in. But how? How does that work?

Sometimes what you have to do is first do some de-programming. In other words, *unlearning.* If you have a program that is just wrong, if it doesn't work, if it has become redundant and no longer relevant— sometimes you have to undo the previous learning, uninstall the old meanings, in other words, change some beliefs. Then installing a new program and programming it in is a matter of learning. Here repetition offers you one of the most dependent methods for programming in the new learning or meaning. Here trance work is also another valuable method.

In NLP, a primary way we do programming is via explicit patterns. A pattern is a program— a code for how to think, feel, speak, and act. It is a way to run your own mind-body system to achieve specific outcomes such as motivation, decision, empathy, resilience, and a thousand other states. A NLP pattern is a process that has been modeled and/or developed that you can use to establish an inner code for a specific subjective experience. How's your programming? Do you like it? Would you like to update any particular aspect of it?

> [For more, see the two books on patterns— *Sourcebook of Magic, Volumes I and II.* Also see *Hypnotic Thinking,* 2020]

BLAME THINKING

The *thinking* that leads a person to assume personal responsibility for self is hard. It is hard personally and it is hard mentally. That's because it is a thinking that requires a lot of personal development and maturity. It is not the thinking of children or the immature. *Response-ability* thinking involves recognizing your innate powers of thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting— powers that cannot be taken away from you, but powers that you can give away. That's what victim thinking does.

Opposite to the ability-to-choose-my-own-response thinking is *blame thinking*. It is much easier to do and given how children so easily fall into it— it must be a default thinking pattern of children. When a child gets into something, messes something up, causes havoc— an easy and cheap way to "feel good" anyway is to avoid accepting responsibility for oneself and to blame. You can blame your brother or sister. You can blame mom or dad. You can blame the weather, the TV, the neighbor, the cat ... the objects of blame are infinite.

If you have not learned how to own your innate powers— then an easy, cheap, and illegitimate way to "feel good" is to blame others for your situation and your problems. And if you run out of parents, family, culture, school, and government to blame, then blame fate, blame God, blame the universe, blame your genetics, blame the politicians.

Now there are actually lots of benefits and advantages to blaming— which explains why I it is so prevalent. First, you get to avoid unpleasant things. When you blame you can avoid or save yourself from feeling responsible and accountable. Now you don't have to face the bad feelings you have let yourself and others down. Then as an extra – -you get to feel righteous, and even better— self-righteous. You can feel a pseudo- spirituality, "I'm better than others."

Then there is the freedom from effort. When you blame, you also don't have to do anything. Blaming saves you the time, effort, and energy of taking effective actions. You don't have to correct what you did wrong, you don't have to invest the energy and effort in learning and developing new skills. Blaming is an energy-saving device allowing you to feel comfortable being irresponsible.

Here's some examples of the freedom from effort. *Learning.* It is easier to blame than take responsibility for your education. Yes, true enough, education is the magic ticket out of poverty, low paying jobs, ignorance, stupid decisions, and cognitive distortions. And yes, you can pursue your education without going to college — go to the library. Buy a book. Learn how to learn. You have no excuse. But all of that takes energy and effort and you have to get yourself into the right state. Too much work! Just blame your school, the teacher, your parents.

Relating. It's easier to blame than to take responsibility for your relationships. Yes, no matter how you have been treated – how dysfunctional your original family, you can learn better. You can learn how to listen, care, be empathetic, forgiving, etc.   But again, that's a lot of work! That would require that you develop some patience and tolerance and understanding. Much easier to just blame.

Healthy fitness. It is easier, a lot easier also, to blame others for your lack of fitness and/or ill-health. Here it is really easy to blame genetics, your inherited temperament, the family you grow up in, the fast-food industry, your friends, etc. After, all have you ever considered how much effort, focus, and discipline it would take to get fit, eat healthily, and manage your eating, exercising, and sleeping habits.

Now if you want to really see *blame thinking—* listen to the politicians. And sad to say, this includes just about every single one of them. Listen to how they answer legitimate questions (not the "gotcha' questions). Something is chosen to focus on that indicates a weakness or fault in the person or the political party and politicians have an incredible ability to dance away from that issue immediately and swing their party around with an equally large accusations about what the opposing party is doing.

There is a cure for blame thinking and the linguistics of blame, but it is not fast nor is it easy. It requires maturity, a willingness to own one's responses, an inner permission to be a fallible human being, and an understanding that making mistakes is *par for the course* whenever you are engaged in actualizing your potentials.

Childish I-have-to-have-my-way Thinking
In the news today from the Grand Jury in Louisville Kentucky revealed a conclusion that some people didn't like. So what did they do? Protest ... and then start attacking the police, starting fires, shot two police, and threaten that they will burn things down if they don't get their way. Some even attacked the General Attorney of Kentucky about the news, even though he is Black. He noted that "justice by riots" is *not justice,* but revenge. The fact known from the beginning is that the boyfriend of Breonna Taylor shot first at the police and the police then returned fire in self-defense. Democracy requires that we reach justice by following the rule of law and letting the processes work. That does not mean we always get the results that will please everybody.

THE UNTHINKING MOB

A mind that does not *think for itself* is a mind which is actually betraying itself. Yet that is what most people do. School teaches us to do this. Sit still, don't question your teacher, receive the lesson, play it back on the test and you will be approved, get good grades, and move on. Those who learn this well will be doing this decades later. They sit still when they watch the news on television or on the internet, they hear the political talking points a dozen or five dozen times, and that's what they repeat. Uncritical credulity. And now with the pat answers, people can feel comfortable that they understand. Case closed. Now, what movie do you want to watch?

If there's any example of extreme *unthinkingness— it is a mob.* In a way we're fortunate this year because we don't have to theorize about mobs— we have been watching mobs in many of the major cities. We hear them screaming and shouting media's talking points. The mob in Louisville Kentucky and other cities this week is a classical example. Instead of actually *thinking* and asking relevant questions— all they focus on is the end results. They didn't get what they thought was right, so they protest. But what are they protesting? The judicial system worked—a jury of peers looked at the evidence and drew their conclusions from the facts of the case.

> Facts included "Breonna Taylor's boyfriend fired first" and the police returned fire in self-defense. They knocked on the door and announced "Police" which was confirmed by other people living in the apartment building, it was not a "no-knock" warrant.

Now an active and effective mind considers the facts, weighs the evidence, and reasons to a logical conclusion. Even the person who delivered the final verdict, Daniel Cameron, the General Attorney of Kentucky, and a black man said that "justice by riots" is not justice, "that is revenge." If we ask who is actually responsible for Breonna's death, it is her boyfriend who initiated the gun fight. If he had not done that ... she would not have died.

Those from the Democratic left have been calling for people to rise up, call for justice, demand protests until they get justice. Yet all of that is non-sense to *thinking* people. That's just the taking points of BLM and the media who endlessly present today's "Lesson" for all the immature minds to mindlessly repeat. Some so much do not like the facts, they try to change the facts. The most ridiculous are those who say that Daniel Cameron is not really black!

A mature mind confronts problems to be solved, searches for relevant evidence, weigh the evidence against context, the rule of law, values, ethics, etc., come to a reasoned conclusion, test it with others, etc. That's executive thinking and it requires calm objectivity. The emotional thinking that we see in the mobs is mobilized by lots of cognitive distortions— exaggerations, over-generalizations, personalizations, awfulizing, identification, etc. You can hear it in their illogical chants:

"No black man is safe in America." None? No where in America?
"Police are committing genocide against African Americans." Of course, that goes against the fact that 96% of all black men are killed by other black men.

The problem with *the unthinking* is that sound reasoning doesn't compute for them. Nor do facts. Emotional reactivity is what leads them to scream, chant slogans, throw things, threaten to burn things down, etc. and become violent mobs. It undermines democracy, humanity, and morality. Screaming "No justice, no peace" in the shouts of a mob is actually a *threat*. It is threatening, "My way or highway of destruction."

That undermines the democratic agreement which every democracy is built upon. We establish processes of justice and we keep updating and refreshing them so that we become "a more perfect" union. Yet it is always human— always fallible. Recognizing that every justice process can be improved— that's where reasonable men and women put their focus, not rioting in the streets.

NLP IS ENOUGH
TO BE MINDFUL & KNOW YOURSELF

I'm often asked questions about the many *other things* that come along as possible self-development techniques. The question I'm asked concerns the relationship of NLP to these other things especially when the next "fad of the month" is getting lots of publicity in the media. Knowing NLP and Neuro-Semantics as I do and thinking of Neuro-Semantic NLP in a systemic way as I do— the answer that I've always ended up with is that NLP is enough. Here are some examples.

Mindfulness
The idea of being mindful has surged in the past decade or more and all sorts of programs for *mindfulness* have made the rounds. It sounds new and sexy and therefore appealing. Yet what are we talking about? What are these programs actually about?

The great majority of such programs focus on good stuff— being calm and cool (relaxed), in sensory awareness, and meditation of one kind or another. All good stuff! *And* all of that—is basic NLP. When you study NLP 101— you study sensory awareness, "losing your mind and coming to your senses" (Perls), representational systems and becoming truly *aware* of how you are thinking. You also learn about states— learning, motivation, decision, *and relaxation.* And with your Milton Model training, you learn about trance— mediation.

The better *Mindfulness* programs also *implicitly* offer some of the meta-stating processes— stepping back and observing your state. But (and this is a big but!) *they do not make it explicit* and so while the processes are incorporated within their program— because *they do not present the structure of mindfulness,* participants for the most part do not really understand how it works. They may have a good experience, but without *explicitly* learning the structure (which is what we do), they remain dependent on the program and do not become independent and self-determining.

So what all of the programs for *Mindfulness* offer is precisely what we *already have* in NLP. Actually, it is not something new at all. It is only *the packaging* that they present that seems new. Now there are some forms of mindfulness that actually do the opposite. What they mean by mindfulness is getting out of, and eliminating, conscious awareness. Good luck! You are a thinking being and thinking you do! You cannot *not* think. You cannot turn off your brain doing what brains do— process information. Further, the problem is *not* thinking— if there is a problem it goes to *the kind and quality of thinking*— thinking with cognitive distortions and fallacies and not knowing how to manage one's thinking.

That's where the Meta-States Model comes in. This is what all of the programs on mindfulness *does not have.* To truly and authentically become mindful— you need to become *aware* of your awareness, to think about your thinking. We call that meta-thinking, meta-cognition, meta-awareness. We know the process for doing that— meta-stating. We bring a state of observation, curiosity, wonder, learning, etc. *to our first level thinking.* That makes us meta-mindful.

The value? Now you can quality control your thinking. Now you can check out the quality of your thinking to make sure that you are not bringing judging, fear, anger, hatefulness, etc. to your thinking. That's what creates problems. *Mindfulness ... and advanced mindfulness is built into Neuro-Semantic NLP.* And when you know that— you know that what you have is far richer.
> [And if you want more— See Chapter 12 in *Neuro-Semantics* (2012) "Actualizing Reflective Mindfulness."]

The Enneagram
Organizations and business people want things quick and simple *and this is actually the hidden frame that creates so many problems in business.* But most in business do not even know it! It is a blind-spot for them. Therefore they are easy hits for people who over-promise using the ideas of fast and simple. The Enneagram and other typology programs are examples.

Here is an ancient typology system that they are dusting off and selling. This nine pointed model (ennea-gram) presents nine personality *types* in a circle and triangle. *Of course, the problem is the whole idea of types.* Typology is the assumption is that people are types and they can be divided and classified into *types or kinds of people.* Oh, if only it was that simple! So any of the popular typology models— Myers Briggs, Taylor Johnson, DiSC (from William Moulton Marston, 1920s)— the problem is the assumption that you are a certain *type* of person and you will always be that *type.*

But *people are not types.* People can and do change. And people are so flexible that in different contexts with different people and for different purposes, *they function in different ways.* That's why no typology fits with NLP. As a model of communication and change, NLP is about enabling people to change and adapt to be more effective. I detailed the reason NLP view *personality* in terms of states — flexible, changeable states, not types in *The Structure of Personality* (2001).

And precisely because of this, in Neuro-Semantic NLP we use *the Meta-Programs Model* to help us work with, match, and facilitate change in people. With meta-programs, you can profile a job, a task, a role ... and then profile the people who are already operating in the ways that best fit. Is it as simple? No. Is it as fast? No. But then again, we are working with human personalities — which are complex systems, not fixed pieces that can be put into a box.
> [See *The Structure of Personality* and/or *Figuring Out People.*]

THEY BOTH LOST

I was disappointed. I had much higher expectations for the first presidential debate, but the reality proved very disappointing. *It did not seem professional for either person*— to talk over and interrupt someone when that person has the opportunity to talk is juvenile. That's what immature people who have not learned any social graces does. Trump started it and Biden reacted in kind. It was not professional also in the name calling which Biden most engaged in calling the President a liar, a racist, and a clown and told him, "man shut up." Trump only did it once returning the lable of liar.

It was also not professional in all of the personal insults. Most of the time the personal references had nothing to do with the question that was put forth. And when exchanges get personal like that, it is the cognitive fallacy of *ad hominen* — "to the person" that is, an attack on the person's position by attacking the person's character. Professional communicators do not do that. And if they do, they catch themselves, apologize and back up.

I was disappointed in *the low quality of information*. It sounded like two commercials— each one running with his talking points to his fans. There was no *searching for truth* and *seeking to understand the other*. The presentations were full of platitudes and half-truths— on both sides. In terms of achieving the status of a dialogue— it failed completely. It was more a case of yelling at each other with insults and low level sarcasms.

In a genuine dialogue, people stop, step back and examine their thinking. They are willing to look at their assumptions and presuppositions. But none of that happened. There was hardly a half-second space between exchanges— not the kind of context for seeking to present different views in an understandable way.

There were a few questions asked of each— Biden simply refused to answer three or four questions directly and changed the subject. Trump also could have provided a direct answer, but went off on side issues.

What was good and highly commendatory was Chris Wallace's performance. He provided excellent open-ended questions that allowed each man lots of room for responding. He followed up and reminded them of the question when they got off. He reminded both of the rules, pleased with them to follow the rules, and even held each accountable to talking over when they did. I don't know how much he had to drink after that to calm his nerves(!) — or if he could sleep last night, but he did a great job in spite of the two juveniles going at it.

Both need to learn how to communicate in a professional way— both need some basic NLP training, some training in listening before responding, some skills in framing. Both need my

books *Communication Magic* and *Unleashing Leadership.*   If you talk to them today, tell them I'll send them the books at my expense. Or drop the idea that they might want to contact a Meta-Coach— we have nearly 4,000 world-wide who would be fully qualified.

[This series on Political Thinking represents my thinking, and mine alone. It does not necessarily represent Neuro-Semantics which is a psychological model.   You can reach me at meta@acsol.net   L. Michael Hall, Ph.D. For the book *Political Coaching,* see the link — www.neurosemantics.com/political-coaching/]

Political Coaching is now in PDF format on The Shop
        https://www.neurosemantics.com/shop/page/3/

NUMERICAL THINKING

When it comes to *thinking in terms of numbers,* what we call numeracy is sadly under-developed in most people. The average person has limited exposure to mathematics, mathematical thinking, statistics, etc. As a result, if a person wants to manipulate information and distort it in their favor, they quote statistics. Mark Twain popularized the famous statement, "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics." Although it was mistakenly been attributed it to the British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli. Anyway, this phrase describes the persuasive power of numbers both positively and negatively. You can use statistics to bolster weak arguments and you can use statistics to doubt an opponent's point.

Why is that? *Because numbers, by themselves, do not mean anything.* To have a meaning, as with words, *numbers need a context.* We count things and put things in numbers, we do so to relate one thing to another. Yet without a context, a number can easily be blown out of proportion so that it mis-communicates, even deceives. To keep things in proportion and to understand the meaning, we have to know the first context as well as the layers of contexts behind the numbers.

The problem with quoting numbers is this— if numbers are presented without a context, the numbers are probably being used manipulatively. Typically, they are being used as a scare tacit. And of course, fear sells the news. Fear is dramatic and sensational. I see this on some news channels like CNN. They present the number of cases of the virus and the number of deaths, both in the USA and in the world. Yet without some context, those numbers are designed to frighten people.

	Cases	Deaths	Recovered
United States	7,170,000	208,000	3,900,000
World	33,000,000	995,000	22,800,000

Now 208,000 deaths sounds terrible! Yet that number is **not** the highest death rate number in the US, it is actually the third. It comes after the number of deaths by cancer and heart attacks. To identify the context here, you have to ask? "How many people die in the USA normally?" Answer: The total number of U.S. deaths are 2,750,000, which is $1/13^{th}$ of the total. That means the total number is 13 times that number.

In terms of the cases, if we have 7,000,000 who hav caught the virus— that, again, sounds horrendous. But with a population of 328,000,000 that means that 321,000,000 have **not** caught the virus even after it has been spreading for 10 months. So in spite of the virus being highly infectious— it has only spread to about 1% of the population.

Here are the most recent numbers (this week) from the CDC (Center for Disease Control) about the survival rate from the corna-virus. Of those getting the virus, how many are surviving? The data present the rate according to various age groups.

Age	Percentage Surviving
0 to 19	99.997
20 to 49	99.98
50 to 69	99.5
over 70	94.6

Statistically also, if you are under 65 years of age, you are **7 times more likely** to be struck by lightning and die than to die by covid. As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released this new data, they also indicated how many Americans who have died from COVID-19 who also had other contributing conditions. According to the report, *only 6% of deaths have COVID-19 as the only cause mentioned,* revealing that 94% of patients who died from coronavirus also had other "health conditions and contributing causes," among the most command are:

Influenza and pneumonia	Cardiac Arrest	Diabetes
Respiratory failure	Heart failure	Injuries
Hypertensive disease	Renal failure	Poisoning
Vascular and unspecified dementia		

"The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website disclosed the shockingly small number of people who died from only the Wuhan coronavirus, with no other cause of death mentioned. Hold on to your hat because here it is: out of the 161,392 deaths in the CDC data, just six percent, about 9,700 deaths, were attributed to the coronavirus alone. According to the CDC, the other 94 percent had an average of 2.6 additional conditions or causes of deaths, such as heart disease, diabetes, and sepsis."

The greatest antidote to unreasonable fear — *the facts.* So, get the facts. Use your critical thinking skills to push back against the hype.   It will do more for your peace of mind and sanity than anything else.

POLITICAL THINKING

There's are all kinds of thinking. In the book *Executive Thinking* (2018) I made a pretty extensive list of the many, many kinds and variations there are in what we generally call "thinking." Of courses, that book was primarily about high quality of executive thinking that we call *critical thinking*. After that I wrote about *Thinking as a Modeler* (2019), then *Hypnotic Thinking* (2020, and more recently have completed another work, *Humorous Thinking* (2020).

Then there is political thinking. While I did not formulate the book *Political Coaching* (2015) in terms of the kind of thinking that an emotionally healthy person (a self-actualizing person) would use, it is everywhere in the book. It is especially in chapter 7 on Political Strategies and Skills. What does good, healthy "political thinking" consist of? What is it like?

A strange fact about politics is that *politics are all about relationships*— how we get along with each other, how we organize ourselves, manage our activities, allocate our resources, make decisions, etc.— this is the subject matter of political thinking. This is true when you are engaged in political thinking about office politics, business politics, or national politics. Now behind your political thinking will be your beliefs, assumptions, understandings, etc. about people, human nature, groups, power, group functioning, persuasion, etc. You will operate either from Theory X or Theory Y of human motivation.

Theory X politics describes how politics has operated for thousands of years. It assumes that people cannot be trusted, people are not responsible, people will naturally lie, steal, deceive, manipulate as they work in a zero-sum game in a win/lose context. And if you expect people to behave that way, you will want all the control and power you can get to control them. You will design things so that they are dependent on you. In that way you can get them to do what you want them to do. *That kind of political thinking is the problem.* It is what needs to change.

Theory Y political thinking is very different. It believes that people have a higher nature, are driven by higher *being*-needs for purpose, meaning, responsibility, collaboration, contribution, ethics, excellence, etc. This thinking inevitably leads to a very different mind-set. The very best and highest form of political thinking of a self-actualizing person involves the following:

Synergistic thinking	— collaboration, winning minds, building teams.
Contextual thinking	— recognizing current environment, trends, systems, history.
Vision thinking	— compelling objectives, concentrated focus, strategy.
Value thinking	— quality values, criteria, standards.
Power thinking	— recognize political dynamics, power brokers, separation of powers.
Stability thinking	— safety in social order, rule of law.
Difference thinking	— diversity for richness, productive conflict.

Intolerance thinking   — against corruption, lies, deceptions, scandals, violence, chaos.
Transparent thinking   — openness, vulnerability, authenticity.
Integrity thinking   — fulfilling promises, trust building.
Diplomacy thinking   — empathy, emotional warmth, winsome.
Flexibility thinking   — willingness to adjust and adapt.
Decisive thinking   — intelligent decisions, bringing people into the process.
Consequential thinking — anticipating political fallout, unintended consequences.
Negotiation thinking   — principle bargaining for win/win relationships.
Long-term thinking   — how processes work over time.

The best political thinking entails being able to recognize the political environment— who are the power brokers, the factors that influence thinking and deciding, the need for collaborating, and the consequences for failure to cooperate. Against that environment, one then thinks in terms of goals, objectives, visions— Who do we want to be together? What do we want to accomplish together? What future do we want to co-create?

Differences in those objectives result in different people holding to different agendas and therefore working to attempt to influence things so that one's agenda can win acceptance. *Now we have a power struggle*— which is what we mostly recognize about politics. Some want to go in one direction; others wanting to go in another direction. What kind of political conversations can we create— discussion, dialogue, debate, etc.— so that we can work through our different understandings and co-influence each other and thereby create win/win resolutions?

For that kind of win/win resolutions we need an orderly and respectful way to work through conflicts—we need *productive conflicting skills*. This will require transparency, respect, diplomacy, flexibility, long-term thinking, consequential thinking, and integrity. [For such skills, see the chapters on it in *Group and Team Coaching, Games Great Lovers Play.*]

As an aside, I wrote this four weeks ago, long before the first presidential debate. And what we had in that so-called debate was more of a shouting match of talking points on both sides. We also had some loaded questions by the moderator—which if the President had gone slower and spent more time listening, he could have heard the loaded frames and then address them. To have a healthy and respectful political conversations, we all need to shift our thinking away from win/lose and focus much more on *seeking first to understand.*

Instead of asking, "Who won the debate?" we should be asking, "Who learned something?" "Who gained a more empathetic understanding of his rival?" As long as our political thinking is based on the metaphor of scoring points, winning a battle, defeating an enemy— our politics will be harsh, polarized, and self-defeating. When we shift to a metaphor of being respectful, engaging in learning, and seeking wisdom— then our political thinking will serve us. This will be true for politics in the home, at work, and in the nation.

WHEN QUESTIONS ARE NOT FAIR

Questions are not innocent. They are powerful. And anything powerful can be powerfully misused. In NLP we know that part of the power of questions lies in how *questions direct the brain.* Ask a question and the brain is so wired as to go off looking for an answer. Another aspect of questions is that you can ask questions which presuppose the very answers that you are wanting the other person to provide. Those are manipulative questions.

"Did you wash your hands before or after you took the cocaine?" How do you answer a question like that? You cannot just say yes or no. If you did, you would be accepting the presupposition that you took cocaine. If you spent time *explaining* yourself, it would seem that you are evading the question and not answering the question. Either way, the questioner has *got* you. You've been *had.*

In *Awaken the Giant Within,* Anthony Robbins relates a story about a poll question which people responded to as if it was true— that is, they took the unspoken assumptions of the question as if they were facts. That's what happens with a presupposition in a question.

> "One example occurred during the 1988 presidential election, just after George Bush had announced Dan Quayle as his running mate. A television news organization conducted a nationwide poll, asking people to call a 900 number to answer the question, 'Does it bother you that Dan Quayle used his family's influence to go into the National Guard and stay out of Vietnam?' The glaring presupposition built into this question, of course, was that Quayle had indeed used his family's influence to unfair advantage— something that had never been proven. Yet people responded to it **as if it were a given.** They never *questioned* it, and just automatically accepted it. Worse, many people called to say that they were extremely upset about this fact. **No such fact was ever substantiated!"** (1990, p. 190, bold added),

That's what we call a presuppositional question, one that manipulates the hearer to get the hearer to make a pre-determined response. And in last week's Vice-President debate, I heard several questions by Susan Page that were of that nature. She asked some really semantically loaded, manipulative questions. That is, she presupposed things and presented the question in such a way that it would be very difficult to call out the loaded assumptions. Previously Chris Wallace did that in some of his questions to the President.

What I found jarring in terms of fairness was that Susan Page mostly asked straight-forward questions to Harris and dis-empowering presuppositional questions to Pence. Page asked Pence a few straight-forward questions, but most were loaded with unquestioned assumptions. Check it out for yourself.

To Kamala Harris:

What would a Biden administration do in January and February that a Trump administration wouldn't do? Would you impose new lockdowns for businesses and schools in hotspots? Would you like to respond?

If the Trump administration approves a vaccine, before after the election, should Americans take it and would you take it?

Have you had a conversation, or reached an agreement with Vice President Biden, about safeguards or procedures when it comes to the issue of presidential disability? And if not, and if you win the election next month, do you think you should?

Do voters have a right to know more detailed health information about presidential candidates, and especially about presidents, especially when they're facing some kind of challenge?

Would raising taxes put the recovery at risk?

But if you look at the Biden Harris campaign website it describes the Green New Deal as a crucial framework. What exactly would be the stance of a Biden Harris Administration toward the green New Deal?

What's your definition— we've seen strains with China, of course, as the Vice President mentioned, we've seen strains with our traditional allies in NATO and elsewhere. What is your definition of the role of American leadership in 2020?

If Roe v Wade is overturned, what would you want California to do? Would you want your home state to enact no restrictions on access to abortion?

To Mike Pence:

Why is the U.S. death toll, as a percentage of our population, higher than that of almost every other wealthy country?

How can you expect Americans to follow the administration safety guidelines to protect themselves from COVID when you were at the White House have not been doing so?

In recent days, President Trump's doctors have given misleading answers or refused to answer basic questions about his health. And my question to each of you, in turn, is, is this information voters deserve to know?

Should Americans be braced for an economic comeback that is going to take not months, but a year or more?

This year we've seen record-setting hurricanes in the south. Another one, Hurricane Delta is now threatening the gulf. And we have seen record-setting wildfires in the West. Do you believe, as the scientific community has concluded, that man-made climate change has made wildfires bigger, hotter and more deadly? And it made hurricanes wetter, slower and more damaging?

It's easy to answer straight-forward questions and yes/no questions. The person answering can simply say yes or no and explain the answer. It is much more difficult to answer a question that is semantically loaded with assumed presuppositions. It generally makes one sound defensive.

The real solution is to *question the question.* "When you say 'as the scientific community as concluded,' do you mean that every single climate scientist believes that?" You can also *call attention to the assumptive nature of the question.* "In your question, you are assuming things to be true and loading it up semantically." You can then *refocus the question* which can be answered. "Here is the question I will answer."

[Want more? See *Mind-Lines: Lines for Changing Minds* and *Inside-Out Persuasion*]

POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS

How do you talk about politics? Let me rephrase that. The real question is, *How do you talk about politics in a respectful, compassionate, and intelligent way?* How can you invite others to talk about political issues and subjects without falling back on stereotypes, biases, cognitive distortions, and all of the manipulative ways that most political conversations involve?

To answer that in the negative— we must *not* do what we see on TV or cable! By every means possible, we need to avoid emulating the political pundits and commentators, or the so-called political journalists. Hardly any of them know how to carry on an informative, respectful, and equitable conversation. Ever once in a while I see and hear a few do it— but only for a few moments. But all of them on TV, cable, or an internet blogs have other agendas —create interest, create controversy, ask "gotta questions," spin things to the bias of their audience, to make a name for oneself, to win over agreement, etc. What it does not seem that they want to do is to have a true dialogue.

It would also be good if we do *not* model the candidates in either the Presidential or thee Vice-President debates. Not only was there far, far too much interrupting, talking over each other, and name calling, but there was far, far too little open and transparent about their answers. I could not tell that there was any actual search to understand each other, only repeating "talking points," trying to "get" the other, and trying to "win" over the other.

I addressed this in 2014 in the book *Political Coaching,* and although I wrote it to focus on the political coach or the facilitator who coaches to that subject. Yet what I wrote there can equally serve as guidelines for *how to have decent political conversations with anyone.* There's a chapter that summarizes the best understandings of what healthy and respectful politics is (chapter 11 Principles for Political Coaching). Then there's a chapter on Political Quicksand (chapter 12).

> "Conversations can be like that— like quicksand. You begin on a line of thought and as the dialogue continues, one thought or idea evokes another, which triggers another, and before you know it, the conversation ping-pongs all over the place and you travel to places unexpected. Sometimes you travel to dark swamps where you lose your way and can't see where you've been or which way to go. 'How did we get here?' You become confused even about how to get back on track. That's conversational quicksand." (p. 147)

There's also a chapter on talking about political power (chapter 15)— what it is and have to have an intelligent conversation about power. There are guidelines about *beliefs* and how we are all believers which is what makes the conversations difficult in the first place (pp. 169-170). There is the guideline of ecology (pp. 170-172).

The bottom line: *There are ways to have difficult conversations about difficult subjects.* There are guidelines and skills that can enable us to develop the required competencies. There are skills so that people with opposing views can set down and talk. That requires that each be willing to actually listen and learn from the other. That means suspending judgments and exploring for facts and considering the various ways any set of fact can be interpreted. That means making assumptions and premises explicit which requires honest and direct responses. It means an attitude of collaboration, transparency and even authenticity.

In a healthy political conversation, you will hear both parties say from time to time, "That's a good point" (Neurons 2020 #13). You will hear each ask for the source of the facts that are being presented. "How biased or unbiased were those who created those facts?" Source does matter. Even scientists struggle with that constantly. "Does the sponsoring organization have an agenda? Is there an outcome that they are expecting to be delivered?"

NLP as a communication model offers a whole set of skills for competently holding a true dialogue between opposing parties for those who care more about searching for the truth than defending a dogma. With the Meta-Model of Language, it offers a way for people to engage in critical thinking as they exchange ideas. In this way you can detect when there is manipulation occurring and call it out.

We have to do better—a lot better—in regard to our political conversations. And learning the basis of communication— the linguistics and the neurology that supports cooperative conversation is a great place.

[This series on Political Thinking represents my thinking, and mine alone. It does not necessarily represent Neuro-Semantics which is a psychological model. You can reach me at meta@acsol.net   L. Michael Hall, Ph.D. For the book *Political Coaching,* see the link — www.neurosemantics.com/political-coaching/]

Political Coaching is now in PDF format on The Shop
https://www.neurosemantics.com/shop/page/3/

POLITICIANS AND HYPNOSIS
Hypnotic Language on Display

When I watched the third Presidential Debate Thursday evening the thought frequently flashed across my mind, "That's hypnotic language!" I finally said it out-loud. "That is hypnotic language if I have ever heard hypnotic language!" My comment was on Joe Biden's responses— the kind of language patterns which we actually teach people in NLP. We teach it for being able to create healing trances, trances for excellence, for memory, for focus, etc. The skill is that of how to actually say nothing of substance even though it sounds incredibly meaningful. It sounds meaningful because that kind of language allows people to wildly hallucinate and fill in the blanks (the 'blank' words).

You can also learn to detect this kind of language. How? Step back and ask yourself, "Did this person actually answer the question?" "If so, what is the answer?" In this way you can discover that the question was not answered. If the context is that of making a presentation of one's positions or solutions, then ask, "What specifically is the person's plan or proposal?" In NLP we know that when we reverse the Meta-Model of Language and use mind-reading statements, cause-effect statements, make presuppositional statements, use lost performatives, etc. we speak hypnotically and invite listeners to think hypnotically. Among the vague and hypnotic things Biden said were these:

> "Anyone responsible for that many deaths (220,000) cannot be president."
> "He has no clear plan for dealing with the pandemics."
> "People are learning to die with it [the virus]; we're dying with it."
> "I don't know why this President won't take on Putkin."
> "We [the USA] had a good relationship with Hitler..." (False)
> "I would stop ... the oil industry pollutes, it has to be replaced..."
> "Nobody lost health care under Obama Care." (False)
> "I never said I was against fracking." (False)

This is actually the language that is typical of politicians. It is also what gets Trump in trouble. While he sometimes uses this language, he also gives more specifics (although not enough for my tastes, and sometimes he gets things wrong). That's how and when the media press come down on him. They then use his answers to jump to conclusion (another hypnotic language pattern) and then mind-read (yet another one) what they assume that he "really" meant (another hypnotic language pattern). In this way they can accuse him of the very opposite of what he says.

They do that constantly with President Trump by playing the race card. Although he has denounced white race supremist views and the KKK (and there are an abundance of these video

records), the media gets him by asking, "Will you denounce the racists now?" If he hesitates, trying to get his ahead around "what part of the previous 40 denouncements do you not understand?" they say, "Ah, you hesitated! That means you are a racist!" Of course, all of that is the illogic of hypnotic language at its worse.

Actually I think President Trump should learn about hypnotic language so that he can recognize what the politicians are doing and how to defend against the manipulations. When anyone can do that, you can recognize what's actually going on at hidden meta-levels.

On the other hand, there are many places where Trump could be much more specific. When he said that Joe Biden took millions of dollars from foreign governments, that allowed Biden to easily deny that. He said, "I did not take one cent." Trump needed to be more specific, "Has your family or any member of the Biden family ever taken money from a foreign government?" He erred in attributing it to Joe Biden when it was Hunter Biden who took the money from Russia, Ukraine, and China.

Of course, hypnotic language does *not* facilitate accurate or useful information gathering. It is terrible for accessing facts and debating policy. It is wonderful for inducing states, especially states of inspiration, hope, and courage. But it can just as easily be used to induce states of fear, paranoia, gloom and doom. Biden did that, "200,000 more Americans will due by the end of the year." Personally, I liked the bits of trance that Trump did in inducing optimism, "we have to learn to live with the virus," "we have to open up our country, schools, etc." I only wish he had done more of that.

> For more about hypnotic language — see the two new books, *Hypnotic Thinking* and *Hypnotic Conversations*. The first is an actual book, the second is a PDF file on The Shop, www.neurosemantics.com.]

SO, WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

With the rise of "fake news," it is now hard to tell what is the truth. Yet not all fake news is the same. News can be fake in numerous ways. That's because the word *fake* has multiple meanings. What does *fake* mean and how are people using this modifier?

> 1) Primarily, *fake* means that the news has no basis in fact. It is *false.* Someone deliberately created it for the purpose of providing *dis-information.* The information is made-up, invented, and bogus.
> 2) The word *fake* sometimes refers to information that is biased and/or prejudice. It can be biased due to the words used or the hidden presuppositions that are implied. It can be biased due to the speaker's beliefs, values, assumptions, references. Because of the bias, the news becomes distorted and untrue.
> 3) Sometimes the information is not outright false, but it is *misleading* due to a degree of inaccuracy. Here the news is partially true and yet partially false.
> 4) Sometimes the information *could be* true, there is that possibility, but at the time it is presented there is no evidence that supports it, or it lacks credibility, or it is just an opinion or supposition.
> 5) News could be fake because it is not actually news but a form of fiction— satire, a joke, etc. Perhaps it was intended for humor, but some took it seriously and passed it on as if it was supposed to be news.
> 6) The word *fake* is often used as a way to do some elegant name-calling. "It's fake news" actually means is "This is news I don't like," "I disagree with this news."

Let's ask, *Where does fake news come from? Who creates it and why?* Those who create fake news do so usually for fraudulent purposes or for politically motivated reasons. They are selling something or seeking to influence an election. So, because they have an agenda, they are seeking to manipulate the results.

Some months back there were several so-called NLP Trainers who were claiming that they had a pattern for curing Covid19. Several members of the NLP Leadership Summit checked into what they were offering and found out what we suspected— it was a marketing ploy. It was *fake news* because they had no such thing and there is no such pattern.

Now if *fake news* did not work and if no one took it seriously, it would vanish. So what is it about fake news that makes it credible? The key to fake news is that it is plausible. What is presented *could* be true. That's why *partial* truths can so easily become the content of fake news. It is just true enough that it passes muster for having some credibility.

Here's an example of a most egregious forms of fake news. President Trump, in his conflicts with John McCain, once made a comment that said he didn't think of him as a war hero, because he got caught and imprisoned. He said he thought of heroes as the winners were not caught. Given that background, it was easy to spread a more recent accusation, that the President called the US Military troops losers. When asked about the source of the accusation, none was ever provided. Not even a single person came forward to take credit for starting the accusation. Meanwhile, when the accusation was first asserted, the President and four people who were with him on that trip to France immediately denied it. In the following days a total of 11 high ranking officials who were present made video-appearances denying it completely. Yet then, three weeks later, in the VP Presidential Debate, Harris quoted it as if it was a fact. She thereby propagated the fake news.

Given that we are all *dependent* on accurate, precise, and relevant information, what can we do? The overall strategy, of course, is to expose any and every "news" to critical thinking, specially to treat information which is framed as new, stunning, surprising, etc. Skeptically question it.
      Question the source: Where did this come from?
      Question the credibility of the source: How credible is the source?
      Question the motives of the promoters: What is your interest or motive in presenting this?
      Question confirmation bias: Does this confirm what you already believe?
      Question the presence of dis-confirmation: What evidence goes against this that you have left out?

As you are doing this— there are things to avoid. Avoid mind-reading the person's intentions and motives. Instead, ask about one's intentions and motives. We all can present "news" which we sincerely think is accurate and later discover that it is not. We mean well. Our intentions may be good and noble, but the information we've been given is just false.

Let's all check the facts as best as we can. Let's look closer at the sources that promote and approve of the "news," as well as the sources that do not promote or approve of it. Let's aim to get both sides (or more if there are more sides than two) of the issue. The falsity in the news can arise because the facts are simply not true, distorted, exaggerated, partial, etc. News can be make false by attributing it to a made-up author, someone with credibility that is being used to make it seem true. It can be false when the sources which it quotes actually do not exist when you check it out. And because racially incendiary news can go viral due to "a rush to judgment" or because it supports one's political agendas, let's slow things down and take the time to check out the facts. Let's ask, "Will the original facts hold up over time?"

BEWARE OF ENTITLEMENT

There are some people walking around on this planet who feel *entitled* to certain benefits. They operate from the assumption that God or government or family or maybe you *owe* them certain rights and goodies. To get an image of the entitled, think of a spoiled child who thinks that he is owed whatever he wants. "If I want something, I should have it. In fact, you owe it to me to provide it. If not you, then the government, the world, God."

This makes obvious the psychological nature of entitlement— it is a childish, undeveloped, immature, and at its extreme—a toxic state of mind. The psychology of entitlement is that it is not a request, it is a demand. The person who claims to be *entitled to something is making a demand for that thing.* When the person looks at you and says that he is entitled, he is usually saying that you are obligated to provide what he wants.
> "You owe me. I am not responsible to earn what I want, to take action to make it happen, I am automatically entitled to receive it. It is mine by heritage. Now provide it."

The entitlement claim is a claim to a "right." There are no requirements for it, it comes with the fact that I am who I am. This brings up *the reasons* that entitled people quote for why the world is obligated to give them what they want.
> I am entitled because my family name is X.
> I am entitled because the color of my skin is X.
> I am entitled because of what happened 150 years ago to distant relatives."
> I am entitled because I am special, unique, extraordinary.
> I am entitled because I have special handicaps.

Those who claim entitlement also have a belief about economics. In terms of Suppy and Demand, the basis of modern economies, they have a simple creed: "I demand, you supply." Now one thing entitled people never say that they are entitled to is to be a provider for others. You never hear them say, "I am entitled to provide justice, fairness, love, honesty, truth, etc. to those I live with." Why not? Because that's responsibility, the opposite of entitlement.

This highlights the contrast between the entitlement frame and the responsibility frame. If you start from the frame of responsibility— that you have the ability or power to make basic responses, then *responsible entitlement* means, "I am entitled to X or Y *because I have met the conditions."* For example, "I am entitled to the trophy because I came in first in the race." This entitlement is an entitlement *based on merit.* Hence, "As a mature grown up, I am entitled to serve, to give, to contribute, to learn, to create, to give value, etc." Of course, that's also the formula for success in the world as it is (not the socialist ideal as it never is).

As a human being, what are you entitled to? Are you entitled to breathe, eat, or sleep? Silly questions, are they not? Breathing, eating, sleeping are not entitlements but possibilities. They are potentials that require effort. What are you entitled to? Are you entitled to have friends? Wrong question. The right question is, Are you the kind of person who knows how to be a friend and to maintain friendship with someone? If you enter into the front door of an organization, are you thereby entitled to a job, to a salary, to an audience with the CEO? Again, wrong question. The real question is whether have earned the right to apply for a job there? Do you have the required knowledge and skills?

When it comes to the good things of life— *we are not entitled to them.* A great many of the good things of life require effort, learning, development, practice, discipline, etc. They are attained through merit. They do not come to us automatically. Even the most wonderful good things of life which are free are also not "free" in the sense that they require nothing of you. They do. To enjoy the beauty of a sunrise, of a blue sky, of a walk on the beach in the sunshine, the smile of a child, the laughter of children, the delight of learning a new insight— even these free things require much of you.   They require mindfulness, effort, personal development, etc.

The entitlement frame is actually a pretty sick frame, one sure to make your thinking and emoting toxic. It makes you a whining child, a complaining discontent, a non-contributing member of society. It's a great way to be miserable and spread your misery to others. When you feel entitled, you feel that the world owes you, which relieves you of your own responsibilities and that will greatly disempower you.

Now whatever it is that you demand of the world or of others, you focus on— security, happiness, money, job, recognition, fame, ease, comfort, approval, love, etc. If you feel entitled because you see that others have certain things— then you become jealous and envious in your entitlement. If you feel entitled because you have some ideal in your head like "fame and fortune," that you are superior to others, special, and don't have to live by the same rules as others, then you develop an anti-social and prejudicial attitude in your entitlement. Entitlement sickens those who adopt that as an attitude. It's a great strategy for giving up your potentials, refusing to grow up, and becoming a burden on others.

Now some political theories and outlook banks on entitlement. They know that the more people feel entitled, the more they can promise. What they don't say is that it takes a bigger and bigger government to provide all of the entitlements along with more regulations and more taxes. And if more government, then the more their political power. All of this is a way to sicken society. It goes against empowering people to take responsibility and run their own brains and lives— which is what NLP is about.

CAN ALL THINGS BE FAIR?

When it comes to fairness— equality of persons, equity in opportunity to speak, assemble, and engage in business, who would *not* be in favor of that? We all want things to be fair— especially to ourselves. And for those who have attained even a little bit of personal development, for others also. Being fair and equitable seems to be one of the most fundamental values built into human being — as can be observed in any pair of 4-years olds about dividing cookies.

In re-reading through Nassim Taleb's best selling book, *The Black Swan*, what he wrote about fairness and inequity caught my attention.
> "Fairness is not exclusively an economic issue." Obviously, the wages people are paid, and the wide range of economic conditions in various countries is not fair or equitable. Equally inequitable is intelligence. Intelligence is not distributed equally— some have a lot; some do not. Consequently, in terms of intellectual production there is also much unfairness.

If we ask, "Are things fair in any realm?" the answer is, *There's unfairness and inequality in every realm of life.* We are not equal in physical fitness, in health, social ranking, emotional intelligence, happiness, resilience, and the list can be extended indefinitely. There's a reason for this— we are simply not equal. Instead, we are all different. We are born with different predispositions and potentials. We are born in different homes, with different parents, different socio-economic standards, etc. Even luck, chance, and probability are not fair, some get more than others. We are all unique, and as long as we are unique— things will not be, and cannot be, absolutely fair and equal.

Yet these differences are not inherently bad. Our differences, actually, can be our strength if we hold a space for respect for the differences. What we need is to set up a system that will promote *equality or fairness of opportunity.* This is not the same as equality of results. We can't make that equal. Nor can any government, no matter how authoritarian make things equal. But we can provide *an equity of opportunity* — so that anyone who will accept responsibility for personal development— thinking, working, acting, then any person will have an opportunity to succeed.

Affirmative Action, in this country and many other countries, has attempted to make things more fair by giving some people (minorities or formerly oppressed people) a hand-up. This shifts the scales so that those who were disenfransized get a handicap for their disadvantages. And for the first generation that has generally worked. It worked for awhile. Then things change. After awhile, in the second generation, the hand-up sends a different and opposite message. It says, "You need a hand-up because you are inferior. You couldn't make it on your own, you need this

hand-out to give you a fighting chance." What was an equalizer, for awhile, now becomes a problematic frame that invites a sense of inferiority.

That's because Affirmative Action incorporates a racist assumption. Namely, "You are not an equal human being. People of your heritage don't have what it takes on an even playing field." Psychologically this can be devastating. It communicates to a whole generation a strong limiting belief and decision. "You are a victim and that victimhood cannot be transcended; once a victim, always a victim." It gives permission for a person to think of himself as lacking and deficient. It sets a taboo against competing on equal terms. It discourages people to think that they can merit what they received.

While Affirmative Action can work wonders for the first generation, it becomes destructive and toxic in the following generations. That's *why Affirmative Action needs a expiration date on it*. In the meantime, not only the external laws and operations in society need to be enabling and empowering people, but also the culture of those formerly disenfrancised. This is where family and school values have to also change to empower individuals. The more stable the home, the more there is both a father and mother present, a strong sense of responsibility, a work ethic, the importance of education, what it means to be a responsible citizen, etc., the more both internal and external cultures truly empowers people to step up and unleash their potentials.

Affirmative Action can only take us only so far. First the legal, then the personal. Once there are opportunities for all to compete on a flat playing field, now the cultural factors come more strongly into play. Now the cultural environment of family, home, school, church, etc. will be playing a stronger influence on the next generation. The legal right to compete does not provide the personal *empowerment* that individuals will need to step up and to compete. This is where education and ethics will win the day. Here is where responsibility and a larger vision will enable the next generation to enter the middle class.

All of this requires cooperation and collaboration. By collaborating we can create a system that will reward hard work which produces values in the marketplace.

A SUSPICIOUS ELECTION

If you are reading this outside of the USA, you may not be aware of the problems and controversy around the still undecided election. In the 2016 election, the democrats claimed election fraud for four years. They called it "the Russian collusion" which led to multiple investigations but eventually ended with all of the allegations disproved. They then tried impeachment over a phone call, but that also failed. Now it is the Republicans turn to claim election fraud. But this time there are lots of factual evidence coming forth indicating the extent of the fraud— systemic fraud.

Systemic means that the fraud was not just a single one or a singular form, it has taken many different forms in many different states from Michigan, to Pennsylvania, to Georgia, to Arizona, and Nevada. Already hundreds of people have come forward reporting of instances of fraud and have signed affidavits under penality of law. There have also been scores of whistle blowers who have spoken out. Fraud, as the general term for any kind of trickery, includes many different things, from not following correct procedure which is designed to make an election fair and give equal access to all people, to presenting invalid ballots, to forbidding transparency etc. Here is a list of most of the fraud being reported.

- There have been significant computer glitches which has generated thousands of discrepancies; one glitch in Michigan registered 6000 votes for Trump for Biden. 47 counties used the same software.
- Multiple polling places refused to allow transparency in watching the counting as they refused to allow republican observers within a range so they could observe.
- There were problems with the mass mail-in. In PA, thousands of ballots showed up with only one vote on it, Biden. Though there were places for another 30 to 50 votes, none were marked. There were no "down votes" on the rest of the ballots.
- Observers of the PA counting now say that 632,000 ballots were illegal.
- Several post office workers have given testimony that they were told to pre-date ballots.
- There have been hundreds of thousands of ballots with no checking of the signature against the registration list.
- In NV, more than 300 deceased people voted; and another 600 who no longer lived them voted.
- A number of people have come forward who showed up and then were told they had already voted, when they had not.
- A Social Worker in Texas has been arrested for forging signatures on 63 ballots that she collected form a nursing home.
- Dozens of poll workers have been video-taped escorting voters into a voting booth and going with them and voting for them while the voter stands and passively watches "with their hands in their pockets."

- The Smartmac software has been implicated as having programs that intentionally delete files where votes for Trump were recorded.

It is a big mess and it is all very suspicious. One suspicious factor about the election is that in the days after election day, it was in the middle of the night (3 am) that the vote summaries suddenly changed from Trump to Biden. It's suspicious that the contested ballots were in 10 democratic stronghold cities. Why is that? Why refuse to let observers in so that they can do what they are there to do– observe? Are they hiding something?

What will eventually happen is still an open question. Obviously, the mainstream media has rushed to judgment in declaring Biden the winner, the president-elect. Biden himself is also acting as if it is over even though none of the states have yet certified the election. That is to occur on Dec. 9. Instead of patiently waiting, he is using the media to cry unfair and that Trump is preventing his transition team. Of course, it took 37 days for things to be settled in 2000 and the transition team to start.

Unless the courts overturn the count due to fraud in several states, then Trump will lose. If he does, I think it will be due to three things. First, *the covid virus;* that's who he was actually running against. Second, the media because while he took immediate and effective action in dealing with it, the media not only prevented that information from getting out, they created an extremely negative semantic environment against him. With 92% of all articles and news reports being negative about Trump, that was a big handicap that was nearly impossible for him to overcome. Third, the fraud surrounding the mail-in ballots.

Whatever happens with the election, the strong antagonism and partisanship that has been contaminating the political dialogue will continue. The different political philosophies of the right and left, conservative and progressive will continue and will create a cry for respectful communication that seeks first to understand and then to be understood. Only that will cure the current toxic environment.

SEARCHING FOR THE FACTS

"Just the facts, ma'am, just the facts."
Sergeant Joe Friday from the 1950s TV show Dragnet

Whenever there is a difference in opinion or a conflict about the best option, we seek to solve things by asking, "What are the facts?" We do this because we believe that the facts will solve the differences. If it were only that simple! It isn't and here's why.

Obviously, if we are to get to the truth about anything, we have to start with the facts. A fact is something that "has actual existence, a piece of information presented as having objective reality." A fact is an external referent which you can point to, an empirical thing that you can see, hear, smell, taste, touch, etc. While that, on the surface, makes sense and sounds easy, it is not. And that's because as Sir Authur Conan Doyle noted: *"There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact."*

When it comes to facts— there are all kinds of facts. There are true facts and false facts, there are clearly stated facts and ambiguous, convoluted facts which are hard to make sense of. There are misrepresented facts, second-hand facts, emotional facts, biased facts, fallacious facts, etc. Given that there are multiple kinds of facts, we start with empirical facts, yet even these are colored by our perceptual lens.

> If you perceive something as blue and I see it as green, what is the true fact? Obviously, neither. *Color* is not a fact. *Color* is a function of the rods and cons in your eyes and my eyes, it is not something "out there" in the world. We cannot say, "It is a fact that his shirt is red." That's an evaluation. In this case, a perceptual evaluation and one not made consciously. It is an unconscious function of a person's visual capacities.

This explains why we have ask, "Is it a fact or an evaluation?" And sometimes it takes a good bit of thinking to figure that out. Those who don't know the difference between descriptions and evaluations will tend to confuse their evaluations with descriptions. Many of the things we call facts are mental maps which we trust refers to a valid and true reference. Yet whatever you call a fact, it is also *incomplete*. It is an abstract *from* something and therefore not all of it. Facts also are *tentative* due to the fact that reality is forever changing. Facts are *contextual,* they depend on the context in which it occurs.

What makes it hard for each of us is that your facts and mine are perceived through our mental filters. That's why, right from the start, it is difficult to get unbiased and clean facts. It is also why we even argue over facts. With any problem-solving discussion, we always want to begin by starting with the facts. "Okay, so what are the facts that we know for sure?" The thought is

that this will simplify things and give us a foundation to start from. And while that's true, it is not that simple.

Then there are "facts" from every domain of knowledge. These are logical facts, social facts, psychological facts, economic facts, political facts, etc. All of these are actually evaluations. In each field, there are frames-of-references creating and coloring observations and experiences that are now called "facts" in those areas. That actually makes them meta-facts— facts about facts.

We often say "It is a fact that John lied." The statement sounds factual. If you're not skeptical, you might quickly conclude, "Yes, that is a fact." Or, "No, that is not a fact." But any statement about a "lie" is not an empirical fact, it is an evaluative fact—an evaluation. Framing a statement as a lie is one possibility among many others. What else could it be? It also might have been a mis-statement, an exaggeration, a partial truth, a joke, humor, sarcasm, an attempt at optimism, and so on. What is it really?

These meta-facts actually suffer from ambiguity. That's because by themselves, facts do not have meaning.   It takes a meaning-maker (you and I) to give meaning to a fact and we do that through various frames-of-references. Our filters and cognitive biases skew our thinking causing us to miscalibrate things.

All facts are not the same because it is so easy to confuse the map with the territory. Merely saying or thinking that something is a fact, does not make it so. If whatever you are calling a fact is not a sensory-based word, but a nominalization, it is an evaluation.

Finally, there are implied facts. Linguistically, whenever you use such words as *always, never, none, all, every* you are using words that imply some absolute facts. Yet these *universal quantifiers* (the Meta-Model) are usually untrue. That's why we challenge them, "always? There's no exceptions?

To do higher quality thinking— critical thinking— learn to challenge "facts" and to get back to the brute facts as best you can. The Meta-Model will help you do that, training in *Executive Thinking ("The Brain Camp")* will help.

WHAT DID YOU DO
WHEN THE WORLD WAS ON LOCK DOWN?

2020 will go down in history as one of the strangest years on a great many accounts. I began 2020 in January with David Murphy and Omar Salom at the NLP Leadership Summit and as we talked— we all anticipated a busy and exciting year. In February I was in Egypt on the first and, as it turned out, only training that I did in the year. When we returned at the end of February, the lock-down began. For months Geraldine and I were essentially in house-arrest and couldn't go anywhere. That's also when people began calling or emailing and cancelling one training after the other, one conference after another. Recently someone wrote and asked, "What did you do when the world was on lock down?"

At first, I didn't mind being unemployed. I was working on *Hypnotic Thinking* and wanted to complete that and get it to the printer. I did that in March. While working on that and on a new Training Manual for it, I came upon the idea of writing hypnotic inductions. I wrote several inductions in the book, and then thought, I could write inductions for all of the APG patterns, and more. So I began working on that book. Now it was April and nothing was happening in terms of opening up. I was still exercising in the garage with an inadequate assortment of weights since the gym was still closed. And we were doing "coffee" on the dining table, since Starbucks, and every other coffee shop, was closed. So I did and that produced the book, *Hypnotic Conversations.*

Now what? June was here ... at least we could get out a little bit. We had to wear masks to the gym and inhale lots of carbon-dioxide (how healthy was that?!). So somewhere along the way as I was re-reading nearly everything that Milton Erickson ever wrote, the idea struck me to write *a humorous* hypnotic conversation— to induce people into a state of laughter and fun. I certainly needed that. As a got a taste of that, I thought, "I could do with more of this."

So with that, I began reading in the field of humor and comedy. I also watched a whole range of comedians on Youtube and began to model the structure of humor. We watched nearly all of the masters of comedy which passed many, many hours. That lasted through June and July during which I created Filipino jokes custom-made just for Geraldine. She kept asking, "What's so funny about that? and so from that, lo and behold, came the book *Humorous Thinking* to answer her question.

What I discovered about humor is that it is much more *a form of thinking* than it is a state of emotion. That's because it is driven by incongruity, ambiguity, exaggerated representations, etc. So it deals with the very same mechanisms that framing and reframing deal with— as well as creativity and innovation. Given all of those inter-connections, I put together a training manual that I titled, *Unleashing Your Humor Potentials.*

In August one of the hypnotic inductions that I put in *Hypnotic Conversations* was about resilience. As I worked on that, and as several trainers were training the Resilience manual, I thought, "What the heck, I have nothing else to do, might as well write a book on resilience." I had previously entertained that thought when I wrote *Thinking as a Modeler* in 2018. When that indigestion passed, I moved on. Now while I had written chapters about resilience, referred to it often, I never wrote the book. So reviewing what I already had written and thinking through a better way to present it, I first created a new Training Manual, then I wrote the book, *Resilience: Being the Phoenix*.

Still in house-arrest in mid-September and having no trainings on the horizon, being a bit indecisive, I finally decided that I would write on deciding. That followed up naturally from *Executive Thinking* since thinking–deciding are so intimately linked together. That lead to reviewing books on decision-making and reading many new ones on the subject. It was also picked up where *Executive Thinking* ended. I didn't even have a chapter on decision-making in that book. So *Executive Decisions* arose as a companion book to focus on the major problem that nearly all humans have— making intelligent decisions.

Unlike the traveling and training schedule, the daily schedule throughout 2020 has been to start the day with three hours of reading and then three hours of writing. To keep healthy, we do an hour of exercise, except when we go hike in the mountains. When hiking we would go from 1½ to 2, and on occasion 4 hours. So in answer to the question, what did I do while things were in locked down, I wrote five books— mostly just to keep busy and productive. Just to employ myself during my unemployment.

It is now the end of November and I have finished *Executive Decisions,* so guess it is time for another book. Let me see, what's the next problem that I have that I'll research? Say, what did you do during the lock down? How did you employ yourself?

The list of 2020 books
>   *Hypnotic Thinking: For Unleashing Potentials*   (Part I)
>   *Hypnotic Conversations For Unleashing Potentials* (Part II)
>   *Humorous Thinking: The Essence of Creativity, Reframing and Well-Being*
>   *Resilience: Being the Phoenix*
>   *Executive Decisions: Smart Deciding*
>   And the three serial books written week by week *Neurons, Framers,* and *Morpheus*.

UNCOVERING YOUR
LATENT RESOURCES

There are a multitude of resources all around us— some we call them natural resources. Examples include forests, rivers, coal, gas, oil, sunlight, and on and on. Others are human resources— assets that enable you to be the best version of you— intelligence, faith, hope, joy, love, courage, persistence, resilience, and on and on. Of these resources— some are active and readily available, some are latent and have to be developed.

We sometimes describe NLP in terms of resources— identifying, developing, refining, and applying resources. With the Well-Formed Outcome questions, the resource questions follow the interference question (What stops you?) and asks, "What resource do you need to handle that block?" It could be an external resource (time, money, personnel, advice, coaching, etc.) and it could be an internal resources (courage, understanding, humor, etc.).

Often you have to go in search of a resource— you have to go explore where it is and how to access it. Just as people explore for oil, explore for wind, water, and sun energy sources, so you may have to explore and then develop what at first may not seem like a resource. When people first discovered oil seeping up from the ground, it was considered a problem, a mess, an inconvenience. They did not want it and that was because they didn't know what they could do with it.

Resources are like that— if you don't know what to do with a latent resource, you will tend to discount it, view it pessimistically, treat it like a problem to be solved rather than realize it is an asset to develop. In the book *Neuro-Linguistic Programming,* the authors described *environment variables*— the sources from which we can develop resources.

> "Each ... involves a shift from the class of environmental variables into the class of decision variables by reframing or restructuring the way a problematic phenomenon fit into our models. It is the continuation of this process, the shifting of environmental variables into decision variables by sorting and punctuating the way the variables fit into context, that is the goal of neuro-linguistic programming." (Dilts, 1980, p. 9)

That's fancy language (which is not all that clear) about turning a problem into an asset. It speaks about shifting an environmental variable into a decision variable which you can then take advantage of. Now you have choice!

> "NLP extends the limits of the modern scientific model by placing the locus of behavioral control in the individual. ... NLP takes one further step and proposes to examine the correlations between what we experience as the external environment and our internal representations of that experience." (1980, p. 12)

In other words, **how** *you think about the external problem can turn it into an internal resource.* Using the example of oil, once people *learned* about it, discovered ways to use it, their *inner perception* changed it from a problem to a resource— how to provide abundant energy and how to create an economy based on it. We did that with rivers as we built dams to capture the energy and then transfer it into wires that today light and warm our homes. In fact, hundreds of external things (environmental variables) that our ancestors considered as problems, or as unusable factors, we have turned into assets that frequently creates an economic fortune for those with this ability. When once people saw a lake frozen over, they viewed that as a problem, today we turn it into a ice skating ring and charge people to go skate. That's also reframing as we change our mind about an external factor, removing it from one category to a more useful category.

In a most creative way, Joe Cheal took the four dysfunctional communication stances of Virginia Satir (e.g., blamer, placater, distracter, and computer) and noting that when one of these are used 'in moderation' there are useful qualities within them that can be used as a personal strength. So from the liability of *blamer* can come the asset of *Expresser* (direct, focused, emphatic, strong, clear, etc.). From the liability of *placator* can come the asset of *Engager* (inviting, consulting, asking, open, including, etc.). From the liability of *distracter* can come the asset of *Entertainer* (amusing, light-hearted, cheerful, charming, creative, etc.). and From the liability of *computer* can come the asset of *Education* (factual, evidence-based, credible, intelligent, explaining, etc.). (*Acuity,* 2013, p. 51)

What are some of your *latent resources*— variables that today you may think of, and conceive as, a problem— that if you could, or would, change your mind, you would discover it as a source for wealth, health, creativity, love, courage, etc.? People create wealth all the time in this way. Others use complaints, problems, frustrations, etc. for creativity, for love, and for resilience.

For many, the pandemic, the lock-down, the economic down-turn has been nothing but an unmitigated problem. The media used it to spread a pandemic of fear and paranoia. Yet it doesn't have to be that way. Simply ask, "How can I turn this environmental variable into an asset?" I used the lock down to accelerate my research and writing (last week's Neurons #64). Some used it to develop a daily exercise routine. Some used it to build up an inner sense of resilience.

Think about a latent resource as *a resource-in-waiting*. It is there, it is simply not activated — not yet. It could be an understanding, a meaning, a competence (capacity), a symbol waiting to become an overt resource. Latent resources, however, can be deceptive. On the surface, they do not normally reveal themselves as resources. That's why you have to *look deeper,* explore more thoroughly, frame and reframe to find and develop that hidden resource. It is a potential that can be actualized, yet it takes a robust meaning-maker to do so. This is the challenge— are you up for it?

> For more, see *Mind-Lines* which is about the art of reframing, *Unleashed* which is on the process of how unleashing potentials work, or *Neuro-Semantics* — how we construct meaning and then actualize it in our performances.

From: L. Michael Hall
2020 Neurons #66
December 14, 2020

'TIS THE SEASON TO BE GRUMPY

Normally the holiday season, Christmas, Hanukkah and New Years is a "holly jolly time of the year." Stores are full of shoppers, restaurants full of customers, families traveling and gathering, end of the year parties, and on and on. This year, not so much. With the locked down, the economic turn down, the number of covid cases, the people hospitalized, the over-reaching by governments in micro-managing people's lives— this year it is more of a season to be grumpy, to complain about how things are going. I know, I feel that urge.

I have felt that urge to complain and to be grumpy more the past few months than in decades. And it arises from the simplest of things— I'd like to go out to a restaurant for an evening meal with friends. No, "Closed." Or I'd like to go to a coffee shop and read. No, "Covid warning, closed by order of the Governor."

Recently I began to self-model how I experience a grumpy mood, I've noticed how different it is from frustration or anger. These tend to indicate much bigger issues and problems. Something blocks me from reaching a goal (e.g., an unexpected expense, more paperwork, having to do paperwork all over again, etc.), and so I feel *frustrated.* Or if something violates my values (e.g., rioters burning down businesses, etc.), then I feel *anger.* It takes bigger or more significant things to trigger these emotions for me.

But for *feeling grumpy, annoyed,* and *irritated* it does not take much. Just a little inconvenience will do. The mind-set is also different. With the larger negative emotions, my mind goes to the problem and then to problem-solving. But with feeling grumpy, my mind goes to what is missing. I do not focus on a positively stated problem that needs to be addressed, I focus on what *I don't have* and *what's missing.* The first focuses on something present to deal with, the second focuses on what is not— on a negation. I can't go to the restaurant, I can't go the gym, I can't meet up with friends.

The meanings that create *frustration* are obvious and clear— there's a block. Something is interfering with my plans. I need to go through, around, over, under, or sideways to move forward. The meanings that create *anger*, if it is healthy and appropriate anger, are also obvious and clear— something is violating my values. Something significant and important — human dignity, preciousness of life, the value of X— is threatened or violated.

But with *grumpiness,* the meanings are not so obvious and clear. What are the meanings that I'm constructing in my head in order to feel irritated and grumpy? "I'm not getting my way!" "The world is conspiring against me." "Nobody is helping me get what I want." Noticing this, it becomes clear that I'm not clearly defining a problem that I can solve, I'm *just complaining.* I'm whining about things outside of my control. I sound like a 5 year-old fussing and fuming about not getting to play with a certain toy when there are piles of toys all around him.

Now if NLP is "the study of the structure of the subjective experience" and we look for the structure of *complaining*, to effectively complain you need to begin by *mis-matching* what you have with what you don't have and then *pessimistically* focus on what you don't have. Then *step into* that experience so that as you focus more and more on what is *missing,* you feel helpless to do anything about it. Your locus of control is on the outside, it is *external* to you as you scan the outside world asking the "they" question, "When are *they* going to fix this?" "Why don't *they* do something about this!"

Wow! That's a loaded package of meta-programs: mis-matching, pessimism, associated, external reference, etc. It comes from and it reinforces a state of dis-empowerment. The person is *not* owning his own powers of thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting. Nelson Zink wrote "To complain is to display your inflexibility." (*The Structure of Delight,* p. 215). Ah yes, the lack of flexibility! There's a lack of using one's creative problem-solving to come up with alternatives.

Instead of thinking about how to turn what you consider a liability into an asset (Neurons #65, Dec. 7), there is a sense of resignation. Instead of a robust sense of resilience, there is a giving up. To the trip that has caused a temporary, and usually tiny little, set-back— one stays down complaining to the high heavens and does not bounce back again.

Now the value of knowing how you and I create our states, emotions, and moods is that when you know *how you create them,* you are at choice point and can create something new and different.
> You could look around and *match* what blessings you do have and then *optimistically* let them count.
> You can *step out of* the grumpy feelings and *step into* more hopeful, loving, passionate, and courageous feelings. Or you could at least stay neutral.
> You could *fully own your powers by referring what you think and value* and refuse to play the "world's victim."
> You could increase your flexibility by adopting an attitude that there's lots of *options* for turning liabilities into assets and set-backs into resilience.

Actually, this is the season to feel whatever you choose to feel— if you step up to do some executive thinking and deciding.

> [For more see *Executive Thinking* and *Secrets of Personal Mastery*]

From: L. Michael Hall
2020 Neurons #67
December 21, 2020

2020 HINDSIGHT

I've been looking back on this past year to see what insights I can harvest. As undoubtedly one of the most disruptive years I've ever experienced— it turned so many things upside-down and interfered with multiple plans that were set up with scores of people. What is strange about it is that typically we use the metaphor of "20/20 eyesight" for seeing into the future even though we know that it is "hindsight that is 20/20," not foresight.

"If only I had known what was going to happen in 2020!" If you feel that way, I'm sure there are millions more who share that sentiment. I certainly do. I started out 2020 with a full calendar of trainings and conferences and while in Spain in January and Egypt in February, the thought never crossed my mind that the whole world could be stopped, put on hold, and everything I planned cancelled or postponed. "Who would have thunk it?" And because no one else anticipated it— 2020 was one of Nassim Taleb's Black Swan events— an event that *could have been predicted*, but was not, and yet which now looks somewhat obvious in hindsight.

Looking back the events of 2020 certainly underscore afresh that *we humans are intimately interconnected.* Even though the planet is large and spacious, our life together is that of villagers who are equally affected by what happens. I never anticipated that a virus in a far-away city in China could, within a couple months, spread around the whole world and bring about a shut down of every economy on the planet. Oh, yes, I've seen the Zombie movies of viruses that turned the infected into mindless Zombies who turn on the uninfected, but I didn't really consider that a cornavirus could do what covid-19 did, minus the Zombies.

At the beginning of 2020 I could not imagine governments start classifying jobs as *essential* and *non-essential.* If you had predicted that, I would have laughed and dismissed it as foolishness. And yes, I can understand that health care workers have jobs that are obviously essential. What doesn't make sense are so many of the jobs suddenly declared non-essential. I'm now thinking about all of the communication jobs that enable people to *think better, feel better, interact better*— coaches, therapists, consultants, educators, trainers, etc. In terms of surviving and coping well, these are essential jobs, not non-essential. But, of course, they were many of the first jobs to be shut-down and prevented.

And now, these many months later we are paying the price for that. Domestic violence is up, child abuse it up, so is drug and alcohol abuse, depression, suicide, etc. As holistic persons, in addition to staying safe from infection, surviving includes mental and emotional well-being. And what shall we say about all of the people, at least in the US, who started rioting, attacking the police, burning down businesses, etc.? Locking people up for months, preventing millions from going to work so they have meaningful work and activity to be engaged in— no wonder there were so many ready to take out their frustration and anger when given a chance.

Looking back gives many insights about human nature and what happens to people under restricted conditions. *Human beings thrive best when they are free.* We operate best as self-determining and self-responsible persons. Lock-downs are like being under house-arrest. It is not good for the human spirit. Not being able to freely get with family and friends also speaks about how much *we are social beings* and having a rich and rewarding social life is so important for our well-being.

Kids are also social beings. And kids learn best in person with a teacher and with peers, much better than on-line with a computer at home. The best learning is experiential— true learning is *not* about pouring facts into an empty head. It is *not* downloading all the known facts about a subject. Learning involves integrating and using. It is in the application of knowledge that one truly learns. Millions of children have essentially lost a year of learning because of the unscientific decision to close schools.

And some humans have a hunger for power so that when there's a crisis, they use it to grab all of the power that they can. We saw that in the United States with a few mayors and governors. They issued forth unreasonable restrictions. In Michigan you could go to the liquor store, but not to church. You could buy groceries but not paint or items to fix up your home. No wonder the idea that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely" still resonates with us. Abraham Maslow was the one who noted that the person who *wants* power is precisely the person who should never be given power.

Looking back on the pandemic of 2020 we see how consumerism has been, and is, a scourge for many people. Those who lived *on the edge* financially, living paycheck to paycheck immediately got in trouble. They may have had a sufficient job and paycheck, but they had the disease of *compulsively spending,* always needing the latest and best. Now they go to food banks and stand in line for handouts. I wonder how many will learn the lesson about saving, budgeting, and planning for emergency situations? Will they learn the basics of *healthy* wealth creation?

Here's to you developing and using your 2020 hindsights to become more insightful and wise in 2021. Here's to you making good use of the crisis. I raise a glass to your resilience!

DECISION TIME

Yes it is that time of year! As we approach the beginning of a brand new year— it is the time to reflect and take stock of where you are, how you're doing, and where you want to go. We talk about it as a time for New Year resolutions. The idea of a *new* year suggests that we can make other things *new* in our lives. So we think about making a decision.

Now isn't that exciting? Of course, I'm being a bit sarcastic. That's because, for most people, making a decision doesn't strike them as exciting, but difficult, needless, or even futile. Many have made New Year resolution one after another and typically they are long forgotten by February, let alone in August. After years of resolutions that were not so resolute, and which never went anywhere, many simply stop making them. Why make a New Years' resolution if you know yourself well enough that you will not follow through?

The great majority of decisions that we make in life are of the quick-decide-now version. We make decisions about what to wear, eat, and say in that way. It is a shot-from-the-hip type of decision making, usually based on how we feel in the moment. We make decisions based on a gut feeling, an intuition, a particular context, in response to someone else, etc. No wonder then that we have a lot of practice in making *real authentic decisions that are life transforming*.

Now unknown to most people, within *smart decisions* is a hidden structure. A strategic process actually governs intelligent decisions that people make and it is a strategy that you can learn. Interesting enough it is based on the most fundament process that your brain engages in— *thinking*. That's because, ultimately, you can make decisions no better than you can think. Thinking and deciding are two brain processes which are highly collaborative.

This is what puts so many people off from making an authentic decision— it requires the mental effort of thinking. It requires establishing a desired outcome based on your actual values (and not your "should" values) relative to what's realistic in terms of your competencies and environment. As you are engaged in that, you begin to do information gathering or due diligence which, in turn, allows you to face the challenges of the changes and prepare for them with some contingency planning. And all of that requires a lot of *thinking*.

Now there's a part of your brain that does that kind of thinking. It occurs in the pre-frontal lobes of your cortext. That's where you do abstract thinking in terms of concepts and principles. That's where you do consequential thinking in terms of trends, possibilities, probabilities, long-term sequencing of activities, etc. It is there also that you make executive decisions. Ah, yes, *executive decisions*— decisions that affect your whole system. Decisions that set up the policies and rules that, in turm, govern your life.

To escape from making executive decisions is to live in the moment and go with any wind that blows your way. It is to live your life *reactively* to the people and events and circumstances around you. But you can be the CEO of your company— the company of You. You can make executive decisions about what's important (your values), how you want to be (your personality), what you want to be engaged in (your work and career), who you want to be with (your friends and loved ones), etc.

Here's an area of development that would do most everyone a lot of good— cultivating one's ability to engage in truly *intelligent* decision-making. First and foremost this gives a sense of being in charge of your own life. It develops your confidence that you can make a decision in such a way that it becomes lifestyle— you carry it through. Your decisions are sustainable. You can make choices about things and then make those things happen. You are decisive, disciplined, and proactive.

One of the biggest problems with decisions is that we humans are notorious for making *bad decisions*. We all do. And just as the cognitive biases, distortions and fallacies undermine healthy and sane thinking, they undermine smart decision making. There are, in fact, lots of decision traps that are so easy to fall into. The solution? Learn the strategy within the process of robust and wise decision-making. If you're ready, then start with a meta-decision— decide that you will learn how to make truly well-formed and intelligent decisions.