

Rapport: Re-Modelling NLP Part Eight: Performing Change

“The deed is all, and not the glory.”

Goethe

Every type of intervention will be explicitly or implicitly structured and designed to function in relation to the understanding of the therapist. The therapists’ understanding is their epistemology. Our epistemology will dictate how we form an understanding of what the client is doing as well as how and why they are doing it. It will also be the basis for deciding how to proceed; what kind of relationship to have with the client and what kind of changes to work toward. The epistemology behind a modelling methodology is very different from the epistemology behind a techniques based approach.

I have outlined some of the DBM re-modelling of NLP models and skills in previous articles. I will return to models in the next article. In this article I want to present an example of Developmental Behavioural Modelling applied as the basis for “performing change”. This example is a piece of work from nearly six years ago. Since that time DBM has been developed much further with many new models and distinctions.

It is relatively easy to get clients to feel good at the end of a therapy session. This though is no indication, let alone evidence, of useful or lasting change. The reason for choosing this particular transcript is that it includes follow-up feedback from the subject during the six-year period since the change work. As the aim of quality change work is lasting change this allows us to check how effective this educational modelling approach has been.

Systemic Counselling and Consultancy Transcript

This transcript is from a Systemic Counselling training session at the beginning of 1995 and is used with the full permission of the subject. The transcript highlights the differences between a complete modelling approach and a techniques’ approach. While there have been major new developments since 1995 (some more will be included in the next article) this transcript demonstrates the ability to respond to the subjects needs at many levels, from the physical and sensory through to meaning of life. It should be clear from the beginning that traditional NLP techniques are not appropriate for the presenting limitation.

The background to the session:

In the particular session I was exploring a model that distinguishes between difficulties, problems and limitations. Each member of the group had been asked to offer an example of a limitation. I had already worked with a few examples when the subject offered her example.

The Subject:

The impression made by the subject at this time was of a likeable, intelligent, sensitive person who was timid, shy, emotionally reactive, with some health difficulties, including periods of psoriasis. I first met her at an ANLP conference and then through her participation in an NLP Master Practitioner training (she had completed Practitioner training with another organization) and in the first year of the Systemic Counselling and Consultancy training. I had been hoping to get the opportunity to work with more central issues with her.

The change work:

The following transcript is a verbatim account of responding to what the client is doing and “Re-Modelling” together. Knowing what to offer as new skills derives from a detailed knowledge of subjective processing and some of the models outlined in previous articles. The re-modelling is a form of “teaching” and is only effective if it fits what the subject needs and wants. The subject is the one who ultimately makes sense of it and will continue to if it is useful. While helping her to feel more confident might have been a response I would possibly helped her make in previous years, the re-modelling I am teaching offers a deeper and more lasting change. It is a change in processing not just a change in product.

In change work I use my understanding of subjective processing with the clients’. Starting with their current processing I work with them to find optimal ways of processing that will work better for them in the long term.

“If the client could they would”
McWhirter

The NLP presupposition that we all do the best we can is very helpful, especially if taken a step further. If someone seeks help then it is likely that they can’t do something or that they won’t (with good reason in their own terms). Obviously not all issues are experienced or described simply as “I can’t” or “I won’t”. It is a useful simplification that highlights different types of response required from the therapist if they are to facilitate useful change. These patterns are applicable in all areas of life not just in the therapy situation.

If the issue is WON’T then the feelings will likely be nervousness, fear, worry, and / or anxiety. A useful role for the therapist is to help identify issues that are resulting in this reluctance. The FADS model (Re-modelling, article 3) is an excellent tool to help the client explore their own issues and to appropriately resolve them.

If the issue is CAN'T then some learning is required. The role of the therapist is now one of teacher / facilitator. The following transcript is an example of responding to an "I can't" limitation.

The feedback from subject:

6 weeks later and nearly 6 years later.

Advice for reading:

A live session is obviously more than just the spoken word. Important information was available to me in terms of background of the subject and in the subject's physical behaviour and tonal responses. The spoken word is also sometimes difficult to represent in text in terms of speed, tone, overlap of speech, etc. Even with these constraints it is possible to follow the key elements of the interaction because the facilitation was conducted dominantly through language. The longer examples of suggestions given are often spoken slowly in response to the subjects accepting them, processing them. As this involves a lot of unconscious processing the subject often adopts a light trance state as they process the suggestions. Instead of lots of dots to show gaps commas have been used to keep the text together. Longer pauses than usual will reflect the slower speed of delivery.

Transcript: "Making sense of life".

February 1995

Subject: *(pause) Well, it's as if I can't make sense of life, and I can't make sense of my life.*

John: *OK. What's important about making sense of life?*

Subject: *(pause) I can't get beyond there has to be ...*

John: *(Watching external indicators of internal processing). You're getting close to it. Just stay with it for a moment. What does it mean about you, if you can't get the answer?*

Subject: *(pause)*

John: *Stay with it a moment more. Notice, concentrate on the answer.*

Subject: *It means, it means, that I can't make a difference, and I, therefore I have no value.*

John: *OK. What's important about an individual having value? (pause) And notice that takes some of the emotion away. (long pause)*

Subject: *I don't know. At a sort of selfish level, I suppose it means there'll be, that... I can't, I don't know... I suppose it's that people will want them, people will accept them, love them. I don't know.*

John: *Now, if people don't love them, what's wrong with that?*

Subject: *That's like being in outer space, unconnected to anything.*

John: *OK, what's wrong with not being connected to anything?*

Subject: *It seems to come back to no meaning, and not being able to make sense of even yourself, no reflection, nothing to make contact with, to know yourself through, to, (long pause) it's just, nothing, it's, em, it's, it's kind of a picture, it's black, and it's cold, and it's frightening.*

John: *OK. Close your eyes for a moment, and notice how you feel sitting in the chair. What colour's the feeling sitting in the chair?*

Subject: *What colour is?*

John: *The feeling, of sitting in the chair. The feeling of sitting in the chair.*

Subject: *Sitting in the chair.*

John: *The feeling you have.*

Subject: *Um, that's, that's more a sort of orange red, and that's more flesh coloured, that side of the spectrum.*

John: *OK, good. And how do you look, sitting in the chair?*

Subject: *(pause) Em, a bit, flat, a person sitting, a bit flat.*

John: *OK, and how do you sound, sitting in the chair?*

Subject: *I sound, calmer, quieter.*

John: *Now, how many words can you come up with, that can be used, about yourself sitting in the chair? You're smiling more now, what words?*

Subject: *Em. (pause) My feet are on the floor, and muscles are making contact with the cushion, curve of the chair. Generally all right.*

John: *Now, as you see yourself, sitting in the room, how do you connect with the room?*

Subject: *Through the chair. Em.*

John: *What about through the air? The chair connects you physically to the room, but you're in the room, just as much as the chair's in the room.*

Subject: *Yes. Yes.*

John: *Just notice how you were connecting yourself though, within a point of contact, an area of contact, physically.*

Subject: *There's quite a nice feeling of air, all around my skin. There's the pressure.*

John: *So you're always somewhere, and that somewhere's available to your senses, to verify your immediate experience.*

Subject: *Yes.*

John: *Now there's other meanings you could attach to it, meanings of, comfort, happiness, meanings of belongingness, meanings of visiting, there's a whole variety of other things you can, add. And, it doesn't take away the primary experience of noticing how you're feeling, looking, sounding.*

So, you're always grounded in this experience, and the other meanings that are there are variable. They're more conceptual, they are chunked up into a different type of meaning. You could be sitting comfortably while visiting, while at home. While intruding you can be sitting just as comfortably. So the primary existing in the world can be very secure. While the rest is very open, and in flux. Now, take away all that meaning while you're here and now. And just notice you can be comfortable feeling yourself here and now. You don't have to have any immediate purpose or meaning. You can just be comfortable being, connected to the world. And it's good to have a little relief from concerns about reasons and purpose. Just let that go for a moment. Concentrate on feeling yourself sitting, breathing easily, increasingly easily. That's right.

We're going to take a few moments now. Really notice what it's like just, relaxing, not concerned about anything else. Except, sitting, breathing, being comfortable here, in the world. We can go back to how you'd like to be in the world differently, in a moment. Not yet though. I want you to feel more, familiar, with sitting comfortably. Comfortably sitting. Because there's one thing we need to do before adding, those higher abstractions. And that is making sense of yourself first of all. Before trying to make sense of what's beyond you, at the moment.

So, beginning with your feet, and feel them, and your legs. Continue to add, increasingly more parts of your body, integrating them all together. And really feeling yourself comfortably in yourself. (pause) And I want you to notice now, just how much you can be aware, of being you, that you can reflect and connect with yourself. And enjoy the feeling of being here, now, comfortably, solidly. Aware of where and how you connect with the world, physically through the chair and the floor, physically with the air all

around you. Every little movement you make, changes the world around you, in different ways. And the solidity of your own existence. And the fluidity, you can move physically, you can move your senses. And, you can move your language. And the meanings in the words. It's all based and grounded, centred in you. So now as you begin to move your attention out into the world, you maintain this sense of solidity, while noticing the meanings can be varied, your solidity never varies. You're always you, even when things are, meaningless around you, you're full of meaning, because you exist here and now, taking comfort in that sense of solidity of existence, while wondering, just what this means, and that means.

It's OK that things can be in flux and move, just as it's crucial that your body moves, so you can breathe, and navigate round the world. So it's important that meanings can move, so that change is possible. And meanings can be grasped, can be seen or heard, or left alone. You don't have to hold them in your mind for them to exist. You can let them go, and attend to them when it's useful. Sometimes not finding them, but that's OK too. Because when you look into darkness, that's what you see. You can still hear, and feel comfortable. And, you can add your own pictures in the darkness. You can brighten from the inside. So you can create the meanings, and make them happen. So you can think, comfortable, and make yourself comfortable sitting here now, creating meaning from the inside out, seeing that that's possible for you, and making it happen.

Now you could have thought, comfortable, and seen nothing, and become frustrated that nothing happened. That's what you used to do. That was waiting for sense. Now, we're exploring making sense of things. And you can notice, does that comfortably connect with how you're feeling because sometimes you might think comfortable and you're not. You might notice you have to shift, and make movements, to make the comfortable real. (pause) That's right. And through time, different shifts will be important. Now making sense of your life as a whole requires, your life as a whole, tracking it through time. And notice there's too much there to see and feel all at once. So you have to simplify and generalise, abstract, get a sense, and begin with a sense of being solid in the world.

And now it's how you're being now, how you have been, how you will be. Comfortably being in the world. And becoming more and more of what you want to create. If you wait for meaning, there is none. Because meaning is human creation. If nobody creates it for you, there is none. And if you create it for yourself, that's a fantasy, and if you apply a fantasy, you make your dreams come true, by doing them, making things happen. And that's part of becoming different, and the world becoming different, and more full of meaning that you've helped create. In every little way. Every second of the day, is the first opportunity you have, to create and change, and develop through time.

Now, look into the darkness. Realising now, that you can create anything light you want. You can illuminate that darkness through dreams and daydreams. Through dreams at night, through fantasies, and creating pleasantries. Or you could create horrors, but there'd be little point in that. Or you could keep the darkness and enjoy your mind being a blank. Or you could change the darkness to a blank whiteness or a blueness. Buddhists like to meditate with a background of blue. Others like to meditate with all the

lights off, in the darkness. So darkness has no meaning. Darkness is just lack of light. So you can add, whatever's useful for you, sounds and feelings are there. And whatever will lighten it for you, you can do. And you can play with meaning now, more easily, noticing which, fits with the world more than others, knowing that it has to be updated, because the world's constantly changing. And if you get meaning from others, it may not be accurate, any more. Your own meaning may be more accurate now. But your own meaning may be sometimes out of date, or lacking a closeness of fit with the world.

It's important to check, and update and there's things to update in your own understanding of yourself, and others. And the meaning in the world can be simplified, to, 'the world is.' And the nice thing about saying 'the world is', is that's all you need as a sentence, and then you can chunk down and add things to the end of that sentence. 'The world is comfortable now.' Equally you can say that 'I am' and leave it there, and that's good. Then you can add to that. 'I am comfortable, I am sitting.' you can extend it out. 'I am sitting in the room now.'

And you can add other meanings, evaluations. There's a danger they become disjointed and disconnected from the primary experiences. Everything should be verifiable in sensory experience. The most dangerous things are not those that are senseless, they are those that are too much sense. Non-sense. Nonsense doesn't necessarily means the lack of sense. It can mean the wrong type of sense being used. If somebody says 'that's nonsense', it doesn't mean that they didn't hear anything, see anything, or feel anything. It means what they saw, heard or felt doesn't fit with how the world is. It needs checking out, connecting with how things are. In your experience. Now, look into the darkness, and what do you make of it now?

Subject: It becomes much more of a peaceful night, I see stars, and, I know that I can change it if I want to, in my mind, make it, or even feel different. Different landscapes and colours. It's a different feel to it. it's, vastly different, like it can be quite comforting, restful.

John: Good. And really notice that you're always connected to the world, no matter what meaning's there.

Subject: Sorry?

John: You're always connected.

Subject: Mm hm.

John: But there's are different types of connections. Some are more useful and enjoyable than others. But they're additional connections to the primary ones. You can always stay safe and secure with the primary connections while exploring other ones, connections with friends, family, connections with yourself.

Subject: It seems a bit odd, connections with myself.

John: *Mm hm. Now, those are the ones to concentrate on in the near future. Just to solidify them, and be more comfortable in making sense of yourself. Creating sense for yourself. And then extend that out, with others. (pause)*

Good. Keep your eyes closed and extend your awareness out into the room, so you're aware of the others in the room, the space in the room. So you can connect with them, without seeing them. They're always there whether you see them or not. Somewhere. Just because you can't see things doesn't mean they're not there. It depends how you look at them. You can remember how they looked before, as an approximation of how they might look now. Some of them are still awake. Although that might be hard to remember, how they looked when they were awake. And that's OK too. When you're ready, open your eyes, comfortably.

Now, coming back to, the original limitation. How did you phrase it when you had it originally?

Subject: *Er. (pause) I can't remember it very easily. It seems a long time ago. (pause) Em. Yes. Originally, it, there was something, when you started talking to me today, about this pattern, having learnt it, and then connected to all sorts of other things. (pause) And, then that affecting, em, whatever, having to cope with it in (long pause) I suppose it, what it led to was, em, how I saw myself, in the world, what that meant, What that time in my life meant in relation to the world, other people in the world as a whole, through time. (long pause) There's a different feeling now as if it comes from me, instead of outward coming in, it starts from here, sensory based, and I can check it out like this. A sense of, contacting with the air even. There's a certain sense of freedom in it.*

John: *Good.*

Subject: *And because all those molecules are all around. All the time.*

John: *Good. And it will have other knock on effects, physically as well. Good.*

Feedback from subject: 6 weeks later.

Subject: *It sounds very simplistic, but being more in my senses, and having very much to do with a sense of belonging wherever I am. What I had before, it's a bit like a feeling of a witness, not so much taking part in things. And now the word 'centre' has a lot of meanings to me, and, a lot of implications as well, because it's like I've become the centre of my life in a way that's right, it's easier to be sensorarily much more external, and to join in with things, bounding is very different, being with people's very different. And, it's a bit like being a child again. In a very nice way, enjoying tiny sensations, and like it's much more in time, a big shift in processing, like, more external focus. I hadn't really realised how I was noticing it, with people, voicing my opinions more often, and just*

noticing I was joining in, and it was all right to do that. Being much more in time as well, and chunking down in a way that I didn't normally, so that I didn't have to be searching for meaning. That meaning could come from my ongoing experience, and enjoying that. And sometimes just enjoying that, even though I had been chunking right up to my life as a whole means something, and where as before I would always have felt that it was all right for somebody else to enjoy their experience, it was actually all right for me to do it. That was new. It's very difficult to put into words, because there is so much, there is lots of difference, in lots of way. Very significant ways as well. Not attaching a sense of belonging to my family. That was something that I think I needed to keep hidden from myself. It was like a life line, so I had to, keep it, keep it hidden, and now, it's like, it's all right for me to be whoever I am. And my values don't have to be the same as my families, and it makes it easier to move away, to separate from it, different ways, because geographically I live very close, which is something I have been thinking of for some time, and it's going to be easier to do that. I've been enjoying things a lot more. My skin feels better, it's early days yet, but I've noticed that my skin feels smoother. And, I've found things easier, here on the course, listening, participating, and socialising.

Feedback from Subject – September 2000

I got a major shift in how I experienced the world from this piece. At the time, I particularly noticed a greater range across most, if not all, of the Processing Preferences - much more balance.

Going home that evening my senses were open, bringing greater immediacy and aliveness to everything down to the smallest detail, and a simultaneous sense of awe and wonder at the vast scale and rich complexity of our planet. Most significant to me was that I felt connected, a sense of belonging, that I could play a part in things – which has had far-reaching consequences because of course it fundamentally changed how I was.

It was a dramatic contrast to having, for some years, daily felt somewhat isolated as if interacting through a vacuum. I had often felt uneasy and nervy at night, threatened by vague images (imagination) outside in the dark. In that state I felt overwhelmed and it was hard to make sense of things. That night I drifted peacefully into sleep comforted by the night, realizing that people are (I was) at risk far less than (I) sometimes feel.

Among many changes over the following year, my sense of belonging in the world developed. I became stronger and more active, and this has been ongoing. I had flashes of insight and slower dawns as more things began to make sense to me.

A lot has happened since then, and now life events have combined with other Sensory Systems training that I have done either side of this particular piece of work with John. It is difficult to attribute subsequent shifts to any one model or exercise. Some I can identify specifically if I stop to think about it, but mostly one may have seeded something,

another developed it or offered new perspectives, different insights – sometimes instantaneously, sometimes more gradually through time. The change is continuing – because these trainings provided tools/material which I have been able to use to deal with and learn from situations/events instead of just feeling affected in a crumpled, confused, often overwhelmed, ineffective sort of way.

I have initiated other things, set off in new directions – some very much with the help of my husband or at his instigation – but nonetheless that I would not previously have attempted. Much of this has been mutually positively reinforcing, creating a virtuous circle with each step helping other current and future ones – and possibly revision of some retrospective ones too. But I don't think I could have managed it from where (how) I was before this piece of work.

These days when problems arise or I am simply confused, I can handle it better (not necessarily wonderfully, but better). There are ways to think things through and work out possible solutions or just take a break from things – a breathing meditation is really helpful sometimes. There is still much to sort out, but much less of it, and I feel much steadier about doing it. It's easier to see how some things came to be, how I contributed to problems in the past, how interactions are going along in the present. In the case of life's knottier, messier dilemmas with no clear solution, I am better at coming to terms with that, accepting that I don't necessarily have to act (I used to feel compelled) to change things. There is still a lot of mystery – which is great – but things I need to understand make much more sense now – even if it takes a bit of time figuring some of them out. Things are much cleaner and clearer. Communication is more comfortable. Life is much more fun and far more peaceful.

Concluding Comments

I hope that you enjoyed reading this example of “performing change”. I want to thank the subject for sharing her life issues in the original training, for giving permission for them to be shared here and for the clear and helpful feedback. It was a pleasure working with her and to know that she has continued to build on her learning. For me it is an example of the benefit and joy possible through exploring and learning together. It is a central aspect of my work as a consultant (therapist) and trainer working from a total modelling approach. I learn as much and often more than my clients do from the interaction. This is another aspect of the developmental part of Developmental Behavioural Modelling. There is always more! I am interested in your comments. Contact me at the address below.

Next article: Organising Change: Models and skills used to organise our performing of change.

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John McWhirter can be contacted at:
Sensory Systems Training
162 Queens Drive
Queens Park
Glasgow G42 8QN
Phone: 0141 424 4177
Fax: 0141 424 4199
Email: johnm@sensorysystems.co.uk