

## Developing a resource metaphor: Journey with whales

The following is a transcript of facilitating a client who is living through traumatic circumstances to develop a resource metaphor using Clean Language and Symbolic Modelling.

During a workshop with 24 Ukrainian psychologists and psychotherapists we offered to demonstrate how to develop a resource metaphor.

Penny asked the group:

*What is a resource or a quality that you have that can support you in these difficult times?*

*And this resource is like what?*

After hearing several examples from the group we asked who would be willing for us to ask some Clean Language questions of their resource metaphor. The volunteer-participant's responses were translated by **Anna Stativka**.

It was a particularly interesting session for a number of reasons:

It shows how it is possible to use metaphor to work entirely content-free (preserving the privacy of the participant's real-life details)

The participant repeatedly reports dual feelings (e.g. "calmness and anxiety"; "good and bad at the same time"; "calmness but at the same time it's a cold and dark place"; "It's good side is warm and the other side, it's like anxiety"). The transcript shows how we acknowledge both feelings and continue to develop his resource metaphor.

Although not shown, there were several pauses while, it appeared, the client experienced strong emotions.

It shows what can be done with just eight Clean Language questions and how we repeatedly included the participants early metaphors to keep them all in his awareness.

While reading the transcript it is important to remember our agreement with this participant: To develop a resource metaphor. We did not have a therapy contract. The transcript shows how we honoured his dual feelings and kept to our agreement.

[The format of the Clean Language questions are in **bold** to make it easy to see their structure.]

1. *Participant* Yes, I didn't articulate my resource so I will do this now. My resource as I felt it, it was like a bit like indifference and calmness and appeared as the image of an ocean
2. *James* An ocean Okay. Can we ask you some Clean Language questions about that?
3. *Participant* Yes.
4. *James* Okay so your metaphor is like an ocean. **So what what kind of ocean is that ocean?**
5. *Participant* When I was younger, I was an Army and I served on the ship. This ocean reminds me of this time, but this ocean looks like the Mediterranean Sea. And this is very clear water. Blue clear water. There are not any insects. Very clean, very fresh air.
6. *Penny* And the ocean is blue with clear water and no insects and fresh air. **And is there anything else about that blue, clear water of that ocean?**
7. *Participant* Ah, it's so calm. I have seen the big turtle. It is big, like two meters in diameter, and two meters under the water. And I have seen how it swims under the water and it gave me a very calm feeling.
8. *James* That's a turtle that swims under the water. And it gave you a calm feeling. **And whereabouts is that calm feeling?**
9. *Participant* I felt this calmness here inside my chest, here, but in the same time I had this feeling of anxiety.
10. *Penny* And when you felt the calmness inside your chest, **whereabouts** inside your chest did you feel that calmness?
11. *Participant* I am showing here, I am showing.
12. *James* And when there is that calmness there in your chest, **does that calmness have a size or a shape?**
13. *Participant* I don't see colour but I see the shape and shape is oval and with un-regular edges
14. *James* So it's an oval shape with un-regular edges in your chest, there, that's a calmness from seeing a turtle that swims underwater in a clear blue water with fresh air.
15. *Participant* Yeah.
16. *James* And that calmness, and the oval with the un-regular edges in your chest **is like what?**
17. *Participant* This calmness is flat. And I can, I can take it away.
18. *James* You can take it away. Uh huh. Yeah, so it's oval and flat with un-regular edges **like what?**
19. *Participant* It's look like old skin. The old piece of old skin, but in the same time when I take out this old skin [enacts metaphor] on this place, I have new skin and this is okay.
20. *Penny* **And is there anything else about that** new skin?

21. *Participant* I want to itch it, it's itching.
22. *James* And you want to itch it, to itch that new skin. And so when you itch that new skin **then what happens?**
23. *Participant* I'm a bit confused I have a lot of different feelings. I don't understand where to direct my attention, what to put my attention on.
24. *James* And so when you don't understand where to direct your attention, **what's happening to the** new skin in your chest?
25. *Participant* The skin is red and I would like it to be a normal colour.
26. *James* And you would like it to be normal colour. **And so what's happening in the chest right now where there is that** calmness?
27. *Participant* This feeling went into my; to this area [touches solar plexus] - a bit a bit lower. Yes, and in the same time it's - And this feeling, it's good and bad at the same time. It's good side is warm, and the other side, it's like anxiety.
28. *James* So it's it's good and bad at the same time.
29. *Participant* Yes.
30. *James* And so when there's that feeling there, a little lower, that's both good and bad at the same time, **what happens to a** clear blue water of an ocean?
31. *Participant* Nothing happens to the ocean, but I don't know why I feel sad. I have a feeling now. I have a thought that now it's like before the storm. It feels like a storm will start soon.
32. *James* So it's calm now and it's before the storm. And when it's calm now before the storm, **what would you like to have happen** before the storm?
33. *Participant* I don't know what I would like to have happened before the storm but now I understand why I like the turtle. Because turtle is underwater, and if you are underwater - like five meters below - there are no [inaudible] - here the deeper you go, because there's a deep deepness.
34. *Penny* And now you understand why you like the turtle, because it's under underwater. **Anything else about a** turtle underwater.
35. *Participant* There is calmness there but at the same time it's a cold and dark place.
36. *Participant* Calmness in a cold and dark place. That turtle under the water. **And when that** turtle is under the water and it's calm, there's calmness, and the place is cold and dark, **what would that** turtle **like to have happen?**
37. *Participant* Oh, I think that for the turtle it would be the best to swim into the tropical seas where it's warmer. And at the same time she has not to go on the surface. She, she has to stay underwater. **I**
38. *James* To stay under and swim to the warm waters of the tropics. **And as that** turtle swims **to those** warm waters, **then what happens?**

39. *Participant* Yeah, when the turtle swims there are the family of whales in the sea, and I understand why, because whales they are mammals. Whales are warm blooded. Because the turtle, she has cold blood, she is cold blooded. And the whales that I see on this on this ocean they are warm blooded.
40. *James* So the turtle meets the whales that are warm blooded as she swims to the warm waters and when she meets those warm blooded whales, **then what happens?**
41. *Participant* When turtle meets the whales, I want to continue my journey with whales, not with the turtles, but with whales.
42. *James* You want to continue your journey with whales.
43. *Penny* **And when** you want to continue your journey with whales, **then what happens?**
44. *Participant* When I'm thinking about continuing my journey with whales I begin to be afraid of people, because people bring wars, aggression and danger. So I have to avoid people.
45. *James* So you have to avoid people who bring wars and aggression, and you want to continue with the whales, the warm blooded whales. **And as** you continue **with those** warm blooded whales, **what happens to that** feeling in your chest and little lower down?
46. *Participant* I feel this feeling. It's getting not so strong and I feel tears. I have tears on my eyes,
47. *James* Tears on your eyes. **And what happens to that** new skin?
48. *Participant* My new skin colour is mostly normal. Better.
49. *James* Mostly normal, better. Is it okay if we if we stop here?
50. *Participant* Yes.
51. *James* Okay, thank you. We appreciate you volunteering your metaphor.

### **Postscript**

After the participants had practiced developing resource metaphors with each other, the volunteer participant in the above transcript said:

Now I understand what my work was about. It was to run away and not to be human. And at the end now I have an understanding that in any case, to be human is more safe than to be somebody else'.

## **Analysis of questions**

Once the session started we used 8 Clean Language formats in the 20 questions asked:

- 1 What kind of
- 3 Anything else (about)
- 2 Where (whereabouts)
- 1 Size or shape
- 2 Like what
- 4 Then what happens
- 5 When [X] what happens to [Y]
- 2 What would [you/symbol] like to have happen