

I am freedom and I am independence

The following transcript is the sixth demonstration of Clean Language and Symbolic Modelling to a group of Ukrainian psychologists and psychotherapists. Transcripts of previous demonstrations are available online 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](#)
5. [Finding Words in a Spiral Galaxy](#)

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

The transcript also has an introduction, a recap during a break in the demonstration and afterwards some questions and answers.

This transcript is illustrative of a number of features:

- The spontaneous appearance of a symbol that prevents the client's desired outcome from happening.
- The session is paused after 15 minutes to enable the client to draw the 'metaphor landscape' she has developed so far and for us to comment on the process.
- The importance of [psychoactive space](#) to the change process.
- The last 25 minutes of the session is entirely devoted to *maturing* the embryonic change that appeared immediately after the client had described her drawing.

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.

James' introduction to the group

One of the interesting things about Symbolic Modelling is that it has a quite different philosophy and methodology to most other traditional therapeutic processes. On the surface it looks very, very simple. But underneath there are many subtle processes going on.

Everyone can learn the Clean Language questions and we *strongly* recommend that you become really fluent in how to ask those questions – exactly as they are formulated (since every word the therapist adds in potentially contaminates the client's experience).

One of the most important functions of a therapist using Clean Language is that they get a big say in what gets selected as the as the focus for the session – not the overall desired outcome, that's the client's role, but the focus for each question.

However the questions are the surface of the process. They are *not* asked to get an answer. The primary role of a Clean Language question is to invite the client to attend to aspects of their experience that support them to make the changes they would like to make.

This is particularly important when the client's emotions and feelings are intense, near to the surface and can appear unexpectedly. We want to fully acknowledge and honour the clients experience however painful it is. But going into the depth of those painful feelings and emotions is rarely helpful for the client.

How then do we honour the experience *without* taking the client into an unresourceful place where they have little or no room for creativity?

There are two key ways that we do that:

One, we stay *adjacent*, in the vicinity of the difficult feelings without going into the depths of them and staying there too long. In this way, clients learn *how* their unresourceful states occur – the structure and process – and that increases their choice about how to manage them.

And the second way is that we invite the client to attend to a desired outcome or a resource. This brings into awareness that they have problems and difficult emotions *and* they also have desires and strengths.

The five demonstrations that we have annotated so far all have examples of how we used these approaches in different ways with each of those clients.

And that's something you can look out for in this demonstration as well.

Row	J/P C	Transcript	Annotation
1	J	Do we have someone who would like to volunteer a topic to work with?	
2	C	Yes. I just want to say that I have a cat with me in my room and he can ask me to go out, okay?.	
3	P	Okay. And so what would you like to have happen?	
4	C	I would like to accept myself more and to love myself more.	Desired Outcome.
5	P	And to accept yourself more, and to love yourself more. And is there anything else about accept myself and love myself more?	Start facilitating client to develop the desired Outcome.
6	C	I would be happier in my relationships and in life in general.	
7	P	And when you accept yourself and love yourself more and you're happier in your relationships, how will you know when you accept yourself and love yourself more?	Invites client's to consider her evidence for having attained her desired Outcome.
8	C	I have another feeling of myself. I'm more free. I'm more independent. And I smile.	
9	P	And when you have another feeling of free, independent and smile, where is that feeling?	
10	C	In my chest.	
11	P	Whereabouts in your chest?	
12	C	It's somewhere here, and bit like it starts from here [gestures].	
13	P	And so from here it starts and it's in your chest, and does that feeling free and independent have a size or a shape?	
14	C	I have a ball in my throat.	A sudden shift of attention from chest to throat.
15	P	A ball in your throat. And anything else about a ball in your throat?	Follows the client's attention.
16	C	I don't know about the ball, but I have something here [points to head] and I have tears in my eyes, and I know the tears will not go out. I know that they just stay in here.	Another shift from throat to eyes.

17	P	And you have something here and tears in your eyes that you know will not go out. And when you have something here, is there anything else about that something here?	Follows the client's attention.
18	C	It's like a stone. A dark grey stone with some edges.	
19	P	A grey stone with some edges. And when a grey stone with some edges, whereabouts is that grey stone?	
20	C	This stone is in my throat, mostly over all my throat.	Ah, since C18 the client has returned to her throat. The client's facial expression suggests this is not a pleasant experience for her.
21	P	And when that stone is over all your throat, and tears in eyes that will not go out, what would that stone like to have happen?	Use of the PRO Model to check the <i>symbol's intention</i> .
22	C	To hold something and not let something go out. It closes the way for something to go out.	
23	J	So that dark stone in your throat closes the way for something to go out, and then what happens to accepting and loving yourself?	Investigating the <i>effect</i> of Stone's intention on the client's desired Outcome.
24	C	[Pause] This acceptance appears to stay in a very closed place here [touches chest], and it has no freedom to go out	Stone is achieving its desired Outcome.
25	J	It has no freedom to go out. And so when acceptance and loving yourself is there in your chest, and it's a feeling of independence, and a smile, does that feeling in your chest have a size or a shape?	We repeat the question asked at P13 and return to developing the <i>client's</i> desired Outcome (which was temporarily suspended since C14)
26	C	For now it's like shining and this shining is red. And its size is from shoulder to shoulder.	
27	J	A shoulder to shoulder shining and red. And when that shining and red there, shoulder to shoulder, it's shining and red like what?	
28	C	I don't know why I imagine a red light of traffic lights.	
29	J	Traffic lights, the red of a traffic light, anything else about the red and the shiny of a traffic light?	
30	C	When I see it now it's round like on traffic lights and it becomes dark, dark red, like raspberry, and I like raspberry. I like this raspberry colour. And it's tasty.	
31	J	Okay, so it's round. And it's a dark red, like raspberry colour. And that's tasty. Anything else about a red like that?	

32	C	This is something very close to me. And I have it from my childhood, from the moment when I tasted raspberry, when I was eating raspberry in my childhood and this very familiar to me and very close.	
33	J	Very close from the moment you tasted raspberry in your childhood, so what kind of moment was that moment?	
34	C	It was when I was a child and everybody loved me and I loved myself. I was absolutely okay with myself	
35	J	Everybody loved you and you loved yourself and you were okay with yourself. And what kind of self is that self that's okay with herself and loves herself, what kind of self?	
36	C	A beautiful girl [laughs]	
37	J	A beautiful girl.	
38	C	[Laughing] A small girl, a little, happy and beautiful girl. [Cat intervenes asking to go out!]	
39	P	We heard the cat. This could be a good time to pause.	"Pause" is a pun on "paws"!
40	C	Okay.	
41	P	While we talk to the group, you could you draw your metaphor. Could you draw this while we're talking?	
42	C	Okay.	

James to the group

We've been going for fifteen minutes. Let's just reflect on what's happened with the process so far.

We started with a desired outcome, "to accept and love myself more". And so we started to facilitate the client to locate and develop her desired outcome. And we did that for a few questions, but as often happens, the process of developing what the client wants was interrupted by another experience, another feeling, in this case, the metaphor of a ball in her throat. So we acknowledge that and facilitated the client to develop its form a little, and it became a "dark, grey stone".

We then asked, 'what would that stone like to have happen?' We're inviting the client to consider the *intention* of the stone, which was "to hold something and to close the way".

Now we have two symbols, one an explicit metaphor, the stone in the throat, another as yet undefined in the chest.

I inferred that they would be related in some way, but just to be sure, I asked, when 'that dark stone in your throat closes the way for something to go out, what happens to accepting and loving yourself?'. We find out that the stone is doing its job and it's doing it very well, it is succeeding in achieving its own desired outcome by keeping acceptance in a "very closed place".

By now the client is clear that what they want is the feeling in the chest but that is prevented from getting out by this stone in the throat.

Then we returned to the feeling in the chest to continue to facilitate the client to develop it in to a symbolic form, the shining red colour. That prompted a memory of being a young child and tasting raspberry. And in that moment, she was a beautiful young girl that loved herself.

We assume that the stone is there for a good reason. And we do not favour the red over the stone.

Now that's a lot of information, very high quality information, that's come out in just 15 minutes.

As observers if you have any questions write them down or put them in chat and we will look at them at the end of the demonstration.

We'll we'll go back now and continue.

Row	J/P C	Transcript	Annotation
43	P	Can we see your drawing?	
44	C	<p>Yes I have a drawing, it is surprising because I don't like to draw. I had only one pen. This part [points to drawing] is a raspberry garden and this is a line of raspberry plants.</p> <p>And this [points] is the village from my childhood where I was absolutely happy.</p> <p>And also I have a memory about the dress. This dress is also raspberry colour. I had this dress later than in my childhood memory. But the dress was sewn by my grandmother with whom I lived or whose house I visited during this time of the raspberry so it was a her place with the raspberry garden. And also I remember the time when I wore this dress, and this time I also was very happy.</p> <p>At first when I started to draw this raspberry colour dress, I drew only the dress without myself, but then I had an idea to draw my face and then I am inside this dress because it would be more natural maybe if there will be me inside the dress, not just the dress by itself.</p>	
45	J	<p>Okay, thank you. And when you would like to accept and love yourself more, and there's that feeling in your chest that's raspberry colour, the colour of reminds you of being a young beautiful girl that loved herself, and a dress sewn by a grandmother, and there's a dark grey stone in your throat, when that's the way that it is, what would you like to have happen now?</p>	The addition of "now" to this question invites the client to set a direction for the next part of the session.
46	C	<p>First I will say that it's not stone anymore, it's something more like a cloud, like air that stops something going out, but it's not so strong anymore. It's more like a cloud. What I would like to have happen right now – I would like this raspberry thing to go out, because now I feel as if somebody closed it, inside me.</p>	<p>First indication of a change in the landscape.</p> <p>Specific desire Outcome.</p>
47	P	<p>You'd like this raspberry thing to go out and now you feel somebody has closed it inside you. And the stone is now more like a cloud. And what would that cloud like to have happen now?</p>	Given the stone has changed into a cloud, checking whether its intention is the same or different.

48	C	This cloud here [touches throat], it closes the way for this raspberry something to go out. I would feel more comfortable if this raspberry shiny would be able to go like out and back, like breathing. But not like now. Now it's like closed inside. I know it is here but I have no access to it.	No change to the symbol's intention. The client's self-modelling has made very clear what the problem is. It is not the stone. The problem is the <i>relationship</i> between the stone in her throat and the raspberry thing in her chest – currently they have incompatible intentions. Because of this, at present the client can't have what she wants, or be who she wants to be.
49	P	And when you know that the raspberry thing is here. Where is here?	Keeping attention on the desired Outcome metaphor.
50	C	Now it is here [touches chest]. It has got a bit higher. This raspberry thing was here and it came up, just to this grey cloud that doesn't let it go out [pause]. It begins to move it.	Another change.
51	J	It begins to move it. Anything else about there where the raspberry has come up to, where the raspberry and the cloud are?	Follow the change by inviting the client to attend to "there" where "raspberry" has moved to, nearer to "cloud".
52	C	They have the same consistency. This is something like a cloud and this is also like cloud but this is raspberry colour and this is grey colour, and this grey colour is becoming lighter. I don't know why, I had a thought just now that these colours have a good combination between each other	"becoming lighter" is a further indicator that changes are ongoing.
53	J	A good combination between the raspberry and the grey. And so what's happening between the raspberry and the grey?	Same as J51.
54	C	They touch each other like two clouds.	
55	P	And when they touch each other, like two clouds, what kind of touch is that touch?	Same as J51 & J53 although they are not just close, they "touch each other". Generally, when symbols come in contact it indicates a significant change in the structure of the landscape.
56	C	Tender and soft touch. As if you lay down on a pillow.	
57	J	A tender and soft touch. Like laying down on a pillow. And when that raspberry and the grey touch, tender and soft, then what happens?	Inviting the client to be aware of the <i>effects</i> of the changes.
58	C	They now hold together. They didn't mix with each other but they have contact with each other normally.	
59	J	They contact normally, and then what happens?	Same as J57.

60	C	When they contact normally, this grey cloud begins to be more like a fluid around that raspberry cloud. Like ice cream when it's getting warm; melting, melting ice cream. This grey begins to be like melting ice cream around raspberry.	
61	P	And then what happens?	Same as J57 & J59.
62	C	And this raspberry thing becomes to feel more free and can have a more open way out, because this grey thing becomes very thin and this raspberry thing mostly can go out, mostly.	"more free" was part of the client's original desired Outcome at C8.
63	P	Mostly it's more free and more open and it can mostly go out. And when that raspberry is more free, what kind of free is that free?	Attending to the latest change.
64	C	This raspberry cannot go out from here [touches throat] because this grey thing is still closing, but this raspberry can go out of my body like air.	
65	J	So it can go out of your body like air. And when that raspberry goes out of your body like air, where does it go out from?	Same as P63.
66	C	Now this grey cloud is still, I still I feel it here. And the raspberry thing has got bigger. And it can be like breathing. And it goes out from my shoulders and arms and chest. It gets bigger. Like air. Like breathing.	
67	P	Like breathing. And what kind of breathing is that breathing?	Same as P63 and J65.
68	C	A light and easy breathing.	
69	P	A light and easy breathing. And when that breathing is light and easy like that, what happens to accept myself and love myself?	Invite client to notice the <i>effect</i> of the latest changes on her original desired Outcome.
70	C	I have more access to it and I have a contact with it. I know where exactly this raspberry is shining inside of me. And this is something like a feeling of flying, like a bird [makes wing-flapping gestures]. I feel like a bird and I can direct my flight.	Client's body enacts the newly appeared metaphor, which has <i>agency</i> ("I can direct my flight").
71	J	You feel like a bird and you can direct your flight, and as you breathe easily and that raspberry from inside, comes out like air, and you fly like a bird, what happens to your independence?	Same as P69.
72	C	Yes this is independence. I <i>am</i> freedom and I <i>am</i> independence.	Two congruent identity-level statements.

73	J	And you <i>are</i> freedom and you <i>are</i> independence, and then what happens to your relationship?	Same as P69 & J71.
74	C	Do you mean the relationship that I have now?	The client temporarily pops out of the process to ask a clarifying question.
75	J	Yeah, you said you will be more happy in relationship and life.	
76	C	I think now that when I feel as I feel now, like freedom and independence, I don't need relationships for today. I would like to have a pause, to have a pause between relationships. I am by myself. I want to be by myself.	
77	J	And so that's an independent and free by yourself.	
78	C	When I feel like that independence and freedom I don't feel a need to be in relationship.	
79	J	And so then what happens to accepting and loving yourself?	Same as P69, J71 and J73.
80	C	I am inside this state of freedom and independence and acceptance and love and light like a bird. I am this state.	
81	J	And you are inside that state and you am that state, and what happens here in your throat?	Inviting client to be aware of what is happening where the problem symbol was previously located. (Note: Using the location, not the name of the symbol.)
82	C	I don't feel any stuck here. I only feel that this raspberry shining, it just doesn't go out from my throat, it goes from my body. I don't feel anything here anymore but this raspberry shining doesn't come here it comes out from my body.	A significant shift and a new way for "raspberry shining" to come out – of her body. (Maybe "stone" was preventing "raspberry shining" from coming out via the throat because it was better for it to come our via the body – who knows???)
83	J	Only from there. And so is there anything else you need right now to accept and love yourself more?	Bringing the session to a close.
84	C	I want to eat raspberries now [laughter].	
85	J	Do so if you can find them!	
86	C	And I want to say thank you to you.	
87	P	Okay, thank you to you too. And we'll stop there.	

To the group

James Okay, so we'll open I open it up to the to the group for comments and questions about the process that you've just observed.

Anna Yes, there is a question in the chat: How did what is stopping this shining from coming out appear?

Client It just came out by itself. It was the question what else about that and I had this metaphor immediately.

James And that often happens, the spontaneous appearance of a symbol that is preventing the desired outcome from happening.

Penny We never try and make anything happen. If the metaphor landscape is well developed, and symbols have a name and a place then usually something spontaneously happens in the landscape – it's called [psychoactivity](#); the landscape become psychoactive. Then the symbols in the metaphors will do what they need to do for the system to become whole. If we try to make something happen in the metaphor, the psychoactivity won't be as active.

James What will happen is that the metaphors and the symbols will start reacting against *us*.

Any other questions about the process?

Participant The question is, I observed your actions. And it was unexpected to me, when in the end of the work, you mentioned 'independence'. It was at the end, when we're talking about the bird, the fly. And you mentioned independence. How did you know to mention these things somewhere in the process. In other methods of therapy, I feel when we have to make connections, but in this method, I still have no idea. So my question is, what is your criteria? How do you know that this was the moment to mention this or that word of client's words or metaphors?

James Towards the end of a session I almost always will go back and 'pick up' the the words from the beginning. At the end, I want the client to make a comparison between the beginning and the end of the session, how much has changed. And in this case, at the beginning the client said that when she accepts and loves herself more, she will be more happy in a relationship and she will have a feeling of independence. So I want to find out if at the end she has more of what she's asked for.

That's my purpose at the end of the session (there are other reasons to bring in a symbol at other times in the process).

Does that make sense? Does that help?

Participant That is simple. I had some complicated constructions. But what you say sounds more simple.

Penny Just to say, sometimes there's a time limitation in a session, you don't have time to go back and check as much and that's okay. You can ask them to draw where they got up to. Symbolic Modelling is a very forgiving and a very robust process.

James As you just saw, we often ask the clients to stop and draw in the middle of a session. It's very good for the client.

And, I will also say, that if you as the therapist find yourself lost and you don't know what to do. Ask the client to draw.

Penny When they come back, have them describe the drawing. And your next question is, just as we asked, 'And what would you like to have happen *now*?'

James One other observation about this demonstration that I think is very important. The client reported that things were beginning to change after they described their drawing. And from then to the end of the session was about 25 minutes.

And you observed us working with that change, but going slowly, slowly, slowly. Just letting it happen at its own pace, letting it unfold in its own way. Many therapeutic processes think that once the client feels a change, something changing, it's finished. They've done their work. But we think the work is just beginning.

You need to remember that the client may have been living with the previous landscape for many years. We want to use all the time available for them to get used to, to become familiar with the new landscape. So we take as much time as we have to keep asking questions about the new metaphors, to keep evolving them, moving time on, so that their new landscape gets consolidated and as robust as their previous landscape.