

Sexy Variables and the change process.

I've enjoyed my business as a psychologist for the last 6 years. I remember starting off thinking I could never run a successful business. I then thought what I could do though is run an unsuccessful business, so I did. Gradually change came about. I developed more confidence, more clients, more belief in my own ability, now as an occupational psychologist specialising in stress management, I look back and ponder about the changes that occurred.

One night I asked my wife whether she thought I had changed over the 18 years she had known me. She told me, quite quickly and in definite tones "yes, you are more relaxed and you think of other people more". I rolled over in bed, concealing a satisfied smile, "good karma for a psychologist" I thought!

At present I specialise in one to one work and the question I asked myself and the answers I came up with is what this article is about.

Dog on lap, gazing out over the pond in our garden I asked "Bruce, when you evaluate at 6 months why have some of your clients experienced fantastic change, some moderate change and a few very little change at all?"

The answer Bruce came up with took a little time to surface, but it crystallized in a framework of 6 C's.

The unashamed use of sex is to first of all get your attention and secondly if you find what you read here useful, to act as a mnemonic so you can check **your** 6 C's are in place when **you** decide **you** want a change.

CLARITY.

I believed that one variable successful clients demonstrated when they were with me was a capacity to generate very clear representations about what their outcome was. This is simple TOTE (Miller et al. 1960) and an operationalisation of Bandura's self-efficacy-expectation model (in Dilts 1990) however it is more. Clarity is not just a picture of what your outcome is, it is clarity about the tonality of your voice in the future, it is clarity about how you will feel internally in the future, it is clarity about specifically when in the future this outcome will be realised, it is clarity about your internal dialogue at that time, it is clarity about your perceptual positioning as you realise your outcome, it is clarity about your new identity at this time in the future and the beliefs, behaviours and interactions which accompany such an identity. I think you get the idea! Logical levels, perceptual positioning, time line, sub-modalities, systems thinking, the works. To assist a client obtain such clarity took time, but what seemed to separate them from others was they were willing to work with me to obtain such clarity. They were also willing to "come to their senses" and in an honest way develop a clarity of sensory evidence that, in the present, provided them with the starting point for their journey of change.

Another important differentiation around this dimension is that between clarity and fantasy. Many became stuck in the change process because they confused clarity with an internal representation which was the inane product of some P.R. or Marketing executive; they then believed "they could never live up to such an image". Of course they couldn't the "image" was an archetypal fiction.

CLIMATE.

Phyllis Alden (1998), when writing about 4 of her own cases where she facilitated almost instant change (2 phobias, excessive fear, and state management) spoke of being struck at how quickly patients responded to treatment for a needle phobia when they had an imminent injection and how slowly they responded when didn't. Other types of imminence were present in all of her 4 cases and for Phyllis Alden **significantly** a factor in such "magical" change.

One of the answers Bruce came up with, as he wandered into the kitchen to make a cup of tea, was when the time was right, (imminent), for a client to change that was the time they were more likely to change.

Stephen Brooks (1992) suggested when clients generated excuses for explaining why they can't change the person helping them should investigate their secondary gains more closely. When the time was right, Bruce believed the client would be much less inclined to come up with the types of excuses Stephen talks of. They would be more motivated to work with the helper. Conversely when there was slack in the time line, secondary gains would work their own brand of black magic.

One does not need to deal with a needle phobia 6 months before one is exposed to a needle. However the closer one gets to one's holiday the greater the need to deal with the phobia. The closer one gets to needing an injection the more the psychological climate for the individual changes. It is at the time when the psychological climate is relevant to the individuals needs the likelihood of change is greater. I think often times come in the lives of individuals when they know they have to make a life moulding change. At that time they either change, or they remain the same, making excuses for the rest of their life, as to why at that time they could not change.

CAPABILITY.

One of the operating principle of NLP is when we successfully model the strategies of another human being we obtain the same results as them. Type theory comes from a slightly different angle though. However extensive our efforts to model Meta-Programs, if we do not **naturally** possess that program our implementation of the model will be flawed. Type theory believes that the meta programs we run are formed at such an early stage in our life that some even accredit them with a genetic aetiology. When running Myers Brigg Type indicator (MBTI) workshops a favourite ice breaking exercise is to ask participants to sign their name with their preferred hand and then describe the feeling. Often comments like, easy, natural, fluent, normal, arise. The same participants are then asked to sign their name with their other hand. Afterwards such descriptions as clumsy, childlike, awkward, embarrassing are offered as descriptions of the latter experience. The delegates have a **capability** to write more effectively with their dominant hand. However much they practice with their inferior hand they will always be more **capable** in the use of the dominant hand. Type theory says if you are an extravert, you will always be an extravert. The stretch is in developing your introverted attitude so you can benefit from the beliefs, strategies and behaviours that such a Meta programme provides on the appropriate occasions. However a **natural** introvert will always be a better introvert than an extrovert with well-developed introverted attitude.

An interesting piece of research (Brown et al 1998) tested the hypothesis that an everyday preference for holistic and emotional thought is related to the ability to enter

hypnosis. The research did indeed find a significant relationship between the two experimental variables. This supported the existing evidence that high susceptibles experience their emotions more strongly than lows do, (Crawford et al 1987) and that hypnosis is characterised by an increase in emotionality (Crawford et al 1989).

This also supported the gut feeling Bruce had about his successful clients. They appeared to be clients who either naturally or because of personal development had well developed “Feeling” functions. In looking over client notes it became clear many clients returned a “Thinking” function preference after filling out a questionnaire. However what was apparent, about the successful ones was in getting to know them they appeared to be quite happy in a one to one context to bring to their emotional selves to the conscious mind. They didn’t use their “Thinking” function to deny their own emotional realities.

As NLPers, another operating belief is there are no resistant clients, only ineffective therapists. I buy into that one, however during his transderivational search Bruce began to believe that certain people do have capabilities which facilitate change, a well developed feeling function was just one of those more subtle capabilities.

CONGRUENCE.

I guess this is when all the planets, or logical levels line up. The dog jumped back up onto Bruce’s lap as he continued, automaton like pondering this interesting question. A few weeks had passed and the dog was evidently enjoying the new routine. Although Bruce believed these 6.C’s were discrete, he also believed they were to an extent interdependent. Congruence was somehow rooted in the present and was related to Climate. The interesting character that introduced him / her self at this stage of the proceedings was the “hidden observer”. The first evidence of the hidden observer to Ernest Hilgard was in a classroom demonstration of hypnotic deafness (Hilgard 1986). After a successful demonstration, one astute student asked whether some “other part” of the participant might in fact be able to hear the sounds being made close to the participant’s head, who was blind. After various procedures it transpired there was, and this “part” was obviously dissociated from conscious awareness. This is the same “part” who, if you are made hypnotically blind will take you around a chair placed in the middle of the room, when requested to walk from one side to another.

Often people who want to change have been thinking about it for some time. However it is as though there is some much deeper part of them, a wiser part, who knows it is not time. If one cannot obtain a congruence signal around clear outcomes, change will be difficult. The helper is up against the force, a force older, wiser and more knowledgeable than he or she.

In the above experiments even though at a conscious level the participant was not aware of very loud noise (blocks of wood being banged together close to the head), a chair in the middle of the room, the deeper more primitive part was. In assisting change it is this part with whom we need to negotiate.

The “hidden observer” is not the only character that resides in the unconscious mind, so too are the implicit emotional memories of the amygdala (LeDoux 1996) that are triggered by innervations from the sensory thalamus. These memories bring with them a host of beliefs and strategies, often emotionally charged and limiting, which are used to personally interpret our world. These filters help create our personal map. Unless the beliefs generated in this area are modified so as to become successfully aligned with the beliefs necessary to implement the outcome represented at a

conscious level, change will not occur. Those who changed were those who developed a very good congruence signal in these deep areas when thinking about their clear outcome in the future.

CONFIDENCE.

“Daddy, I’m home”. Ok times up. Both the dog and me will need to wait until tomorrow till we tackle this one.

Contrasted with Congruence, as the crystal formed, this variable appeared to be oriented towards the future and related to Capability and Clarity. I think this is where NLP comes into it’s own. Many clients are congruent, they want to change, they know, at a deeper level, what they want to change into, but they drop their heads, “ I just cant see it”. They don’t BELIEVE IT.

As mentioned above a requisite for the capability variable is the capacity to either have certain abilities or to put in the effort to develop them. A well developed feeling function being just one of these abilities. The reason NLP comes into it’s own here, is that it provides such a rich tool box to assist clients, or individuals by themselves, develop the cognitive and emotional flexibility to experience what it is like to be the person they wish to be. Some clients appeared to warm enthusiastically to the NLP paradigm others did not. Those who did, as they worked with the tools, slowly developed the **confidence** they needed to change their capacity to change into the people they wish to be. They slowly began to change not just their perceptions as they began to model their new reality, but their whole existence and experience of life. At each of Dilt’s logical levels there developed a brighter and more **confident** existence and experience of life.

I thought about Carl Rogers at this time. He said: "no approach which relies upon knowlege, upon training, upon the acceptance of something that is taught, is of any use." (Carl Rogers.1992). NLP change techniques in my experience work well and are powerful, however there is clearly another argument that says it is only “quick fix” and not sufficiently integrated into the psychological and social systems that help create the reality of the individual.

This paradox brought me to my final C. The dog moved position; I used that as a cue to not feel guilty about making myself another cup of tea.

COMMITMENT.

Sure one to one work does work like magic. Besides the “magic” being attributed to imminence by Phyllis Alden there was also, expectancy, relaxation, distraction, and finally “helpful attributions / adaptive cognitive changes”. The dog looked at me, “isn’t that the same as context and content reframe?” (Smart Dog!) The psychological variables which need to be in place for a successful hypnotic intervention are similarly multitudinous; motivation, relaxation, imagination, absorption, expectancies, attitude, belief, concentration, suggestibility, placebo effects, selective attention, stress reactions, role enactment and compliance.(Wagstaff 1998). The dog’s had enough; she jumped off my lap and snuggled up in the basket under the stairs!

However what happens when for one reason or other some of these “necessaries” are not in place. The answer Bruce came up with was commitment. Motivation, which drives commitment, provides us with the energy to move from one reality to another.

Bruce somehow believed if any variable was equally related to all the others it would be this one. If I could get my client to obtain a bit of clarity, a bit of confidence, a bit of congruence, a bit of capability, if the time was right, **that** would generate the motivation providing the commitment to put the 6 C's fully in place using NLP and providing lasting change.

Often I think of the magical change that Erickson would produce in clients, but on reading some of his papers I become amazed at the commitment both he and his experimental subjects had to the change process. In order to produce some changes his subjects underwent 8 hours hypnotic training before any attempt to use hypnosis was made. Even then Erickson said it was desirable that a slow induction of up to 30 minutes was desirable. Without this commitment Erickson believed that the appropriate "mental set" which was the foundation for altered perception was not possible. (Rossi 1980).

Professor John Gailbraith said "Given the choice between changing and proving that change is not necessary, most people get busy on the proof". (The Therapist 1995).

If you think change is not necessary in your life, GREAT. But be aware of Festinger's (1957) concept of cognitive dissonance. As humans we exist at many levels, our conscious representation is only one of them, the product of many other levels. If we have conflict in our life there will be a pressure to reach consonance. For instance a smoker may have the belief "smoking causes cancer" and another belief "I smoke". This puts our smoker in a dissonant position. They need to resolve this. Maybe the best way is to stop smoking, (20,000 in the U.K. do every year!) However many do not and they reach consonance by attitude change. So rather than changing behaviourally they will change cognitively and develop a belief that for some reason they will be immune to cancer.

Very often the cognitive and emotional drive for consonance in a similar way to the effects of secondary gains prevent the desired change at the deeper levels of our existence. The consequences of both secondary gain and cognitive dissonance is that humans are not rational creatures but rationalizing creatures. I think that much of what Professor Gailbraith is talking about is a function of the rationalisation process and does not represent the most effective use of the "human computer".

The purpose of my life is to, in a Rogerian way, actualise the reality of the deeper levels of my existence and not to make excuses at a conscious level.

The purpose of my dog's life is to have her next meal and bark at people who come to the door.

What is the purpose of your life? If it is change towards a more desirable future which expresses your deeper values and beliefs more effectively make sure you access a very 6.C. state, enjoy the journey!

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