

Finding Words in a Spiral Galaxy

The following transcript is of a demonstration on our fifth workshop with a group Ukrainian psychologists and psychotherapists who want to use Clean Language and Symbolic Modelling to support themselves and their clients. The aim of the session was simply to demonstrate Symbolic Modelling 'live'.

Transcripts of previous demonstrations with this group are available via these links:

1. [Developing a resource metaphor: Journey with whales](#)
2. [Developing a desired outcome: Coping with Un-safety](#)
3. [Starting to feel the movement of life](#)
4. [From pain to calm clear sky](#)

The client's responses and our questions were translated by **Anna Stativka** and **Dr. Vladislav Matrenitsky**.

This transcript is illustrative of a number of features:

- The client presents with a potentially serious physical symptom and so we start by clarifying the scope of our agreement and our expertise.
- Since the client does not know how to find the words she needs to help a mother tell her son his father has been killed in the war, we cannot develop her desired outcome directly. Instead we work *adjacently* – to maintain attention in the vicinity of the relevant experiences (see J13, J21 and J45) – until a resource metaphor emerges which will enable the client needs to support the family.

Key: C = Client, P = Penny, J = James.

The format of the Clean Language questions is highlighted in **bold** to make it easier to see their structure.

Phase numbers refer to stages in the Symbolic Modelling Lite process (Note 1)

When we capitalise the words, 'Problem', 'Remedy' or 'Outcome', we are using the definitions specified in the PRO model (Note 2). When these words are not capitalised they are being used in a more everyday sense.

| Row | J/P C | Transcript | Annotation |
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| 1 | J | And what would you like to have happen? | (Starts at Phase 2) |
| 2 | C | I would like the inflammation of my gums to stop. | Wanting a Problem to "stop" is defined as a Remedy according to the PRO model. |
| 3 | J | Okay. So before we start I just need to check. Have you been to the dentist about this? | Clarifying the scope of our agreement and expertise. (Return to Phase 1) |
| 4 | C | So it started when I moved in with a family to escape the war and there is no possibility at the moment to find a dentist. So I've used some folk and natural remedies to help myself. I connect what's happened with having to leave my home. | |
| 5 | J | We can work with your response and your feelings about this, but we're not qualified dentists and so I'm concerned that you might need to receive physical medical treatment which we are not able to provide. But we can work with your response to what's happening, your emotional response and your psychological response if that's okay. I need to get that clear first. | |
| 6 | C | Yes, I'm okay with this. | |
| 7 | J | Okay. So what is your response to having inflamed gums? | |
| 8 | C | This is not the first time when I have this inflammation when I've experienced some stress. So I consider this inflammation as a reaction of my body. It seems like on the surface I am calm. But I see it's a reaction of my body that I am not managing the situation. And the day before yesterday in the family where I'm living at the moment, the young woman was notified that her husband had died in the war, in a battle, and that's when I felt an activation of my symptoms of inflammation. And of course I'm trying to help support the family because I'm living with them. But probably I'm doing something wrong because of how my body is reacting to the situation. | |
| 9 | J | Okay, so it's a reaction of your body that you're not handling – you're not managing the situation. And so what would you like to have happen when your body is reacting because you're not managing the situation? | Requesting a desired outcome <i>given</i> the current problematic situation "when ...". (Continue with Phase 2) |

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| 10 | C | I would like to find another way of managing in this situation, and I'm grateful to my body that it has helped me. But I would like to find another way of managing this situation. | We regard this as a mixed Remedy-Outcome since it has the format of a desired Outcome but "another way" obliquely references the Problem. |
| 11 | P | And is there anything else about another way to manage this situation? | Developing the desired outcome. (Start Phase 3) |
| 12 | C | Probably I have to find some words, or other words. Because now together with this mother, with this woman, we have to tell the child that his father has died. And I don't know how to find the words. | |
| 13 | J | So you have to find some words to help the mother tell this child. And where could words like that come from? | It seems incongruous to ask directly for words the client cannot find, instead we invite her to consider the <i>source</i> of those words. |
| 14 | C | I don't know. [Pause] These words they exist somewhere in my mind but I cannot put them together. I've forgotten how to express myself. | When a client says "I don't know", we usually remain silent and wait, since it often means 'I need a little more time to find an answer'. |
| 15 | P | And the words exist in your mind but you cannot put them together. And when they exist in your mind, where in your mind do they exist? | |
| 16 | C | In my memory. | |
| 17 | J | In your memory. And whereabouts is your memory of those words? | |
| 18 | C | Probably somewhere in my brain. | |
| 19 | P | Somewhere in your brain. Whereabouts in your brain? | The <i>primary function</i> of the 'Where?' and 'Whereabouts?' questions is to keep the client attending to the vicinity of an experience (in this case the source of the words), and only secondarily about identifying a specific location. |
| 20 | C | I don't know. [Pause] I have thought that probably what I want instead of words – I want to tear apart with my teeth all these abusers who who kill our people. This is probably what has created this feeling. And I don't feel any hate or anger, just in a calm way to tear apart all of them. | |

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| 21 | J | And to tear apart the abusers. And you need to find the words to tell the child that his father has died. And what kind of words are those words in your memory? | We acknowledge the dual desire to "tear apart" <i>and</i> the immediate need to find the words to tell the child. Also notice that, again, this question does not ask for the actual words (which may add to her "stress"), it goes <i>adjacent</i> (Note 3). Asking "what kind of words" gives the client the latitude to either answer with specific words or, more generally, with the nature of those words. Either way, attention stays in the same vicinity. |
| 22 | C | These words are about grief and about why his mother is crying. Because everybody loved him. | |
| 23 | P | Because everybody loved him. | Waiting to see whether "him" is the child or the father. |
| 24 | C | How everybody loves the child. | |
| 25 | J | Everybody loves the child. And this would support the family that you're living with. | |
| 26 | C | As much as it as possible. | |
| 27 | J | And so where does your want to support the family come from? | The client is beginning to formulate the kind of words she needs to say, and more generally, she wants a "way of managing the situation" (C10). Given that the way people respond in stressful situations is state-dependent this question <i>begins</i> to attend to the kind of state the client will need to be in to support <i>her</i> to support the family (C8). |
| 28 | C | From love. | |
| 29 | P | And from love. And what kind of love is a love that wants to support? | The next five questions follow the a variation of the 'From a feeling to a metaphor' routine devised by David Grove. (Note 4) |
| 30 | C | A kind of warmth here in the body. | |
| 31 | P | And a warmth in the body. And anything else about that warmth there, in the body? | |
| 32 | C | It's kind of worrying and it's a bit trembling here. | |
| 33 | J | Worrying and trembling. And so when there's that warmth, the warmth of love in your body, and that trembling, where is that warmth and trembling? | |
| 34 | C | It looks like it's in the solar plexus and a bit up, above. | |

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| 35 | P | In the solar plexus and up. And does that warmth have a size or a shape when it's in that solar plexus and up? | |
| 36 | C | It's like two ovals, or spots – one bigger and another one less big. | |
| 37 | J | So there are two oval spots. Is there anything else about those two oval spots? | |
| 38 | C | They are connected with each other. | |
| 39 | P | And when they're connected with each other, what kind of connected is that connected? | |
| 40 | C | It's like an hourglass you know with glass parts and running sand [depicts shape with hands]. | We note this metaphor continues the dual-perception motif evident at C8 and C20, although now the two are "connected". |
| 41 | P | And when it's like an hourglass, anything else about that hourglass that connects those two spots? | |
| 42 | C | Now I see it more like when we see the universe with galaxies which are connected to each other [depicts shape with hands]. | |
| 43 | J | Two galaxies connected. So when it's like those two galaxies are connected there in your solar plexus, and that's a warmth and a trembling of a love that wants to support there, what happens to words in a memory? | Now a metaphor has emerged and developed a coherence over the last four answers, does it have an <i>effect</i> on the original desired outcome? ... (Start Phase 4) |
| 44 | C | I think they can be put together in a conversation. | ... Yes, and it probably indicates that something is changing for the client. |
| 45 | J | They can be put together. And as those words are put together what kind of put together is that, of those words? | Again, rather than going directly for the words, this question invites the client to attend to the <i>process</i> "put together", as requested at C14. |
| 46 | C | It looks like a spiral. | |
| 47 | P | What kind of spiral is that spiral? | At the same time, we start maturing the change indicated at C44 (Start Phase 5). |
| 48 | C | It's like planets - like a galaxy where the planets – the words go one-by-one [gestures depict metaphor]. | |
| 49 | J | So it's like the planets in a galaxy, those words. And so when those words are put together like planets in a galaxy, then what happens? | |
| 50 | C | And then a kind of connection or link appears between the father who has died, and this boy. And the words they help the child to experience and realise this connection. | |

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| 51 | P | And when words help a child to realise this connection with their father, then what happens? | |
| 52 | C | They have an opportunity to experience joy and happiness <u>even though</u> there is also grief. | Another connected dual perception. |
| 53 | P | And they get to experience joy and happiness, as well as grief. | |
| 54 | J | And as those words that are like planets in a galaxy that are connected and link that child with their father [pause]. And you would like to tear the abusers apart [pause]. And your support for the family comes from the love in your body that's warm and trembling, what happens in your gums? | Given the client has had a range of experiences in the last 30 minutes, this invites her to consider what is now happening to her original presenting symptom. |
| 55 | C | First of all I'm starting to breathe. [pause] And my gums hold my teeth tightly. [pause] And right now I don't feel any negative feelings or sensations. | Quite a shift! |
| 56 | J | And so is there anything else you need right now? | Bringing the session to a close (Start Phase 6). With more time we would have continued maturing the change (Phase 5). |
| 57 | C | I want to sit in a different way and feel my muscles [adjusts posture]. | |
| 58 | P | So take all the time you need to sit in that way and feel your muscles, and begin to wonder what you would like to have happen next. | |
| 59 | J | Now that you know you will find the words [pause]. And is it okay if we just leave this there? | |
| 60 | C | Yes, thank you | |

Notes

1. Lawley, J. & Tompkins, P. (2011). Symbolic Modelling Emergent Change through Metaphor and Clean Language. In Chapter 4 of L. M. Hall & S. R. Charvet (Eds.), *Innovations in NLP: Innovations for Challenging Times*, pp. 60-79. cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/articles/346/1/Symbolic-Modelling-Emergent-Change-through-Metaphor-and-Clean-Language/
2. Tompkins, P. & Lawley, J. (2006). Coaching for P.R.O.s., *Coach the Coach* (Feb.). cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/articles/31/1/Coaching-for-PROs/
3. Tompkins, P. & Lawley, J. (2006). Proximity and meaning: A 'clean' approach to adjacency. *The Model*, December, pp. 1-10. cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/articles/56/1/Proximity-and-Meaning/
4. Lawley, J. (2012) How to start modelling an exemplar. cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/blogs/79/How-to-Start-Modelling-an-Exemplar.html