

Rapport: Re-Modelling NLP Part Nine: *Organising Change*

The wise only possess ideas; the greater part of mankind are possessed by them.

Coleridge

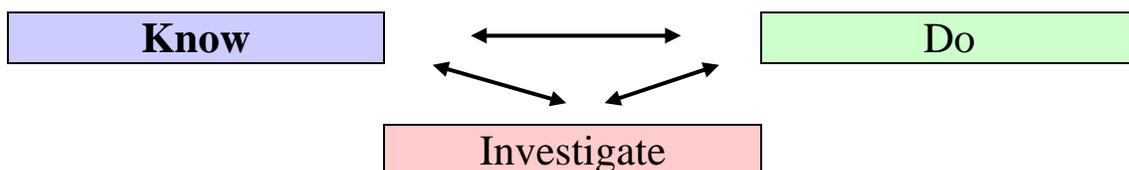
Our ideas are the basis of all that we do and therefore our ideas regarding change will be the basis for organising specific changes. I introduced, in a previous article, the model below. This model can be used to understand what the client is doing and also for organising our own changes. Becoming more skilled is only partly about doing things more skillfully; it is also about quality investigation and accurate and useful knowledge. Through 24 years of working therapeutically I have amassed a lot of useful experience. My understanding of many life issues and processes make it easier to quickly understand how clients are experiencing difficulty. My skill has been greatly enhanced through a deeper understanding of the modelling process and the finer distinctions that Developmental Behavioural Modelling (DBM) supplies.

In this article I will outline four different types of change that can be used to organise the changes we make. A transcript will demonstrate how I used these in a piece of change work.

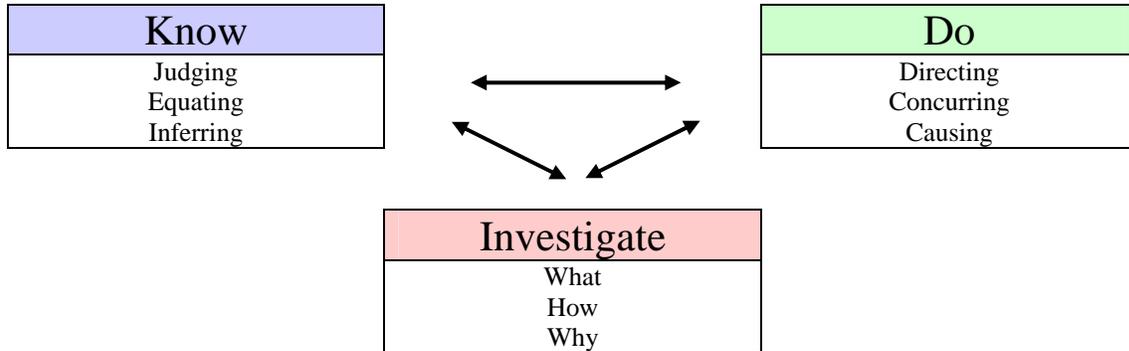
DBM KNOWING – DOING - INVESTIGATING

In traditional NLP the emphasis is on the doing; what the client is feeling, doing, and thinking and how to change this. We have extended this to include all three areas, Doing, Knowing and Investigation. In Part Two I outlined questions for investigating Knowing and Doing at Level II below. In Part Five I introduced a model using the investigating in Level II.

Level I



Level II



In Part Six I outlined some of my re-modelling of change. In this article I will add to the change model some of my more recent developments that extend it.

Many traditional therapies operate only out of a remedial model of change. Remedial change is problem based and aims to "remedy" - to fix things. This is often consistent with the desires of people who are suffering. NLP added greatly by extending the types of change to include generative change. Generative change focuses on adding useful resources and skills. It is not about fixing things, though things often improve after generative changes. If you want to compare these two then Part Six of this series has some exercises that you might enjoy.

Further remodelling has led me to add two more types of change to this list. These are Developmental and Life Learning.

Developmental Change:

Developmental change is focused on the developmental process as well as difficulties and issues stemming from it. Issues may arise from previous or current life stages and changes are designed to assist the transition to the next stage.

For example, when I worked with children who were not attending school we had two main approaches depending on their age. For children with a number of years schooling yet to complete we worked remedially to assist their return to school. For those who only had a few months schooling to complete we worked with them in relation to the next life stage, leaving school, getting a job or further education. Sometimes this also meant getting them back to school in order to practise for a work routine or to complete qualifications necessary for the job or education placement desired.

I have found the work of Milton Erickson to be a great inspiration in this area.

Life Learning Change:

What we learn about life will be the set-up for all that we do as well as being a potential joy in its own right. Our thirst for knowledge is immense and the practical consequences of poor or inaccurate knowledge are also immense.

Life learning can be completed in any situation. Situations of change are particularly useful as the changes themselves are indications of difference. Life learning is therefore often made after a change. Therapeutically new life learning is sometimes required before useful changes can be made.

Older insight based therapies sometimes produced this type of change but were often limited because they imposed a theory onto the situation rather than learning from or about it. Also they were not building practically on the other changes. The potential for new Life Learning about the process of change itself will be greater when changes to the problem are occurring rather than when the client is in the stuck state of the problem.

Types of Change	
Developmental	Life Learning
Remedial	Generative

In the transcript below these models of change are used to organise useful changes that assist a student to make an important change and to add additional useful learning. The issue is an example of a common experience; that of reaching a conclusion about people or life that reduces our pleasure while operating as a limiting basis for future interactions.

Transcript: August 2000

This transcript is taken from a Systemic Counselling and Consultancy training. I am responding to a participant while presenting “Types of Change” as part of the training. The participant speaks English as a second language. Her comprehension of English is excellent. The transcript is used with the full permission of the subject.

W: But sometimes learning ruins the whole system inside because ...

J: It does what to the whole system, sorry?

W: I find that now a few weeks ago I learned something, and in a way I find that it ruins many other things in my life, and I don't know what to learn ...

J: It ruins?

W: I can tell you about the case if you want. It's a matter about making a work in a club, and people take very good care of the boy and his family for years and then

they have cheated, economically the club. We have done a lot of work with them as a family and so on and that is very unpleasant because we are many people who have been doing good work among these people and I don't know what to do to it because of course in some ways I will still be the same positive person to new people and to children and families so until now I don't know what to learn from it.

J: Okay, now is that a situation where you haven't yet learnt something, or that what you've learnt you don't like.

W: I don't like what I've learnt.

J: Okay.

W: And what consequences do I have to make in my feelings and my thought on what I've learnt. I don't like people cheating me.

J: Okay. Now this is nice actually, because you have the collapsing together of a couple of values – the value in helping, the value in relation to anyone cheating you and when those two get together it results in the state you're describing and it's what the consequence that would have both from the present to the future and from the present to the past. What does it mean about what you have done starts becoming questioned. What does it mean about the future gets questioned so it destabilises things that were stable before...

W: Yes.

J: ...and the danger in that situation is that you reach some negative conclusions of people like that are a waste of time. Often we relate to people as if they have to be perfect and helping them in improving and giving will make them nice people. You get this a lot in charities and a lot of support work, particularly volunteers in systems that are well-meaning and want to help people are open to that kind of disappointment because there can be sometimes a naïve sense, and I'm not saying you are in this case but, there can be a naïve sense of "if you're nice to someone then that should be causal, that should change them and make them nice" when there's nothing in that at all. They might be grateful but it still doesn't stop them taking advantage of the world if people are in a difficult situation. And there are also elements of what I was describing the other day that an expectation is a demand of getting something back. If I have given I should get niceness back, I shouldn't get anything bad back. But again in terms of a pairing there's a "give and take" pairing being used and if I give then they should give back. So when you place, for instance, their cheating as what they're giving you back, which is usually what happens in that case, it is a major disruption. If you and others have given them help and what they have given you back is cheating that increases the difference the conflict between the two.

W: *[W. has been nodding in agreement] And it really increases this because we have been living in the same co-house for ten years and in this co-house there are two other persons from the same kayaking club and all three of us go out and are doing a lot and now we can see they have also cheated us socially ... when you live so close together it's just like undermining a social community too. So it is not alone in the club it is also at home where we have been eating and partying and everything through ten years.*

J: *O.K. now, just for curiosity, just to check what happens, think about when you're socialising with them, when you were giving them attention and attended to them and they'd also be attending to you, so get a sense that that was balanced.*

W: *No.*

J: *No? Were they not attending to you at all?*

W: *They were but it was not in balance. They were very strict in rules and structure - school teachers [laughter from group]. We have a lot of meetings in order to rule this community and they have always been very strict in how to make the rules and whether we are doing as we have to do and at the same time they have been sitting on the money.*

J: *So at some point they didn't stick to the rules, did they?*

W: *No, they did not at all.*

J: *Which thankfully shows some flexibility [laughter from group].*

W: *Behind this has given shelter from not sticking to the rules.*

J: *So coming back to the.....when you think then of that social part and you think of them following rules and you're not, you notice a difference?*

W: *Yes.*

J: *When you think of the kayak club and the situation in you are doing your bit and they're doing their bit is there also a difference there?*

W: *Yes. They don't do their bit. They are always missing.*

J: *Okay so that was the same.*

W: *Yes with the boy and the girl too in another club.*

J: *Okay so you notice there is a consistency there.*

W: *Yes. Consistency what does that mean?*

J: *It's the same.*

W: *Yes it's the same as going over and over and over again.*

J: *Okay so that's been there...*

W: *Yes.*

J: *...so when it comes to this money bit is that a difference or is that more of the same.*

W: *No it's the same but it's another material. It's money you see, another thing. It's, like here, I can see this is this money they've been taking out of the community and the kayaking club and the other club much more money than they give.*

J: *So looking at it now, you can see that it's the same kind of thing ...*

W: *This is a pattern.*

J: *Yeah but you're responding differently to the content.*

W: *Yes, I'm awake now, where I also know that they are taking out the money.*

J: *Because it's money you're responding to it differently?*

W: *No, not because it's money but because here I can see well that it is wrong because they go and break the rules about they had to pay for one year and they go and make appointments with the cashier only to pay half. But at the same time they had all these advantages that has cost so much. So they are much more out of the content, the money than they should have.*

J: *Okay. Now if you pay attention to them, they're doing more of the same.*

W: *Yes in the social, with feelings, as in money, yes.*

J: *Yeah. You are judging it differently because you can judge the content differently.*

W: *Yes that's right.*

J: *So you're doing something different now.*

W: *Yeah, okay.*

J: *They've been doing the same kinds of things before.*

W: *Yeah.*

J: *Now, knowing what you know now..*

W: *Yes.*

J: *...would you have done the things you did in the past differently? Knowing that you didn't know so clearly because they weren't doing it with money they were doing it with other things? Was it reasonable to react the way you did in the past?*

W: *Hmm. Yes and no, in the context when I was there I found it was okay but now I don't find it okay I would have done something else.*

J: *Okay, now if you knew then what you know now you would have done something else.*

W: *Yes.*

J: *But knowing now that you didn't know any better then do you think what you did was reasonable?*

W: *No.*

J: *Okay in what way is it not reasonable?*

W: *I would have..because...It was not reasonable because they were doing it on purpose. They send their children for camps without giving them money and they owe money, spare money for this camp and at first the boy and the girl and they don't pay the amounts they have to pay for the camp as all the others pay. Its not much money.*

J: *Okay so you knew that in the past.*

W: *I did know that. I gave just my money for ice cream and things like that and now afterwards I see that I would not have done that now when I know what I know.*

J: *Okay, what I'm asking you is, knowing that you didn't know that is it reasonable. So giving them money because you didn't know the circumstances was it reasonable to do what you did?*

W: *Yes it was reasonable to do it.*

J: Okay now are you pleased that you were doing it? well intended and it wasn't your fault you didn't know.

W: Yes.

J: Well intended? And it wasn't your fault you didn't know.

W: No.

J: So you were doing the right thing given the circumstances.

W: Yes.

J: Later it turned out that the circumstances were not as you thought.

W: Yeah.

J: Okay. Now at that point it is important not to go back and give yourself a bad time for having done what you did. You were doing, clearly, very well with the knowledge you had.

W: Yeah.

J: Later on you find out something more and often when that happens we give ourselves a bad time of "I should've done that differently" because we take that knowledge back to the past as if we knew that and still did what we did but you didn't know.

W: No.

J: So it's important not to contaminate the past with new knowledge but to appreciate that you did a good thing and you were clear in what you were doing and pleased with what you were doing. Now, into the future is where you need to do things differently. That's where to make the changes not in the past because that's gone but if you think hmmm in those circumstances could you, if that type of circumstance happens again, could you investigate or enquire to find out more about what's going on.

W: Yes.

J: Is it possible to find out more?

W: Yes. I will do that another time. I will be able to read the signals much earlier and I will be clear to read the right signals.

J: Now, knowing that, that you are now in a position to be more sensitive to people manipulating a system, people trying to take advantage knowing that you are now more sensitive to that and are making commitments to being sensitive to it. Is that a useful change for you?

W: Yes.

J: So from this circumstance that had all this bad stuff in the past you've gained something from it because of what you've done. Now how do you feel about having gained that?

W: Calm and a little as if I've got some light. (She laughs). I feel like I overview something now and I can go from a feeling to an overview in situations. I will be aware in another way. I'll not get so stuck in the same sense as I did.

J: Hmmm. Okay. Now one other thing, if you think of how they were consistently doing the same thing all the time, as each time they were trying to take advantage of the content level, they were trying to get more content, things for themselves by the sound of it...

W: Yes.

J: ...and then you think how you have now used the situation to actually learn from to add quality to your life in terms of learning...

W: Yes.

J: ...so you have gained from the situation in a positive way while they have gained in a negative way although they gained some short term material gain. What's common to both you and them is the attempt to gain something out of the situation. But it shows that not all gains from a situation are worthwhile. There are some gains that are useful and some gains that, even though it might be money, are not so useful. And therefore the positive aspect of what they were doing was a trying to gain something for themselves. What's sad is what they were trying to gain wasn't useful for them. That in itself is it's own punishment, it's own problem, because they're doing more of the same negative stuff. Meanwhile what you've done is an example of doing something positive with a bad experience. Learning from it and learning more about how people interact. And that sets you up to gain even more as you go into the future. Now if you think then of that little situation as a whole and you could expand it to your life as a whole, what can you learn about people and the wide range of things that people do.

W: I can learn in my head. Its just like boxes in my mind. I can learn to be aware when people all the time need me. Even when the children always are in a position where they need to get help then maybe their parents they just take

advantage of it. Now I will be able to see this much much earlier because I can also now see that it's not for the good of the children they are getting all this support always from foreigners. And then their parents have other ideas about it. I don't still want to exclude the children because they are only getting pushed even more in the pattern and then their parents. And I can see that now. In this case very clearly because I also know them so much and seeing that the children's play through ten years now so I also know how they are in playing in the garden. I know something now I never knew before.

J: Now that is an example then of a learning in part being made. Still other learnings to be made but the learning that's been made was not useful or as useful as it could be but then from that learning other learnings were required to support it because the learning that had been made was disrupting both the past and the future through contamination but also needed to balance things. So within the dialogue there, there were a number of types of change that I mentioned the other day. One was some remedial work which was to remedy - to go back and explore the learning, the contamination of the present into the past needed to be remedied, tidied up that was not helpful because it was leading to a lot of self-criticism and all the negativity that was not a useful basis to connect the world with. Then there was some generative change in terms of a different way of thinking about it.

Move on to what we call developmental change. Now developmental and generative changes are different. Developmental is directional more than generative. Generative is positive and building but it doesn't have a particular direction. Developmental change is a relative change, it is relative to stages, it is through time. It is thinking in terms of where's the person going, what would be useful to do next. So the aspects there were in terms of moving into the future what would be useful learnings for dealing with similar situations in the future and that way it was more targeted generative change is just building up resources, making things more positive it doesn't have a particular outcome in mind. Developmental change has the positive elements of generative change and also the problem solving aspects of remedial. It is also about problems that haven't yet happened but might happen knowing the next stage in development. The next stage in development is moving from this situation into the future where other situations like it might occur. This is a basis for useful development. So that the response next time is better than the last time rather than some negative development like, "stuff that, I'm not getting involved again, I'm not going to help those people" which would not have been a good development, but it would have been a development, but it would have been a withdrawal from helping, a withdrawal from caring, a withdrawal from participation.

The change here is what would be a useful development to build on to the remedial and generative change; to be able to work on what would be a useful next step. What would be useful in order to approach something similar next time; how to think and feel in a way that would be helpful.

Then with that, this is what I now call life-learning change, which is a sort of a reflective modelling of life as a whole what is this life of ours like. Whereas developmental is about stages or interaction you are going to be doing and life-learning is a step back a bit, understanding how the world works, how it all fits together and the more understanding from there is beyond the developmental change it's about life as a whole, not about a particular stage or a particular issue or challenge but just more about how does life work. And that again is a more sophisticated change again building on top of the previous changes already made. So in the little interchange we just had all four of those changes were involved to extend what could have just been simply just feel better about a bad situation. That would have been a remedial sort of feel at ease or feel more comfortable with the events as it happened. But that would have missed the opportunity for more extensive change. For a small investment in time and effort it was possible to extend that further and make changes that would be useful beyond the event that is over and done with. Changes that would result in the person learning about themselves so they would develop as a person.

In many ways if someone's going through a bade experience or suffered in some way, even if it's only a minor annoyance, it's nice to balance that by learning from it. Learning from the elements there in terms of learning about the learning, learning about the behaviour of the other people so that even what seemed initially to be bad behaviour, nastiness, can still be something to learn from. Often when we have a negative value in things we don't take the time to understand them. That's why a lot of social problems continue longer than need be, why people that have enemies don't take the time to understand their enemy whether it's Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Arab, they don't take the time to learn about the other person because they are too busy hating them and that's not a good position to be appreciative and understand. They don't rise above it and get to a high level of involvement because that would require some developmental a sort of life-learning changes rather than trying to be revengeful or get your own back.

Feeling bad, it's very basic, a very base responses and unless people know how to do it differently then most people usually seek for change as some remedial help of I'm feeling bad and I don't like this bad feeling and I want to get rid of it, which is fine if a client, or a human being or anybody, a friend, colleague is in that position, the opportunity is to give more things that won't be asked for if the person if they don't know it's there and therefore can't ask for it.

There is a potential ethical dilemma of giving more than you've been asked for, but even if it's just the remedial change that's been asked for the client's always been given something they don't know about exactly, so you're always giving them more than they ask for even if it's close to what they ask for. The benefit of taking this further is to give even more. The safe side of the imposing of that is about adding choice it's not about building in an automatic response, it's about

increasing the level of understanding and appreciation. In that way its about adding choice not just giving an alternative response so it's not that they have to feel good about the other people that's the important element.

When I used to work a lot with families and disturbed adolescents and criminals and stuff some of my colleagues, particularly young newly qualified colleagues often run the risk of being too well meaning and soft. They would collapse together caring and feeling nice about people. Often you had to care and hate, really dislike, what they were doing because what they were doing was some really nasty things. The important thing was not to contaminate the rest of the person with the dislike for their behaviour. If an adolescent boy goes out and knives or rapes somebody that shouldn't be a nice thing to feel good about, it should be quite understandably something to feel bad about but it doesn't mean that has to contaminate the rest of the boy and their future, it's about what they had done in the past. The important thing is to use that to motivate yourself and them to make changes in the future, it's to redress that balance, use the dislike to make changes. That's something I used a lot; the more annoyed or angry or disgusted I got, the more determined I got to help them change because it was only then that it would redress the balance. Otherwise they were going to keep doing the same stuff. It was going to continue – the horror, the nastiness would continue. So there's an opportunity to build a positive out of something rather than just leave it neutral.

Extensive changes are not just fixing things that need to be fixed. They are also about setting the person up optimally and then moving on to “what does the future bring”. Moving into the future with further changes that would be useful for the next stages of their development. Then what can we also learn about life as a whole. That will take them through time even more, it will take them into further stages but also to appreciate life as a whole. The life-learning changes are about understanding and appreciating the process of life. These changes are much more elaborate than just changing the bad feeling involved in a problem. They are about understanding the process of life rather than just the mechanics of it. So that's something we're going to be moving into in terms of the connecting these up.”

Using the Four Types of Change

Each of these four can be used in isolation. However there will probably be some change in the other three as a consequence of change in one.

Whole fields of therapy operate mainly from one of these types of change. Traditionally NLP emphasized generative change but the vast majority of NLP is remedial. In DBM and Systemic Counselling and Consultancy we emphasise the developmental and life learning types of change. As can be seen in the transcript above, this entails the other two types of change

Clients understandably often operate from a remedial bias. They therefore often do not take advantage of their problems to develop and change. Therapists who only work remedially further limit this. The outcome of therapy can be more than only feeling O.K. (remedial), or feeling good (generative), or feeling growth (developmental), or insight and understanding (life learning), it can be all of them. This can be the basis for a higher-level development and higher level of learning about learning.

Organising change with this extended model results in a more meaningful experience for the therapist as well as the client. It also highlights the importance of the clients learning processes and the additional benefits from extending our interventions.

In my next article I will outline some of my remodelling of some other traditional NLP models that are used for organising change.

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