



THE CLEAN APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

By Angela Watson

In today's climate of "less is more" new ways of thinking and acting matter now more than ever. And any manager, coach, teacher or trainer can benefit from this empowering communication and facilitation practice. This E-Book "The Clean Approach To Leadership", introduces you to Clean Language in the context of leadership, as it has developed since its inception by David Grove. It's a good place to start and a superb place to continue your understanding of this deceptively simple process and it's applications in the workplace today. With The Clean Approach, effective leadership and powerful questions walk hand in hand. If you aspire to leadership that empowers, relationships built on respect, projects that deliver, ways of thinking that can work for everyone, or the life you really want, taking The Clean Approach can lead you there. What I address over and over is HOW....

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About the author

Angela Watson is the founder Angela Watson Consulting, an international leadership development and coaching company. She is pioneering the use of Clean Language for people in their work as coaches, consultants, business owners, managers and leaders.

This important process developed by David Grove, helps people to turn their interactions with their teams, department , or organization into productive environments where people can go beyond their usual ways of thinking to resolve problems or issues in their own way with clarity, creativity, courage, and ownership.

Angela does "Clean" work with education providers, healthcare professionals, coach training companies, coaches, consultants, NLP practitioners, and she is available for seminars in the UK and around the world.

Angela Watson Consulting grew out of Angela's career in the NHS, where she had served as a Nurse , Senior Manager, and Management Consultant for 20 years. She is Co-Founder of The Practice Leaders Programme, (in Portsmouth), enabling leaders to make change in primary care, and is one of the Principal Trainers for one of Europe's most successful coach training organizations.

Angela was born and raised in the UK and lives in Hampshire with her partner, Mark Grainger, who often facilitates on Angela's courses, adding extra value with his amazing storytelling and delicious menus.

As well as this book, Angela has written several short stories which she uses in her work to illustrate key aspects of human experience. She has also been known to teach non-swimmers how to overcome their fears.

As well as her Clean work, Angela personally designs and delivers NLP Intensives In Turkey, for UK and international delegates – it's a motivating personal and career development opportunity leading to certification as an NLP Business Practitioner (With A Clean Twist!). You can find details, dates, and more about Angela's work on her website www.angelawatsonnlp.com

Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge the pioneering work of David Grove (deceased), who pioneered the ground breaking technique of Clean Language whilst working with trauma victims during the 1980s. He discovered that patients would often speak in metaphor when describing their pain and that the most effective way of alleviating the effects was to honour their metaphors by asking questions which reflected the patient's exact words. This meant he avoided adding in his own assumptions and refrained from "leading the witness".

Over a period of years, David identified a set of questions that would least influence the client in their metaphorical journey. The technique was studied by Penny Tompkins and James Lawley, authors of "Metaphors in Mind", who devoted the next 3 years to modeling David's techniques into a methodology that could be taught to and practiced by others, not only in therapy but also in business, healthcare and education.

We have integrated this methodology into what we call - The Clean Approach.

The Clean Approach is a powerful catalyst for change.

In our model it includes a set of 6 Key Attributes which create the conditions necessary for effective learning and change to take place.

In the presence of these six behaviors people go beyond their usual thinking patterns to discover the resources they have within themselves to resolve their problems or issues in their own way with clarity, creativity, courage, and ownership.

Through our own learning and practice we have integrated the Six Key Attributes of A Clean Approach into programmes that teach their application to the work of leaders, coaches, teams, and individuals. This E-Book focuses on one of the Key Attributes – Clean Questions - and offers some practical applications and insights into how to develop a Clean Approach To Leadership by using this deceptively simple and powerful questioning technique.

This book aims to help you lead something easily and well by laying out six specific practical questioning tools in a step by step format, to enable you to:

- Extend your effectiveness as a leader, doctor, teacher, nurse, manager, and coach by fine tuning your ability to communicate, motivate and manage those around you.
- Explore and enrich your own personal leadership style so that you can relate more effectively with clients, trainees, patients, students.
- Empower your teams to achieve results.

Introduction

"When the leader leads well, the people will say, "We did it ourselves" Lao Tzu

One of the many reasons why The Clean Approach resonates so well with me is because I am fascinated by the way we each make sense of the world in our own unique way. Creating environments which convey to people the message that "you are unique and you are valued", is the first step of leadership. Every action after that influences the quality of our interactions from there.

It's the result of years studying Clean Language and NLP alongside some of the world's leading experts, and through practical experience through my role as a coach to 100's of professionals and executive coaches that I've been uniquely placed to discover what really works in everyday practice.

My intention in writing this book is:

- 1) To get you started with Clean Questions and show you how to use them quickly and easily at work.
- 2) To help you to discover more about yourself when you're leading at your best.

The action you take after reading this book is what's important. Once you have experienced the power and effect of Clean Questions, keep going! Practice more, learn more and do more. It's the desire for "more" that differentiates great leaders which usually stems from a vision that things could be enriched or improved in some way.

This book is not intended as a complete "how-to" guide, there is lots more to learn. If you find yourself hooked (as I am) I would recommend our two day introductory training to put these new skills into practice, which will enable you to use your professional and leadership skills in a more focused and systematic manner. Just get in touch to find out more.

Once you've tried some of the ideas here, please drop me an email to let me know how it went. Commitment to learning is central to everything I do and I offer you my commitment in working with you. Let's stay in touch.

I'll get out of your way now so that you can make a start...

What Is Leadership?

Leadership is a word that has many meanings. But the truth is that leadership happens everywhere. Where there is life there is leadership. Everyone is a leader. That's because leadership is much more of a mindset than a title. In fact a title does not guarantee true leadership. Even though those with powerful titles often have a massive impact on the world (regardless of whether the impact is positive or negative). At the heart of leadership is two dynamics – impact and responsibility.

Impact –is the effect we have on others, our families, communities, the environment, and the world. We are constantly impacting others whether we realize it or not. When people are striving towards win-win scenarios that still accomplish the desired goal, they are engaging in positive leadership. When people are only working towards achieving their own objectives, they are engaging in negative or destructive leadership.

Responsibility – is a leaders' willingness to notice the impact they have and to respond in a way that's conscientious and appropriate. Even though everyone is responsible for their impact, not everyone takes responsibility for it. People commonly deny responsibility by blaming others. It is much easier to deny or blame than it is to take responsibility. But in the long run blaming others is more difficult than taking responsibility. Because when you give up responsibility you give up your control. A good leader gives appropriate and conscientious responses to the world around them; they do not deny mistakes or blame others.

Whatever your role, paying attention to your impact is one of the responsibilities of a leader.

3 Characteristics of Effective Leaders?

Have you ever watched a true leader at work. What is it that they do that works?

3 key characteristics of effective leaders are:

1. Listening: Leaders have traditionally been valued for their communication and decision making skills. Although these are important skills, they need to be reinforced by a deep commitment to listening intently to others, and asking questions to identify and clarify the will of others.

2. Attention. An important leadership quality is to pay attention to people and recognise others for their special and unique contributions. Presuppose the good intentions of colleagues; accept the person even if you are forced to refuse their behavior or performance.

3. Self-Awareness: Making a commitment to foster self-awareness can be scary – you never know what you may discover! Develop your senses to notice what is happening during your interactions. This essential information that lets you how the impact you're having.

What Is The Clean Approach?

Clean Language is an extreme person centred approach applied to questioning which intrinsically values the unique contribution of each person. It's an innovative communications and facilitation practice which should be part of every leadership development programme.

The purpose of the Clean Approach is not only to demonstrate understanding but to help people to understand for themselves what they need. By putting your full attention on a person and asking Clean Questions which encourage them to do the same, you will open up space for them to do their best thinking and empower them to work out for themselves what it is they need to do. And because the person has ownership of their problem and the solution they are more likely to take action...in their own way.

To be Clean in the way we interact with others means to be prepared to be in a "not knowing state", to put aside our notions of what we might assume is happening and to listen and ask questions instead. Listening exquisitely and giving another your full attention is a powerful leadership attribute which requires commitment, discipline and skill.

To be Clean is a way of asking questions to avoid misunderstandings and making assumptions (which are usually wrong!) It's a way of asking questions to explore what's on another person's mind, and to discover how a person organizes their thinking. It avoids leading the witness, and instead it encourages personal responsibility and ownership.

The 6 Key Attributes of The Clean Approach are:

1. **Building Rapport** – paying attention to what someone is saying and using their words as you ask them to explain more about it seems to be a universally acceptable way of building rapport. You'll discover the beliefs and values which underpin their actions. You may well find that you share some of those beliefs and values. Even if not, respect them anyway. It's not paraphrasing that's needed for this –it's more like "parrot Phrasing" – using the client's student's patient's colleagues' exact words - (Clean Language, Revealing Metaphors and Opening Minds –Judy Rees and Wendy Sullivan, 2009).
2. **Listening attentively** - It's not just active listening, this is deep listening which means clearing your mind of your own "stuff" which can get in the way of your ability to really listen and to hear others. The saying "Performance =potential –Interference" from Timothy Galway's " Inner Game of Tennis" can be applied here. To listen in this way -focus your attention on the person you're interacting with, and keep your assumptions, opinions, and advice to yourself. On training courses I often get feedback from delegates about the quality of my attention being like "zooming in to the person I am engaging with, where the room appears to shrink and they say they feel like they are the only person there". By respecting the unique ways that individuals process and filter information –honour the way they "do being them" and respond in ways that increase the likelihood of effective interaction.
3. **Using pauses** – when someone is thinking deeply they often go very quiet. Resist the temptation to interrupt and provide space for quality thinking to happen. Accept no eye contact as a sign that quality thinking is happening.
4. Having behavioral **Flexibility** – Be flexible in your communication style and "try on" the belief that there is no such thing as a resistant client, student, colleague, or patient. If there is any resistance, it's the person's way of teaching you to how to ask a better question or how to ask it in a better way.
5. Being in a "**not – knowing**" state – you don't have all the answers! Get curious and ask questions instead.
6. **Asking Clean Questions** (See Appendix), can be and are useful particularly when you want to lead a project, a team, a meeting easily and well. Clean Questions request the person to consider particular aspects of their experience, without making assumptions as to the outcome of that thinking. And if they describe their experience as a metaphor, take their metaphors as an accurate description of how the world is to them and ask questions without adding in any metaphors of your own. Use Clean Questions to determine your outcome and the outcome(s) of the person(s) you're working with particularly in meetings, appraisals, and anytime you want to have a purposeful conversation!

Asking Clean Questions

The good news is that asking Clean Questions liberates you from having to come up with clever question variations.

All you have to do is ask the questions as they are written in this book, replacing the "X" with the person's exact words so as to direct their attention most appropriately.

So if you heard me saying- "it's like banging my head against a brick wall"

Or

- "I can't see the wood for the trees"

Or

- "things keep getting on top of me"

Example you could ask:

And is there anything else about that brick wall?"

Or

And what kind of wood is that wood?"

Or

"And whereabouts on top of you?"

Metaphors play a key part in the way that we speak to each other. Metaphor is not just a matter of language, not of mere words...On the contrary, human thought processes are largely metaphorical, and research shows that we use about six per minute...which works great if we all work from the same metaphorical hymn sheet.

The problem is that we don't all interpret metaphors in the same way. When I was first studying Clean Language I was describing a "circus master" my metaphor for my role as a dog trainer. I was struggling to find the right word for "circus master", so my fellow student trying to be helpful blurted out "oh...you mean like the child snatcher from chitty chitty bang bang!" As you can probably imagine, this added a very sinister connotation to my "circus master" metaphor which was not in my mind at all – until then. We both learned a lot about the power of metaphor that day!

And so you can see that if you misinterpret what other people mean and vice versa... all kinds of havoc erupts. So rather than make assumptions – ask questions!

What's Your Intention?

Whenever you use Clean Questions it's worth being aware of your intention from the outset.

Are you:

Gathering information for your own benefit?

Gathering information as a researcher?

Helping another person to become clear about something or understand themselves?

Helping another person to make a change?

The Clean process is fundamentally the same. And being aware of your intention while using Clean Questions will help to ensure you make ethical use of this important tool.

Ask Clean Questions.

Here are six ways to use Clean Questions when leading a project, a team, a department etc ...and whenever you're interacting with others.

1. Building Rapport.

You could ask:

Example 1. What's important to you about your work?

- Is there anything else that's important to you about work?

Example 2. What's important to you about losing weight?

- Is there anything else that's important to you about losing weight?

Example 3 What's important to you about becoming a coach?

- Is there anything else about X(X being their words)?

Ask the questions in any order and as many times as you like in each of the examples.

(As devised by Judy Rees, *Seven Practical Ways To Use Clean Language At Work*, March 2010, available at <http://www.xraylistening.com>)

This package was devised by Judy Rees as a way of building rapport using the "non-clean" question "What's important to you?" combined with the clean question "Is there anything else about".

2. Clarify.

When you are not sure what someone means. Rather than assuming a meaning, or attempting to mind read, check using a couple of questions.

The two most commonly used Clean Questions are very effective for clarifying exactly what someone means by what they have said. By using them, you'll reduce your chance of jumping to the wrong conclusion.

They can be used in casual conversations, in consultations and interviews of all kinds, in meetings wherever people are talking about anything.

Ask:

- Is there anything else about that X?
- What kind of X is that X?

In any order as many times as you like.

(Judy Rees, Seven Practical Ways To Use Clean Language At Work, March 2010, available at www.xraylistening.com)

3. Motivate

When you want to motivate, delegate, and encourage independent thinking in situations where you may or may not have any formal authority.

Research has shown that people are significantly more likely to achieve goals they have set for themselves than objectives imposed by someone else -even if they have agreed to them. This process is useful in situations at work for:

- Persuading colleagues to do certain tasks for you, without having any formal authority over them.
- Empowering patients to take responsibility for their health.
- Encouraging people to take ownership of their results

Ask the person:

- What would you like to have happen this week/month/consultation
- What needs to happen for X to happen?
- And can X happen?

This package was originally designed for use in slimming club meetings as it was found to be swift and effective at encouraging people to take action.

(As devised by Marian Way, Phil Swallow, and Wendy Sullivan)

4. Outcomes

To gather outcomes at the beginning of a meeting, a coaching session, an appraisal or workshop.

Ask each person in the group:

- What would you like to have happen?

The answer may be:

Example: "I want to have more understanding around a certain topic/ issue."

Then you could ask:

- What kind of understanding is that understanding?
- Is there anything else about understanding?
- What needs to happen for understanding?
- Is there anything else that needs to happen for understanding?

Ask in any order that makes sense. By asking these questions you as the leader, coach, or appraiser are finding out how best to support the individual to get what they want out of the meeting, coaching session, appraisal.

5. Planning

When devising a plan of action in relation to any goal, or meeting, and as a reflective tool.

Ask:

- What would you like to have happen?
- What kind of X (is that X)?
- Is there anything else about that (X)?
- What needs to happen for X (to happen)?
- And can X happen?

In any order that seems to make sense in the context, and as many times as you like.

6. Managing Your State

When thinking about what you personally need in order to get into a resourceful state for leading something easily and well.

The following process is for you. Your state dramatically affects your ability to lead.

It's our emotional state probably more than anything else that affects how successful we are in achieving what's important to us.

This process allows you to discover one of your personal metaphors for when you're leading at your best. As you learn more about your personal state of excellence, you will probably experience the state it represents, which can be valuable in itself. And afterwards, the metaphor may become a kind of talisman or symbol for you, helping you to get back into that ideal state more easily.

You might find it useful to find someone else to ask you the question.

Take as much time as you need to answer the question. There is no wrong or right answer.

- Step 1 Think about a time when you have been leading really well.
- Step 2 When you're leading at your best....you're... like... what? (ask this slowly)
- Step 3 What's a symbol or description that represents you when you are leading at your best.
- Step 4 Draw/ write your symbol on a piece of paper, or find an object that represents you when you're leading at your best.
- Step 5 Ask yourself (or have someone else ask you) the Clean Questions from above to develop your thinking about the symbol / picture/object further.
- Step 6 Put this symbol/ picture/ object in a place that seems right for you.

Top Tips for Success

- Prior to any situation where you are taking the lead ask yourself “what can I do to stay in a great “leading” state during the event?” Ask yourself “what kind of preparation will aid my ability to lead?” What else do I need to be successful?” When I’m leading at my best I’m... like ...what?
- When starting a project, or leading a team, consider what kind of people you will be working with, how you perceive they work at their best, and what you’ll have to do to get the most out of them.
- Talk to your colleagues about the fact you are learning Clean Language. Most people are fascinated by these ideas.
- Don’t assume that because this stuff looks simple, it’s OK to dive in at the deep end. Be aware - these questions can sometimes trigger strong emotions. Practice the questions in low-pressure situations at first.
- Be polite and respectful whenever you use Clean Language. Using the questions in a hostile way, or to judge or tease someone, is not considered to be ethical leadership or clean practice.
- Go for the good stuff!– as a leader it’s more useful to support people to move towards the vision, goal, or solution, rather than focusing too much on the problem.
- How you manage yourself in particular situations could give you the edge to differentiate yourself in such a way that others will start to notice how confident you are, how easy you make everything look, and what great results you’re getting.

Now try out the techniques!

You don’t have to wait for a serious meeting or an important event. Just try it.

And finally...

As you start to notice your own and others communication styles, and how different they can be, you can discover more effective ways of leading and engaging others.

When I discovered Clean Questions it was like being liberated from having to think of clever ways to find out information and being able to give my coaching clients space to have some time to think and find their own answers from within themselves. For you it's like...what? Learning to swim? Learning to drive?

And what difference has knowing all of this made for you? I'd love to hear your experiences – email me back at contactme@angelawatsonnlp.com

Once you've tried the questions and the process for yourself, there's more to share with you. Get in touch to go through any questions you may have or to have a free 20 minute telephone coaching session to experience the power of these questions when you're asked them by a trained Clean Language Practitioner. Why not join us at one of our Clean Foundation Courses and experience for yourself how to use Clean Questions effectively in your work.

I look forward to talking with you very soon.

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Best wishes

Angela Watson

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Useful Websites

Angela Watson www.cleanquestions.co.uk

Penny Tompkins and James Lawley www.cleanlanguage.co.uk

Marian Way www.apricotisland.com

Wendy Sullivan www.cleanchange.co.uk

Judy Rees www.xraylistening.com

Appendix:

Clean Language Questions: Devised and developed by David Grove

- What kind of X (is that X)?
- Is there anything else about (that) X?
- Where/whereabouts is X?
- That's X like what?
- Is there a relationship between X and Y?
- When X, what happens to Y?
- Then what happens? Or And what happens next?
- What happens just before X?
- Where could X come from?
- What would X like to have happen?
- What needs to happen for X?
- And can X (happen)?

