

USING NLP TO MAKE THE MOST OF CHANGE

In this issue of the Raise the Bar ezine, RtB Transformation Coach, Speaker and NLP Trainer – Tiffany Kay, offers a fresh perspective on handling change and embracing uncertainty.

We are living in uncertain times, from economic crises to natural disasters to epidemics, things have been pretty chaotic recently and the only real certainty we have is that things will continue to change. According to John Overdurf, the founder of Humanistic NLP™, the quality of our life is a direct reflection of our ability to handle uncertainty. So how can we embrace uncertainty, so that rather than fearing change, we can capitalise on the opportunities it presents.

Uncertainty equals possibility:

Major life transitions, especially those that are not invited or welcomed (eg involuntary redundancy, divorce, bereavement), create massive disruption and uncertainty. The natural human response tends to be shock, upset and often denial. But when you come to terms with a negative situation, there is immense value and learning to be had from any experience.

To put it another way, contrast inspires desire. In a situation where there are unwanted experiences, there is a greater opportunity for clarity about what *is* wanted instead. One of my favourite sayings is “*if you have only ever eaten hamburger, you won’t know what steak is*”. Contrast is essential for clarifying what you want. The bigger the contrast, the greater the opportunity for clarity... if you are open to discovering it!

In an ideal world, we would immediately recognise the learning and turn our attention to the hidden opportunities. But, in reality, our resistance to a situation tends to prolong the suffering and prevent us from spotting solutions. One of the fastest ways of changing a situation is to make peace with where you are.

I worked with a football player whose career had been cut short by a significant leg injury. When we spoke, it was obvious that he was still in complete resistance to the situation. Understandably he felt he hadn’t been given the opportunity to fulfil his potential, but sometime on, he was still locked in the “*if only it hadn’t happened*” pattern. This way of thinking had brought on debilitating depression, to the extent that he was close to losing his marriage as well as his career. He was completely stuck. His refusal to accept the situation was in danger of destroying his life.

Sometimes life will throw us a curve ball. When we try to argue that it shouldn’t have happened, we prevent ourselves from moving forward and our lives stagnate. Once this former football player learnt to accept the situation, other opportunities for the career fulfilment he wanted began to open up. He now coaches younger players who are returning from injury to help them to regain a winning mindset.

Naturally, most people will lean towards certainty. I was working with a client who had been made redundant from her job of 25 years. Her reaction, whilst still feeling shocked and upset, was to desperately seek out alternative jobs in that field, even considering positions with a much lower income. It was clear that without coaching, she would have taken the first offer she got, sacrificing an opportunity to get clear about what she wanted

in her life for the certainty of knowing she had a job. One of the questions that had the biggest impact for her was when I asked “*Are you willing to not know long enough for something new to emerge?*” This question equates uncertainty with possibility, a much more appealing option. This created the space to consider more information, including what she had learnt and how she had changed in the last 25 years and whether this was even the field where she wanted to continue to pursue her career (In fact, she has since gone on to set up her own successful business!).

Forget “How”... for Now!

In times of uncertainty, we limit ourselves by trying (too quickly) to work out “how” we can get what we want and yet it is only when you have really come to terms with the situation and explored what has been learnt, that you are ready to focus on what you want to happen next.

I was working with a client who had a lifetime ambition to emigrate to Australia. When we discussed his dreams, he would light up in front of me and be full of enthusiasm for the idea... until he started to try and work out how he could make it happen. When he couldn't see how it was possible in his current circumstances, his mood would rapidly change and he would dismiss the whole idea.

Time spent focussing on the “what” and the “why” is time well spent. Take time to get clarity about what you want and your reasons for having it (as many as you can come up with!). A good question to expand your perspective is to ask “*if I knew success was the only result, what would I do?*”

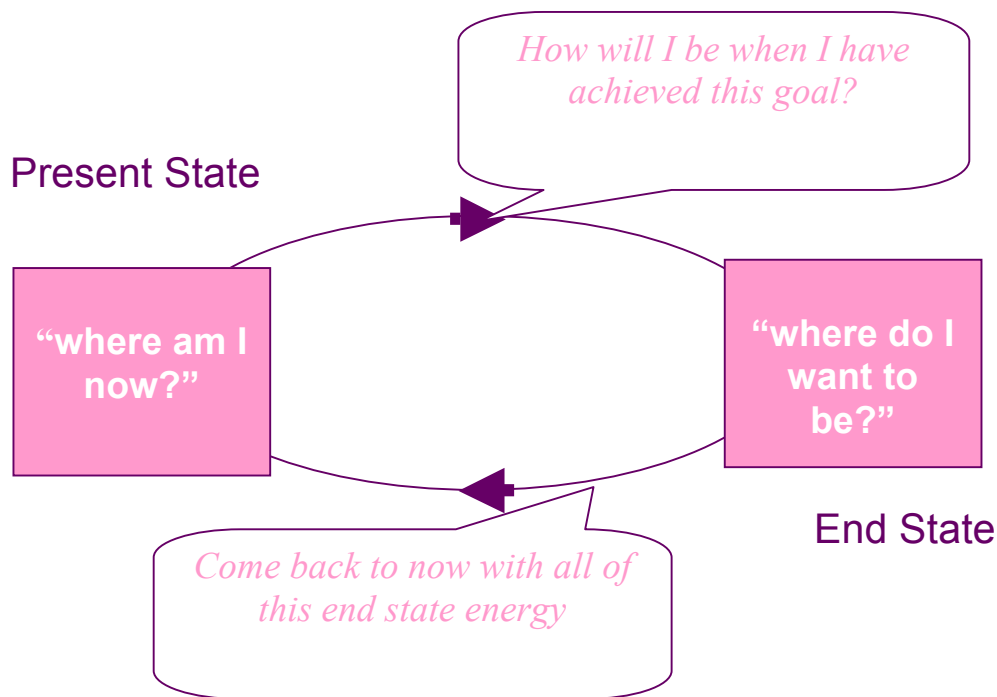
Another great way to do this is offered by Asara Lovejoy in her book, *The One Command*. She recommends using the following expression...“I don't know how..... (*fill in the blank with what you desire*).... I only know that I do now, and I am fulfilled”. So, in this example, the client may say “I don't know how I have the money to move to Australia, I only know that I do now and I am fulfilled” By embracing the uncertainty of the how and focussing purely on the desire or dream, it lessens internal conflict allowing new inspirations and ideas to emerge.

Beyond overwhelm...

By this point, you will be feeling much more positive but there will come a time when you do need to get more practical and take some action. Planning ahead is useful, but to fully embrace uncertainty, there is benefit in not getting too specific about the actions... Yet!

Since we don't have a crystal ball, the further you go into the future, the greater the uncertainty becomes. It is much easier to make a plan for tomorrow than a plan for five years time. So how can we use this to our advantage?

Most goals are really a means to getting to a certain feeling, or in other words, a certain *state* of being. Why do we want a specific job, or relationship, or lifestyle? Because we want the feelings we think the result will give us. In Humanistic NLP™, this is known as the *end state*. And because the end goal is an emotional state, we can create that feeling now, in this moment, without needing our external circumstances to change.



Think about your current situation and where you want to get to (end state). Ask yourself *“How will I be when I have got what I want?”* Really tap into how you will feel when you get there. How will you know that you are feeling that way? Shifting your language to present tense will help you to tap into these feelings even more. For example, instead of saying *“I would be feeling satisfied and content”*, you could say *“I am feeling satisfied and content now”*

When you are fully experiencing those feelings, come back to the present situation and notice how you feel now. The goal may have expanded or even have changed completely from this fresh perspective.

Then, consider the smallest next step you need to take that takes you in the direction of your end goal. What is the one, small and simple thing that you could do right now that is going to move you towards your goal?

In 2007, England had a shaky start to the Rugby World Cup. Having won the competition in 2003, expectations were high and the pressure to succeed was immense. After a less than convincing win over a novice USA team, followed by a crushing defeat to South Africa, England needed to win both of their last two games in order to proceed in the competition. Back home, the media headlines were scathing. Facing massive uncertainty, the only way that England could turn things around was to stay firmly focussed on the end goal. The next smallest step wasn't even to win the remaining games. That would have increased the pressure. The next smallest step was to turn off the TV reports. They also banned each other from reading the newspapers. In doing so, they could turn their attention to their own games, and work on their own improvements. England went on to face a rematch with South Africa in the final. And in an extremely close finish (including a tough call and a disallowed try!), they narrowly missed out on a second world cup victory.

Present State



If the next small step seems overwhelming, you know that it is too big. Try breaking it down into a smaller step and see how different that feels. I once had a client who stated that her smallest next step was to move out and divorce her husband... definitely not a small step! But when she broke it down to calling her husband and arranging a time to sit down and talk, she felt much more ready to take action.

You only need to choose your smallest next step, and then another and then another. The advantage of doing things this way is it allows for new information to emerge and circumstances to change. A general sense of direction is important but it is easy to get too hooked into a plan and miss other opportunities along the way. This avoids investing energy into the whole plan so it is much easier to change direction or even to choose something different as the situation evolves.

I find that once my clients have experienced the significant and widespread benefits of using this process, not only do they come to embrace uncertainty, but many begin to actively seek out and introduce more of this “not knowing” position into their lives. It has been my experience, that when you let go of the need to control the outcome in a situation, many new exciting possibilities emerge. In fact, on the other side of letting go, there is a whole new level of control.