

# “MORPHEUS”

## 2024

### META-COACHING REFLECTIONS

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**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #1**  
**January 3, 2024**

## **ACMC CHANGES — 2024**

We are always working to update, upgrade, and improve ACMC. Recently the leadership team talked through where we are with ACMC and what we can do to raise the quality of ACMC around the world and we came up with a couple of new ideas.

First, over the years, we have always had two different groups of people attending ACMC. There is the group of people who entered into the Meta-Coach pathway to become professional coaches and identifying themselves as Certified Meta-Coaches. There has also been another group of people who were primarily focused on their own personal development and/or their development as professional communicators. This includes managers, leaders, CEOs, consultants, even therapists who attend—not so much for the *coaching* aspect as for the *communication* training.

Seven or eight years ago, I created a second Certificate for participants in the ACMC training. It was primarily for leaders, CEOs, and other senior managers in organizations—those who did not really care (or want) a Meta-Coach Certificate. But they were open to getting a *Professional Communicator Certificate*. So that's what I created and over the years, we have given out that certificate. That certificate recognizes that they have deeply studied the NLP Communication Model and practiced it.

About that time we also *stopped* giving out the Meta-Coach Certificate at graduation and instead we gave everyone a *Pre-Certification Record*. Now why did we do that? The primary reason was because we wanted to take the pressure off at the ACMC training. We wanted also to communicate that *if you were serious about reaching competency—it would take some time*. No one reaches competency in 8-days. It takes time. It takes practice. And so we put the assessment of competency at some time later—*whenever the person was ready*. This was designed to take off the pressure of needing to complete it in eight days.

There was another reason. We had previously put a “P” after a person's name to indicate “Provisional.” But some people (who I will not name) simply covered the “P” and never completed their competency assessment. So that led to the *Pre-Certification Record*. But now we had another problem, one that has continued to this day, namely, disappointment. Many were disappointed that all they got was a *Pre-Certification Record*.

So we are going to fix that. Beginning in 2024 everyone who attends ACMC will receive a *Professional Communicator Certificate*. And, those who are there to become professional coaches will also receive the pre-certification record. And we are upgrading that *Record* to include the following:

- \_\_\_ Complete 25 coaching sessions prior to assessment. Half can be pro-bono, the other half paid coaching sessions.
- \_\_\_ Assessment of competence (2.5) *after* the required coaching sessions.

Why you ask? Almost no one can reach competency *if they are not regularly coaching*. And while we want you to do buddy-coaching, and coaching in the Practice Groups and in the Deliberate Practice Groups, the best preparation is *coaching real live clients*. Now in the 25 coaching sessions *after* ACMC, you can charge something minimal like \$40. As you do, you are taking the steps necessary to enter into the coaching market, getting used to charging, getting used to presenting yourself as a professional, and building up your confidence that you can do it.

If you choose to go for the Meta-Coach Certification, then you have *one year to complete the process*. In that time, you will be coaching multiple people and experiencing 25 coaching sessions. You will keep track of these sessions: Who, Date, Amount of Time (1 hour, 1½ hours, etc., Client name, contact information of client (see the format in the ACMC manual). Once you have completed the *25 coaching sessions*, you can then ask to sit for assessment and be benchmarked.

I recommend that before you ask to sit for assessment, *benchmark yourself*. You have learned the skills and sub-skilled, so take the feedback form and watch the video of your coaching session. See how well you did. There is a page in ACMC informing you about how to score on each of the skills. You will learn a lot doing this! You can also have other Meta-Coaches do the same.

*All of this is designed to raise the value and quality of the **Meta-Coach Certification** so that it means more and more to you and to all of us*. It speaks of the quality of work you have done to achieve it. And it is not for everyone, just those who want to be professional coaches.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #2**  
**January 10, 2024**

## **HOW MUCH DO YOU WEIGH?**

She wanted to lose weight. Actually, a lot of weight, 50 pounds to be exact. Ideally, her height and bone size suggested she should weigh 150 pounds, but she was just over 200. She in the first week, she got on the scale and it read, 202. “Okay, that’s my beginning place.” At the beginning of week two, she stepped on the scale. It read, 202. “Well, I didn’t lose any weight this week,” she said to herself. “But I want to lose weight. I want to get down to 150.”

Week three she stepped on the scale, 201. “Why am I not losing any weight?” she asked herself. “I just cannot figure this out. I set my goal. I really want it. I checked that it was ecological.” On weeks four and five she stepped onto the scale, 203, 201. That was frustrating enough that she decided she would talk to a Meta-Coach.

“So what are you doing to reach your goal of losing weight?” the Meta-Coach asked?

“Well, I am getting on the scale once a week to assess where I am in the process.”

“Okay, and what else?”

“Well I’m believing and hoping.”

Obviously she has answered WFO questions #1 and #3, but not #7. That’s why her approach is not, and will not, work. She is focused on the ultimate outcome and not on *the process for how to get there*. Similarly, I have known some people who stepped on *the scale of assessment* week after week hoping to now reach the 2.5 competency level without every practicing and exercising the Meta-Coaching skills. Kind of silly, isn’t it? The key is not the assessment! The key is *what you do on a regular basis between assessments*.

Knowing how much you weigh, or how high a score you get in an assessment, *is not the way to improve your level of skill and competency*. No. Instead you have to get to the gym and workout—the gym of Practice Groups, real live coaching practices, video-taping your sessions, doing a self-assessment to see where you are, etc. You probably also have to change your diet of what you’re reading and studying.

While *the key is not the assessment*, I encourage you to get regular assessments and to do self-assessments. You know the feedback form—it’s in your ACMC manual. Make copies of it and watch a video of your own sessions. Watch it five times—one for each of the five core skills that you want to become fully competent with—supporting, listening, questioning, meta-questioning, and state induction. Keep reading and studying the pages in the manual on the skills and sub-skills and how to assess yourself.

When you think you are close to reaching the competency level, get one of the Meta-Coach trainers, or one of the team leaders who has been designated a “sign off” person, to look at your video to see if you have reached competency yet. All of the Meta-Coach trainers and the others are here to support you—if you are committed to your own learning and development.

If the key is *what you do* between assessments, then focus on that! What those who have succeeded in becoming competent and have moved on to the next level in Meta-Coaching have found critical is *plenty of actual coaching experience* and plenty of feedback.

Whenever anyone wants me to do an assessment with them, I always ask one question, “How much practice have you been getting in actually coaching this past week?” If it is two sessions or less, that is just not enough. Just as going to the gym or getting some form of exercise two or less times a week is not enough for long-term fitness and well-being, so two or less coaching sessions is just not enough.

Are you serious about a coaching career? Are you committed to it? Then minimally aim to do one coaching sessions every day.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #3**  
**January 17, 2024**

## UNLEASHING ATTENTION

*“Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention?”*

*“If you would direct your attention to the front of the stage, you will see...”*

*“This is sure to capture your attention like nothing else will.”*

*“I wish I could focus my attention on my reading and not get distracted.”*

Attention is a power dynamic in human consciousness, but all *attention* is not the same. In Neuro-Semantics we distinguish between out-of-control, undisciplined and wild attention from attention that serves intention for a focused purpose. The first is the attention that we are all born with—the attention of small children as well as anyone who has not learned to discipline his or her attention. The disciplining of attention occurs when you develop your intentions and *set an intention*. If and when you do that, then you can align your attentions so that they serve your higher intentions. Now your attentions have a purpose and a direction—they arise from the values and decisions that you intentionally set.

Natural attention is primary level attention. It comes with being human and with developing a mind. The disciplined attention, is a meta-level phenomenon that arises as you learn to manage your attentions which you manage from a meta-level of intentions.

If you are easily distracted, then your primary attentions are probably too strong and not disciplined enough. Now if you wanted to increase your distractability, simply increase the number of things that you want right now. But who wants to do that? The more desires you have, the more options, the more problems to solve, the more fantasies, etc., the more your attentions will be all over the place. Your attentions will be highly variable, always shifting and changing. And your attentions will undoubtedly conflict with one another.

To be less distracted, there is another set of distinctions about attentions to consider. Namely, there are attentions which are wide and those which are narrow. *Wide attentions* refers to when you open your mind—your thinking—to bring in the full range of awareness. Sometimes when Geraldine and I are out on a mountain hike, I will practice opening up all of my attentions as wide as possible—and seek to attend to all of the visual data before me, the auditory sounds, the kinesthetic sensations in my body, and the olfactory sensations. When I do that, I’m in full sensory awareness to that there’s almost no internal dialogue.

There are also times in a coaching session, I will open up my peripheral perception to bring in as much information about my client as possible. As I listen to the person, I will widen my attention to the words, the quality of his voice, tone, tempo, volume, etc. I will widen my attention to movements, breathing, sighs, etc.

*Narrow attention* refers to when you focus your attentions on a particular object. In the

wilderness of our mountain hikes, I will do that if we are climbing up or down a really steep area. In those moments, I can't let my attention divert from what I am immediately trying to do. At times I do the same when I'm absorbed in reading a text that absolutely fascinates me. Others experience the narrowing of attention when they play a video game, a tennis match, or anything that demands total attention.

When you are narrowing your attention it is common to experience it as *a trancelike state*. You are totally there—"in the zone," in "flow," or as we say in Neuro-Semantics, in your "personal genius state." You are *all there* and you are nowhere else. And typically, when you are there, you have all of your resources fully available. This is what we do with the Accessing Your Personal Genius Pattern (APG). To create this, you rise up to your brain's executive function, especially your intentionality and from there you manage and supervise your performances.

This speaks to how to be less distractable—namely, learn to narrow your attentions. Intentionally set a goal, a specific significant goal that you highly value. In doing this, you set up a self-organizing process so that your attentions begin to serve your intention. To achieve this, shift out of *options* into *procedures*. Set aside your need "to keep my options open." That only makes you more easily distractable. Turn off your chatty internal dialogue so that your narrow attention becomes one with its object whether it is the mountain you are climbing, the game you a play, the book you are reading, the client you are coaching.

When you widen your attention, you are in a very different state—more of an oceanic state, in full sensory-awareness. You are fully present to the outside world in a very different way. It is typically relaxing and rejuvenating.

*Then there is the switching of attention.* From you highest intentions, you can choose *when* to use narrow attention and *when* to widen it. In switching, you can move back and forth between these two facets of attention. In each also you can *sustain a particular kind of attention*. You can stay focused or you can open up and stay in sensory-awareness. When you are narrowing attention, you are *screening attention* so that you are shutting out everything that is not relevant to the focus that you have chosen.

There are time when you will want to interrupt your attention so that you can then switch to the kind of attention that will serve you best in a given moment. For that you will need an effective state interrupt.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #4**  
**January 24, 2024**  
*The Art of Benchmarking #1*

## **WHAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT ACMC BENCHMARKING**

At the basic competence level in Meta-Coaching (e.g., 2.5 for the basic coaching skills), we have over the years created very specific benchmarks. That's why there are now more than 20 sub-skills for Listening and 20 for Supporting and there are more than a dozen sub-skills for each of the other skills. Given that, after a dozen years of training Meta-Coaching, and working with Coaches to become truly *competent in coaching*, we have been able to identify the minimum requirements which reveal when a coach has a level of competence. You can find that minimum list in your ACMC manual.

Now while *reaching competency level* is one kind of challenge, an even greater challenge is to benchmark. That's what we teach in the 2-days of training prior to every ACMC training. We spend 2 days with the assist team, preparing them to learn how to *benchmark at the ACMC level*. And it is so challenging, that it typically takes a person 4 or more times on the team to really become skilled at it. Yes, that's right— 4 or more times! That means the 10 days of ACMC four times, in other words, 40 or more days of intense practice of benchmarking.

“Why does it take that much time and practice?” you ask. Here's why. First, you have to *know and understand* the coaching skills and how they show up in the sub-skills. And given that there are so many sub-skills, that means getting acquainted with a hundred-plus sub-skills. Second, once you intellectually “know” the skills, then there's the dynamic experience of being able to *recognize* the skill in some sub-skill format *in real time* as a coach and client are engaged in a coaching session. This is where many, if not most, Meta-Coaches on the assist team develop intense headaches when they first start out (!). It is a lot of mental work.

Third, it is not enough to *know* and to *recognize* the expression of the skill, then you have to *catch* it in real time and *record* it. Wow! All of that is a lot! And that's why it takes most people 40 to 70 days of practice before a person gets really good at benchmarking. But here's the thing. When you do, your own coaching skills will improve significantly. Why? Because when you are coaching, there will be a new level of awareness and appreciation of *what you are doing as you are doing it*. In other words, you will become highly *mindful* of the process of coaching and that puts you at “choice point” about what to do at any given moment.

If you are really serious about becoming a professional coach, I would highly recommend for you to *get on the assist team* four or more times. Yet you don't have to wait. Start now by video-taping your coaching sessions, grabbing a benchmark form, and begin to learn to benchmark yourself. You will learn a lot doing that! For me, having taught ACMC done it 100 times, that explains why I'm fairly conscious of what I'm doing in a coaching session in real time.

Now there is something else. *The meta-skill* that you need as a benchmarker is *meta-detailing*. You have to know *the coaching skill* (the meta) and you have to be able to drill down to specific details in terms of how that skill shows up in the coaching session (the detailing). What does this mean? It means you have to do both global thinking and detail thinking simultaneously. You have to *hold the global or meta frame of the skill* and at the same time be able to zoom down to the details. That's meta-detailing which is explained in the book, *Sub-Modalities Going Meta*.

I found that distinction when I was study the structure of the “genius” state. In Dilts’ books on the *Strategies of Genius*, this is the distinction that separates someone at that level of expertise from everyone else. They meta-detail. And when you can do that as a benchmarker, or as a coach, your skill of coaching will grow exponentially.

This is the art of benchmarking at the ACMC level. As we have refined it over the past 20+ years, it has become pretty precise. That's why one of the tasks I give every assist team is to see how close they can come to my benchmarks. It's not that my benchmarking is perfect or always right — it is not! I often miss things. But overall it is nearly always more accurate. And what most people have asked me is how can I see and hear so many things that they do not. Well, it is just practice; that's all. Attend ACMC 100 times and you'll be able to do that as I do.

Now if that's what benchmarking at the ACMC level is like, is it the same or does it differ at the PCMC level? Answer: It differs. And actually it differs a lot—the subject of the next article.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #5**  
**January 31, 2024**  
*The Art of Benchmarking #2*

## **HOW PCMC BENCHMARKING DIFFERS FROM ACMC**

Having described ACMC benchmarking (Morpheus #4), and having posed the question: Is benchmarking the same as the ACMC level or does it differ at the PCMC level? The answer: It differs. And actually, it differs a lot. So, *how* does it differ?

At ACMC level, the focus is on the *standardization* of basic coaching competence. Accordingly, over the years we have developed a lot of precision about what is minimally required for competency. That means that when you watch a person coach—you will be able to tell if that person has been through *Coaching Mastery*. You will see a *standard of performance* which has a level of quality which meets the ACMC standard with regard to listening and supporting, questioning and meta-questioning, and state induction.

A similar thing happens in the field of sports—swimming, gymnastics, soccer, basketball, etc. First a person needs to develop basic competency so that one can consistently produce the skill. One learns the *standards* of that sport and then learns how to perform those standards at the required criteria. Once that competency is laid down in one's behavior so that it is consistent and, perhaps even automatic, then a person can begin adding unique idiosyncratic pieces that add wonder, mystery, and charm. Now one can even break some of the foundational rules and processes in order to achieve a higher level of functioning.

The guiding principle is this: *You cannot break the rules until you can thoroughly and consistently follow the rules*. Rebels can break rules; actually any fool can do that. But to break it because you know the rule inside-out and can tell when to rise above it, that's an entirely different thing. If you *can* operate at standard level, then *when conditions call for it*, you have the ability to rise above the rules governing standard procedure. Once you have the foundation of a skill, you can then—when it is appropriate—move beyond that rule. You can introduce your own unique style which may or may not literally satisfy the rule. That's what begins to happen at the PCMC level.

Now given that, *how does anyone benchmark that?* The difference lies in operating from a *standard base* that's required (ACMC level) to operating from the *principles* and *intentions* of coaching. When benchmarking for the standard base, you need rigorous and precise measurements. When benchmarking for the *spirit of coaching* at the PCMC level, you are looking for, and measuring things by, a higher standard—the person's attitude, spirit, and heart.

This is why, at the PCMC level, the additional skills that transform the standard base into something truly marvelous, are the following skills:

- In-the-moment-framing skills
- The coachable moment skills
- The compassionate-challenging skills
- The distinction and the torpedo-questioning (or FBI questions)
- The deep experiential induction skills
- The inferential thinking and listening skills.

It's these skills that make a PCMC coaching experience—a *deep and transformative change*. As a Meta-Coach, you take your client *inside* to his Meta Place (or mind) where you find the frame-that-has-to-change. Whatever skills you use to do that, whether inferential listening, challenging, questioning, etc., you and your client *touch on the deepest meanings* which lead to a transformation in the person's thinking, feeling, and responding.

Accordingly, while I'm looking for each of these advanced skills when benchmarking at the PCMC level, above and beyond that I am looking for *the coach facilitating the inward transformative journey*. If the coach can do that with only one of the skills, say inferential listening, or perhaps a challenge to a meta-program, then that could be enough.

I have begun to call this *the deep dive*. That is also the title of the next book that I'm currently writing. And the amazing thing about a deep dive is that you can make a deep dive with someone by focusing on a single word, a semantically loaded sentence, a trivial meta-comment, a downtime moment, a surprise, and on and on. There's many ways and mechanisms for how to invite a deep dive with a client. And true enough, not every client will take you up on your invitation. And sometimes you have to make the invitation a dozen or more times before one goes inside.

At the PCMC level, coaching becomes *highly experiential*. In multiple ways, you get the client to leave the outside world and go inside. That's when things become truly *real*. You and your client move beyond the person's personas, roles, and masks as you encounter the authentic person. At PCMC level, there is almost always a *coachable moment* that then becomes the core of the call for authenticity.

So yes, I'm looking for, recording as many of the foundation skills as I can. I'm also recording as many of the advanced skills as I can. And yet, *above and beyond* that, I'm looking to see if the coach truly did *meta-coaching* by taking the person inside to the meta-levels of his mind and meaning-making functions.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #6**  
**February 7, 2024**  
*The Art of Benchmarking #3*

## USING BENCHMARKING TO BECOME A BETTER COACH

### The question:

- Can you learn to effectively benchmark a coaching session, will that automatically make you a better coach?
- If I join the ACMC *Assist Team* and get the benchmark training and practice, how much more effective will I be as a coach?

The answer, generally and overall is *yes, benchmark training will help you be a better coach*. It is not automatic. Some have learned to benchmark and, from what I can tell, it has not transferred to making their coaching practices better. For one person I think it was because she wanted to focus on the benchmarking skills, rather than the coaching skills. For another, I think he had a block inside in terms of integration and apply-to-self. But for the great majority, when you learn how to benchmark, you take your coaching skills up a notch or two. Why? What explains this?

1) *Knowledge*. To benchmark effectively, you have to know the coaching skills—and the sub-skills. The simple fact that in benchmarking, you go over the skills repeatedly and learn more about them, what counts, what does not count, etc., you will be more aware of the skills.

2) *Perceptive*. There's also the fact that now you are not so much *doing* the skills as *observing* the skills from a second-person perceptual position. This gives you an entirely different look at the skills. Over the years, dozens and dozens of team leaders have commented that often time in watching new coaches struggling with getting a skill down, they become embarrassingly aware of what they must have looked and sounded like when they were beginning. The experience is very different from first-person perceptual position of *doing* the skill and from *observing* it. Now seeing it from the outside, you can edit how you would do it.

3) *Mentoring*. Often as the person benchmarking, you will invite the coach-in-training to stop and reflect on the skill he is attempting. Frequently the person will say, "I just don't get it, could you show me how to do it?" And you do. And in doing that, you are not only mentoring, you are deepening your own ability with that skill.

4) *Deliberate practice*. What we now teach all of those on the Assist Team to do is to engage your team members, and/or the triads in the practice groups, to do *deliberate practice*. This is a key aspect of developing expertise. You identify a series of steps, maybe four of them, that makes up the process for doing something. Then you practice each step, one by one, until the person can do it. Then you ask them to put all the steps together. And you have the person go through the

process repeatedly until she *gets it*.

Now regarding the benchmarking skills, *you can begin today!* And, I recommend that you do. How? Video-tape yourself doing a coaching session, ideally with both of you in the same place. Then get out the feedback form and watch the video. The nice thing about a video—you can stop it, and back it up. If you do something and are unsure, “Is that X skill or not?” you can record the time when that occurred and later have someone else watch it to get a second opinion.

Even if you have not taken the benchmarking training on the Assist Team, offer your services to another Meta-Coach. You will learn so much! Get a buddy coach and exchange with him or her.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #7**  
**February 14, 2024**

## **THE META-COACHING WAY**

Not too long ago while doing a demonstration of Meta-Coaching, a coach from some other coaching “school,” made a comment. “I’m not familiar with the Meta-Coaching way of coaching, when you did X, I would have done Y.” I thought that he was going to ask a question, maybe something on the order of, “So what were you thinking, or what in the Meta-Coaching methodology led you to do that?” But there was no question. There was more of a statement that implied, “This is what you should have done!”

Regardless of that, it did get me thinking? “What exactly is ‘the Meta-Coaching way?’” If I were to explain *the Meta-Coaching Way*, how would I explain it? And that led to writing this article. But before I present my thinking about that, what do you think? If someone wanted to do a coaching session with you and asked you, “By the way, what do you mean by *the Meta-Coaching way* of coaching? What does that mean?” And you would say what? Take a moment and formulate your thoughts about that. Or go take a walk and come back to read the rest of this article.

### ***The Meta-Coaching Way***

Now if you cheated (also known as ‘research’) and you picked up the book, *The Meta-Coaching System*, you would have identified *Meta-Coaching* in terms of the eight (8) primary models that we use in coaching. That comprises *the methodology* of Meta-Coaching. And yes, that certain defines *the way* that we do Meta-Coaching. You might have picked up the ACMC manual and reviewed the definition of Meta-Coaching—a conversation like none other that gets to the heart of things, a client’s meanings. Here it is in full:

Meta-Coaching is

- 1) the art of facilitating the processes with an individual or organization
- 2) to a specific agreed upon outcome
- 3) by means of a ruthlessly compassionate conversation
- 4) that gets to the heart of things— the client’s core meanings
- 5) to identify and mobilize inner and outer resources
- 6) for generative change
- 7) to develop, unleash, & actualize the client’s potentials for achieving his or her dreams.

And yes, that would also provide another way to describe *the Meta-Coaching way*. But that’s a lot of words. Can we shorten it? Can we make it more succinct and pithy? In just one sentence, what is *the way* that distinguishes Meta-Coaching?

*Meta-Coaching is coaching at a higher level. We coach your inside world so your best self comes out and make it real in the outside world.*

Now, sure, we could also summarize it up in a single sentence about meaning-making. We could summarize it in another sentence about detecting, inducing, and upgrading your mental frames. There's a number of ways of doing a quick summary. You could say "The Meta-Coaching way is winning the inner game so that the outer becomes a piece of cake."

What's most distinctive about the Meta-Coaching way is our focus on the meta-level structures. That is why, above all else, we take the client inside. Nor do we merely focus on what the client feels inside. That is a pretty superficial inner level, more symptomatic than anything else. We focus on the thinking that creates the emotions. We move beyond the emotional symptoms to the meaning frames that activate the emotions. We move to even higher to the hidden and deeper structures that govern the client's experience.

Now when you do that, simultaneously you do many other things. Here is just a few:

- You give the client an intimate personal experience.
- You put the client at cause — responsible for his own life.
- You dive deep into the client's unconscious mind (the meta-levels).
- You facilitate transformative learning and change.
- You invite the client to identify, develop, and unleash potentials.
- You enable the client to claim her powers for self-determination.

All of this is involved in *the Meta-Coaching way* of doing things. It makes the way we coach dynamic, life-changing, empowering, and completely respectful to the client to choose his own way. As Meta-Coaches, we have no agenda except to be of service. And now tht you know the Meta-Coaching way—let your clients know.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #8**  
**February 21, 2024**  
*Lessons from Coaching Videos #1*

## WHAT I'M LEARNING FROM YOUR VIDEOS

I have just completed a new coaching book using transcripts from videos that have been made of my coaching sessions. Once I had the transcription of the coaching session, I went through the dialogue and identified key aspects. I identified some of the coaching skills; some of the client's patterns, and I wrote out what I was thinking at any given moment. Geraldine and the Philippino and Malaysia Meta-Coaches regularly ask about *my thinking* at the end of the Executive Coaching sessions we do on Zoom.

Once I had the transcripts pretty well done, I invited a few Meta-Coaches who have been working to reaching PCMC level to read them. I wanted to know what they would learn or pick up from the dialogues and what questions they would have. I was not disappointed. Those who participated wrote extensively about insights, take-aways, and learnings. They also took the time to ask some really great questions—questions that helped me to understand some of the processes better and questions that enabled me to know how to communicate more effectively about what was transpiring. I then also put many of the questions in the last chapter of the book.

Well, that's about my videos. As all of that was transpiring, I invited them—as I do anyone and everyone—if you want to make a video of yourself coaching and you want feedback, send it to me. So in the past few weeks I have received nearly a dozen videos. And rather than do a detailed benchmarking of them—I have focused on giving feedback on what worked really well and what the person needs to do to take it to the PCMC level. Geraldine has also been watching them and that has given us time to talk about Meta-Coaching Processes and what can help a person full *step up one's game*.

Here are some of the most critical insights that we can offer to those of you who are committed to becoming the very best coach you can become.

### ***1) Know the WFO questions and ask them precisely.***

The key thing that undermines even those at the PCMC level is that they are often sloppy about how they ask the WFO questions. The problem is that if you mis-state the question, or ask it in a convoluted way, both you and your client will *not* experience the power of those questions. What is seductive is that the questions seem simple and obvious enough so a person could easily think, "There's lots of ways asking the questions; no need to memorize them."

But that's where coaches often get really sloppy. So a coach asks, "What do you want to talk about in this session?" rather than, *What do you want that will make a big difference in your life?* (#1). They ask, "When do you want this?" (#4) rather than, *When do you want to achieve this goal?* Those are two very, very different questions. My recommendation with regard to the 18

Well-Formed Outcome questions—*memorize them!* Memorized them exactly and precisely. Learn to ask them in such a way that you clearly communicate the distinctions that you are asking for.

There's something else seductive about these questions. Because they seem simple and obvious, most coaches do not realize all of the things that they can do with them. Obviously you are co-creating with your client a well-formed goal. You are also giving your client a chance to reveal his meta-programs. Ask #1, *What do you want?* and clients will tell you what they are moving toward and/or what they do not want, what they are moving away from. That gives you *a lot of information about themselves*— if you know how to listen to it.

When you ask #3, you are inviting them inside and some will easily go there, others will not. Now you have some information about internal-reference versus external reference. As they answer questions #1 and #3 you will be able to quickly detect—global or specific. If they can answer question #3 effectively, they probably have a well-developed value system, if they can't, but talk in long sentences or stories, they probably are not very clear about their values.

Effectively using the WFO questions enables you to do some really high level *information gathering*. Your client's answers gives you a mirror of their internal world ... if you are really listening. And if you do *critical acknowledgments* when they say anything that's semantically loaded, you can get to the heart of things and not waste a lot of time going round and round.

Used effectively, the WFO questions can do something else—they can help a client get *clear*. The questions themselves, especially if you use the *energizing questions* that you learned in ACMC, can function as a clarity conversation and bring understanding and new levels of awareness to a client.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #9**  
**February 28, 2024**  
*Insights from Coaching Videos #2*

## THE ART OF WORKING YOUR QUESTIONS

In watching about a dozen videos just in the last few weeks, and writing reports for the Meta-Coaches regarding the skills really well done and those that need some correcting or updating, you may be wondering, “What am I looking for when I view the videos?” Obviously, I could use the benchmark form and simply fill that form in. But that’s not what I’m doing. Not what I think is best in terms of the coach’s next level of development.

Instead I’m looking for the things that seem to cause the most interference or problems. And why? Because most often, when a person has lots and lots of good skills, it only takes one skill poorly done to undermine the total effect. That is the case with the WFO questions which I mentioned in the last article. This also applies to all of the other questions.

### ***2) Practice asking the energizing questions to get the most out of your inquiries.***

You learned at ACMC that *the primary tool of coaching is questioning*. It is not presenting, summarizing, running a pattern, etc. It is questioning. You coach best by questioning. Now, why is that? It’s because via your questions—you engage, encounter, confront, and probe your client’s world as she, simultaneously, is doing the same.

Actually, it is absolutely amazing all that you can do with a question. If you look in your ACMC manual, there’s a list of 12 kinds of questions and their counter-parts. Nor is that an exhaustive list, there are many more kinds. And, *the question you ask will largely determine the answer you will receive*. Isn’t that amazing?

Now I designated the four *energizing* questions as “energizing” because with them you can *work* whatever answer your client gives you. Why? Because, as you know, your client often will give you vague, unspecified, and generalized answers. Often their answers only confuse things further and if the first thing you do in Meta-Coaching is coach for clarity, then you need to *work over the answer* so that it yields its treasures.

Two of the questions are *opening questions*— Exploration and Clarity and two of them are *closing questions*. The first two invite the client to diverge and the second two invite the client to converge. In diverging or opening up your client gives you more information so that you can understand the context, the background, and his references. In converging or closing, you are getting a commitment from your client as you use positive closed questions resulting in a yes or a no.

All of this is pretty basic. It is Coaching 101. And if you have practiced these questions, especially if you have done so with *deliberate practice*, then these energizing questions will be so

automatic in you, you will ask them unconsciously. But that's not what I generally see in the videos. Instead I'm watching coaches *not asking for clarity*, or getting the necessary parts of the *context*, or asking the *testing questions* for a commitment, or using the *checking questions* to present the coach's confusion and ignorance.

“So what?” you ask. Without these energizing questions, it is very, very difficult to get *the subject* which is usually necessary so that you can then get the client's *goal* or outcome. Almost without fail, when a coach misses the *subject* and/or goes round and round and round in trying to get an *outcome*, it is because the coach is not asking the energizing questions.

And why does the coach *not ask*? Again, usually because of the seductive nature of communication and a basic human bias: *We assume that we know what the other person is talking about!* Yet that is a very dangerous assumption. It is much better to assume that you do not know what your client is talking about. That's the whole purpose of using *checking questions*—and often I will hear session after session and never hear one checking question. In the meantime, in my mind, I have been asking 10 to 20 checking questions.

Average human beings assume three things: *Words are real. You use words just like I use the same words. It would be silly to ask how someone is using a word.* But a well-trained Meta-Coach and NLP-er never assumes these things. We know words are not real, they reflect a mental map of the speaker and “the map is not the territory.” We know that everyone has their own background of references for the words they use and how you use words is not necessarily how I use the same words. We know that a professional communicator asks *clarity questions* such as, “How are you using the term ‘leader’ or ‘hurt’ or ‘criticism’ etc.?”

If I have heard one Meta-Coach say, “I don't want any content, I'm focus on process” I've heard a dozens and dozens say something like that. But you do! *You need content in order to ground the conversation in reality.* Without content, you will not know what the person is talking about. That's why you need the *exploration questions*—to find out. If someone's goal is, “To get more income,” ask, “How much?” “How much income are you now getting?” “What is the additional income for?”

Think of yourself as a *Questioner par excellent*. It's what you do. It's what coaching is. It is what your client is paying you for. Now, for your homework this week— get a note book and start writing down questions. Think of a client's statement and then write five questions. Write different kinds of questions, then write five of each of the energizing questions.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #10**  
**March 6, 2024**  
*Insights from Coaching Videos #3*

## THE MAGIC OF ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In this series I'm highlighting recommended *insights for you* in your coaching.

### **3) Learn to do critical acknowledgments.**

As a skill, *acknowledgments* in Meta-Coaching is so simple, so easy to do, so quick, and yet even when coaches can do it in practice groups, can do it on demand, when in a *live session*, so many seem to have complete amnesia to *acknowledgments*. It's really astounding. When I'm in person and can interrupt a session and say, "Would you like to do an acknowledgment?" most coaches can immediately and effectively do it. But when I have been watching the dozen or more videos that I've received this year—very few do it in the live session.

Now to pull off a proper *acknowledgment* is to do the following five steps:

- 1) *Identify a statement* that the client makes that seems to be *semantically loaded*. It is a significant statement. It is not just repeating some facts. Repeating facts and words is good but that's not what we mean by *acknowledgment*. Typically it is a small statement; a short sentence. "It's critical to my well-being." "I never pictured it that way." "I owe it to my son."
- 2) *Call attention to the statement*. The easiest way is to say, "I just hear you say..." You could use a question, "Did you just say ...?" You could exclaim, "Wow!" and then repeat the statement. But in some way you need to *call attention to the statement*. Why? Because the purpose of the *acknowledgment* is to get your client to *hear* himself.
- 3) *Repeat the statement precisely*. There are times for general summaries, this is *not* one of them. For an *acknowledgment* to be effective, you need to repeat the statement exactly. That's another reason that it should be a short sentence—not a full paragraph.
- 4) *Pause*. Once you have repeated the *acknowledgment*, be sure to pause. Give the person a moment to hear what she said. If she responds too quickly, repeat the words and pause again.
- 5) *Uniquely vocalize the acknowledgment*. If your client made the statement with some unique emphasis in tone, volume, or tempo—then, as best you can, repeat it using the same vocal distinctions. If your client made the statement in a matter-of-fact or kind of under-her-breath kind of way, then *use your voice to help her hear herself*. Speak it slowly, or use a different voice or tone to speak it.
- 6) *Check with your client*. The *acknowledgment* is not yet done, since the purpose is to get your client to hear himself, find out if he is hearing what he is saying. Ask an awareness question: "Are you aware that you said that?" Ask a testing question, "Do you really believe that?" Ask a meta-question, "Now that you hear that from yourself, what do you believe about that?"

There's tremendous power in a well executed *acknowledgment*. That's because there's several things you can do with an *acknowledgment*. You can *slow* a conversation down ... especially when a client is rushing or downloading lots of information. You can *zoom in on* a subject or a hidden semantically loaded subject. You can invite a *coachable moment*. You can do a *state induction* with the content of the *acknowledgment*.

To be able to effectively do an *acknowledgment*, step 1 is essential. *You* have to catch it! That's where your attentive and active *listening* comes in. Stick it in your mind—"My client might be saying the very things that define the issue or that solve it." "Am I hearing anything that is *semantically loaded*?" What are you hearing that you want your client to hear?

If and when you hear something, that brings you to step 2. You may not need to do an interruption, but *you do need to get your client's attention*. So how will you do that? I've offered several suggestions above. Most essential, you have to shift your voice and demeanor so that it gets the person's attention.

Next, *repeating the statement exactly* is step 3. And, yes, that can be quite challenging. That's because coaching conversations can often go so fast, and so many things are said, that you may not catch every exact word. That brings up a coaching question: What if you do not or cannot repeat the sentence back exactly? It is alright if you can't! Ask a question, "What did you just say about your boss?" Or present it tentative, "I think you said ... Did I hear that accurately?"

If step 3 deals with content, steps 4 and 5 with form or structure. Here you pause and *use your voice* to punctuate the statement so that it stands out. And that's what you want, the statement to *stand out* in your client's mind. I once repeated to a client, "I'll never get this." I stopped. I paused ... looked at the client ... waiting in anticipation for his response. He said, "Did I just say that?" "Yes, you did." Long pause, "Well, I don't really believe that." "Great. So what do you actually believe?"

Finally, you check to see if the *acknowledgment* has led your client to become more aware, more conscious, and more attentive to his or her own statements.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #11**  
**March 13, 2024**  
*Insights from Coaching Videos #4*

## YOUR VOICE—YOUR STYLE

Among the *insights* I'd like to offer you, this next one is so crucial, so essential, that if you miss this one, you will tend to not have very many transformational and experiential coaching sessions with your clients. They will be nice talks. Helpful chats. But not life-changing coachable moments.

### **4) Practice using your voice as a coach.**

If I wasn't so engaged in watching the videos that I've received and writing a report that, I really, really hope, will take that Meta-Coach's skills to the PCMC level, I would have fallen asleep listening to several of the videos. The voice of coach and client was monotone ... and they droned on talking, talking, talking, never altering tone, tempo, or emphasis. Now while I didn't fall asleep because I was paying attention to the sound of the monotone drone (!), those videos were good examples of *how not to use your voice*.

When you are coaching, your voice is one of your most essential and primary tools. So *how you use your voice is critical*. If you are just *talking* in your usual way of talking—more than likely you are failing to use your voice effectively. I think of my voice as my key way to *induce state*.

- There is my *questioning tone of voice*—for questions.
- There is my *validating tone of voice*—for validating, sympathizing, empathizing, supporting, inducing emotion, etc.
- There is my *inspiration tone*—for inducing a sense of awe, value, and importance.
- There is my *challenging tone*—for getting focused, getting real, driving home a point, challenging, etc.
- There is my *matter-of-fact tone*—for information gathering, for de-emphasizing emotion, for inviting emotional control.
- There is my *anticipatory tone*—for future pacing, co-creating tasks, inviting excitement.
- There is my *humorous tone*—for teasing, playing, and challenging.
- There is my *hypnotic tone*—to take a person inside to generate self-awareness or construct a specific trance.

What about you? Beyond your *regular* voice, what other *voices* to you have? What tones do you have? How much control do you have over your tempo? To slow down, speed up? Can you *slow down to emphasize something*? Can you *speed up* to get the session to move on to the real issue?

In ACMC we always say when it comes to your voice—*sound like what you're talking about*. That creates congruency and it facilitates your client to *go* to where your voice is leading them. And *your voice is leading your client somewhere!* The question is, "Where?" Would you like to find out? Then listen to your voice. Video or audio record your coaching session and then set

back to listen to your voice quality. Ask yourself, “What is the *quality* of my voice? The *tone*, the *tempo*, etc.? Where is my voice leading my client?” “Do I have a voice that the person will take serious?” “Am I giggling or chuckling too much or at inappropriate times?”

Whether you know it or not, like it or not, your voice plays a significant role in establishing your *brand* in the minds of people. It establishes your style and even *the tone of the conversation*.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #12**  
**March 20, 2024**

## **COACHING FOR GREAT DECISIONS**

**Preface** — *Before I write the Article*

My #5 article in the series, *Insights from the Coaching Videos* is written and awaits to be sent to you. But right now it lies deep within my laptop which is in Houston Texas with the TSA, and specifically, in their “lost and found.” At least it is there! And at least they have found it and will eventually send it to me ... paying a steep little price for that service.

When Geraldine and I landed in Houston, reclaimed our bags and then took them to have them forward on to Grand Junction, we then went up the escalators to the TSA Check point. That’s where we met some “Nazi” TSA people who love to order people around and treat everyone as potential terrorists. Anyway, they would not allow me to put my laptop on top of my jacket, it had to go in a fourth bin.

When the bins arrived at the end of the assembly line, they had to look through things “for anything sharp.” My shoes were on the bin, I started to reach for them, but no, “That’s being a bad boy.” I was told to not touch them until I was told I could(!) and to step behind the red line on the floor. “Yes, ma’am.” My Maslow book, “Further Reaches of Human Nature” was in that particular bag. She took it out, flipped through all of the pages as slowly as humanly possible looking for “sharp objects(!).” I commented thinking I could help move things along, “There’s no sharp objects in that book.” But no, that just made her move even more slowly!

Amazing! Ask some humans to be more effective, more efficient and they do. Ask others and now they have to resist. It is as if they have an agenda: “My job is to frustrate and provoke you and see if a terrorist emerges!” And I did find it irritating. So much so that when she finally handed me the bag, I didn’t even think whether I had put the laptop in it being distracted by her fascist attitude and behavior. That’s why I then walked off leaving my laptop behind. A nightmare I created of my own doing!

Next week (if all goes well) I will send out the #5 *Insights from the Coaching Videos*. Currently I’m on a laptop computer I bought for emergencies like this. It has not been used in 3 years so I do not have on this computer any of the latest things I’ve worked on. My learnings? Back up everything constantly! Also, tolerate Nazi Security Check people, don’t let them ruin your day.

### **COACHING GREAT DECISIONS**

Last week in Monterrey Mexico, I had the privilege of *finally* getting to present *Executive Decision-Making, Brain Camp III*. It was my very first presentation of that material from the book by that title in 2020. We had 15 or so Meta-Coaches and they were great with the 15 or more non-coaches and what they did provided an excellent opportunity to *show their skills*.

If the main thing people use coaching for is *clarity*, trying to get clear about what they want, why they want it, and how to go about it, the second big use of coaching is *making an intelligent decision*. “How do I decide about career, business partner, love partner, where to live, what to invest in, etc.?” Experiencing that it is so easy to make a bad decision and then to suffer for it for years to come, or even for the rest of your life, people ask for coaching to *think the decision through*.

You already have the tool of the Decision Workshop about the Pros-and-Cons which is part of the Axes of Change, the Decision Axis. But in the full Decision Model that is step two. The first step involves information gathering—getting high quality information. And that’s an entirely different skill and will be different for every decision. Here you separate out the relevant from the irrelevant, the good from the poor quality, and the critical from the peripheral.

Step three entails organizing the how: how will you plan and implement the decision? What are the risks? Do you have contingency plans? How many? How much organizing and strategies do you need to do? The more involved and complex the decision, the more variables and accordingly, the more things that could go wrong. Good deciders do lots of planning because the *thinking process of thinking through things* then enables them to adjust the plans in real time when things change.

Step four involves action. You can make all the decisions you want *in your head*, but if you do not *implement* the decision, it is all just a mind-game. It will lead nowhere and accomplish nothing. A good decision-maker has an *action bias* and an *active meta-program* so that after all the reflection, she can shift to taking action and making it real.

But even after you get to the *Yes/No* decision and decide it is a go or no-go, you are not done. All along the way you have been receiving feedback as you gather information, identify your criteria, weigh the options, organize your thinking, and make the decision. The fifth step is feeding monitoring as you open up all of your sensory-channels to see *how things are going*. Are they panning out the way you plan? What adjustments do you need to make?

As a Meta-Coach, your ability to coach people *to make great decisions* is one of the places where you can really earn your money. People can quickly recognize how much more effective and efficient they can be with a great decision, how much money, time, effort, and mental suffering they can save. Sell yourself as someone who *helps people make great decisions*. You have the tools to do that. And if not, there are now more Neuro-Semantics trainers who can replicate that training— at least in Latin America.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**About the New Book**  
*The Deep Dive (2024)*

## **“THE DEEP DIVE”**

### **DESIGNED TO DEEPEN YOUR COACHING**

*The Deep Dive* is the first book that I’ve written from transcripts of actual coaching sessions. The dive is into your client’s *mind* or consciousness and into both conscious and unconscious thinking so that you can get to the heart of things. Ah yes, the heart of things—the *meanings* which are driving the person’s emotions and behaviors. The *meanings* that create both problems and solutions. Then, when you understand the person’s unique semantics, that awareness informs you (and often your client) about what to do to facilitate self-actualization, transformative change, healing, empowerment, etc. You have to know the person’s *operating system* if you are to bring about the unleashing of potentials.

I wrote the book especially for those who are, or who want to be on the PCMC level. A small group of five Meta-Coaches in the PCMC track read and studied the transcripts. From that study they then gave me feedback, a lot of which I integrated into the text. Inside of the transcripts I have identified what I’m doing as well as what I was thinking which led me to do whatever I did.

The book is actually easy to read because it records the dialogue in the coaching session. But it is best to read the exchanges *slowly*, to put yourself inside of the dialogue, to think about what you would have said, done, or understood. If you do that, then you can use the book as a way to allow me to mentor you in your coaching practice.

In *The Deep Dive* you will discover how all of the pieces of NLP and Neuro-Semantics come together to help you get a picture in your mind of your client’s inner world. You will discover how, in human consciousness, *the deep is high*—it’s the hidden frames in the back of the mind. And because you know the Meta-States model and the movement of self-reflexive thinking, you know how to make the deep dive. *The Deep Dive* is only a PDF book and you can find it on The Shop: <https://www.neurosemantics.com/shop/page/8/>

Now I have a special deal for you if you are in the PCMC pathway, write to me at [meta@acsol.net](mailto:meta@acsol.net) to find out more about that.

**By the way — take a look at the new page on the website**  
<https://www.neurosemantics.com/thinking-for-humans/>

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #13**  
**March 27, 2024**  
*Insights from Coaching Videos #4*

## COACHING TO THE PAIN

This next insight is *not* one that I share at the ACMC level of trainings (Coaching Mastery). It is what I present at the PCMC trainings. There's a reason for that as you will soon discover in this next *insight* for taking your Meta-Coaching skills to the professional level.

### **5) *Aim for the hurt; go for the pain.***

Now on first impression, you might think that I've forgotten that I was writing to Coaches and thought I was writing to Therapists. But no. I have not forgotten. And yes, I remember that coaching is primarily and mostly about *going toward what you want*, not away-from what you do not want. Coaching is primarily about *solutions*, not problems. The key word here is *primarily*.

Obviously, problems drive people to coaching as they drive them to therapy, but there's a difference. Therapeutic problems tend to center on trauma and traumatization. Coaching problems tend to be those problems which are blocking, interfering, and in the way of a desired outcome. You will recognize that as question #14 of the Well-Formed Outcome questions. "What stops you?"

The *pain* in each of these two domains are very different. The *pain* in the therapy context is almost always an inner pain with the *self*. That's because the *self* is not okay (suffers from conditional self-esteem), the *self* is not strong and robust (ego-strength), but self-doubting, feeling helpless, and sometimes hopeless, and the *self* is not even in the here-and-now, but in the past—stuck in some past memory. This describes *traumatization* and why the healing processes of therapy is the best choice.

Now while the *pain* of coaching is different, it is still there. Expect it! In fact, it is *pain* that primarily drives people into coaching. They *feel* that something is wrong. For them, what's wrong is not the *self*, but trying to achieve something. Something is in the way; something is blocking them from reaching their dreams. Something is just not working in getting to the top of the organization, in running a successful business, in making a relationship work, in getting their children to develop in a healthy way, in reaching a level of fitness and well-being that they want, etc.

Now this may sound really strange, but your job as a coach is to *find the pain*. Find it and when you do, *go there*. In coaching, this shows up most often as *the coachable moment*—a skill that we teach at the PCMC level. Now if you do not have the basic ACMC skills of supporting and listening to a client (the relationship skills), then you probably can't fully engage in the questioning skills that probe and challenge. And if you can't do that, then the states you induce will probably not be under your control. Given all of that, *you are not ready to go to the heart of*

*things—where the person will share his authenticity.* Before you can do that, you have to be able to make it safe for the person. You have to communicate that you are trustworthy to receive your client's inner reality. You have to be able to manage the conversation.

When you can, you can then *find and go to the pain*. Now when you do that, suddenly the coaching is going to *get real*. Suddenly, you and your client will be deep inside the Meta Place and that's because your client has opened the doors and let you in. And that will not happen if you are still worried about how you are doing, what your client thinks of you, whether you are succeeding or not, whether you will get a good score on your coaching—if you are focusing on yourself, you will hardly ever get to experience a deep, authentic coaching conversation with your client.

When you touch on your client's *pain*, you are almost always touching on what is *semantically loaded and unfinished* in your client. "Pains" I've seen and heard in various videos include—the fear of asking for money, "I feel like vomiting when I think of 'charging' someone." The pain of not being recognized by my colleagues. The pain of asking for help because that is begging. The pain of trying again and failing, "it would be so embarrassing, I would die." The pain of trying to be a promoter, "that's so superficial, I could never think of myself that way." The pain that my friends will think that I think I'm better than them if I act like their boss. The pain of the idea of discipline about food, "it takes all the joy out of life." The pain that my family will think I'm not loving them if I make choices they don't like. The pain of feeling rejection again.

Even successful, healthy, resourceful, and self-actualizing people experience all sorts of *pains*. It is just human to do so. No one has all of their *semantic understandings perfectly well-formed*. So all that needs to happen is to have one idea, one thought, one belief, one understanding *ill-formed* and then you have it—*pain*. Then if someone or something touches it, pushes that button, now you have a human being in pain and who wants and/or needs something. And it is most common that the person does not know what that thing is. Hence, he needs coaching.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #14**  
**April 3, 2024**  
*Insights from Coaching Videos #5*

## **THE FIRST DECISION: WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?**

Here is an insight for coaching— *get the subject before you do anything else*. Seems so simple, so obvious, yet it is much more difficult than it seems. Nor is the subject, necessarily, the same thing as the goal. Usually subject and goal are different.

### **6) *Get the subject first.***

Whatever is the subject of a coaching session it will be a *general category*. It could be relationships; it could be finances; it could be health and fitness. These would be some of the possible general categories. A good way to begin is to use the Wheel of Life and ask about what about the general subject or theme. Friends, School, Work, Career, Money, Business, Hobby, Spirituality, Self-Development, Home, Family, etc.

When you ask the first coaching question, “What do you want to achieve in this coaching session?” and your client says, “I don’t know,” set a frame to do some delimiting of the subject. “I’ll mention a number of categories and tell me if it is or is not in this area.” Then list the wheel of life areas. People who may not be crystal clear about what they want will be much more clear about what they do not want. “Do you want to lose weight?” “Do you want to gain weight?” “Do you want to start a business?” “Do you want to revitalize your marriage?”

With some clients, instead of landing on one topic or theme, there are two or three. “I want to talk about work/life balance, my work schedule is getting busier and busier, and I don’t have any time for playing soccer with my friends, but I need the extra hour to get my debts paid off...” Here the *options meta-program* may be in play as may also the *indecisive meta-program*. What is a coach to do? Pick one!

In one sense it does not matter *what* you pick. Start somewhere and as you and your client gain clarity about the situation, either a more important one will emerge or you will discover how both are interconnected. “Would it be worthwhile to you to focus on your work schedule and get that figured out?” If yes, go there. If no, “Then would it be worth your time and money to focus on your finances and get that figured out?”

Once you have a subject, then comes the goal. “What do you want to achieve about X-subject in this session?” Be sure to add *in this session*. If you don’t say that, or worse, if you say “in life,” then you’ll not be able to specify *what this session is about*. “Okay, in life you want to achieve a good balance between your work and what you do at home with family and friends?” Yes. “That’s your long-term goal. What do you want to achieve *today, in this session?*” Some clients will still waffle and go into long monologues. Interrupt them!

“By the end of the session, what do you want that will be different from what you have *right now*?” Here also you can use *the kind of coaching conversations* to begin to define the subject and the goal.

- Are you crystal clear about what you want with your work schedule? (Or, your finances, your time with friends, etc.) Sounds like we need to work on clarity first, what do you think?
- Have you made a decision that you will cut back on your hours at work? You have? And so you are committed to making that happen? No? So perhaps we need a decision conversation about that.
- Do you have a strategy for how you will make X happen?
- Are you ready to make a change in order for X to happen?
- Do you have all of the resources that you need to make X happen?
- Is there anything inside you that could prevent X or sabotage this? Shall we spend time confronting this?

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #15**  
**April 10, 2024**  
*Insights from Coaching Videos #6*

## **DON'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU HEAR!**

This next recommendation I have given to several whose video I watched. It is a paradoxical recommendation. Yet what may seem contradictory on the surface is only a *seeming* one and not an actual contradiction. Similar to *compassion and challenge*, this next recommendation involves a synergy of two equally skills *and* skills that you can learn to do at the same time.

### **7) *Be skeptical.***

This paradox in the coaching process involves *how you approach and respond to your client*. On the one hand you should naively accept whatever your client says and explore it while on the other hand, you should be totally skeptical about the validity of what your client says. Does that sound contradictory? If it does, then when you hear it, you may very well feel like asking, “Okay, so which one should I do?” Yet while these seeming recommendations may seem like a contradiction, they are not.

In accepting whatever a client says, you go where the client is and especially where he is conceptually. As a coach, you really need to do that! Why? Because you want to know how he is seeing things, what and how he is believing, valuing, deciding, etc. You want to know the meta-program filters she is using. It's only after this *pacing* of your client's reality that you can then fully use the full force of skepticism.

Skepticism is the attitude and state which empowers you to truly question in a challenging way. It allows you to use your curiosity for exploring, to test what is there and how solid it is, and to challenge your client's frames. Although you accept what your client says, you can then *not believe* that his statement is credible, useful, or ecological. When you do this, you are inviting a questioning of his reality. Maybe she has it wrong! Now your client may love you for this or hate you. It may even invite a fierce conversation which requests your client to get real about things. It communicates that you are there to sharpen her perceptions and understandings by correcting the errors in them.

Now sadly, this is one factor which tends to be weak, or even non-existent, in most Meta-Coaches. They fulfill the first part—accepting *what* the client says, but not the second. They do not question or test the client's words. This means they score very low on *testing questions* and on *clarity checks*. So what? What price will you pay if you don't know how to effectively ask skeptical questions?

First, *you will not be able to detect mis-diagnoses* of problems and/or solutions. And given that approximately half the time clients mis-diagnose their situation, without a robust skeptical attitude, you will miss this. And if you miss how the client has mis-diagnosed things, both of you

will be going off on a wild-goose chase. Not good!

Second, *you will miss limiting beliefs, decisions, understandings, etc.* By accepting your client's beliefs and understandings at face value, you will be blinding yourself to all of the cognitive distortions and cognitive biases within them. To counter this tendency, simply plant the question in your mind, "Could this statement be a limiting frame of some sort?"

Third, *it will undermine, even prevent, you from exercise the skill of challenge.* Then you will be offering nothing to your client for her to push back against. In the end, your client may feel that "the coaching conversation was *nice*" but it did not challenge me. And without challenge, there is like likely of a chance that the coaching will elicits great insights or create a breakthrough.

If all of that isn't bad enough, the accumulated effect is that your coaching will be soft, weak, and non-challenging. It will not nudge your client out of her comfort zone and as a result, your coaching will not be experienced as life changing or very powerful. Is that what you want? Is that the reputation you want for your coaching? I would guess not.

So the solution is to *become robustly skeptical.* Spend a week questioning everything! Take on the mindset that "What you see is not what's truly there." That will then drive you into a search mode, to find out what is there? What is hidden? This skepticism will also help you to with learning critical thinking and with using the Meta-Model questions for making a deep dive into your client's reality.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #16**  
**April 17, 2024**  
*Insights from Coaching Videos #7*

## COACH AS A TESTER

You have got to test your work! If you don't, you won't know what's working and what is not. Now the best time to start testing your work is *when you are coaching*. When you do that, your coaching will take a tougher quality and convey the sense that you mean business, that you expect results, and that it is up to your client to step up and take full responsibility for the results that she wants.

### **8) Review and test.**

Among the skills of coaching are these two—reviewing and testing. *Testing* occurs from the very beginning of a coaching session as you ask *testing questions* to keep confirming the information and the understanding that you're receiving. Testing questions are yes/no questions, and with each one, your client makes another commitment, sometimes a small one; sometimes a big one.

*Reviewing* is the skill of repeating back to your client what you have heard. It is not a *summary*, that's a different skill. Nor is it an *acknowledgment*, that also is a different skill. When you do a review, you may do it to slow the conversation down, to confirm for both yourself and your client that you are getting what he is saying, and to check the conversation is still on track with the client's desired outcome.

In watching and listening to the recent videos, my overall sense is that there is just not enough reviewing and testing. I watch coaches jump into the conversation and then, whatever the client brings up, the coach follows. The problem is that when the client brings up something else, the coach follows that. Then another subject and the coach follows that. And before long, the conversation has diverted a long way from where it began and even further from the subject or outcome.

This is why and where you would want to do constant *reviewing and testing*. By reviewing, you keep the conversation on track and as you keep it on track, your client keeps confirming that it is important and that she is committed to it. Now as you do this, anticipate that your reviews will frequently indicated that you got a wrong impression and that what you're thinking is not the actual meaning your client was intending to communicate.

*Coach:* So you are saying that you feel that you cannot ask for a fee for your coaching because you have a fear of money. Is that right?

*Client:* No, not exactly. It's not that I fear money, it's that I question the value of the coaching and don't know if it is worth it and I really don't want to cheat people financially.

*Coach:* Your point is that you are pretty conservative about money and afraid people will think

you are over-charging them. Is that right?

*Client:* No, it isn't. My concern about whether I can deliver the value of the coaching that my client would pay for. What if she feels that she only got \$50 value when I charge \$100? I couldn't live with myself if that happened.

*Coach:* Now I get it, you are questioning yourself and the value you're delivering. Is that correct?

*Client:* Yes.

You know from the basic NLP Communication Model that everyone listens to each other *through their mental maps and conceptual filters*. That's why it is so easy to misunderstand each other. There are a hundred way to mis-understand and generally only one way to understand each other. And because we use the same words in different ways, and because each of us have different experiences in using words, it is probably a hundred times easier to mis-understand than to understand. Understanding is the *unique experience* that generally astonishes us and that delights us.

My recommendation? As a Meta-Coach, get yourself into the habit of constantly *reviewing and testing*. Start from the assumption that you may very well *not* be understanding the client on his or her terms, but yours. Then your coaching sessions will be far less likely to get off track.

From: L. Michael Hall  
2024 Morpheus #17  
April 24, 2024

## PERFECTIONISM AND “DOING YOUR BEST”

There is within most people the desire to do things *perfectly*. We set our aim to do whatever we are doing *flawlessly*. We want to do our very best so that there are no mistakes and so that we attain whatever it is that we have set our aim on—to win the game, to get an “A,” to succeed in the report writing, finishing the project, being the best at what we do, etc. That desire is understandable; it is human; and it is commendable. It describes a highly motivated, high achiever, who is willing to push oneself, strive for excellence, and not sell oneself short.

So far, so good. But lurking around the corner, and trying to stay out of sight is a problem. The problem of *perfectionism*. And, what is perfectionism? It is *not merely* the desire to do things right, properly, or perfectly. Instead, it is the state of mind wherein you always *think*, “I could have done better!” “I’m not fully ready to ... make the presentation, compete, write the book, start my coaching practice, charge people for my services, etc.” “I need another training, another coaching session, another book to read, another practice session...”

*Perfectionism* is simultaneously **a fear of not being perfect and a demand that you be perfect**. That’s what makes it such a problem. Most people learn this at home. You bring a report card home with a **C** and your mom or dad asks, “Why didn’t you be a **B**?” You bring a **B** home and they ask, “Why didn’t you get an **A**?” You bring an **A** home and they say, “Why didn’t you get an **A+** or an **A** in every class?” *To the child it seems that whatever he does is never good enough*. Now fast forward 20 years and the person is doing this same kind of torturous thinking pattern *on himself*—whatever he does—*it is never good enough*, he needs to do better.

So he tries and tries and sometimes, in some areas, he succeeds. But at what cost? Lots of effort, lots of stress, lots of ‘controlling’ of his thoughts and feelings. Eventually, that gets tiring. Eventually the stress catches up. Eventually there’s inexplicable headaches, backaches, stomach aches, poor sleeping, various health problems. And eventually, being *fallible*, there will be mistakes, he will miss things, things will not be as perfect as he prefers. Eventually, he will then put things off. He will procrastinate in getting started on something... fearing that it will not be good enough and he’s not ready.

The inner life of a perfectionist is one of inner conflict—*wanting desperately to achieve something and desperately fearing she is not good enough and not ready*. So the false-solution that many perfectionists settle for is “I’ll do the best I can.” But that’s a pseudo-solution. It is actually not real because it functions as a sneaky way to bring back perfectionism.

After all, what does “*just do the best you can*” mean? Usually it means the same thing as “be perfect, be flawless, make no mistakes, make sure you are completely and absolutely ready.” As a Meta-Coach, be on the alert to this perfectionism substitute. When a client sets a goal about

“doing the best I can” in X or Y, may all of your Alarm Bells go off so that you do not allow that to be set as the person’s goal.

What is the opposite of *perfectionism*? Take a moment and think about that question. What is the backside of striving to make no mistakes, produce no flaws, to do something just right? The backside is acceptance of fallibility. It is to welcome being fallible in thinking, feeling, speaking, behaving, and relating. This distinction will enable you to coach the perfectionist, so ask:

- What comes to your mind when you think about being fallible?
- What do you believe about the fact that everything you do will always be “liable to error?”
- What understandings have you learned over the years about mistakes and errors?
- How comfortable are you with your inherent fallibility?

Fallibility is a given—it is innate in human nature. It is something that no one can overcome. No one is infallible! No one is perfect. We are all *liable to error*. Actually, this is what makes us human and what enables us to grow and develop. Now with that, you have yet another set of questions to explore.

- What qualities do you want for yourself given your fallibility?
- Would you want curiosity and learning? Acceptance and grace?
- Would you want openness to feedback and flexibility to adjust?
- What is important to you as a person? What are your highest values?

When you explore these questions and get the person’s answers, then you can offer them a brand new way of moving through the world. You can offer a new life induction:

Taking your passion for learning and growing, your love for people, and the importance of being respectful, you can now do your best with these resources as a fully fallible person. How does that sound? Taking into account your fallibility as a human being, what qualities and resources will you use as you “do the best you can?”

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #18**  
**May 1, 2024**

## **COACHING DISTINCTIONS**

### **The Art of Making a Difference**

When you get really good at coaching, you are able to see, recognize, and work with *distinctions* that you were not even aware of earlier and that others usually do not see. That's why in Meta-Coaching we train coaches to be *distinguishing coaches*. We present and encourage coaches to look for *distinctions* right out of the gate. Why do this other than this is the very art of mastery? It's because when you can discover "the difference that makes a difference" in a person's life, that's the key to that person's development and transformation.

*Question:* How much would you pay for *a difference* that would make all the difference in the world for your life? Imagine that distinction enables you to gain clarity about something critically important, to feel emotionally intelligent about yourself so your emotions serve you very well, to access a flow state for intense focus, to figure out how to solve problems more effectively, etc. How important would that distinction be to you? No wonder we say that *coaching is about enabling a client to find the critical distinctions*.

Now since *mastery is in the details*, then in any and every field, it is the critical distinctions that ultimately define success and productivity. The expert is the one who can make distinctions which others cannot even see. Experts have further learned to integrate those essential details in how they respond. Those who know and live the distinctions are also usually those who make the most money, are more effective, and who enjoy the process the most. Distinctions lie at the heart of creativity, efficiency, and leadership. I mention all of this because Geraldine, after watching me do executive coaching several times, once commented to me:

"When you coach, it's like you somehow *reach inside* the person's world and you separate the things that are confused. You make distinctions which allow the client to go much deeper inside where they can make more profound changes."

As I appreciated her kind words, I began thinking *what are the distinctions* that I make? What are the distinctions that she sees and hears in the way I coach? So I began writing a list. Now this is not a new subject in Neuro-Semantics, *distinguishing* is one of the core thinking skills (*Executive Thinking, Thinking for Humans*) and it shows up as the "distinction question" in the list of questions.

- Subject / Symptoms
- Subject (area, topic) / Goal (outcome)
- Cognitive / Emotions
- Meaning / Event (activity, person, words)
- Person: Self-Esteem / Self-Confidence
- Person / Social roles
- Cause / Contributing factors

- Time: past, present, future
- Emotions: Associated / Un-associated Primary / Meta
- Emotions: Level or degree of intensity on scale 0 to 10.
- Levels: VAK (descriptive) / Meta (evaluative) Representation distinctions

Then there are lists of distinctions: Meta-Model distinctions; Meta-program distinctions, Meta-States distinctions, Sub-Modality distinctions of cinematic features, Matrix distinctions, Meta Place distinctions, Thinking skills distinctions.

That's a lot of distinctions! No wonder it takes a lot of time and practice for a person to become skilled at recognizing differences within an area. Just in the domain of language, using the Meta-Model, we have 21 categories of words. Within the domain of perceptual filters, we have 72 meta-programs. Within the meta-levels, while 10 distinctions will serve you well with just about anyone, we have identified over 100 meta-levels in Neuro-Semantics.

A good way to think about distinctions is the 20-Question game that you may have played as a child. "I'm thinking of X, what is X?" You can ask 20 questions to see if you can identify X. So you begin, "Is it animate or inanimate?" If animate, "Is it an animal or human?" If an animal, "Does it live on the earth or elsewhere?" And so on. With each question, you eliminate a major area and hone in on a more specific area.

*A client* says, "I'm really struggling with my self-esteem."

*You*: "Are you speaking about your worth as a person or your competence in doing or achieving something?" That reduces the *subject* considerably.

*Client*: "I have taken the entrance test three times and haven't passed it yet, I'm questioning whether this is the field I should enter."

*You*: "Are you questioning your basic talent in this area or your learning skills in test-taking?"

*Client*: "Yes, test-taking. I get so nervous and stressed-out that I can't remember things I studied just the day before."

*You*: "So this is about performance anxiety, not your learning skills?"

With each *distinction question* you ask, you narrow the focus of the conversation and hone in on the real issue. In this way, you get closer to *the heart of things*. And you do it in a faster and more efficient way.

What distinctions are you able to make and use in your coaching?

Which distinctions will you practice this week to expand your repertoire?

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #19**  
**May 8, 2024**

## **MIXING MODELS— DON'T!**

If you want to confuse yourself, a good way to do that is to try to fit two different models together. That is, almost always, *a bad idea*. Why? The most obvious answer is that each model was created and designed for a specific context and environment to achieve a specific outcome. Each model was created to answer a different question, so when you try to force them together, it's like trying to force squares into circles or circles into squares. It's like trying to shower and get dressed at the same time.

Yet we all have a natural tendency to do that—especially if there is a model that you know well. In fact, *the more acquainted you are with a model*, the more likely you will try to understand new models, or models new to you, through the filter of the model you already know. It's natural because that's one of the ways that we learn. We use what we know to understand what we do not know. This is the very structure of a metaphor. We bring, to the new subject, a subject we know well. But this is also a way to *prevent* understanding because the old frames and assumptions get in the way.

\_\_\_\_\_ Subject well Known \_\_\_\_\_  
/ \_\_\_\_\_ New Subject \

This came up recently in the ISNS Wisdom, *Deep Dive Thinking using the Meta Place*. First there was the question about the Matrix Model. “How do they relate? Are the dimensions of the Matrix Model *landmarks* in the Meta Place?” The short answer is *no, they are not*. Here's why.

I developed *The Meta Place* to answer two questions. First, *What does the brain do?* Answer: The brain *thinks*. Second, *What are the core ways that the brain thinks?* Answer: It represents, edits what it represents, believes, values, decide, identifies, remembers, learns, imagines, anticipates, expects, intends, metaphors, assumes, etc. Actually I listed more than 100 answers using all of the words (in English) that describe aspects of thinking. Among those 100+ were many synonyms so when I combined those, I ended up with 10 to 20 words which I then posited as *landmarks of the mind*.

When I put *The Matrix Model* together in 2002, I asked a very different question. *What are the key dimensions of frames by which we construct meaning?* I came up with 8 answers: State, meaning, intention, self, power, others, time, and world. I soon realized that these are also the key dimensions prominent in Phenomenology and to some extent also in Developmental Psychology. That correlation was, for me, a convincer because both NLP and Phenomenology study the structure of subjective experience.

Actually, there was a previous question. It was 2002 and I was in Sydney Australia with Bob Bodenhamer as we were training Prac. and Master Prac. Having written *Frame Games* in 1999 and have trained that training several times, I was in the habit of frequently saying, “I never leave

home without my meanings.” “I never leave home without my self.” Anyway, at some point I repeated those lines while we were looking at ‘time’ and doing NLP time-lines, so I said, “I never leave home without my constructs of time.” At that point, Bob turned to me and asked a question. We commonly did that with each other when we co-trained. We did that to pose a question for the participants. But in this instance, Bob asked it out of his own curiosity and learning. “Michael, how many things do you not leave home without?” Then as part of the rapport between us, and the way we would sometimes banter with each other, I said, “Bob, I never leave home without 7 things.” “And what are those 7 things?” Teasingly I said, “Wouldn’t you like to know.”

Later that evening at the hotel’s restaurant, we talked about that exchange. “What are those seven things? Bob asked. “I don’t have a clue! I just said ‘seven.’” “And why did you say ‘seven?’” “Because it’s more of a sexy number than six or eight or anything else.” It was at that point that Bob got serious, “If there were seven things or some number of frames or meanings that you never leave home without, what would they be?”

I didn’t know. And while we talked about it for awhile, nothing really came of it ...except ... Except that it planted a question in my mind that I continued to work on when I returned home. And from that I asked the question, *What are the main dimensions of meaning?* Then from those items, Bob and I worked out the diagrams and later I realized that five of the dimensions, what we called thye content dimensions, were actually dimensions of *self*.

Self as a person — your worth, hence self-esteem.

Self as a doer — your competence and confidence in what you do — self-confidence.

Self as a social being— how you relate to others — social self.

Self as a temporal being — how to relate to time — temporal self.

Self as engaged in roles in different worlds— identifying with what you do— role self.

The Matrix Model asks a very different question from the question of The Meta Place. So also the Diamond of Consciousness. That diagram/ model arose from another question: *How are all of the meta-levels related to each other?* Answer: they are like the facets of a diamond, all referring to the same thing, but presenting different facets of consciousness.

Here’s a clue for your learning: *Every model exists to answer some question.* The question then became: *What is the question?* And when you know that, you know the inner mechanism that drives that model. And knowing that will probably help you learn the model and use it effectively. My recommendation: Learn the model on its own and use it exclusively for its designed use. When you do that, you won’t even think about mixing them.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #20**  
**May 15, 2024**

## **BELIEFS ARE REAL**

Here's a question for you to consider. Because as a Meta-Coach and as someone who uses NLP and Neuro-Semantics models to enter into a person's inner world, *Are beliefs real?* Obviously, they are *real inside a person and to a person*, but that's not the question I want you to think about. Rather, *Are beliefs externally real?*

Nor am I asking if a belief refers to a *real* referent which is external and outside in the real world. If a person's internal *map* about the *territory* is to be useful so that we can navigate the terrain that we're concerned about, then there needs to be at least some correspondence between map and territory. That's because, as Korzybski pointed out over and over in *Science and Sanity*, the factor that actually makes a mental map in your head useful is that its *structure* "fits" the world. It may be a metaphorical map, but if so, then it has a degree of correspondence *in structure* so that it helps us get around and succeed in what we're doing.

But again, that is *not the question* I want to explore. I want to know, *Is a belief 'real' in that it can act on reality.* Now here's the thing—you can't see a belief; you can't hear a belief; you can't kinesthetically feel a belief; you can smell or taste of belief. And since you cannot empirically experience a belief via your senses, how could it act on reality? Let me extend this even further. You cannot detect a belief using a microscope; nor does a belief show up in a MRI scan. Given, that it seems like the answer to our question is, "No, a belief is not real."

Yes, it *seems* that way at first. But let's make a deeper dive. Once you realize that we humans are all believers. Once we have represented the sensory world in the theater of our mind, *we draw conclusions.* We start to *think a second time about our first-level thoughts* and when we do, *we create beliefs.*

We create cause-effect beliefs: X leads to Y. X causes or makes Y to happen. We create complex-equivalence beliefs: When X occurs *that means* Y. "Crossing your arms over your chest *means* you are defensive." Which is also a mind-reading belief. There are identity beliefs: X *is* Y. "You are a smoker." "He is a runner." In fact, we create all kinds of beliefs: assumptions, memories, expectations, intentions, etc. If we use the Meta Place, then all of the landmarks in the Meta Place are one form of belief or another.

Yet when you create *a belief*, it goes beyond functioning merely as a thought. It is no longer just a "message" to yourself and your body; it is a "command" to your body and to all of your nervous systems. This is the Neuro-Semantic difference between a mere thought and a belief. A belief is a higher level abstraction which you create when you meta-state a thought with confirmation. When you validate a thought—no matter how silly, ridiculous, obnoxious, destructive, dysfunctional, etc.—that "thought" transforms into *a belief—and functions as a command.*

Now belief as a command then become a much deeper thought in your mind—it becomes your

ultimate *map of reality*. Those who believe in the Voodoo Curses, that if you are cursed, you will die. And so it is. It's the believers in the curses who die. Non-believers do not. In medicine we now know this mechanism as the placebo or nocebo effect.

The amount of research about placebos is immense. That is because, in part, we test every pill against a non-active sugar pill (a placebo). That lets us know if the medicine is as good as or better than the placebo. But the problem (or the wonder) is that *placebos work*. Most placebos work 30 to 50 percent of the time. Some placebos work 70% of the time! Imagine that! An ineffective sugar pill—if you believe it is effective medicine—will work up to 70% of the time.

In that instance, *what is "working?"* It's not the pill. It is not the placebo fake surgery. It is not the words of the doctor, "Take this for your pain." No. What's working is *the belief*. Somehow, in some way, your belief in the pill *causes* you somehow—somewhere in your nervous system structures and brain structures—to create the pain relief. And if that is amazing, even more amazing is the recent discovery that *placebos even work when you know that it is a placebo!*

How about that! Even when you know that you're taking a sugar pill, it can still work. How is that possible? Ah, your mind, as it emerges from your brain, is an absolutely amazing mechanism! That's why we have the ancient wisdom: "Be careful what you believe because it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy." Why Jesus said, "Be it unto you according to your belief."

It is why as a Meta-Coach or as a therapist, consultant, parent, or communicator—your beliefs and the beliefs of your clients, customers, and children—are one of the most important and powerful factors in human personality. So back to our question, *Are beliefs real? Can your belief enable, energize, and motivate you to act on reality?* The answer is: You bet! And once you recognize the reality and power of beliefs—you have a focus that will enable you to be a great change agent.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #21**  
**May 22, 2024**

## **WHEN DO YOU EXPLORE THE PAST?**

You know and I know that *coaching is about facilitating a client to create a more wonderful future*. It is about goals, about dreams, about hopes, about development and progress, it is about achieving. It is not about the past. So how do we answer the question posed in the title? As a Meta-Coach, is there ever a time when it is appropriate to shift from focusing on the present situation and on future outcomes of your client and spend time exploring your client's past? If so when? And if so, how?

Now generally, this is *one of the key differences between therapy and coaching*. Coaching is future oriented; therapy is past oriented. Why? Because when a person *lives* in the past, or is *stuck* in the past, keeps *reliving* the past and does not seem to *get beyond* the past—then the methodology that best helps that person is therapy. Generally speaking, such a person is *not* in a very good space. He is difficult for that person to even be present to today, to the here-and-now. Mentally and emotionally, something seems unfinished to the person and the person has a strong inner drive to finish it. To that end, we shift our focus from challenging the person to rise up and embrace the future, to resolving the conflictual beliefs and remembered experiences.

[By the way, in Meta-Coaching we always discourage a coach to do this. Instead, refer to a therapist. But if you have at least some training in Meta-Therapy, then you could possibly make this shift. That's what the new Meta-Counseling diploma is all about.]

Now when it comes to *exploring the past*, that does not inherently imply therapy. After all, a psychologically healthy person also lives with his past. And because we are all human, there will be some aspects of everyone's past that can sometimes get activated and create some distress. That, in itself, does not mean you need therapy. You may simply need to explore that past and reframe it with your most adult and sane thinking. Actually, this is sometimes the very reason a client has contracted with you for coaching. Something has activated some past memory, belief, or experience and your client wants to understand it (self-knowledge) and/or complete it in a more healthy way.

Back to our question: When is it okay for you, as a coach, to explore the past with your client? For me, the first sign is this: When a client experiences a strong negative frame, one that does not seem to go away. You may not know this until you attempt to do several things with your client, but for all that you do, *the strong negative experience continues or keeps re-appearing*. When that happens, assume that the frame or the experience is strongly wired in.

Neurologically you know that “neurons that fire together, wire together.” That comes from Donald Hebb, a neuroscientist and is known as the Hebb's Rule. We know it in Neuro-Semantics (and NLP) as *associative thinking* or *anchoring*. If at 10 you were scared out of your wits by a dog, and you remembered that scary dog 1,000 times—you probably got your fear-of-dog neurons strongly wired together. That's why 40 years later, while you know it is irrational, you still fear

dogs.

Now if, over the years, you had forgotten about the incident, and all that's left in your memory and neurology is this *inner impulse, this inner fear*, then sometimes just recalling it enables you to re-process the event. And with that, you finish it. As a coach, you could ask your client to access a more resourceful state, being calm, curious, playful, etc. Once you get him into state, you amplify it so it is very strong and then connect "dog" to the state. Often then new "firing of neurons" wires in a new response and makes the old redundant.

How should you, as a Meta-Coach, talk to your client about the past? First, frame that you are going to do some *information gathering* to identify the original event from which the person drew his conclusions and created his belief. Distinguish: the past *did not cause* the experience, it was just the context. The person's *thinking and believing* causes the person's experience. As you talk, notice *where your client* puts the past. To her right, left, in front, behind. Ask about these factors: how far, how close, how bright, how colorful? Are you in first-perceptual position? What happens when you step into second-person perspective?

What has happened (the past) is always and only *an event, an experience*. In itself, it is *never* determinative. It is just what you have to deal with. It is what you *think*, and how you *interpret*, the event that *determines* what then happens to you. The meaning you give is the instinct that you then live. So if you or your client do not know or understand the *meanings* driving a person's current experience, then gather information about the past. If it is still 'alive' in the person, it is because of the person's current thinking (conscious or unconscious).

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #22**  
**May 29, 2024**

## **DON'T SOLVE CLIENT'S PROBLEMS**

Why do clients call you up and contract with you for coaching? Obviously, they have some problem or difficulty that they want to address and solve. And even when you ask your client, “What do you *want* that will make a *transformative difference* in your life?” Many clients will start the next sentence with, “Well, my problem is...” Or, “The problem I want to solve is...” Or worse yet, “The problem I want you to solve is...”

What's so wrong with any of this? One key thing, namely: *Coaching is **not** about solving problems*. Surprising? Well, it really is not. Therapy is about solving problems, therapeutic problems. Consulting is about solving problems—the problems that call for some expert knowledge or advice (financial, medical, business, etc.). Training is often about solving problems and the skills that are required to solve a particular problem—how to manage time, how to delegate, how to resolve conflicts, how to create a high-functioning team, etc. But coaching is not about solving problems.

Question: How can it be that coaching is *not* about solving problems? That's because coaching is uniquely situation to facilitate *becoming the best you that you can be*. That means setting exciting goals, stretching one's knowledge and skills, unleashing potentials, inspiring one's heart, leading others as you win their minds and hearts, etc. The first 13 questions of the Well-Formed Outcome questions are all about *designing and developing an highly desired outcome*. It is only whenb you get to question 14 that the subject of problems is brought up:

“Could anything stop you or interfere with you making what you want happen? What could block you?”

“What could block you?” is the problem-question because a *pro-blemo* is something that is *thrown* (blemo) in the way or before you (*pro*). A Meta-Coach never *starts* with a problem, problems only arise once there is a compelling goal. And why is that? Because you literally do not, and cannot, have a “problem” unless you have a goal. After all, think about the word *problem*. Is it a noun, verb, adverb, adjective, or what? Ah yes, a nominalization! Again! And that means you cannot see, hear, feel, smell, or taste it— it is a conceptual category in your mind.

And if a *problem* is actually a nominalized concept *in your mind*, problems are human constructs. You want something and you think about it, perceive it, and imagine it in such a way—that you cannot figure out how to get what you want. If you didn't want it, there would be nothing in the way of what you don't want. If you want it and can figure out how to make it happen, there again, there's no problem. *Problems exist in the minds of the people who say “I have a problem.”*

If you weigh 400 pounds and eat one pound of ice cream every night before bed, do you have a problem? You may or may not. Most people would. That's because they do not want to weigh 400 pounds. Others may be perfectly find weighing 400 pounds. And a pound of ice cream to

them is a nightly reward. No problemo! To have a problem, you have to want something *different* from what you have. You have to have a goal that you want to achieve.

Now clients frequently will ask you directly, “How do I solve X problem?” *Never answer that question.* Instead, ask them “What do you want?” (WFO #1). “What do you not have that you would like to have?” “Why do you want that?” (#3) “When do you want that?” (#4) “Do you know what to do to get what you want?” (#7). If you don’t ask these Well-Formed Outcome questions in sequence, you will probably jump the gun and try to solve a problem that is not well-defined and that may not even be the real problem.

Once you do all of that, still *do not solve the problem.* Coaching is about enabling, empowering, and equipping ***the client*** to solve his or her own problem. Fixing the client’s problem is like giving him a fish, but not teaching him how to fish. Your job is to co-create with your client *a better and more skillful problem-solver.* Solve the problem, and the client will come back to get you to solve her problems for her. Not good! That trains dependency.

That’s why you coach best by asking questions—questions that activate the client to learn how to find her own answers. If you enjoy being “The Answer Man” (or Woman) you will never become a good coach. If you have a compulsion to “Tell the answer,” you will never discover the true heart of coaching. The sign of a great coach is that his clients become increasingly better Problem-Solvers. They can do critical thinking, creative thinking, and can put their minds to work to figure things out.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #23**  
**June 5, 2024**

## **GETTING TO THE THINKING BEHIND THE WORDS**

Perhaps the most obvious thing about coaching is that *to coach you have to use words*. Since coaching is a *conversation*, you begin a “coaching conversation” by asking a question, “What do you want to achieve?” And you continue the coaching by engaging in an exploration conversation until you have a basic diagnoses regarding what compassionate challenge your client needs.

But as you know, *words are not all that reliable*. For one thing, we cannot count on words for truly conveying what we are thinking and feeling. For another, words can get in the way of thinking. They can distort thinking, bias thinking, and generate false ideas and understandings. Often in coaching, we have to probe beyond the words, even set aside some words, and eliminate other words to get to the truth of a situation.

The problem is that we all think almost exclusively in words. While you can entertain thoughts in any of the sensory-systems (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic, gustatory, olfactory), such thoughts are usually simple and direct. Perhaps someone asks, “Do you remember the dog that you played with as a child?” and you, for a moment, *see* that dog in the theater of your mind. You may even be able to hold on to that image, perhaps see it as a movie rather than a snapshot. Now if you wanted to, you could play around with the image. “Can you make his hair orange?” But that’s about it.

This limitation does not continue with more abstract language. Once you have a reference that you represent, then you can create all sorts of categories, concepts, and understandings for it. You can classify the dog by breed, as animate and living, as intelligent, etc. As a meta-representation system, language allow you to think deeply, expansively, and thoroughly. With words you create the uniquely human world of conceptual abstractions. Some of this will be accurate, much of it will be pure invention, and some of it will be delusional.

Yes, you can have experiences apart from words. Yet without words it becomes extremely difficult to talk about, share, or even hold that awareness in mind. As a human being, you think in words and with words. You use words as *vehicles* to transfer thinking and as a *code* to encase a thought. Language is a set of symbols and as it can *enable* thinking, it can also *constrain* thinking. That is, words constrain just as equally your ability to think certain things. And without language, there are all kinds of things that you can’t think. That’s why when a given language lacks certain words, people will have all sorts of problems thinking and conceptualizing what others can do so easily.

Now for one of the most amazing things about words: *They are not real*. Say that to many people and they will be absolute shocked. They have grown up thinking that words are real. They have

grown up in a culture that takes that as a given. Yet when you make that mistake, you will probably then also think that “words can hurt you.” And with that assumption, then you will talk about “verbal abuse.” But all of that’s a fundamental mistake. Words are not real. “Dog” is a word, but it doesn’t bark. “Cat” is a word, it does not have fur and it cannot scratch you. “Stink” has no odor. Words are symbols that stand for some reference other than themselves.

That’s also why there are words and phrases that do us a great disservice. As a mental map they can just as easily promote and enable dysfunctional thinking. And with words, to wrongly use a word is to encode an idea that—in that context—is not only wrong, but can be hurtful and problematic.

Korzybski identified that a word without an actual reference is a *pseudo-word*. It’s not a real word! Of course! That’s easy to understand. But then you face that word and if you have heard it a thousand times, it is almost impossible to not think it is real. It seems real, it seems real. “Awful” is such a word; so is “failure,” and more harmfully so is “race.”

What’s seductive here about words, especially pseudo-words, is that when we fail to notice it as *pseudo—as false*—we nevertheless do our best to *think* it. We try to imagine it, assume it, and vaguely represent it. It then seems to us that we understand when, of course, we do not.

All of this highlights the importance of the Meta-Model of Language from NLP. First you develop a radar for pseudo-words and second, you are ready to ask challenging questions about the terms. Once you know that words are *symbols*, you are forever asking about the referent. “What does this symbol refer to? What can you point to that we can see, hear, smell, taste, or feel?” “What do you mean by X-term? What else could you call it? What else do others call it?”

Words— we use them to think—to get in touch with reality, but they are not a perfect tool by a long shot. We use words and language as we relate to reality, but only as mental maps to guide our experiencing. As a coach, always be alert to the limitations of the words you use and that your client uses. If you use the Meta-Model, you can get behind the words to their references. This is also the purpose of *Thinking for Humans*.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #24**  
**June 12, 2024**

## **WHEN YOU FACE DIFFICULTIES**

It will happen! You will face difficult things—it is inevitable given the nature of life on planet earth and given the human experience of being a fallible being. The question is not, “Shall I or shall I not face difficulties?” The question is, “*How* will I face difficulties?” Will you face difficulties with courage, determination, using your Neuro-Semantic skills, with resilience, etc.? Or will you give in to anxiety and depression?

Joseph Yeager in his book, *Thinking about Thinking with NLP*, writes about children facing difficulties. He quoted the book *Learned Helplessness and Intellectual Achievement* by C.S. Dweck and B.G. Licht.

“Dweck and Licht compared the different responses of children to solving puzzles of discrimination and logic of the sort used in aptitude and achievement tests. Initially, all the children performed at the same level of ability. They were comparable in tests of accuracy, speed, and effectiveness of problem-solving strategy. At a key dividing point, the strategies changed. When difficulty was encountered, some children’s performance improved, while the performance of other children deteriorated.” (pp. 29-31)

What were the different strategies? They had different perceptions of themselves due to earlier ‘programming’ which taught them *how to interpret the meaning* of their experiences. Some perceived themselves as *helpless*. They viewed the difficulties as ‘failure.’ They believed it was due to lack of ability: “I have a lousy memory.” While they didn’t correct mistakes, they became preoccupied with their mistakes. They discounted prior successes, viewed their problems as irreparable, and fell into a ‘down’ state of feeling bad.

Those who faced difficulty and overcame them interpreted things in a completely different way. They interpreted their errors as a temporary setback and their mistakes as information telling them how to proceed. Instead of searching for the cause of the errors, they searched for solutions. They took it all as a challenge to do better, imagined various positive solutions, and persisted.

The point is that *how you interpret a difficult determines how you experience it*. If you use a difficulty or errors as a way to feel inadequate in the face of difficulties—you have a self-defeating strategy. For most people, the very idea of “having a problem” triggers negative emotions. Why? Because they think of (frame) problems as bad, painful, distressful, etc. This then sets them up so that a problem (almost any problem) then triggers them to feel weak, inadequate, and stupid. How about you? Then, given that, with the first sign of a problem, they flee!

To counter that and to be a great problem-solver, be sure to *reframe problems so that it triggers courage, wisdom, growth, and enthusiasm in yourself*. Problems can provide an exciting

challenge in life—*if* you frame them in that way. The meaning you give to things is the ultimate reality in your life and mine.

So when a problem arises, grab that problem by the throat and shake it loose so that all of the factors that make it a problem fall out. Then write down everything you know about the problem: write about what is it, when did it start, how is it defined, what criteria defines it as a problem. Treat the problem as just that—a problem or puzzle to solve. Refuse to let it say anything about *you*. Don't personalize it. It's just a problem to solve and you have all kinds of resources for solving problems in Neuro-Semantics and Meta-Coaching.

Difficulties are inevitable. There's no escape. What you do have is the ability to build up a bold and courageous spirit. Then when difficulties arise, you have a strong and powerful attitude, the ego-strength, and the inner sense of empowerment that takes on the difficulty as just "something to figure out and solve."

Actually, that's the very spirit of Neuro-Semantics. It's an optimistic attitude that "I can always do something, no matter what." "I have a wealth of resources in Neuro-Semantic NLP and I am part of a world-wide community of people who are there to support me."

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #25**  
**June 19, 2024**

## GETTING THE SUBJECT, AGAIN

From an outside point of view, you might think that the simplest thing in coaching would be to identify a client's subject. And for that, all you have to do is ask, "What do you want to achieve in this coaching session?" But when it comes to real life in the trenches, things are not so easy or so simple. Ask that question and a good 50% of clients will say that they do not know! "That's what I've been thinking about..." [For reference, I already addressed this in Morpheus #14.]

That leads us to another question, "What's going on that they find themselves uncertain about the coaching and indecisive about what to work on?" And the answer to that is that it could be a multitude of things.

- They typically are indecisive generally in life and so nearly always uncertain. For them making a decision implies commitment and responsibility and that activates certain fears.
- They not only want options, they have to have options. So when it comes to selecting *one thing*, they feel trapped. They feel that they are being forced to reject perfectly good alternatives.
- They have not sorted out their values and have not prioritized things so when making a decision, they feel confused and uncertain about what's most important.
- They experience an inner conflict between something they *know* is important to work on and what they *feel* is important. So they oscillate back and forth.
- They set the coaching appointment without really thinking through what they want to achieve.

Given these different possibilities about the cause for hesitation and indecision, what should you—as a coach do? You could see if you can discern if the hesitation is due to any of these factors. Ask:

- Are you generally indecisive? Is this in character with how you experience decisions?
- Do you feel that you always need options?
- Have you prioritized your values and know what's most important?
- Do you sense there's an inner conflict within you between two or more choices?
- Have you just not given much thought to a coaching goal?

Now depending on the answers that you get—any one of these may become *the subject of the session*. If so, you could make that as a proposal and lock that down as the goal of the coaching session.

- Given that you're generally indecisive, would you like to change that? Would you like to gain some clarity on the factors that contribute to your indecisive style? If that's the subject of the session, what would you like to achieve—clarity about the factors, a change in your style, or something else?
- Given that you feel the need for options, it sounds like that's your thinking / perceiving pattern, what we call a meta-program. What if we explore that so you gain self-awareness about how that has developed. Then if you want to expand your choices so you can settle

on a procedure without needing to jump out of it, we can do that.

- Given that you say you have not prioritized your values, what if we made that the subject of this session? We could then aim to identify a set of values around relationships, or work, or exercise, or whatever you'd like. How does that sound?
- Given that you say it feels like there's some internal conflict around choices, would you like to make that the subject of our session? We could explore the conflict and see if we can resolve it.
- Given that you haven't thought much about what you want in this session, what if we made that the subject? We could use the Wheel of Life to identify many of the areas of life and how you are doing in those areas. That may then awaken you to what you'd really like to focus on.

*When someone doesn't know what to choose—make that the subject.* Find out why choosing would be important (question #3) and if the person knows how to achieve that (#7). If not then you could together develop a strategy for choosing. Then you might have a *learning* conversation, a *resource* conversation, or a *change* conversation.

In doing any of this, as a coach you are classifying things and modeling for your client *how to classify things*. This is the skill that I hope you learned in NLP when you learned to “chunk up” and to “chunk down.” As expressions of inductive thinking (chunking up) and deductive thinking (chunking down), it is like the Game of 20 Questions you might have learned as a child. In that game, you ask someone to *think of something* like an object, person, place, etc. Then you ask questions that constrain or limit the subject, thereby narrowing the classification.

- Are you thinking of something animal or inanimate?
- Is it human or non-human?
- Is it big or small?
- Etc.

You can do the same in coaching. With the Wheel of life, you ask, “Do you want to understand or change or experience something about work? Relationships? Health? Hobby? Emotions? Strategy? Etc.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #26**  
**June 26, 2024**

## COACHING FOR AUTHENTICITY

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

Fritz Perls (*Eyewitness to Therapy*, p. 120)

While it seems that the above quotation is about Gestalt Therapy, it is actually in the first NLP book. That was the book that Bandler transcribed and of which he became partially the editor of the book. It is also a book that contains a great many of later became NLP presuppositions and themes. In that book, you will read Perls’ passionate arguments about why *not to ask ‘why,’* but to ask *how*. And the materials in that book were the foundation for the Gestalt Class that Bandler and Frank Pucelik began at the college—the class that figured out what we now call “The Meta-Model.”

Now the above quotation also contains *one of the hidden themes* of NLP, one of the themes that the field of NLP never developed, namely, the self-actualization of authenticity. It wasn’t until 2005 that I found out that NLP came almost directly from the Human Potential Movement (HPM)—from Perls, Satir, and Bateson who were second-generation *leaders* in the HPM.

At some point in time, on one of the audio recordings that Bandler heard, Perls said, “*The idea of Gestalt therapy is to change paper people to real people.*” That was Perls way of talking about self-actualization—the theme that Maslow and Rogers spoke about more directly. For Maslow, becoming one’s *real self— one’s authentic self*—meant reducing living behind a mask and coming out from behind oneself to become real.

In a section in the book, *Future Visions*, which is titled, “After Self-Actualization, What?” Maslow wrote:

“In the intrapsychic realm, the first great task is to *search for one’s identity*. Each person must find his or her true, active self, and after that task is accomplished, then life’s real problems lie ahead. Clearly, this task is related to finding one’s vocation, or calling, or biological destiny. ... The person who has acquired a sense of self, direction, and vocation can use all of these tools simply as tools. The tools serve rather than boss their user. ... Essentially, if you know who you are, where you are going, and what you want, then it is not hard to deal with inane bureaucratic details, trivialities, and constraints. You can simply disarm them and make them disappear by a simple shrug of your shoulders.... “

About becoming authentic in your person, this is what Abraham Maslow wrote. He began by focusing on one’s self-awareness and self-knowledge, and then one’s ability to live *inside-out*.

“... authentic persons are those who have *discovered and accepted* their own, biological, temperamental, and constitutional cues, the signals from within. In a sense, this description relates to intuition ... if you achieve this *ability to hear your own impulse voices*, then you have

attained an inner ‘supreme court’ from which come virtually infallible suggestions and even commands. Such people know what is good and what is bad for them and what they like and dislike.”

In the next paragraph, Maslow asks about *how one becomes real?* His answer is that it is a matter of personal development, of becoming a *self*.

‘How does one become an identity, a sure person, one who has authentic inner voices and who hears them and has courage to act on them?’ ... Some people have good intuitions because they have achieved a self. Others have lousy intuitions because they have not attained a self, and therefore, cannot distinguish between the inner voices of authenticity from those of neurosis.”

He ends by speaking about his opinion that very few people attain this kind of authenticity.

“... the human species is composed of perhaps 1% to 3% of people who have achieved personhood and that the vast majority have not done so ...” (*Future Visions*, p. 179)

Then, writing in a different context, namely in writing about leaders and especially about paranoid political leaders, Maslow said:

““Most people lack a strong sense of self. They do not know what they want or what they are looking for in life. As a result, they are extremely suggestible and will follow a self-confident leader rather than determine their own destinies.” (*Future Visions*, p. 175)

As coaches, *we coach people to become real persons—authentic*. This is not easy and it is not quick. To do that we have to get through all of the personas that a person puts up, through the superficial identities of the person’s roles, and through the defenses the person uses to not go there. For that we have to make a deep dive to the person’s hidden beliefs and assumptions which prevent a person from getting real. This explains the role of *challenge* in coaching—challenging a person to get out of one’s comfort zone and stretching forward to become one’s best self.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #27**  
**July 3, 2024**

## WHAT WILL CONVINCING YOU?

That's the question, isn't it? "What will convince you that you have achieved your goal?" Whatever it is that convinces you, that item will be—for you—the *evidence* which you need. Then you can stop striving toward the goal and celebrate your accomplishment. Now that item could be what you see, it could be what you hear, it could be what you feel, or it could be a set of criteria. Now we call this, "the KPI of your well-formed outcome." That refers to your *key performance indicator*— some indicator that you use which convinces you.

This is Question #18, the last question. And whenever I demonstrate the Well-formed Outcome set of questions at ACMC, I always ask this question. And once upon a time (namely 2002 to 2006) we required it for ACMC. It soon became obvious that this was far too much at that first level of Meta-Coaching. There were even some Meta-Coach Trainers who could not "lock down" a KPI on request. So we shifted it to the PCMC level. That began in 2010 and lasted until 2017 when it became obvious to me that it was also *too much* at the PCMC level. That's when I dropped it as a requirement for PCMC and said that it belong to the MCMC level.

"Wow! And once upon a time it was required for ACMC level?" Yes it was and I offer a big apology to those who suffered trying to achieve it in those early years! Next question? "What is it that makes the *evidence procedure question* so difficult?"

To answer that question, I first have to make some distinctions. The first distinction is that *there are different kinds of KPIs*. If your goal is to produce a product or to create a plan—the KPI is pretty simple and easy to achieve. "How will you know that you have reached your goal?" "I will hold the product in my hands." "I will pick up the business plan, the blueprint, the check-list, etc. and look at it." Easy! You could also be convinced by seeing a flow-chart of the production process for the product. You may not have to wait to actually produce the product. Or instead of writing, seeing, or holding a "plan," you might simply "say the words of the plan to yourself."

The KPI for the creation coaching conversation and the planning conversation are easy because the KPI is external and coded in one or more of the representation systems (VAK). The other kinds of coaching conversations are more difficult: the *outcome* conversation, the *change* conversation, the *experience or resource* conversation, etc. And now you probably know why. It's because the *convincer* will be less tangible, it may be completely intangible or a mixture of tangible-and-intangible.

The KPI for an *experience* coaching conversation is a good example. Let's say a person wants to achieve the ability to ask for a raise. "How will you know that you have achieved your goal?" An answer that is as obvious and common and as wrong is, "I will ask and get the raise." The problem? The outcome *depends* on the actions of someone else, namely, your boss. That violates Question #8, "Is it within your power or control?" Okay, so we back up. "I will *feel* that I can go

in and ask for a raise.” But a KPI is a key *performance* indicator, **not** a feeling. The KPI has to be a *performance—something that the person does*.

So we ask again and our client says, “I will feel *confident* that I can go in and ask for a raise.” Ah, sneaky! Another feeling—*feeling confident*. But if a person is not *competent* to go in and ask, then the so-called “confidence” would be a false and unsubstantiated confidence. So we try again. “I will be able to *see* myself go in and *hear* myself ask for a raise.” Bingo! Now we have the KPI. Here the *key performance* is an internal, mental *performance—a mental strategy*.

Now we ask, “Are you able right now to make an internal movie of yourself going in and asking for a raise? Can you see and hear yourself doing that?” What is interesting at this point is that many clients will say “Yes.” If he does, then definitely announce: “So we are done! You can make the movie, you can see yourself in the right state with the right words, and asking for the raise.”

Because your client is in the process of finishing the Well-Formed Outcome questions, your client has *not yet created the internal experience*. So obviously, she **cannot** do it yet! That’s important to underscore. “Oh, you don’t have a full movie with the needed words and states? Great! I have a job. That’s what we are now going to develop. And at the end of the session, you will have that see-hear-feel movie and can play it competently and confidently in your mind.” “That’s what you want? Yes? Great then that will be the KPI that will convince you that you have what you want.”

That’s a lot! And it will take you some time with your client to get that “locked in.” And, at the ACMC level, you will **not** need to do that. Actually, by the time you finish the session of facilitating your client to create that *internal mental strategy*, then you can ask #18, “Does this see-hear-feel movie convince you that you have the experience and resource to achieve your goal?” And typically the person will say yes.

Now why would a person do something like that? Another excellent question —and I’ll answer that in the next post.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #28**  
**July 10, 2024**

## GETTING A CONVINCING KPI

In the last *Morpheus* (#27), I ended the article with the question, “Why would a person go through all of the mental and conversational work to create a KPI for an experiential coaching conversation (or change, outcome, etc.)?” Last week’s article was about a person’s *convincer strategy*—what will convince you that you have achieved your outcome? I noted there that we human beings typically use what we can see (V), what we hear (A), an experience that we feel (K) or the criteria of value terms or standards (Ad).

Consider for a moment your own *convincers*. “What convinces you when you buy a new car?” “What convinces you that a training program is the right one?” “What convinces you to take a certain job?” “What convinces you about the friends you choose?”

Two meta-programs are *Convincer Meta-Programs* (#19 and #34). These deal with *what* convinces: facts, authority, research, repetition, social confirmation, etc. They deal with *how often one has to experience it*: once, three times, seven times, or never. They deal with *the representational code* of the convincer: VAK, words.

[#19: Convincer Representation; #34: Convincer Demonstration: number of times; length of time passing.]

This aspect of any experience, *being convinced*, has to do with some kind of validation and/or measurement. It arises when the question of measurement arises. How will we be able to know for sure? Will we measure it in terms of quantity (numbers) or in terms of quality (the nature of the experience itself)?

When it comes to coaching clients, clients fall into three categories: some are *too easily convinced*. Almost anything will convince them. They are naive, optimistic, and ready to believe. This makes them vulnerable to being tricked and deceived. They can also become easy victims for any cult-like leader or group. Others are *too difficult* to convince. In fact, they may even be “never convinced,” and therefore argumentative about the value, benefit, or effectiveness of any intervention. They are skeptical, sometimes to the point of being cynics. They can be mismatchers and/or strong-willed. Then there is a third group who are somewhere in-between the two polar opposites.

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Never Convinced  
Difficult

Always convinced  
Easy

Question: Does a client really need to be convinced of their outcome? Or your interventions? Of the effectiveness of coaching? The answer is that some do, some don’t and some don’t really care. For most clients, it is nice to be convinced. It’s not merely an extra value, it can play a key role in facilitating and accelerating the coaching process. On the other hand, someone who is *hard* to convince, or *never* convinced, ask, “Do you really need to be convinced? Aren’t you the

kind of person who is willing to experiment and see what happens and let the results do the convincing? So, let's jump in and see what happens. In that way, you don't need to waste a lot of time on something that will occur when you and your client achieves her goals.

Now you know why there are times in which I will skip #18. I just don't ask it because it would take up a lot of time. With mis-matchers, strong-willed by temperament, highly self-referent, sometimes it is just not worth the effort. At other times, I may ask #18, and then say "fine" to whatever they say. Even if he says, "I'll just know it."

At other times, with a client who may be unsure, doubting, naive, giving too much reference (authority) to me, I will probably spend time enabling that client to come up with his or her evidence procedure. Why? Because I want them to become increasingly more self-determining, self-referencing, and live from the inside-out. I want them to know their own powers and authority.

Then when they reach the criteria of their convincer, they will *know* and that will solidify their inner convictions.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #29**  
**July 17, 2024**

## **EXPERT COACHING**

- *Are you coaching these days with an eye on becoming an expert? Would you like to?*
- *Are you aware of what an expert coach can do that you cannot yet do?*

When you are fully certified as an ACMC coach, you have *all the tools* that you need to become a *really good coach*. The seven core skills enable you to use all of the models of NLP and Neuro-Semantics to enable your clients to “run their own brains” and to access truly resourceful states. The core skills will further enable you to coach a person in the seven kinds of coaching conversations. They will enable you to use the Axes of Change model and facilitate change, to use the Matrix Model and to generate new behaviors and performances and/or to model a system.

Now, of course, to become a *really good coach* you have to practice. Just getting signed off that you can perform the seven skills is not enough. It’s just the beginning. And if you *practice under supervision* (which is what the practice groups are designed to provide) then within a year of focused practice, I predict that you will become a *really good coach*. In fact, I think you will become a coach who will be head and shoulders *above* most ICF Master Coaches. Why would I say such a thing? Because of the six ICF Master Coaches who have attended ACMC, not one of them got higher than a 1.5 of the skills when they started and not a single one of the reached 2.5 by the end of the training. So when you hit 2.5 even one time, you are already as good as the so-called “master coaches” in ICF! Amazing, right? But why stop there?

Now in spite of the *high quality of coaching* that the ACMC training gives you, you will still *not* be an expert coach. Not yet. But you could be. It is in the cards for you **if** that is part of your personal vision for yourself. In fact, that’s how we have designed the Meta-Coaching System. It is what I and the other Meta-Coach Trainers *want*—we want to create dozens, even hundreds, of *expert coaches*. Wouldn’t it be great if 100 Meta-Coaches (ACMC) decided today that they will devote themselves to becoming *expert coaches* by 2034?

So how do you become an expert? This is where the advanced training of PCMC comes in. That’s also where Brain Camps I, II, and III come in as well as training in The Meta Place. All of these trainings have the same focus—developing expertise, building your skill set for expert level skills. This is why we do the deliberate practice and why there are several deliberate practice groups going on right now which you could join if you so chose.

Anders Ericsson discovered that experts use *deliberate practice* as their way for developing expertise. And they do so over a ten-year period. For many decades the 10 year rule has been recognized as the time frame in which expertise is developed. It seldom occurs in less time than that. That’s what happened to me. It was at the end of my first decade in NLP that I developed the Meta-States Model (1986-1994). That occurred after 8 years of studying NLP and four years working on the modeling of resilience and, of course, 7 previous years studying and getting

diplomas in various psychologies (T.A., Rational Emotive Therapy, etc., 1979-1986). In terms of studying and practicing “coaching” I did my first NLP coaching program in 1992 and created Meta-Coaching in 2002.

*So set your aim for 10 years.* “I will become an *expert coach* by 2034.” As you do, give yourself to the PCMC trainings, do that 4 or 5 times. Get a buddy coach so you can get honest feedback and support. Record your coaching sessions and use AI to transcribe them so that you can then study them for how you are deepening the skills and the structure. You can become a recognized expert coach if you put in the time and effort.

When you reach the level of being an expert in a subject matter, that is, as an expert coach, you will be able to do a deep dive into a client’s mind. You’ll do that automatically and smoothly because you will immediately recognize the mental landmarks as your client speaks and responds. You will quickly be able to identify your client’s frames-of-reference that plays a critical role in his or her experience.

Expertise in coaching means that you know how to gain access to the hidden structures of the mind, the structures which, in turn, play a critical role in your client’s experience. And you can do that because you can “see” into his or her Meta Place. That lets you know where to go and what to do. If you can’t do that now, no worries. It’s just a matter of time and lots of deliberate practice!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #30**  
**July 24, 2024**

## **ARE YOU A KITTEN OR A TIGER?**

I have often observed kitten coaches. And to do so is, at the same time, a delightful sight and a frustrating one. On the delightful side, the coach is so careful, so gentle, so caring, and so compassionate that the client is very well taken care of. On the frustrating side, the coach ends up soft-peddling so many of the things that makes coaching dynamic—especially the challenging, the sudden insights, and the Aha! discoveries as the “coaching moments” are seized.

I have seen kitten coaches take all of 25 or 30 minutes in a coaching session and not even get to Question #7. They seem so fearful of getting the subject or outcome wrong that they just keep asking general questions and open-ended questions until they co-create dozens and dozens of potential subjects. They just won't ask a series of definite questions that lock-down the subject and hold the client's feet to the fire. “Is that what you want? Really? Are you sure? Are you willing to devote this coaching session to this?”

Now because they won't ask commitment demanding closed-ended testing questions, they pussyfoot around. “But what if I don't get there real subject?” Well, at least you would find that out! At least you would get on with the session and discover more about your client's situation.

Kitten coaches do not challenge. They won't bring up a “sensitive” subject. So they soft-peddle it. They dance around it. They hint and they wait to see if the client will bring it up. And because of this, they don't use a healthy skepticism to question whatever subject or outcome that is presented. As a result, they almost never flush out an outcome and/or a proposed solution by the client that is actually a mis-diagnosis.

What's the solution? If you're a kitten coach, let's turn you into *a fabulously robust tiger coach!* Surely there is within you *an inner tiger* that can be accessed and released. Now a *tiger coach* is a coach that knows how to pounce on anything that even slightly represents a subject or outcome. There's a readiness to pounce, to grab, and to seize. Stop waiting around until the subject is obvious or crystal clear—take *something* that you hear and *grab* it. Pounce on it and check it out. “So your subject is your health?” “So the subject is your business and career?” “So the theme for today has something to do with your relationship to your kids?”

Imagine a gigantic tiger. Imagine one that stands 10 feet tall (3 meters). Move so close to that tiger that you can hear and feel it breathing ... you can feel its strength and power. Now imagine stepping into that tiger ... step in and swell up inside it so that you feel yourself 10 feet tall. Take your right paw, extend your claws, and now scratch at the ground. You are ready to pounce and to grab what your client offers. No more being a kitten coach, now you are a powerfully robust Tiger Coach.

Now when your client presents a problem or a possible solution, feel your *tigerness* access a state

of skepticism. “Is that real? How do you know? What’s the evidence? When did X happen? And what else?” Now you can ask *tiger* questions and you can present *tiger* challenges. After all, you are the coach. Your client has asked you to facilitate the change and the growth processes— so *facilitate with the power and grace of a tiger, a caring tiger*.

I believe that within every kitten coach, there is an inner *tiger coach* just waiting to be unleashed. Don’t assume your clients are weak, fragile, and overly-sensitive. What an insult! If a client is like that, he needs therapy, not coaching. Coaching clients are passionate people who want to take on their problems, solve them, and unleash potentials that they haven’t even begun to explore. They want to actualize their highest and best. So don’t dis-respect them by being a kitten— unleash the tighter within you!

From: L. Michael Hall  
2024 Morpheus #31  
July 31, 2024

## TRAINING YOUR INTUITIONS FOR EXPERTISE

In *Blink: The Power of thinking without Thinking* (2005), Malcolm Gladwell argues that there are times when expertise manifests itself in a *blink-of-an-eye*.<sup>\*1</sup> While it does not happen all the time, or even most of the time, it does occur from time to time. And he provides many examples of such—experts (e.g. Federico Zeri, Evelyn Harrison, Thomas Hoving, Georgios Dantas) who looked at a sixth century BC statue and immediately had a gut feeling that it just did not look right. Something is wrong. Yet eighteen months of analysis could not find anything wrong. But in the end, the experts were right, the statue was not legitimate; it was a fake. Their “hunch” eventually proved true (chapter 1). So with John Gottman’s ability to very quickly identify relationships that will end in divorce (chapter 2), and once tennis pro and expert, Vic Braden’s ability to recognize a good serve in the blink of an eye (chapter 3), etc.

What does all of this indicate? First, what it does *not* indicate. *It does not mean* that there is within all people an intuition about such things! Far from it. Such “intuitions” are not genetic or automatic, *they are trained*. It is the intuition of a trained expert that allows him or her to do such seemingly magical things.

It indicates then that a *trained intuition* of a person schooled in a particular speciality (with ten or more years of study and experience behind him or her) can sometimes perform seeming miracles. This corresponds to the beginning of NLP when the founders discovered the same in Perls, Satir, and Erickson. In a person who has trained his or her “adaptive unconscious” mind (p. 11) for rapid cognition, they can sometimes “in the blink of an eye” identify critical cues and quickly get to the heart of things. It is one of the great many kinds of thinking—rapid cognition.

*What is rapid cognition?* In Cognitive psychology *rapid cognition* refers to how trained intuition about something can quickly size up that thing, and do so especially when under stress—that is, in contexts of pressure and demands. Gladwell quotes from specialists like Timothy Wilson (*Strangers to Ourselves*, 2002) that the adaptive unconscious as rapid cognition operates “fast and frugal.”

“The adaptive unconscious does an excellent job of sizing up the world, warning people of danger, setting goals, and initiating action in a sophisticated and efficient manner.” (p. 12)

Now, wouldn’t you love to have that kind of rapid cognition—especially when you are under pressure, for example, when you are being watched and benchmarked as you are coaching, or when you are coaching in front of a group, or when you are coaching to meet the qualifications of being added as a service provider for executive coaching? Wouldn’t that be great? Or when you are encountering a client who presents a lot of things and you are trying to identify *the heart of the matter*?

Gladwell presents the key as *thin-slicing*. This refers to being able to take a thin-slice of a piece of behavior or conversation and seeing or hearing within it the key features that gives you clues as to the inner secrets (or as we would say, structure). *Thin-slicing* is perhaps the critical part of rapid cognition. It is the ability of your “adaptive unconscious to find patterns in situations and behaviors based on a very narrow slice of experience” (p. 23).

“We thin-slice because we have to, and we come to rely on that ability because there are a lot of hidden fists out there, lots of situations where careful attention to details of a very thin slice, even for no more than a second or two, can tell us an awful lot.” (p. 44)

“How good people’s decisions are under the fast-moving, high-stress conditions of rapid cognition is a function of training and rules and rehearsal.” (p. 114)

*Thin-slicing also depends upon something else— knowing what counts.* For Gottman, being able to predict couples who are liable to divorce (he predicts at a 95 % accuracy from observing one hour of a conversation who will and who will not be married 15 years later). Dr. John Gottman has also identified the four key factors (he calls them, The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse of a Marriage!): defensiveness, stonewalling, criticism, and contempt. And to know what counts in that list, he has further identified the most important one of all— *contempt* (pp. 32-33). And within this context, he has identified that “for a marriage to survive, the ratio of positive to negative emotion in a given encounter has to be at least five to one.” (p. 26).

In Neuro-Semantics we train people in the skill of *identifying key patterns*. This highlights the value of *pattern detection*— being able to recognize what is relevant to a particular pattern, experience, or outcome. For Gosling, he identified “The Big Five Inventory” regarding five dimensions of personality (p. 35).<sup>\*2</sup> In another study, the key to whether a doctor will be sued when there’s been a mistake in diagnosis or practice, the factor that counts most of all is the doctor’s *time of conversing with the patient* (just three more minutes than those in the sued group) and his or her *tone of voice* (pp. 42-43). Here the thin slice focused on four qualities: warmth, hostility, dominance, and anxiousness.

For the doctors at Cook County Hospital (Chicago), the work of Brendan Reilly and Lee Goldman’s algorithm identified what really counted in terms of predicting heart attacks. They reduced the list to three items which combine with the ECG that are urgent risk factors (pp. 134, 126-137).<sup>\*3</sup> The problem that the doctors previously had was too much information— too many factors! And within all of that information overload were factors that you would think would make a difference, but actually it did not help with the diagnosis of whether a person would be a candidate for a heart-attack. Again, what’s most important is knowing *what really counts in a particular context*.

What does this mean for you as a Meta-Coach? As you learn to identify *the factors that really count in human functioning and experiencing*, you can discover *how to thin-slice* bits of conversation and experiences. You can train your adaptive conscious and unconscious mind until your intuitions are able to detect the key cues, even if they are subtle and quick. You can learn to zero-in on just a few critical facts. It is this training of your intuitions over the years eventually turns you into an expert. Then even under pressure, even in stressful situations, you will be able to trust your intuitions and demonstrate high quality coaching that gets to the heart of things.

Now don't take thin-slicing as an absolute; it is not. Gladwell also tells stories about when rapid cognition goes awry. It happened to him when he grew his hair long and two policemen jumped to the conclusion that he was the rapist they were after. He also tells a bout the bad rapid cognition involved in unconscious thinking that a "tall" person is smarter or a better leader than a shorter person (The Warren Harding Error, Chapter 3). There is a time and place for limiting your snap judgments and there are times and places to *not* trust them.

"Our unconscious is a powerful force. But it's fallible. ... it can be thrown off, distracted, and disabled." (p. 15)

Would you like that? Great. Then get to your local MCF chapter meetings for practice. If you don't have one, start one! Invite one or two coaches to get together to go over the APMC manual and to practice coaching together. Read, practice, record your coaching sessions, review them, get a mentor, get a buddy coach, get a supervisor to work with in reviewing your sessions. Return to *Coaching Mastery* to revisit, then to be on the Assist Team as a Benchmark. This continuous practice will train your intuitions like nothing else will!

## References

1. As a side note, Malcolm Gladwell wrote, "I don't like the word intuition," and "in fact, it never appears in *Blink*." (Reading Guide, *Blink*, p. 2)
2. He found that complete strangers simply looking at a student's dorm room can be fairly accurate on three of the five personality dimensions (p. 36). The Five personality dimensions: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to new experiences.
3. 1) Is the pain felt by the patient unstable angina? 2) Is there fluid in the patient's lungs? 3) Is the patient's systolic blood pressure below 100?

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #32**  
**August 7, 2024**

## WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?

My client was a lady in her early 40s. She had two young teenage girls. She had been raising them since they were little girls and almost entirely without any support from the ex-husband. For some years, her mother provided her emotional support, then she died and there was no support at all from her father. He lived in a world of his own, perhaps he had a degree of autism, or he could have just been narcissistic. I never met him so I do not know.

Anyway, one day she came in and was *very, very upset*. Normally a pretty level-headed woman who was now taking night classes at the university as she was slowly preparing herself for a higher level job. Today she was, as she said, “a basketcase.” I listened empathetically to her and after 25 minutes she took a deep breath and accessed a more calm and reasonable state. “Thanks for listening...” she said. I nodded and asked, “Would it be good now to ask some questions and explore your state?” She nodded quietly.

“You were really in a very intense state when you started; it strikes me that you were really suffering from the lack of responsiveness in your dad.” Now she seemed to have shifted from upset and angry to being in a sad state, perhaps even a resigned state. She muttered a quiet “yes.” “So what are you now feeling?”

“Back to normal, I guess. Sad.”

“Tell me, what did you expect when you were on the phone with your dad?”

“I expected that he would come around and be a dad to me and a granddad to my girls. Why can’t he be more like other dads?”

“An interesting question. Has he ever been like other dads?” “No.” “Has he ever called you instead of you calling him?” “No.” “In all of the years, has he ever asked about you, what you’re doing, how you are doing financially, how the girls are doing?” “No.” “So he has never behaved like a normal dad or grandfather?” “No.” “So where did you get these expectations? How have you set yourself up to expect all of that ... things he has never shown any ability to do?”

These questions sent her into a deep reflective state and a couple weeks later she told me that it was “revolutionary and transformational”—her words. Why? She explained that she had discovered that all of her upset, anger, and sadness was created by “my own expectations.” “I did it to myself! I never realized that before you asked those questions.” And? Well, once she understood the process and how she was the one who created, *she knew that she had the power to change that*.

Expectations—one of the meta-levels in the Meta Place. As a person uses his *imagination to anticipate* what could be, he begins to develop expectations. If the expectation is kept tentative and realistic, it will do no semantic damage, but once the *expectation involves a demand* ... “It

needs to be this way.” “It has to be this way.” “It must be this way.” then we put ourselves under that demand. Now the expectation sets you up for disappointment. Now if what you began imagining and anticipating has become a demand of what *must* be. This is almost always unrealistic and if you speak your expectations to another person, it typically creates resentment and resistance.

With my client, I asked her to write down a set of *realistic expectations*. Start a sentence, “I can expect dad to...” and write an ending to that sentence stem. She did. She wrote, “I can expect dad to not call, I have to call him. I can expect dad not to ask about me, my girls, our finances. I can expect that dad will talk only about himself.” Once she had it filled out, I said “Put this list by your phone.” (That was the days when people only had land-lines and the phones were often bolted to a wall!) After that, when she did call, she could stare at that list and it would keep her in her best state.

But some strange things happened. First as she felt less and less *need* to get his approval, she called less. And by calling less, the day came when her dad became aware of that and actually called her. And eventually, he began asking about her girls, then her, and to her great surprise, once he asked about how she was doing financially. Apparently, he felt less or no pressure from her and a little bit of responsibility.

Now think about your clients. Do you know what expectations they have in their minds about themselves, others, work, life, etc.? How realistic or unrealistic are those expectations? Does your client need to adjust her expectations? Reduce them? Make them more conscious? Be sure to check out *expectations* when you have a client who is experiencing stress, disappointments, feeling stuck or other negative motions.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #33**  
**August 14, 2024**

## CATCHING MIS-DIAGNOSES

To ask for coaching and to pay for coaching, you can expect that clients have some kind of diagnosis about themselves, their lives, their inner experiences, and what they want or need. How could a thinking human being *not* have some kind of idea about what's needed? Of course, when the client gets to you and sits in your coaching chair and you ask them, "What do you want?" they often say, "I don't know." So you ask, "Well, what is the problem that's stopping you from being your best self?" And again they say, "I don't know."

Now as a coach, what do you then say or do? Are you stuck? A lot of coaches are. But engage with me for a few minutes in some inferential thinking. "What do you know from those two 'I don't know' statements?" "What can you infer?" The first thing you can infer is that the person has depleted all of his resources and choices. He has tried to figure out what's going on, what he wants and/or needs, and what will satisfy things, and he has not discovered the solution.

You can infer that because to be a human being is to be a person who has a whole set of *needs* that drive us to gratify them. These are the basic *deficiency needs* that Maslow's hierarchy identifies. But which need is driving the person? She may not know. He may confuse one need with another need (e.g., confuse loneliness with physical hunger for food). Given this, one place to begin is with the *Hierarchy of Need Assessment Scale*. [We sent that to you when you became a Meta-Coach along with a 12-page document explaining how to use it in coaching.]

As a coach, go through the needs list and ask your client what he thinks about each *necessity* and how he is gratifying it. As you do, you will be hearing the person's *thinking* (e.g., understanding, valuing, and believing) about each need. That will give you a chance to check the *quality* and *accuracy* of his thinking. It will give you a chance to hear the person's *diagnosis* of her situation or mis-diagnosis.

Now because effective coaches *coach* clients in the art of questioning their own thinking, in Meta-Coaching, we use the Cognitive Distortions and Biases as a checklist on our client's thinking. [Again, that's why we have them in your ACMC manual and send them out so you can give to your clients.] What's powerful is to identify specific needs (e.g., sleeping, eating, exercising, making money, sex, etc.) and direct your client's thinking about it.

- What do you think about X? How do you think about it? What do you understand?
- What do you think about that thought?
- Are you exaggerating, personalizing, emotionalizing, awfulizing, etc. in your thoughts?
- Are you aware of any biases in your thinking?

It's this way that you can catch the mis-diagnosis in your clients. When you really know that mis-diagnoses arise from cognitive biases, distortions, and fallacies, you know that it lies in *how your client is thinking*. In other words, clients can get things wrong about themselves and their

situation. It's actually easy to do. Your job, as a coach, is to keep a critical eye on your client's thinking and enable your client to learn how to do the same. And when you do that, you are facilitating the person's ability to be open, to change, and to unleash potentials.

Plant this question in your mind: "What is my client assuming about himself, his life, and his situation?" And with the *assumption question*, you can explore the distinctions of the Meta-Model, Meta-Questions, Meta Place, etc.

- Is he assuming that what he calls something *is* what it is?
- Is he assuming that his description is accurate, precise and meaningful?
- Is he confusing his symptoms with the cause? Does he think the problem is his emotions?
- Is he reducing the problem to a single factor: "It is only X..."
- Is he using linear thinking: "It is either X or Y."
- Is he defining X as outside his scope of responsibility? (e.g. blaming)
- Is he assuming that his memory is absolutely accurate and infallible?
- Is he over-optimistic and jumps to conclusions? Or pessimistic?
- Is he assuming that what he says and sees is all there is? (Availability bias)
- Etc.

The bottom line: Clients often get it wrong in terms of what they think is "the problem" and/or "the solution." Ask them about these things and be skeptical about their answers. Accept their thinking and view as their legitimate thinking and explore it with testing questions. As you confront the possibility that the thinking itself is the real problem, you challenge your client to learn how to do meta-thinking— how to think about her thinking.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #34**  
**August 21, 2024**  
*A Coaching Event*

## ACMC TRAINING IN MAURITIUS

We have just completed Module III of Meta-Coaching, the ACMC training, in the island country of Mauritius which is in the Indian Ocean—east of South Africa 5 hours by flight. It is directly east of Madagascar. I write that description because if you may not even have a clue as to where in the world Mauritius is. I didn't prior to 2014. And when I looked on maps, I could not even find the little dot. Actually there are 1½ million people here, 4 airports and the island is some 60 miles from top to bottom and it is filled with the most unique mountains that I've seen anywhere in the world.



What's amazing is that this is the third ACMC training in Mauritius. The first in 2015, then 2019, and now in 2024. And because of that, there is now a growing community of Meta-Coaches and an amazing spirit of learning. As a result we had a great many volunteer to be on *the team* and so ended up with a team of 15 people. That meant there was one team leader for every 2 participants! It also meant that we have mostly “newbies” on the team—people for whom it was the first time. That was a challenge, but a good one.

Thanks to Bruneau Woomed and the other three sponsors (Joyce, Jameel, and Waiman) the participants were well-prepared for the intense “bootcamp” experience. Prior to the training, they had led a great many preparation trainings both for the participants and the team leaders.

When we landed in Mauritius, the MCF sponsored a Meta-Coach Reunion. I was put in front of 50 or so people and they asked questions for 2 hours along four different themes. And they were really good questions, some of the questions really made me think. Then there was a dinner that we shared. But before the dinner, they sat the room up in the format of *The Meta Place* and the team leaders took different “stations” so that we put the 50+ people through it. We did that in Malaysia in June for the Trainers ... this was the second time we have done that. Each time some people report that it was a very moving and transformative experience.

The long-term vision for Mauritius is for both Bruneau and Joyce to step up to become Meta-Coach Trainers. To that end, I co-trained the whole program with Bruneau and Joyce “shadowed” the process. Mohamed Tarek, our Meta-Coach Trainer from Egypt, flew in and did some of the

co-training with myself and Bruneau, he served as one of the team leaders and he videoed the entire eight-day training!

PGeraldine and I are impressed with the people who came for the coach-training. People who intensely care about people, who love to see people grow and develop, and who share the Meta-Coaching passion for *changing the world one conversation at a time*. In Neuro-Semantics we measure the quality of our trainings by the amount of transformations that occur and the amount of laughter. There was a lot in Mauritius.

On a personal level, our first flight was into Denver where we had delay after delay after delay due to storms in New York. They shifted us to other flights and in the process ...the luggage got delayed or lost or something. By the time we arrived, our luggage did not. Eventually we got one luggage after day 5, another after day 8, another after day 9, and the last on the 11<sup>th</sup> day. We found it interesting to have our carry-on bags and to live out of them for the first 6 or 7 days. Given that United scanned the bag numbers when they were first loaded and each leg of the flights, all luggage is scan in again ... how in the world could they get lost for 11 days? Having called United and Emirates every day and being told that they did not know where the bags were (!), I figured that incompetence is pretty rampant in those companies.

As an aside, I found it an interesting frame of mind to live out of our carry-on bags for six days. Now my *carry-on bags* consisted of a lap-top, books, and papers and that was it. And while a change of clothes would have been nice, it wasn't essential. Okay, I did buy a shirt and someone washed the shirt I wore on the plane for 3 days. Of course, she (meaning Geraldine) has a different attitude about what to pack in the carry-on bags!

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #35**  
**August 28, 2024**

## ACMC IS JUST THE BEGINNING

When you complete Module III, *Coaching Mastery*, you have all of the models, patterns, and coaching skills that you need *to get started*. No one graduates from *Coaching Mastery* as a master! But everyone who graduates has the *potential* of becoming an expert in coaching—if they gives themselves to the practice and study.

Now if you have an *impatient program* in your mind, then your Meta Place is setting you up so that you will *not* become a highly competent coach or an expert in coaching. Impatience in *hurrying up* to “get it” not only prevents you from getting it, it positively hinders your development. Instead, think long-term. Think years. If *coaching competence* was something a person could learn in weeks or even months, there would be a whole lot more competence in the field. But that’s not how it works.

Because ACMC is just the beginning, PCMC is the next stop on your pathway to *coaching competence*. And what is PCMC? It is just 4-days of *deepening your ACMC skills*. It is deepening and expanding your ability to—

- Recognize a *coachable moment*, how to facilitate those moments, and how to utilize them.
- How to *set frames* not only as you start the coaching conversation, but more importantly, *during* the session.
- How to *set frames* to correct misunderstandings *as they arise* in the session in real time.
- How to *detect and use pattern detection* to get to the heart of the matter with your client.
- How to understand and practice *strategy process* as a deep listening method.
- How to use the *Well-Formed Outcome questions* more powerfully.
- How to deepen your use of *empathy and validation* as supporting skills.
- How to learn how to *challenge* a client in a way that delights them.
- How to *confront* effectively and compassionately.

PCMC is about *deepening* your coaching skills. It is about learn how to make *the deep dive into your client’s mind* (Meta Place) so that you can get to the heart of the person’s *meanings* more effectively. To that end, you will do lots of practices in the first four days of the training; you will also see demonstrations.

Then the fun begins. Then you will get to see ACMC coaches, who have 400 hours of paid professional coaching, set for assessment. They will do that in front of the whole group as they have 45 minutes (or a bit more) with a fresh naive client. We get these fresh naive clients by asking for people who want a coaching session but who may have never been coached.

The fun here is the *mystery and the adventure* of “*what will happen?*” That’s because we never know! For an experienced ACMC coach, what will happen should not surprise him or her. For those with less than 400 hours, they usually get surprised and say things like, “I’ve never seen or

heard a situation like this before!” That’s often when I step in to manage things and not leave the client hanging.

What’s amazing at this point is *how much everyone who is watching the live coaching sessions learn*. It is the difference between intellectual learning and *experiential* learning. I think what’s happening is that if you are in the audience watching—you are *thinking, feeling, and experiencing the session as it is happening*. That is, you are putting yourself in the coaches chair and imagining what you would say or do. That doesn’t happen very often when you are hearing a presentation about coaching.

Here’s something else amazing about PCMC training— *it is open to everyone!* Unlike ACMC that has so many requirements (NLP training, Meta-States training), we open PCMC to **everybody**. And as a result we get people who are brand new to NLP and Coaching. We get Coaches from many other Coaching Schools. We get lots of ACMC coaches who are not ready to set for assessment, but who plan to do that in the coming years.

If you are a Meta-Coach, then the PCMC training is your *next step to become a truly competent coach* even if you have just taking ACMC. In fact, I would recommend that you plan to take PCMC two or three times to get the full value from it. There’s really nothing like it.

*When is the next one?* Bali, Indonesia December 2—9, 2024.

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(It will occur just after the training for *The Meta Place*)

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #36**  
**September 4, 2024**

## **META-COACHING: DESIGNED FOR IMMERSION**

When I launched the very first training in Meta-Coaching, one of the decisions I made was to create a training that would be a full immersion in the coaching models, skills, and methodology. Knowing that there was *so much material to cover*, instead of stretching it out over weeks or months, I conceptualized the training being held in a resort context, away from a major city, and doing the training from 9 am to 9 pm. So while we have not done that all of the time, that is what we have done most of the time.

By asking people to get away and to come together at a resort type hotel, my thought is that people would naturally meet for breakfast; mingle at the bar or restaurant for conversations, and do additional coaching sessions with each other. And that's what has happened time after time all around the world. And as a result, some people became best friends, some became business partners, and others developed friends from all around the world.

The most recent ACMC we conducted in Mauritius, and because of a combination of circumstances, we did not do the 8-days in a resort hotel. Instead we use a hotel in town. That meant that everybody showed up at 9 am and went home at 9 pm. That meant that I did not see participants after hours or at breakfast or in the gym.

So what resulted? For one thing, people got distracted as they traveled to and from home so that *coaching* was no longer the primary thing on their minds. By going home, they encountered family, kids, bills, business issues, etc. And they got less sleep! For another thing, because they did not hang around, they did not bond as usual. Another consequence, participants said that they wanted more time with their team leaders, but alas, the team leaders also went home at 9.

What did we realize? One primary thing: Do not do it that way again! It undermines *the immersion effect* and *the intensity effect* of a residential training. Having seen the difference over and over and over—I had no question in my mind of the value of it.

There are several tremendous advantages to *immersing yourself in a single focus* for an extended period of time. Chief among them is the depth and acceleration of *learning*. From the neurosciences we now know the disadvantages of multi-tracking and how much learning, comprehension, and memory is lost when you multi-track and/or get distracted with other things. Simply dividing your attention to one other thing, and you lose 30 percent concentration. That's a lot! Conversely, to live, breathe, sleep, and eat *coaching* and only coaching for 8 days—you will not only develop your focus, but you will pick up a lot unconsciously.

For me the best experiences for immersion occurred repeatedly in the years when we took

busloads of people up into the mountains, to Mendes, where we conducted ACMC in an old monastery. The accommodations were a bit rough—like college dorms. And given that the sleeping quarters was not necessarily an inviting place to go (hard floors, no TV, the roughest of showers, etc.) that additionally encouraged people to hang out longer together and when they did, they ended up doing coaching sessions together.

Today we know that the best way to learn a new language is via *the immersion approach*. Go to the culture where 24-hours a day, everyone speaks the language you want to learn. Then you will breathe, eat, drink, and sleep that new language. So also with coaching. What you will pick up, beyond the content learnings, is *the attitude and the spirit* of coaching. Because you are focusing exclusively on coaching, on the internal journey to the Meta Place, and on facilitating the process—you will learn more a lot about coaching at an unconscious level and it will therefore be within your more intuitively.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #37**  
**September 11, 2024**

## **STRATEGIC COACHING**

I have a question for you, “Is your coaching strategic?” If so, “How strategic is your coaching?” “Does your coaching need to be more strategic?” Even if you haven’t discerned this yet, it shouldn’t surprise you to learn that *Meta-Coaching is designed as a highly strategic approach to coaching*. In fact we have a page in the ACMC manual that presents what we call the *systemic or strategic question*. On page 32 we ask the question to test whether you operate from a strategic structure or if your coaching is a by-the-seat-of-your-pants approach (i.e., do whatever strikes your fancy in the moment).

### ***How do you know what to do, when to do it, with whom to do it, and why?***

#### ***What do you do with clients?***

We engage in coaching conversations as we relate, explore, induce states, facilitate processes, ask questions and meta-questions. We use meta-tools (like the WFO questions) for facilitating a client to access and mobilize his resources to achieve his objectives. We get to the heart of things—the person’s *meaning* and *frames* by using the Meta-States Model and its levels of meta-questions.

#### ***When do you know what to do with a client?***

Timing refers to doing what you do at the right moment. Therefore we look for the coachable moment, the client’s readiness for change, considering the person’s stage of development and where she is in the process of change. We consider where he is in terms of clarity of understanding, etc. For this we either use the *Axes of Change* Model or the Matrix Model.

#### ***With whom do you do what you do?***

We make distinctions with different clients by “reading” each person’s states, meta-states, frames, thinking patterns, etc. We calibrate to their states and take their personality style (meta-programs) into account. Meta-Programs and the Meta Place informs us about this.

#### ***How do you know what to do?***

Our specialized meta-knowledge, we recognize the choices and possibilities for working with a client using Axes of Change and the Matrix as factors which inform us in how to choose the best approach. We use *the Facilitation Model* as we interact with clients to choose how to intervene.

#### ***Why make the choices you do?***

Our theoretical frameworks are the cognitive, humanistic, and developmental psychological models which inform us about how a person or organization self-actualizes. We focus on empowering clients and groups for more personal resourcefulness.

Now the *strategic questions* par excellence are these: Where am I in relation to my client? Where is my client in relationship to his desired outcome? When you answer these questions, you will know strategically what you need to do as a coach and what your client needs to do to achieve her desired outcome. Why is this so? Because to *think strategically* is to think in terms of *Now ...* and *Then*. Where are you now? Where do you want to be?

Accordingly it should be no surprise that when you use the Well-Formed Outcome Questions, you are thinking and operating strategically. So no wonder we constantly emphasize, “Ask the questions and ask the questions sequentially.” When you do, you are using a strategic thinking tool by which you can orient your client to his or her ultimate goal. And with that you then have something that you can use to test the *relevancy* of anything that comes up in the coaching. Now you can do the “relevance challenge” and enable your client (and yourself) to stay focused on what truly matters in any given session.

Thinking strategically as the coaching conversation continues is a critical factor in being able to stay focused and to effectively target what your client wants. Do you strategize as you go? If so, then you are using the relevance of the client’s goal as your north star. Another way to strategize is to keep in mind *where your client is in his or her Meta Place* and how that supports his desired outcome. Clients can and do get distracted by their own thoughts and emotions and head off into irrelevant areas. When they do, it’s your job to bring them back.

Thinking strategically means you know where you are with your client. And that means you are not lost or confused about what you are doing and what you will be doing. You know where your client is in the moment and where she wants to be, you also know the process for facilitating your client to get there.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #38**  
**September 18, 2024**

## **STRESS MANAGEMENT COACHING**

You could specialize as a *Stress Management Coach*. After all, there's a lot of need for that in today's world both individually and in organizations. What we call "stress," in fact, is for many people a disease! They live their lives in high stress—overwhelmed with how much there is to do, and under severe pressures from work, family, kids, finances, etc. And the rise of the *symptoms of stress* in today's societies has made it a major concern. What are these stress symptoms? All kinds of things:

Physical pains: headaches, backaches, neckaches, ulcers, heart attacks, strokes, fatigue, poor sleep, poor digestion, etc. Then there are the psychological and relational symptoms: irritation, annoyance, being quick to anger, frustrated, upset, frazzled, living in 'crisis mode,' feeling out of control, etc.

To add to all of this misery are the many *confusions* about stress. One big misconception is that "stress is bad." Yet if stress refers to the ability of your mind, emotions, and actions to meet the demands of life—the up to a certain point *stress makes you feel alive*. Hans Seyle, the Stress Expert, called this kind of stress— *eu-stress* (good stress). More commonly, we think of it as excitement, fun, enthusiasm, etc. This is the kind of stress that rejuvenates us, that puts spirit in our souls, and that enables us to live more fully and humanly.

Another misconception is that any and everything that activates acute stress is bad for us. But again, that's really not true. When an emergency arises, your ability and mine to rise up, meet the demands of that crisis is how we are made. You stay up all night with a sick baby, you attend to a friend who needs your help in finding a place to live, you drive a thousand miles to support a brother—and while tired, it is a good tired and one that you're proud of.

What's bad for us humans is *chronic stress*. And this is the problem of this age. Now, instead of a clearly defined crisis or challenge, there is the one-more-thing-to-add-to-your-already-filled-plate! You don't say no. You don't calculate how little time you have to de-stress or to take care of yourself, and so you over-commit. You get over-whelmed by all of the things to do. And/or you add more and more of a sense of psychological threat to yourself.

Now you are *living in a stress state*. That's chronic stress and it is a killer. We are *not* made to live like that. Now your "general arousal syndrome" keeps your blood-pressure high, your heart and lungs pounding, blood withdrawn from brain and stomach, adrenalin pumping through your veins ... and you are *living stress*. This is number-one health problem all around the world. And it is the silent killer.

Now if you become a Stress Management Coach you will want to be doing several things with your clients. You will want them to make several lists:

- List all of your stressors. Things that turn up your sense of threat or over-load.

- Make a list of all of your de-stressors. The things you do to release the biological arousal in your body. How do you get the stress out?
- Make a list of all of the things you do that rejuvenates your mind and heart. The things you love doing and that leaves you in a productive and resourceful state

While stress activates the body, it is only chronic stress that creates the problem and only chronic stress that a person doesn't know how to release or what to do to rejuvenate oneself. And because there are not that many things in modern society that activates the healthy stress response, most of the triggers today are psychological. And that goes to the person's *thinking*—what he believes, understands, remembers, imagines, etc.

As a Stress Management coach you will therefore lead your clients into the Meta Place to see what limiting beliefs are creating and/or amplifying their stress. Typically, the person will be using many of the Cognitive Distortions for this. Simply introducing that list and enabling the person to identify *how she is stressing herself out* is often enough to begin reducing that person's stress level.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #39**  
**September 25, 2024**  
***Corporate Coaching #1***

## **HOW TO GIVE COACHING A REALLY BAD NAME**

With this article I want to initiate a series of articles about corporate or organizational coaching. More and more of our Meta-Coaches are being invited into organizations to do coaching and given that coaching inside a business or organization involves some additional distinctions and different emphases, this series will address some of the unique problems in that domain of coaching.

When I presented the materials about taking *ACMC into Corporates* (see Mohamed Tarek) for that presentation, there was a question about managers coaching. “Can a manager coach the people who report to him or her?” “How could a manager coach his or her team members when the manager will also be assessing and doing performance reviews with them?” My immediate response was: *Don’t do it!* Here’s why.

If you manage a team of people and you also coach them, *are you a safe person to open up to?* The answer should be obvious: Of course not! If my job, promotions, raises, etc. are in your hands and you want me to open up and talk about my struggles ... well, you are asking me to put all of that *at risk*. Why would I do that? I want to grow in my job, get raises, be promoted, get good recommendations, etc. so why would I tell you things that you might *use against me?*

In terms of a proper *coaching session*, managers cannot and should not coach their own people. They can do the kind of coaching that Ken described in *The One Minute Manager*. You can walk around and ask your people how they are doing, how you can help, what they need, you can listen and empathize, etc. In other words, you can do *1-Minute Coaching as a Manager*, but that’s about it. Don’t expect the coaching to be very deep or profound.

As a manager, you can use *coaching as a methodology in how you manage and lead*. That is, you can be supportive in your listening, you can ask great questions, you can give feedback, and you can induce state. You can use your coaching skills as *the way you relate to them as a manager*. But proper or pure coaching wherein you take 45 minutes or more and have an in-depth coaching conversation—that requires confidentiality. That requires that the person knows that what they say in the coaching room stays in the coaching room. And as a manager, you could “promise” that, but can you actually do that? Probably not.

So what can you do? My recommendation: You manage your team, assess them, train them for skills, and do regular performance reviews and have another manager/coach coach them. You coach the members of another manager’s team. In organizations, people in HR often take Coach

Training and then do proper coaching sessions with people. That works fine because they do not also assess their performance.

Organizations who send managers to Meta-Coaching or other Coach Training programs often think that they can save money by having someone on staff who can do the coaching. Now they don't have to hire external coaches. But there's a problem: *They do not understand the confidentiality requirement of coaching.* What the companies who do this anyway end up doing is *giving coaching a bad name!* People who suffer the experience of having their manager both coach them and evaluate them come to *hate* coaching. And why not? If they open up—they get themselves into trouble. If they close up—they are accused of being defensive! It's a negative double-bind.

If organizations want to misuse coaching and give coaching a bad name, here is a simple way. Send your managers off to learn some coaching and then return to coach their team! That will put a bad taste about coaching in everyone's mouth.

Senior managers need to know and understand that *coaching is a special relationship of trust and confidentiality.* That's why having a provider list of external coaches is a much better way to go. If managers learn coaching—they also need to use it primarily as *a methodology* for leading. This is pretty much the same advice that we give for all coaches: *Do not coach your husband, wife, or children.* And why not? You are mixing two different relationships.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #40**  
**October 2, 2024**  
*Corporate Coaching #2*

## **DO I HAVE A CLIENT?**

Frequently in organizations, a manager or HR personnel may ask you to coach someone. Great! You've got a client. But do you? Let's slow this down and find out if you actually have a client. The harsh fact is this: Unless the person, who they are wanting you to coach *wants* to be coached, you do not have a client. You only have a coaching client *if a person wants to be coached to some outcome*. So that's what you have to find out. *Welcome, the three-way meeting.*

The three-way meeting is between sponsor, client, and coach. The sponsor is the person in the organization who wants "the client" to be coached. She may be a manager, senior manager, or someone from HR. The client is anyone employed by the organization. The coach is either an external coach brought in from the outside or an internal coach. The meeting is a meeting designed to assess the situation to see if there is the possibility of coaching or a coaching contract.

The coach facilitates a discussion of what *the sponsor* wants and then what *the potential client* wants. Using the Well-Formed Questions, the coach will see if he can get a clearly defined outcome from the sponsor—what the sponsor wants the client to do, stop doing, express or stop expressing. When you do this, make sure that you do it in the presence of the client, that creates accountability and the prevention of "secrets." As the coach at the end you ask the client:

"You have heard what your manager wants from you, are you good with this? Are you willing to achieve this outcome? Do you also want to achieve this?"

If the client agrees, the coach will *test and challenge the client* to see if he truly wants, or if he is just complying, and perhaps have no real desire to put in the effort to achieve the sponsor's outcome.

"How much do you feel aligned with this outcome? How important is it for you to meet this outcome that your manager has suggested?" "If this is important to you, how is it that you have not achieved it yet? What has held you back?"

If the client hesitates or seems conflicted, the next step for the coach is to ask the sponsor to leave the room for a few minutes. In that time, the coach will seek to understand the client on the client's terms, what he truly wants. Again, use the Well-Formed Outcome questions to establish an outcome with this person. Acknowledging the confidentiality of coaching, the coach lets him or her know that if he does not want anything, then there can be no coaching. Coaching is not about imposing, controlling, or manipulating. It is *not* making the person obey his supervisor or manager.

If the client wants coaching, even if it is not for the outcomes set up by the manager, the coach promises strict confidentiality and only reports to the sponsor whether the client showed up for the coaching session or not. The coach's commitment is always to *the person being coached*— to

enable that person in clarifying what he wants, how to unleash her potentials, how to be the best person he can be, etc. Coaching is always and only *in service of the one being coached*. As the coach, you will say to the client that it is up to her to meet her work requirements, the sponsor's outcomes, and that you will not be reporting on that.

If the client does not want to comply with the sponsor's requirements or outcomes, the coach informs the sponsor, "I do not have a client." So given that, there can be no coaching of that person.

"Since coaching requires a willing participant and this person is not willing to receive coaching, then I don't have a client at this point. Coaching is *not* a means for making someone do what he doesn't want to do. Do you need to find out the reasons that he does not want to do what you've asked? If so, we could do a clarification conversation between both of you or a mediation conversation if there is some bad blood between you. Or another possibility is you might want me to coach you on how to handle such individuals, or how to learn new or different managerial skills, we could do some coaching sessions on that."

Just because someone is willing to pay you to coach someone else is not an indication that that person is a coaching client. Coaching is not therapy nor is it a place for court-ordered or manager-ordered injunctions.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #41**  
**October 9, 2024**  
***Corporate Coaching #3***

## **DO YOU HAVE A COACHING CULTURE?**

If you are going to coach people within an organization, the first questions you need to find out are, “Does that organization have a coaching culture?” “What is the culture of the work environment in which the person is operating?” These *context question* are critical for your success as a coach. And do you know why? It’s because you and your client are operating within the boundaries of that culture.

Now the thing with *cultures* is that they are mostly invisible. Oh yes, they show up in the way people talk, act, and relate. They usually show up in architecture and how the office and work station structures have come to be. But while it can be externalized, the organizational culture is not an external thing. It is not “out there.” *Culture is inside—in the mind’s of the people.*

For this reason, *we all learn our cultures.* In fact, we are *cultivated* by parents, teachers, friends, peers, etc. to think, feel, speak, and act as we do. And to that degree, a culture is “how we do things around here.” So every family has its own unique culture, every school, every ethnic group, every business, every country, etc.

So back to the opening question for when you coach someone within an organization, “What culture does my client live within?” And even more specifically, “Does this organization have a coaching culture?” And why would you want or need to know that? Because *your client’s culture will make or break your coaching.* It will support what you are doing or it may undermine your efforts.

For example, if your client lives in a culture where mistakes are terrible, where you hide mistakes, you cover them up, you deny them, and where a mistake can threaten your livelihood and job—then your coaching starts with a significant disadvantage. Now looking for any error message that feedback provides will probably be a threatening thing, a dangerous thing, and a fearful thing for your client. You will experience your client as holding back, closed-up, in denial, resisting, etc. In this case, the person is not the problem, the *cultural frame is the problem.*

“What is a coaching culture?” At the very least, it is a culture that encourages people to grow, to develop, to be open to mistakes and fallibility, and to speaking up candidly and directly. It is a culture that rewards putting in the effort even if you don’t get the results or success that you want. It is a culture that puts people first — employees first, customers first. The culture knows that the success of the organization depends on meeting the needs and wants of the customers and doing it in a way that respects and honors them.

Now if you don’t know the culture of the organization, you will be essentially going in blind, not

knowing that your coaching may actually make things worse for your client. Your client may not know the culture he's working in either and may not realize its influence on him.

Without a coaching culture, your coaching may or may not succeed with a given client. If the coaching succeeds, your client will often leave the company. Why? To find an organization that has at least some aspects of a coaching culture, a place where your client can grow and thrive, can put her human capital to its best use. If your coaching doesn't work with that particular client, the client stays stuck or miserable and HR or the recommending manager is all-the-more convinced that coaching in general doesn't work. Talk about a double bind!

So, what if the organization does *not* have a coaching culture? Then talk to the HR professional or the manager who wants you to coach in that organization about the powerful influence the organization's culture has on coaching— it will make it or break it. Consult with that person to help him understand that the work *environment carries all kinds of hidden and invisible frames that enable or disable people*. Then from that consulting, offer to coach the manager or the senior managers regarding how to create a coaching culture. If they need training, then get one of the Neuro-Semantic trainers to offer *Unleashing Leadership* and/or *Organizational Change*. That will prepare them for making the needed organizational changes so that coaching can work there.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #42**  
**October 16, 2024**  
***Corporate Coaching #4***

## **ARE THE LEADERS BEING COACHED?**

One way to check out if an organization has a coaching culture is to ask, “Are the senior leaders and the leaders in the C-Suite being coached?” Most of the time coaches are being asked to coach employees while the one making the offer, as well as the rest of the leadership team, is not being coached. That’s more often than not the case.

Now you are ready for the next question, “Why not?” And more often than not you will hear, “They don’t need it.” Now you have your answer! That organization definitely does *not* have a coaching culture! The leaders are *not* leading out *in being examples* of the very thing they say they believe in. And with that, no wonder they are not trusted or believed in. No wonder their integrity and congruency is so often questioned and mocked (of course, outside of their presence).

Leaders who do not know the value of ongoing coaching typically think, “Coaching is for people who need help, who are not responsible, who are beginners and who are just learning, who have problems, etc.” Listen for that. And if you hear it, you now know that those leaders *do not know what coaching is*. They probably are confusing it with training, consulting, mentoring, advice-giving, or even therapy.

Great leaders seek out challenging coaches in order to be challenged, to be held accountable, to keep growing, and to identify their blind-spots. They know the power of a reflective coaching conversation which helps them to think through decisions. They know the power of a robust conversation when a coach plays “devil advocate.” It sharpens them. It tightens up their critical thinking skills and releases their creativity. It helps them to slow down, create a more balanced approach to life so that they take care of themselves, their health, and their relationships.

Great leaders, both managerial leaders and executive leaders, also know that coaching helps them to stay fresh, and keep them balanced between being results-oriented *and* people-oriented. To choose one or the other falls into the Either/Or thinking distortion and leads to a life out of balanced.

Ask, “What have your leaders been coached on and what are they being coached on today?” A great many managers have been promoted to a level of incompetency. That’s common. Perhaps the person was fast-tracked into the current position because the organization needed someone to fill that role. But in the rush, the person really did not learn the lower level skills and knowledge and so now feels lost. As a result, deep inside the person feels like a fraud. But he can’t say that, not out loud. He has to put on a brave front of robust confidence even though he may be in over his head. She lives beyond a role, a persona, a mask and she feels trapped. Ask, “Have you been coached for the role that you have been assigned?” “Would you like to be?” “Would you like to

know that you know this role and the required skills so that you can feel comfortably confident that you know your stuff?”

Ask, “Are your leaders passionate about their role and place?” Sometimes a person has been burning the candle at both ends and now is just burned-out. He needs a break or a sense of renewed inspiration. Or perhaps, after stepping into her current role she realizes that it was not really a good fit and she would love to be doing something else. Again, this is not all that uncommon. Passion arises naturally and inevitably when you have a good synergy between your meanings (knowledge, values) and your actions (what you do).

Finally, there’s the principle of *walking your talk*. Any leader who wants those following to do something, experience something, learn something, etc., *and does not do it himself* is a leader who is not *leading*, but ordering. She is dictating, not showing the way. And whenever a leader doesn’t play by the same rules as those put upon others, there’s usually a breakdown of trust. Ask the leader, “Are you willing to go first and show the value of being coached?”

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #43**  
**October 23, 2024**  
***Corporate Coaching #5***

## **GETTING A LEADER TO GO INSIDE**

The idea of *going inside* lies at the very essence of coaching. Why is that? Because our focus is not primarily on behavior—the outer game, our focus is on the inner game of *meaning, understanding, values, intentions, identity, memories, imaginations, assumptions, thinking, etc.* It's the inner game that determines the outer game. Training focuses on the actual behavioral *skills* that a person needs to *do and perform* in order to succeed. But sometimes a person knows what to do, but just cannot get himself to do it. That's where coaching comes in.

In coaching, *we take a person inside to her inner world* of thoughts, emotions, memories, imaginations, etc. Why do we do that? Because it is *inside* where the decisions are made, the permissions are granted, and the intentions are set. It is *inside* in the person's belief structures that her inner world is put together and where she lives. If that inner world is well-designed and healthy, then going there and making a few adjustments in some of the meaning frames is a walk in the park.

But that inner world is not well-designed. If it is structured with limiting beliefs, decisions, identities, memories, imaginations, prohibitions, etc., then no matter how much you can “motivate” the external behavior using pain and pleasure, the person will never be very successful or productive. The inner world has to change and that's what the inner game is about—facilitating change on the inside.

But now we have a problem. Namely, most leaders and managers, most people who are movers and shakers, the people who get things done—are *externally oriented* in how they operate in the world. Mostly they do not look inside. They look outside. And that very trait which makes them so effective in the business world makes them very ineffective and unproductive in their inner world. They don't really know themselves—their inner selves. They know their roles, their status, their reputation, their job, etc. In fact, for many of them—*they are their roles and jobs.*

The problem you have with your client at this point is that of getting them to *go inside*. Many simply do not know how. Others have no experience in doing that. Some are scared to death about what they will find inside and so resist it with every fiber of their being. Yet others think going inside is psychological non-sense and gibberish, so they will not do it. How then do you get such clients to *go inside*?

You take them inside by asking them about their *inside world*—their beliefs, values, intentions, memories, etc. *And expect them to not go there!* Not at first. Expect that they will distract back to the outside world. As you do not let that deter you, you acknowledge what they say and bring them back to the inside world. As you do, *ask meta-questions.* And yes, at first they may indeed

not know what you are asking of them. So repeat the meta-question and help them to go there. Use your own disclosure as is appropriate.

Now, above all, be sure *to use your voice to induce the state that you are inviting them to go into*. This is where these externally-oriented leaders will often have very little experience with their own emotions, let alone the emotions of others. They are used to business conversations, not emotional personal conversations. Be patient and just keep taking them there. Be ruthlessly compassionate and challenge them to step up to be the leader that they can be.

When the leader starts apologizing for having an emotion, for a tear, for a deep feeling, etc., congratulate them. Say, “Welcome to the human race!” Sometimes you may have to directly address the prohibition frame that deep in the person’s mind that holds them back from being real. But you are then in the presence of authenticity being given birth. Acknowledge and celebrate that.

Once you achieve this, that leader will be able to more truly *lead the minds and hearts of those in the organization*. Treating people as objects, especially as replaceable parts, is a de-humanizing approach. Treating people as people—as human beings—is a compassionate and caring approach that earns the trust of those who follow. And with that, the organization can change for the better.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #44**  
**October 30, 2024**  
**Corporate Coaching #6**

## **BALANCING PROCESS AND RESULTS**

Here's something that you need as a coach and here's something that you need to coach the employees, managers, and leaders in an organization. What *balancing process and results* refers to is integrating two thinking styles. It seems that most people default primarily, and sometimes only, to *results-thinking*. They think about the end-product, about what they want, what they want to get, the money, prestige, and fame. Results-thinking is normal and good. It helps you get things done. It enables you to achieve your outcomes. This is strategic thinking.

But with too much *results-thinking* you become so *results-oriented* that you can hardly think of anything else. Now it's a problem. It's not uncommon that people become actually *addicted* to results-thinking. Senior managers, who are really good at this thinking style, often become addicted to it to such an extent that it ends up ruining their lives. If whatever they are doing does not immediately fit into getting a result, they consider it a waste of time. Everything is evaluated in terms of results, even family, relationships, etc. Consequently all of the really important things that are not urgent (Covey's Important and Urgent axes) are put off till later. In organizations leaders become so focused on the ROI numbers for each quarter that they cannot think long-term or about the inner quality of their products or their people.

The other thinking style is *process thinking*. This refers to focusing in on the actually *processes* that make something work. In NLP we talk about the strategy process that defines the *how-to knowledge* that leads to competency, mastery, or expertise. Now because every experience has a structure, a dynamic structure, a structure which involves actions—that structure is a *process structure*. It's what lies at the heart of every expertise and what we want to identify when we model experts.

Knowing that it is the *process* that leads to and creates the *results* enables us to say, "Trust the process." "If you work the process—it will deliver. It's just a matter of time and effort and patience." This means that if the process is a correct one, one that you can depend on—then regardless of the amount of delay there might be in the system, and how slow the results are in emerging—embrace and trust the process. This is true for losing weight, lifting weights for strength, developing the coaching sub-skills which make up the overall coaching skill, etc.

Two styles of thinking and yet most of us prefer one or the other. Which one do you prefer? Which one dominates your thinking the most? We all tend to default to one or the other. And once we become pretty good with either thinking style, we then use it as our go-to thinking style. And with that we become *unbalanced*—overly focus on one to the exclusion of the other. This leads to burn-out for the *results-oriented people* and it can lead to unproductivity for the *process-oriented people*.

Sometimes this also describes the conflict and/or misunderstanding between management and employees. If the manager is a *results thinker* and stays focused on the end-results most of the time, he or she will be mostly impatient with other managers who are *process thinkers* and especially with employees who focus more on the process than the end results.

Obviously, both are important. We need results thinking to establish our strategic outcome—our goals, and then we need process thinking for being able to reach those goals. A common misunderstanding by *results-oriented* managers is that sometimes the processes take a lot longer than we want them to. Things happen. Accidents occur. People get sick. Critical parts are delayed. Reports get misfiled. When that happens, if the manager pushes too hard, is too demanding and controlling, shows no human compassion or understanding—that lack of humanity makes the processes go even slower.

Another common failure is when employees are only giving information about the process and very little about the end-result, something other than the ROI for the company or the increased money for investors. What about the purpose? What about the overall intention of why we do what we do? The bottom line is that we need individually and in organizations to balance process and results thinking.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #45**  
**November 6, 2024**  
*Corporate Coaching #7*

## TRAIN THEN COACH

This is for those of you can not only are able to effectively coach, but who can also effectively train. The training you do may be NLP 101 or some aspect of effective communicating and/or it may be some of the over 60 manuals that make up the range of Neuro-Semantic Trainings. Or it could be some in-house training that the organization wants you to train or some customized training that you design. Regardless of what you train, in training you present valuable knowledge and skill development. That's good and important. Yet when you put training and coaching together as a combination, now you have a really powerful package.

You have a really powerful package because *information alone is not enough and will not make a truly significant difference*. It just will not. Even delivering the very best of information that there is, even that will not transform a person or an organization. That's because of the basic human dilemma that's we call the *Knowing-Doing Gap*. A person can *know* and not *do*. You can know something and know it very well, but that's no guarantee that you will *do* it. I can study and research and deep know—and still not implement that knowledge in real time at the very moment when it is needed.

Now why would I not? Why do you not? The answer to that is because of several factors. First and foremost is that you may have attained the *intellectual and conceptual knowledge* and you may not have the *know-how knowledge*. That occurs all the time. People intellectually learn about the skills of coaching at APMC, but then when it comes time to demonstrate empathy statements, framing, acknowledgments, etc., they simply do not know *how* to pull it off at the right time in the right way. Sad, but true.

The same holds for reading a book. You can read extensively into the field of Coaching, Business, Leadership, Marketing, Selling, etc. and intellectually *know a lot* **and** not be able to *do* what you know. Listening to a speaker, reading a book, talking through a process— none of that is *experiential learning*. It is good; it is valuable; it is a first step. But in the end, it is knowing in your mind and it is not *knowing-in-your-neurology* which allows you to actually *do* it.

That's why merely attending is only valuable if it is your first step, not your last step. That's why I say, "Forget all Certificates of Attendance." They prove nothing. They are worth nothing. So forget them. Instead, focus on what can actually begin the process of developing *experiential learning so that you can actually become skillful and competent*.

That's why measuring and assessing actual skills is actually the critical piece. That's why *real live experiential sessions* in which you practice in front of someone supervising and measuring (e.g., benchmarking) is the only way you are going to actually develop the skill. That's why the

*deliberate practices* that are occurring in Neuro-Semantics for the coaches and trainers are so important.

Do organizations understand this? No! At least the great majority of organizations do not. They are still under the delusion that if “information” is presented, then people have it. They are still blind to the fact of the knowing–doing gap. They falsely assume, “We gave them the training, so they know it.” This delusion and this fallacious thinking is what you need to expose when you talk to HR or managers in an organization. How do you do that?

Simple. Ask them, “Are there things that you have learned, perhaps in College, perhaps on a training, things that *if you were to put them into action would make you ten-times more effective?*” I have always received a resounding “Yes” to that question. Next ask, “**What** do you know about managing, leading, personal relationships, etc. that if you regularly and consistently *practiced* it would make a big difference in your life, in your management skills, in your leadership?”

It doesn’t take much to enable a person to *recognize* the knowing—doing gap. Just ask some personal questions! Just make it personal. “Do you know anything about health and fitness that if you could *get yourself to act on that knowledge* would make a tremendous difference in your life?” Follow that up with, “What would that be?”

Now you can introduce the idea of **Train, then Coach**. Now you can offer the *Training–Coaching* package. “I can offer a half-day training on effective communication via calibrating to a person’s state. Then I can offer two sessions of personal coaching so that each person will be able to actually do that with their teams.” That would be the first half-day of *Coaching Essentials*. Then you can do that with the other 5 half-days of *Coaching Essentials*.

Knowledge *without practice* is wonderful, inspiring, and (usually) worthless knowledge. In fact, sometimes it is worse than if they had not *learned* something. Why? How is that? Because some people, when they “know” something *automatically assume* that they can *do* it. And once they make that assumption, they have a false confidence which, in turn, prevents them from spending time practicing it.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus Promotion**  
**November 7, 2024**

## **An Untold Secret**

### **HOW TO COMPLETE ACMC**

I'm told that several people are asking, "How can I complete my ACMC and get fully signed off as a Meta-Coach?" Well there are several secrets and we have shared most of them. But one that we have not shared very frequently is the following: Study the Advance Skills.

Now why in the world would you study the advanced coaching skills (framing, coachable moment, challenge, pattern detection, strategy process, torpedo questioning, etc.) when you are still working on the basic coaching skills (listening, supporting, questioning, inducing state, etc.)? Well, that's the surprising secret! *When you study and embrace the advanced skills, it accelerates your learning of the basic skills.*

Now consider that. Why would that be so? Ah, the next hidden secret! *Because the advanced coaching skills include and presuppose the basic coaching skills.* Now how about that? The basic and advanced skills are all part of the same thing and not radically different. In fact, many who attend PCMC say things like, "Now I understand so much more about listening or meta-questioning!"

Would you like to accelerate your learning of the Meta-Coaching skills? Would you like to complete your ACMC training so that you can not only reach the competency level of the basic skills, but *perform at that level on a regular basis*? Then consider attending PCMC to get training in the advanced skills and to watch live and listen to coaching sessions and in the moment feedback. This means that not only does *PCMC complete ACMC*, it also means that *PCMC is a pathway to ACMC competency.*

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #46**  
**November 13, 2024**  
***Corporate Coaching #8***

## **PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT OR PRODUCTIVITY?**

When you train or coach inside of a company, every organization has their own *understandings* and *goals* about what they are striving to achieve. You will therefore want to find out. “What does this company want first and foremost—is it the personal development of the people who work there or is it being productive?” Obviously, every organization has to produce something, whether it is a product, a service, or information. And more than that, every organization will want to be highly *productive*. Each one will want to be the *most productive* in its industry.

Yet while it is great to set productivity as the immediate outcome, it is actually not very smart to do that. Shocking? Well, do you know why? The answer is actually pretty simple: *Healthy productivity is an outcome of people development*. After all, what enables people to produce, to be highly productive, and to rise up and produce the best? When they feel that they are valued and respected, and when they feel that their work is valued and respected.

Ah yes, we are back to the idea of *engagement*. And when it comes to engagement questionnaires, the best one that I have found from the Gallup organization focuses on *people*. It focuses on people feeling that they have the right tools and training, people feeling that those above them know them and care about them, people feeling like their work matters, etc. When the conditions for engagement are met in an organization, then people *want* to be there, *want* to do a good job, *want* to be part of a winning team, *want* to develop and grow. And that’s management’s job.

Yet sadly, a lot of people promoted to levels of supervising and/or managing do not seem to know that. Operating from a Theory-X view of human nature, they think they need to be more demanding about time and productivity, more commanding in style, and more strict about punishments. And while that might have worked in 1900; it does not work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Do you do your best work under those conditions? Almost no one does. I don’t. Ask managers and executive leaders, “Do you work best when under pressure, demands, threats and when you are not treated with respect?” For all leaders and managers, it is *people first, task second*. And that’s what has to change.

If you put people first, if you treat people with dignity and honor, if you believe in them, if you create a context that allows them to be at their best, you will have created a culture for high productivity. Otherwise, if you do not, then you will more than likely end up sacrificing people for numbers and trying to squeeze them for more productivity. And usually, you will get less productivity, lots of resentment, lots of resistance, and all of the problems that come along with

dis-engagement.

If you want people working for you in an organization who *put their heart and soul into their work*, you have to create a coaching or self-actualization culture. And that means putting people before profits, before ROI, and before this quarter's numbers. Is that completely the opposite of what organizations have traditionally done? Yes. And that's why your first coaching sessions will be the conversations you have with those who bring you in so that they understand this fundamental strategy.

Therefore set your objective to coach the managers and leaders about this. If you offer some training on engagement—what engages people to do their best, to be responsible, to collaborate, etc.—then coaching individuals or groups to make that happen will be an effective change initiative.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #47**  
**November 20, 2024**  
**Corporate Coaching #9**

## SHADOW COACHING

On the surface, when you watch someone engaged in *Shadow Coaching*, you may get the impression that whatever it is, it is not coaching. That's because at the heart of this kind of coaching, and its first stage, is observing. That's how shadow coaching works: first you intensely observe an individual or group, and then you report your observations. Yet these *observations* are not ordinary observations and not everyone has the skill to do this kind of observing. Similarly, the *reporting* of the observations also is not something people can just naturally do, they need to be trained.

### First, the Observations

When it comes to observing, the first question that arises is, "What are you observing?" You can't attempt to observe everything; that's impossible. Accordingly, you have a conversation with the person or group you are shadowing to identify an objective, then a criteria list, and then the specific behaviors to be observed.

If a leader wants to be more effective, ask, "What do you mean by effective? Effective in what context, with whom, and in what way?" Here you are coaching for a well-formed outcome, doing a clarity check and detailing the contexts. The leader says, "I want to be effective in running the board meetings and the meetings with the department heads." You ask, "What will being effective in those two contexts look like and sound like?" "How do you think you are currently doing?"

"I have gotten feedback that I'm impatient, don't listen very well, and sometimes railroad over people."

"Do you get that feedback in both meetings?"

"Yes, but mostly with the department heads."

"How do you express *impatience* in the meetings, what does that look like or sound like?"

"Well, this is kind of embarrassing; I get pissed when I have to repeat myself for a third time and I guess I speak quicker and that my voice is a bit harsh."

"Say that again, this time in a voice that's quicker and a bit harsh." [The leader does that.] "So that's what you want to stop doing?" [Yes.] "And what about your not listening very well. What would I see or hear if I heard that?"

"I don't know. I guess I would be looking away from you, checking my notes, that kind of thing."

Here you use a clarity coaching conversation to identify *what to observe* and the overall goal for the individual or group. You create a contract with the one or ones being observed so that they know why you are there and what you are paying attention to. When the time for observing comes, it's best for the leader to introduce the observer to the group and frame his or her presence. "Michael is with us today as an observer. He's here to observe me in my role so that I can improve my skills." Simple as that.

As a coach when you are observing, you meta-detail the overall goal with the specific behaviors. This kind of calibrating requires a lot of details, picking up on the words, the tones, the tempo of the speech, the posture, the state, etc. Here all of your foundational NLP skills in calibrating come into play. And to do that, you have to step out of any fear, worry, anxiety, etc. and into a state of “know-nothing” so that you can cleanly see and hear.

In terms of coaching, you are here *receiving feedback*. If you have been on the Assist Team at ACMC, you have been trained in *how to receive feedback* and how to record it so that you can later deliver it to the person. When you do this, take extensive notes, but by all means, do not bury your head in your book or notes. Keep your eyes on the person or the group. You will want to develop some shorthand notes so that you can record everything and you may want to make an audio or video recording as well.

### **Second, the Reporting**

When the session is over, and before you report to the person or group, first do some self-reporting. Review your notes and take some time to *reflect* on what you’ve experienced. Ideally you have a lot of specific notes. Now you need to *step back* and consider the overall effect of the person (or group). What did you feel? What do you guess others felt? How did he come across?

In terms of coaching, you are now preparing to *give feedback*. Here you need to give sensory-based feedback, relevant to the outcome, with rapport with the person, and feedback that is actionable. The more you rehearse the seven criteria for effective feedback in your ACMC manual, the better. Now giving feedback is an inter-personal relationship that should always be in service of the person. That’s why you need to establish rapport, access your belief in the person, his positive intention of improving, his ability to change and grow, and calibrate to his thinking and emoting how best to deliver the feedback.

Be careful not to overwhelm the person. Present one thing at a time. And in a feedback session, maybe three things. I think it’s good to start with some low hanging fruit, something you know the person already knows about him or herself. Focus on that with recommendations for next steps for improving.

When you need to bring up things that will challenge the person, or upset him, or even expose a blindspot that may violate her sense of self, make sure the person is in a state to receive it. Then set frames that will help to reframe some problematic behavior. Also, lead with questions rather than statements. “You did X, I’m wondering about your positive intention—what you were trying to do that would be good for you or the other?” Here you will be engaged in a confrontation coaching conversation or a conflict-resolution coaching conversation.

### **Third, Let the Coaching Begin**

After the feedback, the coaching can begin. If you are observing a single person, you may now establish a contract for Executive Coaching; with a group, you may set up multiple sessions with each member and that may extend for half a year or a full year.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #48**  
**November 27, 2024**  
***Corporate Coaching #10***

## **GROUP & TEAM COACHING**

Today, *Group and Team Coaching* is the fastest growing coaching speciality. Organizations have discovered the value of getting groups, departments, boards, committees, etc. to learn how to work together in a cohesive and effective way. An organization is a group of people working together to create a product or service. It also uses groups of people to run the many different functions in the organization.

Yet merely putting a bunch of people together in a department or division does not guarantee that they will now know how to work together effectively. Each may very well be trained in the skills that they need to do the work, but are they also skilled in the inter-personal and relational skills needed to work together as a team? This is equally true of the board of directors and of the leadership team made up of the heads of the departments. Do they know *how to work together as an effective team?*

The general answer for organizations and corporates is “no.” No they do not know how to effectively work as an effective work group, let alone a team. Actually it is worse than that. Most often, instead of working together, there is in-house politics wherein there’s competition between the departments, competition for power, status, financial resources, etc. People keep secrets, hold information close to their chests, and intentionally work against each other.

Patrick Lencioni, perhaps the foremost authority on groups and teams, writes in *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (2002) that foundational to ineffectiveness in groups is *absence of trust*, then that leads to *fear of conflict*, and with that fear, then *lack of commitment*, *avoidance of accountability*, which all come together to create *inattention to results*. Not good! Talk about organizational problems!

In Neuro-Semantics, our *Group and Team Coaching* training builds on the ACMC training and focuses on achieving groups of people who can *think together*. Then when people can consider and question and explore diverse thoughts, they can *learn together*. That, in turn, enables them to be a “learning organization,” and out of that can make *decisions together*. That is, they can make solid, smart, and well-thought out decisions without the usual politics and power plays. And from that comes the last step, they can *act together*. That’s what makes them a truly effective team.

When you coach a group in an organization, you will want to spend time with the group leader to understand the history and make-up of the group. What does the group leader think about the group, what’s working well and what is not? You will want to find out what the group thinks of the leader. This background enables you to know *who* you are dealing with and to begin to recognize the group’s meta-programs.

With any and every group, you'll begin as you do with any coaching session— facilitate the creation of a well-formed outcome that each member of the group can own. Question-3 will help to invigorate the group as each person sees the importance of the goal/s. Question-7 helps to identify what they need to do to get what they want. Questions-11 to 13 focuses on the group's plan/ strategy and Question-14 the interferences that have to be addressed.

Ultimately, the key to having an effective group goes to how it functions in terms of communicating and relating. Paradoxically, more important than the outcome and the results is the *quality of the communicating and relating*. That's why lack of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability— are all issues and questions about *relationships*. So in group and team coaching, the focus first of all is on *who we are with each other*, and secondly on how to get ourselves to work together to achieve the results.

Group and team coaching is a different kind of coaching in that it is more facilitating than coaching. You facilitate people to *think together, learn together, and then decide together*. Only after that, can people truly *work together*. With a well-developed group, people can have vigorous conversations and even robust debates in a context of respect.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #49**  
**December 4, 2024**  
***Corporate Coaching #11***

## **COACHING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**

It is not new that organizations change, that many (if not most) organizations need to change, and that most organizations which attempt to change—do not. Welcome to the subject of organizational change. As a coach, if you think *individual* change is challenging enough, consider *changing an organization*. That's a much bigger challenge! And it is a challenge that most organizations fail at. Why is that? And what can be done about that?

As individuals get ideas in their heads and then actualize those ideas in behaviors and then those behaviors are repeated often enough that they drop out of consciousness and become automatic programs, so it is with organizations. And as individuals do not like to discover that they have been wrong, mistaken, deceived, or in error and when that happens, they feel threatened and become defensive, so also organizations. Nothing new here; same psychological principles are at work.

Yet there are some differences. At least with individuals, the consequences of erroneous ideas and limiting beliefs lead immediately to bad decisions which lead to unpleasant states (fear, anger, dread, guilt, shame, etc.), and then to non-productive or hurtful behaviors. That's good. Why? Because the person will, at least, have to confront the consequences. And the more immediate, the more intense, and the more critical the consequences—the greater the desire to change. It's a moving away-from desire, but at least the person *wants to change*.

With organizations, consequences are not so personal, not so much “in one's face,” and not so immediate. With organizations, sometimes it takes years, even decades for an erroneous business model with its limiting understandings and beliefs to reap a harvest. In the meantime, top leaders may change; management may adopt a new paradigm, creative use of money and resources may occur ... all of which leads to people *not knowing and not feeling the need to change*.

Further, just as individuals become defensive and can invent creative *defensive styles*, so can organizations. Both can and do use rationalization, denial, blame, shifting of responsibility, lack of accountability, creating undiscussables (“elephants in the room”), hiding behind PR masks and personas, and on and on. The problems that arise from all of this in organizations include a wide range of things that undermine the effectiveness of the organization:

- Accusations of being hypocritical: saying one thing; doing another.
- Extensive “explanations” (rationalizations) about why a project failed.
- Difficulty in leaders and managers (the leadership team) being honest and candid.
- Hidden insults, sarcasm, criticisms, etc. instead of honesty.
- Talking for hours (months) around an issue without making a decision.

- Not actually listening to the ideas of each other or asking for ideas from employees.
- Stubborn refusal to ever admit to a mistake or that something went wrong.
- Silo competition between departments, each one treating the others as the enemy.
- People bad-mouthing each other privately.
- Withhold information thinking “information is power.”
- Delegation by ordering, telling, commanding instead of showing and mentoring.
- Anything “not invented here” immediately dismissed.
- Bad news does not travel upward out of fear of reprisal.

While obviously these are the things that have to change, these are also the very behaviors and attitudes the *prevent change*. They are part of what we call a *defensive system or routine*. And probably every coach who has worked inside of businesses and corporates know all of these far too well. In terms of *the change question*—what can we do? How can we coach for corporate change?

In an organization, you are *not* dealing with a single mind or personality. You are dealing with a *collective mind* and a multiple-personality. That adds another layer of challenge and difficulty. And that’s why the answer is not: “Change must be top-down, so start at the top.” Nor is that answer: “Change must be bottom-up, so start at the bottom.” Instead, *effective organizational change must be both top-down and bottom-up.*”

Top leaders who want you to coach the employees, the front-line people, or a particular department tend to think of change as something *external* which they can order by a decision, and then you, as the coach, will “make it so.” But change is *internal*. It is *inside-out* and it comes when a person begins to think differently, talk differently, relate different, and act differently. So top leaders have to go first and *be the change* that they want to initiate. They need to *personally experience it* and so be true ‘leaders,’ *leading* the way.

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
**2024 Morpheus #50**  
**December 19, 2024**  
**Corporate Coaching #12**

## **THE CHALLENGE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**

In the previous article (Morpheus #49) I provided a short description of what it means to coach *organizational change* and I briefly contrasted that with individual change. I also ended that article by noting this: *Effective organizational change must be both top-down and bottom-up.* And that's one of the great challenges of coaching, training, consulting and/or facilitating organizational change.

A lot needs to be done *at the beginning* in order for it to succeed. I think that because organizational change is typically not well planned and not well framed—that's why it most often fails. It takes a lot more than giving a rousing presentation to HR or to the Board. Inspiration or excitement alone will not be sufficient to carry out legitimate and lasting change.

Here's the *bad news*. Statistically, the news about organizational change is not good. Only 20 to 30% of "change initiatives" within organizations succeed. That means that nearly 80% of all attempts to introduce change into organizations fail. **80%! [Taking Charge of Change, Douglas Smith, 1996]**

There have been (and are today) dozens and dozens of initiatives: reengineering, total quality management, management by objectives, core competencies, matrix management, teamwork, downsizing, flattening the organization, empowerment, strategies, making the custom the CEO, 360 feedback, employees as associates, acquisitions and mergers, best practices, time management, Six Sigma, learning organization, vision and mission development, just-in-time inventory, communication training, coaching, continuous improvement, supplier partnering, etc.

Wow! A lot of different kinds of organizational change programs have been invented and tried. So what's the problem? The problem is *not* that these are poor or bad attempts at change, not at all. Most of them are good programs, decent attempts at change. The problem is that *they are mostly partial*. While they do address *some* aspects of organizational change, they do not address change as a whole. Sometimes they are offered as a quick-fix which then only exacerbates the problems.

Here is what I wrote in our Training manual which is titled *Organizational Change: Coaching Organizations for Lasting Change*. I started with this because so many change programs aim at merely changing behavior. And while that is the ultimate aim, the merely behavioral approach does not work, especially long-term. What does? We have to go, as we say in Neuro-Semantics, for the heart of things—the *understandings and meanings that people hold in mind*.

## **The Target of “Change” — The Actual Change We’re After**

What we are *seeking to change is ourselves*—how we think, what we believe, how we interact with each other, how we feel, etc. That’s because the organization is *us—all of us*—leaders and employees, suppliers and sales people. Yet the new strategy will not work we change our behavior. Most initiatives require that 65% of front-line employees make a significant change.

“If you’re leading people ... you are probably trying to get them to *do* something different. ...

When you execute a strategy that requires a lasting change in the behavior of other people, you are facing one of the greatest leadership challenges you will ever meet.” (*The 4 Disciplines of Execution*, 2012, p. 3)

Changing procedures, rules, teams, managers, etc. is external change—*real change is internal*. If the people who need to do something different aren’t sure about the change, don’t know the goal, aren’t committed to it, don’t believe in it, don’t see the value in it for themselves—it will not happen. It can’t. Without personal involvement from everyone, from the top to the bottom, we can’t create high quality change and commitment that execution requires.

This is what most leaders don’t understand. This is *the hidden human element of organizations* that most trainers and coaches do not know how to fully address. Yet it must be addressed. And when it starts with the top leaders, then a new paradigm of change can be introduced, a paradigm of change that will mean an *inside-out approach involving every member of the organization*. This is not a quick-fix. It will not occur in a weekend training, nor even in a six-months training program. Instead, think in terms of 3 to 5 years. Did I say it was a challenge?

**From: L. Michael Hall**  
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## **ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE BY WAY OF BETTER THINKING**

Let's make a really deep dive into the structure of organizational problems. We can classify corporate problems in numerous terms—system problems, communication problems, skills problems, character (personality) problems, inter-personal relational problems, financial problems, market problems, research and development problems, stress problems, and on and on. And what lies underneath as even more fundamental? What lies above as the over-arching frames for these problems?

The answer is astonishingly simple—*thinking*. And that goes back to an age-long concept, namely, *As you think—so you are*. Your thinking leads to how you build systems, communicate, understand and practice skills, how you experience yourself, how you relate to others, etc. What then causes dysfunctions in organizations? Our *patterns of thinking* and especially, *our cognitive distortions and biases*.

Chris Argyris, one of the great thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and theorists about organizational development wrote a book on *thinking problems*. But he didn't call it that. In his book, *Knowledge For Action: A Guide to Overcoming Barriers to Organizational Change* (1993) he described the barriers as derived from people's "theory-in-use." And what is a *theory-in-use*? It is your actual *way of acting*—how you behave, relate, talk, interact, etc. He contrasted this with your *espoused-theory*—how you consciously think about things and what you consciously know.

In Neuro-Semantics we call *espoused theory* your beliefs, understandings, values, intentions, etc. which make up the "model of the world" that arises from your adult thinking. The *theory-in-use* is the "model of the world" that you have learned over the years of your life and which is so well integrated that it is now your automatic, unconscious, and unthinking *way of being in the world*.

The problem is that your *theory-in-use* model of the world is full of cognitive distortions and biases. And it stays that way until you update it with more adult thinking patterns. This is what we do when we teach the Meta-Model, when we correct cognitive distortions, when we opt for the most useful meta-program, and when we learn to *Thinking for Humans*.

Now in Argyris' work, he names these barriers to organizational change as "the defensive organizational routines" that we (the managers, leaders, etc.) have learned and fall back on. These include blaming, exaggerating, bypassing, covering-up, selective perceptions, wishful thinking, creation of undiscussables, empire building, building sub-coalitions, credit seeking, self-sealing responses, fear of confrontation, fear of hurting someone's feelings, fear of upsetting the status

quo, etc. Ah yes, *the cognitive distortions!*

And where do these defensive routines occur? In our conversations! Argyris writes, “Conversation is central to understanding reality and operating effectively within it.” (1993, 67). And of course, that highlights the importance of the words we use in our languaging.

“Without the right words, used in the right way, “it is unlikely that the right actions will occur. Words do matter ... they matter very much.” (P. 300-1, 1992, Eccles and Nohria.)

He especially warns about three thinking and communicating patterns: advocating without giving examples, evaluating without allowing the evaluation to be tested, and attributing without feedback. While each is important and valuable in and of itself, when it is over-played, it becomes a major problem.

- In *advocating* you present, you tell, you command, you order, but if you don’t reveal your thinking, how you came to your conclusions, the examples you can point to—your advocating is manipulative and controlling.
- In *evaluating*, you share your opinion, your judgment, your values, but if you don’t allow it to be tested, then it comes from a judgmental state and feels as hurtful and imposing.
- In *attributing*, you are identifying how you experience someone in the relationship, but if you don’t let them offer feedback and accept their self-attributions, then you are imposing your judgment of them. These are the things that undermine effective communication in organizations.

Organizations, just like individuals, *live and operate by the kind and quality of thinking* that’s being produced. Do you want to train and/or coach for corporate change? Do you want to facilitate an organizational change? *Go after the thinking!* Introduce Brain Camp I: *Thinking for Humans*. Then Brain Camp II: *Executive Learning*. Then Brain Camp III: *Executive Decision-Making*. When you do that, you address the heart of the matter and go after the critical factors that make and break success.

