

Denmark Journal Article
Re-modelling Conflicts
John McWhirter

By constructive questioning we can usefully re-model NLP models and techniques to make this more effective. We can also re-model how we use these techniques.

I encourage you to write/email questions you have about NLP models, techniques or use of them so we can explore them together. As an example for this issue, I have detailed below some re-modelling of NLP techniques for conflict that I did over ten years ago. I have also included a few more recent patterns added for further exploration.

I have chosen conflict because it is relevant issue in re-modelling; do we stay with the safe familiar model and technique or do we upset our safety by exploring possible improvements and new development. In either case I hope you enjoy exploring and that it stimulates you into further exploration and constructive questioning.

Parting from Parts

I was never very comfortable with the adoption of the parts metaphor in NLP. I was therefore very motivated to re-model the use of parts. It is important in any re-modelling to maintain the current benefits of the existing model. There were a number of different uses of 'parts' that were substituted through the re-modelling. The result is a more consistent model that not only allowed me to do all that the parts model allowed but also a number of very useful additions in the modelling of conflicts as well as a more accurate basis for working with the 'whole person'.

Parts as a metaphor is one thing; as an embodiment of different aspects of an individual it is quite another and potentially dangerous. People are not a collection of 'parts'.

Multiple personalities are an extreme and thankfully uncommon example of the illusion of parts taken to the extreme. So do we need to use parts? My answer is no, not if we can get all the positive results some other way that is not so misleading.

The following exercise sequence will give you an experience of the difference. Firstly think of two things that you would like to do at the same time e.g. "tonight I will go out for a meal (X) and tonight I will stay in and relax (Y)". Secondly, try stating your two examples of X and Y in the three different ways below. Notice the differences.

- 1) Establish a part for each hand and express them as
"Part of me would like to X and part of me would like to Y"
- 2) Again hold these in the hand but change the expression to
"I would partly like to do X and partly like to do Y".
- 3) Change the shape of your hand so that you are pointing
"I would like to go for (direction) X and I would like to go for Y".

In 1) you will have experienced three separate entities, the two parts and you.

In 2) you will probably have experienced a feeling of fragmentation or partial commitment.

In 3) you will probably have experience a sense of one self with two desires.

The occasional use of parts will probably do little harm and clearly some good. My point is that through re-modelling we can get all the benefits with none of the dangers.

The identification of separate "parts" of a person is a confusion of value (like to, want to, need to) with identity (is, my, our, name, thing). This is a common error, which is identified in other areas of NLP but was never applied here.

There are many useful uses of parts. 'Part of', as in leg of chair or body; 'Apart from', as in away from; 'Part', as in to separate or to leave; 'Partly', as in portion or one of a selection

Interestingly, a more extensive the use of General Semantics by Bandler and Grinder would have, if applied to this use of part, clarified this error of feeling of value or desire and identity.

History of my Re-Modelling of Conflict Resolution

It is nearly 20 years since I started using NLP ideas, skills and techniques. My previous training included linguistics, family therapy and Gestalt. I took immediately to the meta-model and to the patterns outlined in Magic I and II and Changing with Families. The identification of incongruence and conflicts utilising Satir categories was very useful for me in integrating different areas of therapy.

In Magic II there are a number of ways of sorting and working with incongruity. When I later attended training in NLP these weren't included. Instead one technique, the Visual Squash or Conflict Resolution technique, was all that was used.

Traditional NLP Visual Squash Technique:

There are now a few variations in this technique. The basic pattern is as follows:

1. Identify incongruence or conflict and separate into parts
2. Place one part on each hand and develop a full sensory representation (picture, sound and feeling)
3. 'Chunk up' to identify the positive intention
4. For each side develop an appreciation of the intention of the other side and of the benefit of integration
5. Establish an agreement to integrate
6. Bring the hands together and integrate
7. Test the integration (the result of the visual squashing together). Re-do if required
8. Bring back into the body and future pace

I used this technique for years and taught it to many people. This technique was often used in association with "Parts". I gradually became aware that the "resolution"

which clients attained sometimes didn't last very long. I checked this out with colleagues and other trainers, and those that had followed up on their clients reported similar results.

An insight which I had was stimulated by the brain hemisphere distinction in Magic II together with a detailed study of a number of examples of conflict resolution. This insight only occurred when I changed from using 'Parts' to 'Directions' as a way of describing polarities. My realisation was that two different types of conflicts were occurring.

Re-modelling of Consistency, Congruence, Dilemmas and Conflicts

The assumption in Magic II is that different messages, if they are not compatible, are incongruent and that incongruence is a bad thing. Once this assumption is accepted then it's a straight forward implication that incongruence should be changed to congruence. For example, if I want to go out for a meal tonight and I'd also like to stay in and rest then this would be considered incongruence in the old NLP model. If I assume that human beings are single channel processors, that they can only think or feel one thing at a time, then this is correct. I totally disagree with this. I can have many "desires" at any single time - we all do. We get used to usually only choosing one of them and this can give the illusion of only one thing. If we have difficulty choosing then this is often considered to be a conflict and requiring resolution. Because there is uncertainty and indecision this can become associated with incongruence.

Below I have provided a summary representation of seven patterns of conflict. I will explore two of them and leave you to explore the others. The variety of patterns can provide additional insight into complex situations and patterns such as binds and double binds.

1. Indecision:

A direction / course of
Action is wanted / needed
But no content is generated.



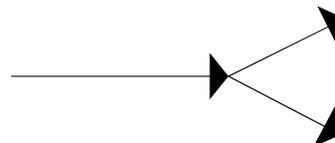
2. Selection:

Same overall direction
Same alternative with two
or more examples to select from.



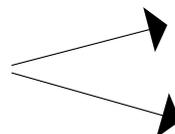
3. Dilemma:

Same overall direction
Two or more alternative
Options to select from.



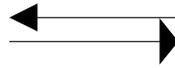
4. Conflicts:

Two opposing directions



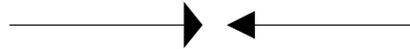
5. Conflicting Levels:

Action is inconsistent with other levels of processing
e.g. behaviour with values or identity.



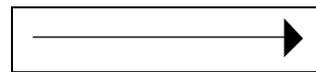
6. Fear:

Anticipated consequences are inconsistent or undesirable.



7. Compatibility:

Direction doesn't fit.
Action incompatible with others, environment, etc.



I want to concentrate on the two patterns of dilemma and conflict as these were the historically the first re-modelled patterns of conflict. A dilemma is where there is more than one option for going in one direction, e.g., Indian food or Chinese food tonight? A conflict is when there are two directions, e.g., go out for meal or save money. The crucial difference is that in a dilemma all options will get you what you want at a higher level. With conflicts the more you go for one, the less you get of the other.

In my experience conflicts occur consistently between issues of development and issues of safety. These are two crucial concerns for our survival. We constantly need to develop, even more so now that the world is changing so quickly. We also need to stay safe as we develop. Development is more often processed by the conscious mind and is often linguistic and visual as it is about ideas and achievement. Safety is often an unconscious check and is experienced as a feeling.

These two patterns require different interventions. The visual squash, or 'conflict resolution', ironically is ideal for dilemmas but not for conflicts. This technique "chunks" them up to a level of sameness and therefore brings them back together. With this accomplished the client can then proceed more easily.

A conflict involves issues regarding safety and development and thus can be masked by using the visual squash technique because the two issues are not of the same type. When they are chunked up to 'sameness' the feeling of conflict is masked but is not resolved and so will re-occur later. For example, if you take any conflict like getting your tax returns done or watching TV and chunk both up until you connect with 'a oneness with the universe' you will find that you no longer feel the conflict. The need to sort the tax return out hasn't gone away. The conflicting issue is still there whether you are feeling or not. That is why it will surface as soon as you come back down to earth. There is clearly a danger in inducing a drug type high feeling instead of tackling real life issues with the obvious ecological concerns.

Sometimes the visual squash will stimulate the client to resolve the conflict but it is by no means guaranteed and I found that this was the cause of the inconsistent results. In 1987 this was the pattern I developed for dealing with conflicts. It utilises the

sorting and chunking portion of the visual squash but accomplishes the integration in a different way. I named it the "Hemispheric Integration" technique.

Hemisphere Integration Technique

1. Identify both 'sides' as in Visual Squash. Use of sides or 'hands' can be used, e.g., "on the one hand I want this but on the other hand I want that".
2. Establish full sensory involvement as in Visual Squash
3. Chunk up to level of safety and development. The actual words are not important. Other synonymous words will do, such as doing things, protecting myself, etc.
4. For each side: Establish need for other attention
 - a) Safety: Example text: *"In a world that's changing, you are physically changing, you need to develop safety if you are to stay safe."*
 - b) Development: Example text: *"How long will you continue to develop if you don't stay safe?"*
5. Integration. Use each side to motivate the need for an integrated ability to respond.
Example text:
"So now you realise that you need to develop, you can develop safety and develop safely and that you need to be safe as you develop and to be safe in your safety"
(repeat links, reversing the order to reinforce)
"... and you can let your hands come together on their own as your unconscious integrates your thinking and feeling so that you can do what's best for you to develop safely. And in the future when you feel one of these concerns it will remind you that you are most effective at doing things when your thinking and feeling is integrated."
6. Internalisation: As in Visual Squash instruct that the hands come back to the chest and to take a deep breath and bring in the feeling of integration
7. Extension: Repeat the deep breath once for
 - a) Spreading the feeling into the past to appreciate the occurrences of conflict and to appreciate the benefits of being integrated and
 - b) Again spreading the feeling into the future anticipating the benefits of an integrated approach to life.

In using the Hemisphere Integration, Safety and Development are directions to go toward. Some clients experienced the 'away from' feelings connected to the directions of safety and development. These are feelings of 'Fear', the awareness of danger, and what is best called 'Angst', the stagnant lack of meaningful development. This led to a major new model for using feelings, the FADS model.

I hope that this stimulates you to constructively question other areas of NLP. In future articles I will outline some other results of my re-modelling as well as respond to any questions about any of the techniques, models, etc. that are sent in. I look forward to exploring and learning more about NLP together with you.