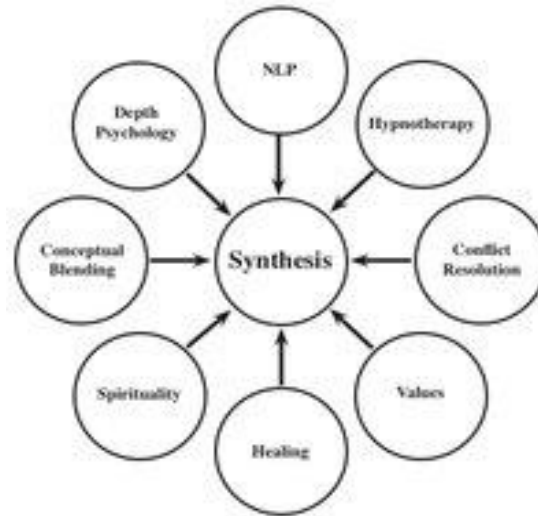


# ELEMENTS OF CHANGE

## 10. THEORIES FOR PERSONAL CHANGE

### 10.1. Introduction



Nothing is more complicated than the human mind. To help clients make the changes in thinking and communicating to achieve their goals, practical theories of the mind are needed. After reading about the mind for many years, below are eight of my favorite theories for personal change, theories which can be blended into a coherent whole for designing a process of change.

### 10.2. Neuro-Linguistic Programming or NLP

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is an approach to communication, personal development, and psychotherapy created by Richard Bandler and John Grinder in California, United States in the 1970s. Its creators claim a connection between the neurological processes ("neuro"), language ("linguistic") and behavioral patterns

learned through experience ("programming") and that these can be changed to achieve specific goals in life. Bandler and Grinder claim that the skills of exceptional people can be "modeled" using NLP methodology, then those skills can be acquired by anyone. Bandler and Grinder also claim that NLP can treat problems such as phobias, depression, habit disorder, psychosomatic illnesses, myopia, allergy, common cold and learning disorders, often in a single session. NLP has been adopted by some hypnotherapists and in seminars marketed to business and government

Synthesizing some of the most important fields of science in the 1970s, NLP combined neuroscience, linguistics and the logic of software computer programming to create models of how the best therapists helped their clients. The basic idea of finding an example of someone who is an undisputed expert and then learning from that person harkens back the craft tradition of apprenticing under a master. It is a sound approach. It can be fascinating to create user-oriented, practical models of how to use language to build trust and to help bring about change.

### **10.3. Hypnotherapy**

In the 1970s, Milton H. Erickson, MD, was considered the greatest hypnotherapist in the history of the field. The founders of NLP studied audiotapes and videotapes of Dr. Erickson working with his patients. That led to a number of books which described his behavior with patients and some of the concepts Erickson used, consciously and unconsciously, to guide how he helped them.

Verbal patterns in what was called the "Milton Model" was used for guiding people to learn through hypnotherapy.

While it is a paradox, the use of Milton Erickson's verbal patterns to guide individuals and groups can offer greater freedom to those guided. By learning the language of self-respect and self-guidance, clients can substitute these patterns of language for those they have been using that limited them or caused problems to continue. Then some key problems can get solved by using more self-respecting, self-guiding, empowering language. As a client who is learning through hypnotherapy, there are a great many learnings and abilities that you can recall and activate within yourself, and new learnings and accomplishments that you can achieve in the outer world. And these can come about as a result of changing the way you speak to yourself. And that is a great thing to learn.

## 10.4. Conflict Resolution

One method of conflict resolution is the conventional way: as a mediator to resolve conflicts and bring about agreement in situations involving people in conflict. The other way is to use the patterns of conflict resolution within a person to resolve internal conflicts. This typically involves a form of hypnotherapy and self-hypnosis.

### **A Model for Conflict Resolution: Phases, Themes and Rules**

The phases of a mediation constitute a series of milestones that need to be reached before the next phase can be even started. The six phases are *Preparation; Open Communication, Problems, Goals and Values; Options; Decisions; and Action & Follow-up*.

The themes of a mediation involve qualities of a healthy relationship such as trust and open communication between individuals, which are called the *Relationship Theme*; congruence within the person at each phase, which are called the *Congruence Theme*; and an awareness of the foreseeable consequences of actions in the negotiation on those on the outside and in the future, which are called "ecology"—which means respect for others affected by decisions in the larger family, business, community or beyond. This is the *Ecology Theme*.

The four rules of a mediation are these: how to resolve process conflicts between phases and themes, called the *Phase-theme Interaction Rule*; making sure each person has positive intent towards the others in the negotiation, called the *Positive Intent Rule*; encouraging each person to be flexible in their communication and approaches is called the *Variability Rule*; and helping each person experience situations from multiple perspectives is called the *Poly-description Rule*. These four rules support the success of maintaining the three themes and transition through the six phases.

### **Conflict Resolution Methods: Involving Individuals in Conflict**

Nothing stifles the effectiveness and well-being of a group more than an unresolved conflict between its members. When a family, couple, business, team, or other groups cannot resolve their conflicts, one way to resolve the conflict, create agreement is to use an outside mediator. The mediator uses methods such as those described above to take the participants in the mediation through a process enabling them to bring about an agreement.

## **Conflict Resolution Methods: Involving Conflicts within a Person**

Nothing robs a person of energy and enthusiasm more than an unresolved, inner conflict. When a person has an inner conflict, the methods that help groups of people create agreements can also help create agreements between the parts of a person who had been in conflict. This is a process of internal negotiation between parts, or sub-selves, with the help, at least initially, of the counselor in the role of a mediator.

### **10.5. Values**

What are values from the point of view of cognitive science? This is a question that was recently answered by advances in cognitive science. The answer gets to why some counseling practices are “values based.” And the answer involves the brain. The heart of our system of valuing is located in a deep, older part of every human brain called the locus coeruleus. It operates quietly, silently and automatically. According to Nobel Prize-winning neuroscientist, Gerald Edelman, in this part of the brain “neural value systems” engage in signaling to neurons and synapses all over the brain producing a sudden burst of firing whenever something important or salient occurs. The neurons in this area of the brain give rise to a vast meshwork of axons that blanket the cortex, hippocampus, basal ganglia, cerebellum, and spinal cord, potentially influencing transmission of billions of synapses over all levels of the central nervous system. Edelman goes on to say that value and emotions, pleasant and unpleasant, are obviously coupled and are central to conscious experience. Edelman uses the words pleasant and unpleasant. And he uses values and emotions as equivalent.

Important values, when fulfilled, are felt as pleasant emotions. And when these values are not fulfilled-when they are contradicted or violated, we experience them in their unpleasant forms. Disrespect, mistrust, unhappiness, and other such feelings are the felt experience of values violations. Our values then are feelings that communicate what is important to us, both what is going well and is pleasant, and also what is not going well, what is unpleasant, and what seems counter to our best interests and current life plan. In the quiet realm of our own inner experience we can learn to pay attention to the messages our values are sending to us as emotions. In those times when we may feel down and depressed, or anxious, nervous or uncertain, it doesn't mean we are crazy or bad or wrong. When problems persist, and unpleasant feelings grow and intensify, it doesn't normally mean that we need something to eliminate these feelings, the drug, alcohol or

entertainment equivalent of a piece of tape over the oil light. Rather, it means that we need a new process of thinking and acting so values which have been violated become fulfilled.

## **10.6. Healing**

One of the favorite experts on healing is Alice Miller, a German psychiatrist. Her book on childhood abuse and mistreatment is an outstanding approach to healing. It is called *For Their Own Good*. According to Miller, when a child does get adequate love, protection, tenderness and understanding, but instead is subjected to rejection, coldness, indifference and cruelty then a process of arrested development takes place. Many children know not to fight back against their parent's harmful actions, even though seeking revenge against someone hurting you is a natural response. Rather, children often internalize the parent's or other adult's view of them as behaving poorly and being a bad person. When this happens, they not only form a negative view of themselves, thinking that their abuser's actions are about them, but they also begin to feel a general desire to seek vengeance, against something or someone.

Often that merely takes the appearance of a someone different in same way, and weaker or defenseless. Then the child repeats the kinds of actions to which he or she was subjected, on a suitable target who is different and weak. This process initiates a way of defining self-relative to a Negative Other, and begins a tendency to scapegoat, blame or vilify the Negative Other in order to enhance the esteem and goodness the Negative Self.

As an example, when such children get older, this manifests in a whole range of problems from overachievement, to underachievement, to abusing others, to drug and alcohol abuse, to temper tantrums, and much more. Without stopping to consider that the Negative Self that forms in such a child earlier in life might be erroneous and inaccurate, an adult with such an unhealed background can continue with the manifestations of this mis-development indefinitely. However, with a pause and with self-examination of the events of the past that created a need for Negative Others to bolster a Negative Self, the problems that were unhealed can be healed. The need for a Negative Other to bolster a Negative Self can disappear and a Positive Self can seek Positive Others as a basic orientation to life. In conflicts, such a healed person, seeks to win over and convert enemies to friends, adversaries to allies. Of course a true state of health enables a healed person to recognize that others can cause harm and sometimes harmful interactions and relationships need

to be either transformed into something healthy or abandoned. This idea is not to blame parents and others in one's past as a way to feel better. Rather, it is a way of taking the story of one's life that may have tragic elements, and provide a process of healing in retrospect on the remaining memories in the current worldview a process that wasn't there earlier, but can be present now.

The other methods I describe for my practice such as depth psychology, NLP, hypnotherapy, conflict resolution, values, spirituality and conceptual blending all have a part to play in designing and bringing about fully healing for you to the extent that you may need it.

## **10.7. Spirituality**

In Karen Armstrong's book, *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions*, she summarizes the history of the religions that became great, world religions today. One pattern she documents is this: the rise of the great religions came in response to empires that shrunk the human spirit and violated cooperative human values. The founders of the great religions such as Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Abraham, Moses, other Old Testament prophets, Jesus and later Mohammed and a few others proposed a new kind of personality, a new way to operate in the world that respected others rather than dominating them. These Founders urged their students to seek goodness and esteem, not by bowing down before the king or emperor or Ceaser, but by revering the kernal of spirit within themselves; by practicing good works to others, even enemies; and by emulating the example set by the Founders themselves.

The ideas and ideals of spirituality, whether connected to a religious institution or not can provide a social group for shared beliefs and traditions, and a framework of belief that creates access to profound values, a deep sense of identity, and means to determine one's purpose and destiny. When spirituality plays a major part in how a person believes, it makes no sense to ignore such a deep dimension of a client's worldview, and potential source of fulfillment for his or her life.

One is to utilize the spiritual beliefs of a person to activate their capacity to learn and change. Another method is to help a person connect their spiritual beliefs with other aspects of their life that might have been at odds with their spirituality. With a person who has definite spiritual beliefs, no approach to counseling or coaching can be complete that leaves spirituality disregarded.

## **10.8. Conceptual Blending**

One of the great breakthroughs in cognitive science is conceptual blending theory. Along with a slightly older theory of cognitive metaphor, this new theory brings forth a whole new picture of human thinking. It combines the more traditional psychological functions such as memory, perception, language syntax, learning, emotion, personality, intelligence with patterns of metaphor and mental imagery. The best way to summarize the integrating, unifying effect of conceptual blending theory is this: our early, ordinary, common, everyday experiences as toddlers and children create the basis, through metaphor, for more abstract adult thinking. Our thoughts then form images that we subsequently blend and re-blend as we come to form a complex, interwoven, adult, worldview. This worldview includes the way we conceive of our self and how we conceive of others; the way we imagine space and time; the way we harness our past, or are limited by it.

Such a worldview can become rigid and fail to adapt to new situations, causing problems that seem unsolvable. Or it can be a growing, learning, exciting, expanding way of looking at, hearing, and seeing the world and our place in it. How? By understanding the processes by which our own worldview came to exist, how it formed early in life, and how it is now constructed, we can gain insights into how we can embrace, extend and enrich our worldview, our day-to-day thinking so as to solve our problems, create new dreams and ideals, and pursue them vigorously.

The great insight that conceptual blending theory offers is that our thinking is based on concepts that we can change. Our problems cannot be solved by the concepts that created them, improved concepts are required for solving our problems. By knowing how your worldview arose, and its basic patterns, you can choose to enhance it in particular ways to serve you goals. With this idea, your own thoughts can be turned back on themselves to form a self-learning operation to enhance thinking.

## **10.9. Depth Psychology**

Depth psychology describes an approach to counseling or coaching that considers the depth of human thinking, hidden, deeper, unconscious or involuntary processes of imagery and memory. Following the innovative work of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Erich Fromm, Heinz Kohut and many others, methods based

on depth psychology plumb the deeper patterns and structures of the human mind and the human heart.

Depth psychology methods go beneath the surface and help you to understand about yourself what may have remained hidden and buried for many years. Depth psychology methods include personal processes and structures. And they also include the larger transpersonal, collective, universal aspects of the depths of your mind. Thus dreams become communications from within. Nightmares become signposts for what problems to take on. Positive fantasies become the stuff of your new, emerging goals. Religious, spiritual and/or philosophical yearnings become inner sources for tapping into and updating your deepest values. The life story you envision and keep refining becomes a vehicle for what you accomplish in the unfolding journey of the rest of your life.

Thus, the methods of depth psychology provide, not only the means for healing in the wholeness of your entire being in a personal sense, but also forms a basis for discovering your current destiny beyond your personal healthy development, and opens up new realms of discovery relative to being a responsible citizen of your community, your nation and your world.

### **10.10. Synthesis**

The methods of depth psychology, NLP, hypnotherapy, conflict resolution, values, healing, spirituality, and conceptual blending can each stand on their own as proven, effective ways for helping my clients. Some therapists draw from these sets of methods to design a customized approach to each person for helping them solve their problems and achieve their goals. One of the most important principles for this synthesis is to realize that the person's worldview that created their current problems cannot solve those problems rather, an enhanced worldview is needed. To help a person enhance their worldview, it is best to create a customized approach from a variety of methods to suit the person's uniqueness. With this principle as a guide, all of these methods can be used to help clients harness their inner capacities to achieve healthy development as a person.