“Tompkins and Lawley have written a book that provides people with a tool for profound analysis and insight. The use of metaphors as a means of evaluating how you order your world, your relationships, your occupation, and interpret the experiences of your life is invaluable. This book should be read by everyone who has an interest in expanding their awareness of why they say the things they do, and discovering how the "contents" of their lives are sources of empowerment.”

**Caroline Myss**, Ph.D., best selling author of *Sacred Contracts, Anatomy of the Spirit* and *Why People Don't Heal*.

“*Metaphors in Mind* presents a broad integration of deep perspectives about helping people learn how to facilitate their own creativity in solving their own problems in their own way. Well done!”

**Ernest Rossi**, Ph.D., author of *Dreams, Consciousness & Spirit, The Symptom Path to Enlightenment* and *The Psychobiology of Mind-Body Healing*

“I have tremendous admiration for the innovative work they have developed. I congratulate Penny and James on completing this valuable book. A richly stimulating text that gently escorts the reader on a captivating journey. Be prepared for this book to launch you on a personal journey of change and development. The parade of thought provoking concepts, stories and challenges contained within will provide a reliable travelling companion to accompany you along the way.”

**David Grove**, MS., author of *Resolving Traumatic Memories*. 
Three Domains of Experience

It is useful to make distinctions between different aspects of our experience. Our research shows that there are three fundamental ways of making sense of the world: Sensory, Conceptual and Symbolic. Each of these domains has its own purpose, logic and type of language.

Sensory
People know about the environment, the material world, the behaviour of others and themselves through seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting; and by their emotions and other feelings of orientation, movement, balance and position. People also create pictures, sounds and feelings with their imagination when they remember a past event or imagine a future event.

Conceptual
All categories, comparisons, beliefs and judgments are constructs of the human mind. They only exist as abstract concepts. While all of us have experienced being part of a group of related people, no one has ever touched the concept ‘family’. Concepts are a different order of reality from sensing or imagining the material world. Concepts are labels for complex gestalts of experience.

Symbolic
A number of philosophers, linguists and cognitive scientists claim that much, if not most, everyday language and thinking is neither sensory nor conceptual, but is actually metaphoric (Edleman, Janes, Johnson, Lakoff, Leary, Pinker). Metaphors allow people to express and give form to complex feelings, behaviour, situations and abstract concepts in a way that conveys some of the original experience. To do this, most metaphors make use of the sensory-material world to describe, comprehend and reason about the conceptual and abstract.

There have been few ways to work directly with the symbolic nature and metaphoric content of our experience—until David Grove developed Clean Language.
David J. Grove

David Grove is a New Zealander whose unique psychotherapeutic approach, experience and style make him one of today's most skilful and innovative therapists.

In the 1980s he developed clinical methods for resolving clients’ traumatic memories, especially those related to child abuse, rape and incest. He realised many clients naturally described their symptoms in metaphor, and found that when he enquired about these using their exact words, their perception of the trauma began to change. This led him to create Clean Language, a way of asking questions of clients' metaphors which neither contaminate nor distort them.

Initially David Grove specialised in ‘healing the wounded child within’. These days his interests have widened to include nonverbal behaviour, perceptual space and inter-generational healing. He is constantly developing new ideas and creative methods which continue to fascinate and inspire us.

Modelling
To model David Grove we observed him working with clients (including ourselves) and spent hour after hour poring over recordings and transcripts. We looked for patterns in the relationship between what he was doing and the way clients responded that contributed to the changes they experienced. We combined these patterns into a generalised model which was tested and fine tuned—cycling through observation, pattern detection, model construction, testing and revising many times.

While our model is based on David Grove's work and incorporates many of his ideas, he has a different way of describing his approach. Our model was derived more from our observation of him in action than from his explanation of what he does. It was also shaped by our desire for others to learn the process easily and for it to apply to a range of contexts in addition to psychotherapy.

Although we have employed many of David Grove's ideas, we have also drawn upon cognitive linguistics, self-organising systems theory, evolutionary dynamics and NLP. Our four year modelling project of David Grove has led to a new domain of “the study of the structure of subjective experience” (Bandler & Grinder) called Symbolic Modelling. The results are fully described in our book, Metaphors in Mind: Transformation through Symbolic Modelling.
Symbolic Modelling in a Nutshell

Symbolic Modelling is a method for facilitating individuals to become familiar with the symbolic domain of their experience. It uses Clean Language to facilitate them to attend to their metaphoric expressions so that they create a model of their symbolic mindbody perceptions. This model exists as a living, breathing, four-dimensional world—within and around them.

In a therapy setting, when clients explore their symbolic world and its inherent logic, their metaphors and way of being are honoured. During this process their metaphors begin to evolve. As this happens and they discover new ways of perceiving themselves and their world, their everyday thinking, feeling and behaviour correspondingly change as well.

Symbolic Modelling is also being applied in education, health, the spiritual realm, in business, organisations and many other areas.

Components

The components of Symbolic Modelling—metaphor, modelling and Clean Language—can be used in three ways: to model successful strategies and states of excellence, to facilitate change, and to facilitate individuals and groups to create new metaphors. The components can be applied individually or all together; and can be used in conjunction with other methodologies.

Three ways of applying the components of Symbolic Modelling

© 2003, extract from Metaphors in Mind by James Lawley and Penny Tompkins
www.cleanlanguage.co.uk
Metaphor and Symbol Defined

Yes, metaphor. That's how this whole fabric of mental interconnections holds together. Metaphor is right at the bottom of being alive.
Gregory Bateson

Metaphor
George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s innovative and mind-expanding book, Metaphors We Live By, says:

The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.

Metaphor captures the intangible, the relationships and patterns, and the essential nature of an experience. Lakoff and Johnson’s definition allows for metaphors to be expressed nonverbally, by objects and as imaginative representations. Thus whatever a person says, sees, hears, feels, does or imagines has the potential to be an autogenic, self-generated metaphor.

Because a metaphor describes one experience in terms of another, it specifies and constrains ways of thinking and behaving—which is why people so consistently do what they do.

Symbols
A metaphor is an expression which is itself comprised of a number of inter-relating components which we call symbols. For example, “I feel like my back is pinned against a wall” refers to three symbols (I, my back, a wall), with a fourth (whatever or whoever is doing the pinning) being implied. In Symbolic Modelling we are interested in the personal and idiosyncratic nature of a person’s symbols as this is what gives them a sense of self and connects them to their history, their future, and the ‘larger system’.

Isomorphism
Metaphors correspond isomorphically to the original experience they are describing: although the form of a metaphor is different to the original experience, it has a similar organisation. This means the attributes of its symbols, the relationships and the logic of the whole, match the organisation of what is being described. When people comprehend a metaphor, it is their intrinsic ability to recognise and utilise isomorphism that allows them to infer the organisation of the original experience from the metaphor. Isomorphism is, what Gregory Bateson calls, “the pattern which connects” two different kinds of things.
The magic of metaphor

Having facilitated hundreds of people to explore their metaphors, we know that metaphor can heal, transform and enrich lives. Why is this? Why does metaphor’s efficacy verge on magic? Why is metaphor such a universal tool for description, comprehension and explanation? How is it that metaphor produces such novel perspectives?

Andrew Ortony points to three remarkable properties of metaphors: inexpressibility, vividness and compactness. Put simply, because metaphors embody that “something vague, unknown or hidden” (Jung), they give form to the inexpressible. Because they make use of everyday concrete things to illustrate intangible, complex and relational aspects of life, they are vivid and memorable. And because of isomorphism, only the essence of an experience needs to be captured; the rest can be reconstructed from inferential knowledge. In short, metaphors carry a great deal of information in a compact and memorable package.

There is a fourth vital property of metaphor and it is the one which most impacts people’s lives. A metaphor describes one experience in terms of another, and in so doing it specifies and constrains ways of thinking about the original experience. This influences the meaning and importance of the experience, the way it fits with other experiences, and actions taken as a result. Lakoff and Johnson state:

In all aspects of life … we define our reality in terms of metaphors and then proceed to act on the basis of the metaphors. We draw inferences, set goals, make commitments, and execute plans, all on the basis of how we in part structure our experience, consciously and unconsciously, by means of metaphor.

Metaphors embody and define the intangible and abstract, but this process limits and constrains perceptions and actions to those which make sense within the logic of the metaphor. Metaphors are therefore both descriptive and prescriptive. They can be a tool for creativity or a self-imposed prison.

Symbolic Modelling is designed to unlock creativity and open prison doors. It does so by only using Clean Language to work directly with a person’s self-generated metaphors and symbols.
Clean Language

A gentle genie has escaped from the lamp.
His name is David Grove and his magic is 'clean language'.
Ernest Rossi

Clean Language is an extraordinary language because everything you, as the facilitator, say and do is intimately related to what the client says and does. Clean Language has three functions:

- To acknowledge the client’s experience exactly as they describe it.
- To orientate the client's attention to an aspect of their perception.
- To send them on a quest for self-knowledge.

The entire focus of Symbolic Modelling becomes an exploration of the client’s symbolic model of the world from their perspective, within their perceptual time and space, and using their words.

Of course Clean Language influences and directs attention — all language does that. David Grove’s Clean Language does it ‘cleanly’ because it:

- Is sourced in the client’s vocabulary.
- Conforms to the logic and presuppositions of the client’s metaphors.
- Only introduces universal metaphors of form, space and time.
- Only uses nonverbals congruent with a client’s nonverbals.

Clean Questions

Each time a clean question is answered it sets up a feedback loop between the client and their symbolic perception. Describing these perceptions encourages further information to emerge, which can also be described, and so on. As this happens the client becomes the viewer-hearer-feeler of the symbolic content of their perceptions.

There are nine clean questions which form the heart of Symbolic Modelling and these are used 80% of the time. Because of their universality, clean questions leave the client free to process, respond and answer with whatever information they consider relevant. Therefore the nine basic questions can be used in a remarkably wide range of contexts. (There are a further 20 or so specialist clean questions used only when the client’s metaphors indicate that the appropriate conditions exist.)
BASIC DEVELOPING QUESTIONS

IDENTIFYING  And what kind of [client's words] is that [their words]?
And is there anything else about [client's words]?

LOCATING  And where is [client's words]?
And whereabouts [client's words]?

CONVERTING  And that's [client's words] like what?

MOVING TIME QUESTIONS

FORWARD  And then what happens?
And what happens next?

BACK  And what happens just before [client's words]?
And where could [client's words] come from?

To help you help clients navigate their Metaphor Landscape, the nine basic questions are diagrammed below as a three-dimensional compass. The arrows indicate where each question invites a clients to orientate their attention: to remain with the current perception and identify attributes; to convert the current perception into an isomorphic symbolic form; to locate a symbol within the current perception; or to move forward or back in time to a subsequent or previous event.

The nine-question compass

© 2003, extract from Metaphors in Mind by James Lawley and Penny Tompkins
www.cleanlanguage.co.uk
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Penny Tompkins and James Lawley are co-developers of Symbolic Modelling and leading authorities on the use of client-generated metaphor for personal and professional development. They have had numerous articles published which are available on their web site.

They are both practising psychotherapists registered with the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP). Together they train and supervise therapists, counsellors, coaches, managers and teachers in the use of Symbolic Modelling.

Penny was co-managing director of a manufacturing company in the oil industry, and James was a senior manager in the telecommunications business. They use this experience when they coach managers and executives to become more self-aware and to develop their ability to think systemically. They also facilitate teams in the use of Clean Language and metaphor so they can model and learn from themselves. They are married, and live in London.

They are available for:
- training in Symbolic Modelling
- private client sessions
- executive coaching
- supervision
- team development
- using metaphor with large groups
- modelling in organisations
- seminars, conferences and workshops

Video available: A Strange and Strong Sensation is a training video of a complete Symbolic Modelling client session with on-screen annotation. It comes with a full transcript and unique 3-perspective explanatory booklet.

For more information please email info@cleanlanguage.co.uk

The Developing Company
www.cleanlanguage.co.uk