An Introduction to Clean Coaching

For Bradford Co-coaching Forum

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By Liz Ford

What is clean language?

- A simple, but powerful questioning technique that helps individuals to explore their thinking.

- A process that honours the client by using words which will least influence or 'dirty' the client's experience.

- Achieved mainly through specific exploratory present tense questions and reflecting back the client's own words.

- Works at a slightly deeper level than some other tools and techniques

- Very helpful for making connections, drawing out how you really see things and clarifying what you want to have happen.

- The coach does not contaminate the coachee's experience with their own interpretation, solutions or questions.

- Coachees have total control to explore whatever they feel safe and comfortable to do so.

- They are not 'led' by the coach, they go only as far as they are ready to go, consciously or unconsciously.

- This makes Clean Language a safe process to explore deeper issues

Background

- Originally developed by New Zealand Psychotherapist David Grove

- A therapeutic communication process that enables the client to stay within their own experience without being distracted or influenced by the therapist's own ideas or assumptions.

- Penny Tompkins and James Lawley modelled Grove's approach and developed their own process, Symbolic Modelling, which combines Clean Language with a more process-driven methodology.

- Clean Language is now used in a variety of situations: coaching, group facilitation, education, physiotherapy, medicine…

Why work with metaphor?

- Metaphors underpin our understanding of the world and the way we interact with it

- Most people use metaphors constantly as a way to describe their thinking patterns (6/min)

- Working with metaphor uncovers thinking patterns, values and ways of being

- Metaphor is a good way of exploring things which are difficult to express

- When coachees interact with their own inner world, rather than talking about it, the potential for new insight and significant change is high

- Metaphors can change and when they do, so does the person's view of the world, their thinking, their decisions and their actions

- Metaphors are fascinating and irresistible so coachees usually want to explore them fully

- Metaphors are memorable and can be easily recalled after the session

Uses of clean questions

- To avoid assumptions and misunderstandings

- To encourage thinking

- To explore an issue and gain more knowledge

- To create a felt sense of an issue

- To uncover and then explore metaphors

Clean questions have specific jobs

- To identify intentions
- To focus attention
- To expand attention
- To encourage metaphor
- To explore attributes
- To identify a location
- To explore a time sequence
- To understand relationships

The prefix "and..."

- Acts as a primer and gets the coachee ready for a question
- Softens the question and makes it less invasive
- Makes it less likely to trigger a defence reflex
- Makes connections
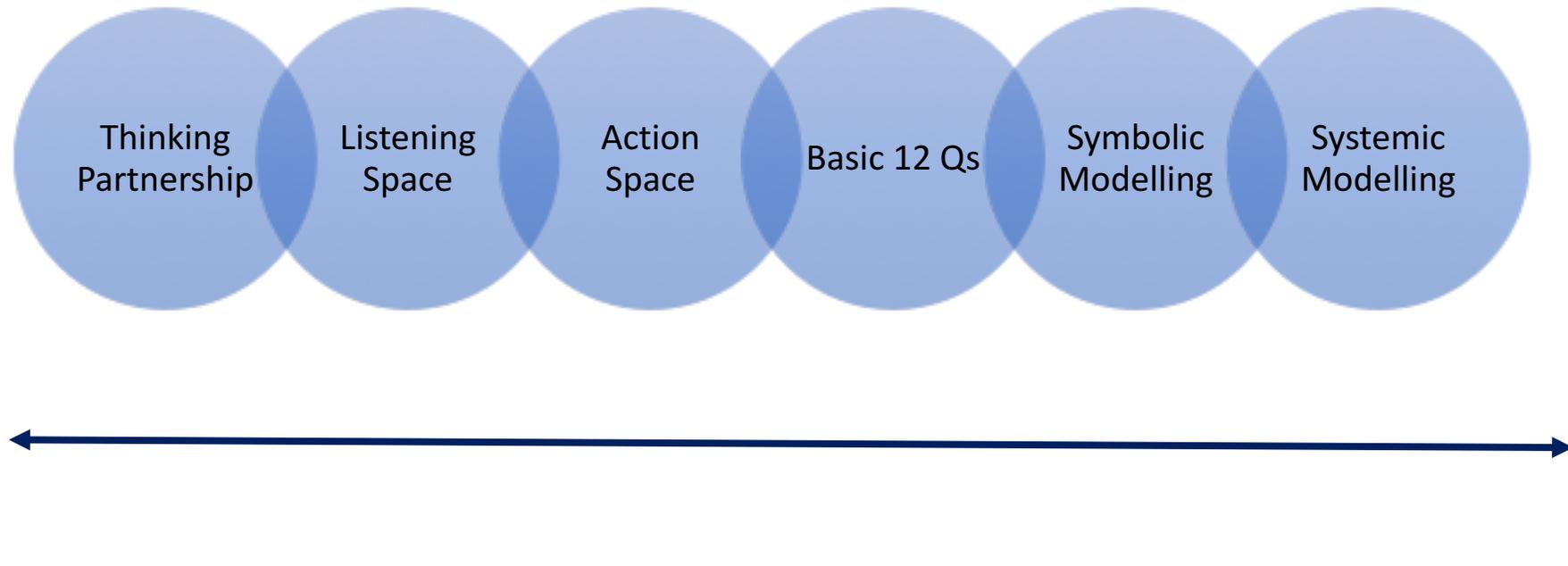- Encourages thinking to flow

Being 'Clean' involves:

- Recognising and understanding your own metaphors and how they influence you and your thinking
- Holding your own opinions lightly and letting them go in favour of new information
- Being in rapport with the client's internal landscape, not just the client themselves
- Keeping out of the client's picture
- Mirroring back the client's words and metaphors
- Being non-judgemental and flexible
- Being curious
- Paying attention
- Listening
- Knowing the clean questions
- Using the specific clean questions

Clean looks distant and cold…

- It works best if the coachee becomes absorbed in their thinking

- The aim is to assist the coachee to develop a relationship with their issue, not the coach

- However, in order to feel safe enough to do this, the coach – coachee relationship needs to be warm and trusting, so it **is** key

- It can look distant and cold to an observer but rarely does the coachee feel this; they are immersed in their thinking

- How the session is set up and debriefed is also important

A clean coaching spectrum

Thinking Partnership · Listening Space · Action Space · Basic 12 Qs · Symbolic Modelling · Systemic Modelling

Less complex ⟷ More complex

Thinking partnership questions

- What would you like to think about and what are your thoughts?

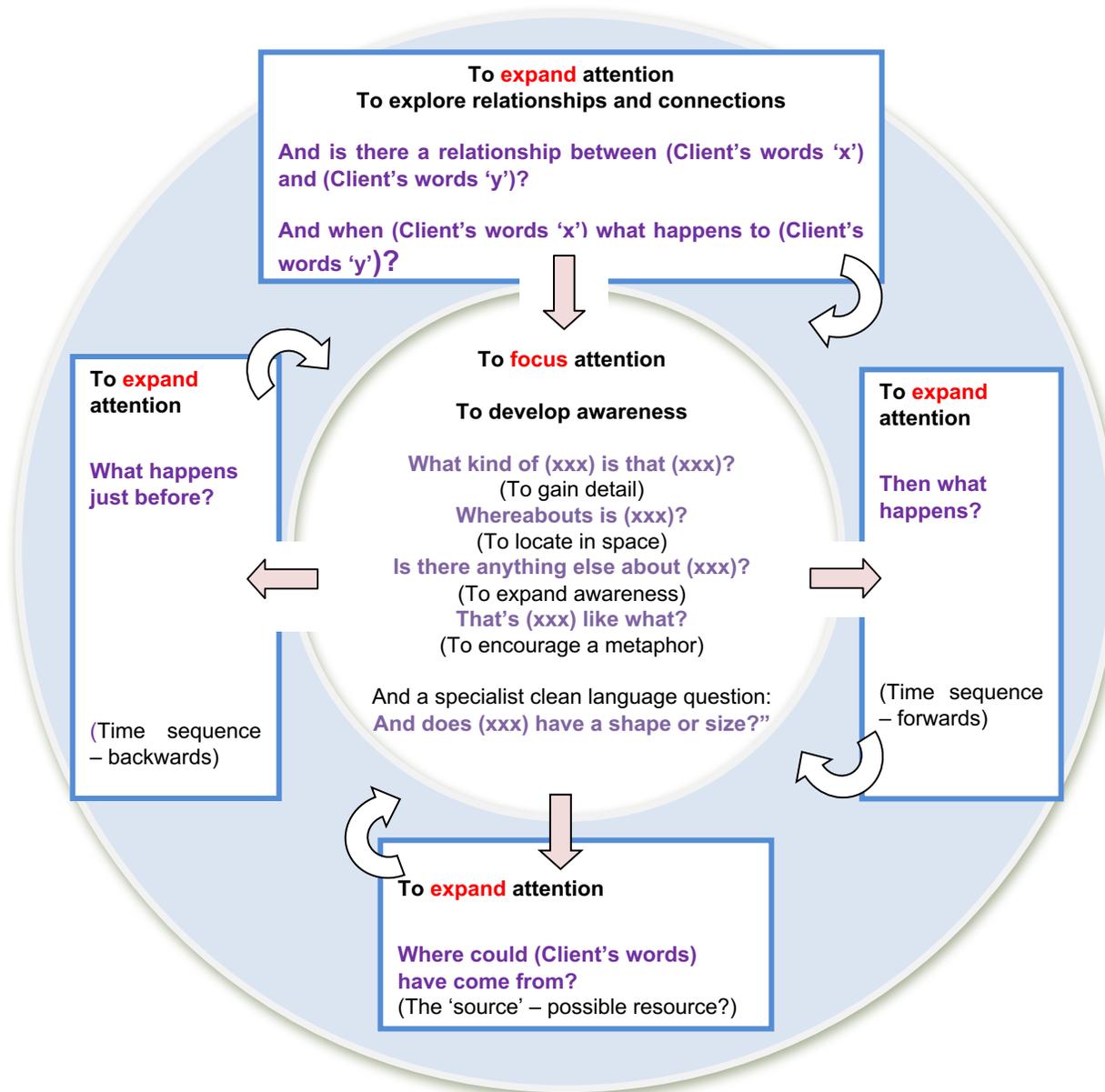- And what more do you think, or feel or want to say?

Nancy Kline

Listening space questions

1. (And) what kind if (X) is that?

2. (And) is there anything else about (X)?

3. (And) where is (X) or (And) whereabouts is (X)?

4. (And) does (X) have a size or a shape?

5. (And is (X) on the inside or the outside?

- And what do you know now about (X)?
- And what difference does that knowing make?

Tamsin Hartley

The 12 basic clean language questions

1. (And) what kind if (X) is that (X)?
2. (And) is there anything else about (X)?
3. (And) where is (X) or (And) whereabouts is (X)?
4. (And) that's (X) like what?
5. (And) is there a relationship between (X) and (Y)?
6. (And) when (X) happens, what happens to (Y)?
7. (And) then what happens or (And) what happens next?
8. (And) what happens just before (X)?
9. (And) where could (X) come from?
10. (And) what would (X) like to have happen?
11. (And) what needs to happen for (X) to happen?
12. (And) can (X) happen?

And what would you like to have happen?

To expand attention
To explore relationships and connections

And is there a relationship between (Client's words 'x') and (Client's words 'y')?

And when (Client's words 'x') what happens to (Client's words 'y')?

To focus attention

To develop awareness

What kind of (xxx) is that (xxx)?
(To gain detail)
Whereabouts is (xxx)?
(To locate in space)
Is there anything else about (xxx)?
(To expand awareness)
That's (xxx) like what?
(To encourage a metaphor)

And a specialist clean language question:
And does (xxx) have a shape or size?"

To expand attention

What happens just before?

(Time sequence – backwards)

To expand attention

Then what happens?

(Time sequence – forwards)

To expand attention

Where could (Client's words) have come from?
(The 'source' – possible resource?)

Angela Dunbar

Resources

Books

- **Dunbar A (2016)** *Clean Coaching; The insider guide to making change happen,* Oxford, Routledge

- **Hartley T (2017)** *The Listening Space: A new path to personal discovery*, Listening space

- **McCraken J (2016)** *Clean Language in the Classroom,* Carmarthen, Crown House Publishing

- **Sullivan W & Rees J (2008)** *Clean Language: Revealing metaphors and opening minds,* Carmarthen, Crown House Publishing

- **Tompkins P & Lawley J (2000)** *Metaphors in Mind: Transformation through symbolic modelling,* London, The Developing Company

- **Walker C (2014)** *From Contempt to Curiosity: Creating the conditions for groups to collaborate, using clean language and systemic modelling,* Fareham, Clean Publishing

- **Way M (2013)** Clean Approaches for Coaches: *How to create the conditions for change using clean language and symbolic modelling,* Fareham, Clean Publishing

Podcasts

- http://www.bfm.my/raise-your-game-clean-language-caitlin-walker-training-attention-uk.html

- http://primalhappiness.co/podcast/episode120/

Websites

- www.cleanlanguage.co.uk

- www.thelisteningspace.co.uk

- www.powersofsix.com

Resources

Videos

- Caitlin Walker - TED speech:
  - https://youtu.be/aVvcU5gG4KU
- Catlin walker - What is Clean Language and how to use it in an educational context:
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5F29kLvLbA
- Caitlin Walker - Keynote Speech at ICF conference:
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9GobkKYYmA
- Judy Rees - Introducing Clean Language playlist
  - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEzehoyf73dlXoRd3n-p__9gDA04afzy8
- Judy Rees – Really using clean language playlist
  - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEzehoyf73dk23tyo8AzlL-lw04QNZp6U

Training Providers

- Clean Coaching – www.cleancoaching.com
- Clean Change - www.cleanchange.co.uk
- Clean Learning – www.cleanlearning.co.uk
- Training Attention - www.trainingattention.co.uk