

## Life's Paradox

uncommon reflections of life matters

# Mediation Intelligence: How do you resolve conflict?

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Have you ever been in a heated discussion with someone and you cannot believe why and how s/he could possibly hold that opinion? It could have been about politics, maybe religion, or football teams, ....perhaps the philosophy of Life, the Universe, and Everything! Wars have started over lesser things!

What would it be like to be able to resolve these situations? Is it possible that we could actually step into somebody else's shoes and experience it from their perspective? What would it be like to be emotionally uncharged and totally non-judgmental on the whole discussion? If you had all the angles, how differently would you have reacted?

A wise person once told me: "Your opinion is worth nothing ....if that is all you have." What does that mean?

Imagine yourself face to face with someone holding a pen horizontally in front of you. He says to you: "the nib is pointing to the *left*." From your vantage point, there is no doubt it is pointing *right*. Both of you are correct from your individual point of view. Yet the two statements are diametrically opposed. At that level of thinking, there is no agreement. If we then looked at it from a third perspective that makes the situation



true for both parties, and announce that “The nib is pointing *North* (or whatever cardinal point of the compass is true at the time)”, we would now both be in agreement.

This is what we call “Wisdom” – the ability to see one situation from multiple perspectives. In order to be wiser in any circumstance, we need to train ourselves to experience that event from a minimum of three positions. This is what we call “Wisdom Training”.

## What is Wisdom Training?

In my previous articles, we explored how Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) can help manage daily situations in our professional (and personal) lives in times of rapid change. For those of you who have just joined us, NLP can be summed up as a behavioural science of excellence modelling top performers of any field as a transferable skill. NLP originated in the USA in the mid-1970’s when John Grinder and Richard Bandler modelled outstanding communicators. These methodologies can be applied to running our business, enhancing the delivery of our dentistry and managing our daily lives.

Wisdom training is another one such transferable skill. This process helps fast track conflict resolution in relationships we choose to have on a daily basis with minimum fuss and emotional charge.

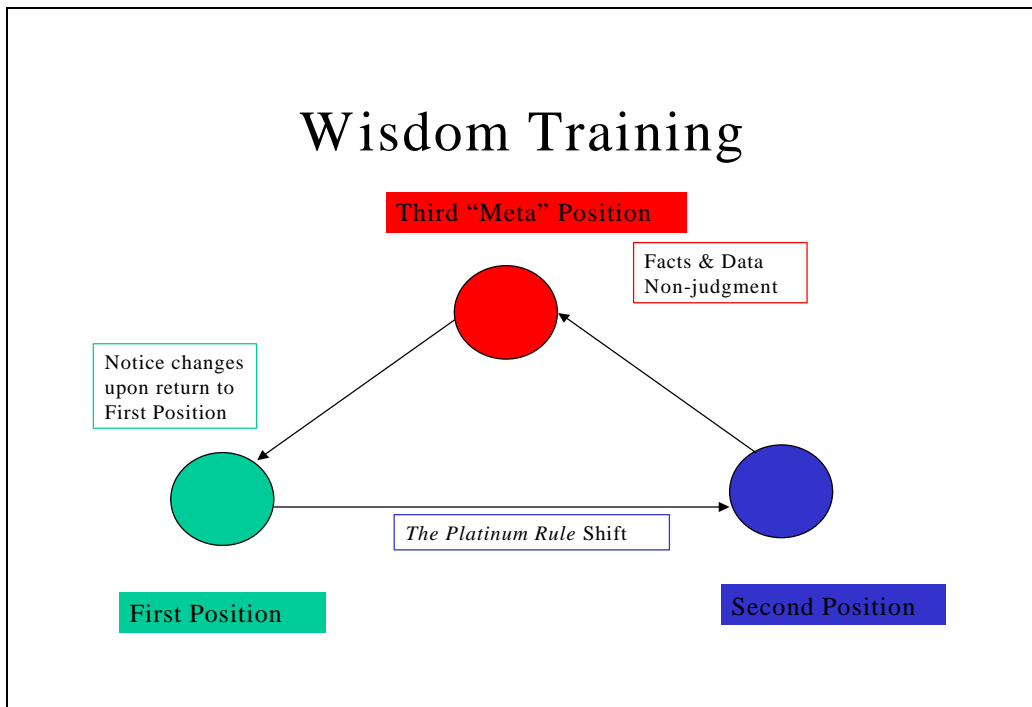
There is an assumption in any interpersonal interaction for a positive outcome that we have an **intent** to get along, to want to resolve the issue or at least to come through with an objective non-judgmental result.

Consider a simple scenario. Let us say you are Lily, first time mother of a newborn. Mary, your mother-in-law, tells you that from her experience with 5 children and 8 grandkids, you are not feeding the baby right. You are upset because you have attended all the Mother-Craft classes and believe you are doing nothing wrong.

## Moving through multiple perspectives

From your perspective, which we shall term the **First Position**, it is quite clear that you feel horribly judged by Mary and that as mother of your baby, you have every right to feed it the way you want to. From the **Second Position** where Mary is coming from, there is no doubt she feels justified to make her comments based on her extensive child care experience. Should you continue to maintain your respective positions, the discussion is likely to get heated. The more you stick to your guns, the more emotional it will develop.





Imagine what it would be like if you stepped into Mary’s shoes and experienced the whole situation through her point of view. Most of us have heard of The Golden Rule of Wisdom spanning many cultures, which states: “Do unto others as *you* would like *them* to do unto *you*.” Let me relate to you the rule that overrides it. The Platinum Rule of Wisdom proclaims: “Do unto others as *they* would like *you* to do unto *them*.” This illustrates the importance of First Position (Lily) stepping into Second Position (Mary).

From the Second Position, you see yourself in First Position doing Lily’s role, and experience it as if you are now Mary. It is interesting how this simple step can shed new light on your responses and behaviour from Mary’s perspective. You now realize that Mary’s intention may be to try to pass on her experience to help Lily and her baby. It was not about passing judgment at all.

What if you were a fly on the wall? From that angle, you can see and hear the two parties having a discussion about feeding babies in two different ways to give nutrition to the child in the most effective manner. This is a factual and unemotional report from a **Third Position**. From this Meta “Bigger Picture” perspective, there is no judgment.

Now that you have taken at least three different perspectives of this matter, return to your First Position and notice what has changed. Assuming the intent is to resolve the issue, you are likely to discover that the charge of the situation has lessened and you



can now respond with more objectivity and calmness. Maybe your (less emotional) response to Mary is to thank her for her concern and to assure her you will try her ways along with what you have learnt at the Mother-Craft classes.

### Have a go

Don't take my word for it. Try it yourself with circumstances that have occurred in the past (or which may be happening right now). For instance, it may be a disagreement with a colleague about a service modality, or it might have been an argument you have had with a supplier. Perhaps it was an angry exchange with a team member over the completion (or lack) of a task. Could it be a disagreement with your spouse about how to discipline the children? Maybe it is a conflict about curfew times with your teenager? Move through the three positions and notice what changed when you return to first base.

So the next time you become aware of a situation that could potentially turn ugly, why not try your wisdom training skill and notice the difference. It may be during a client consultation when philosophies could differ, or when discussing a performance issue with your team, or whilst in the midst of an academic debate with a colleague, or perhaps an emotional issue with a family member.

When one is making future plans, wisdom training could be useful to research the different angles. For instance, it may be useful whilst developing a Strategic Plan for your business in the next financial year. The viewpoints of different stakeholders could be identified and worked through objectively. For instance, before bringing in a new associate into the business, it may be interesting to explore the perspectives of say, the new associate, the team, the clients, and the principal. Before buying a new house, how would it be to go through this exercise from different family members' viewpoints?

### Generalize it through your life

Remember that the skill of wisdom training can be applied at anytime in your life - when you are dealing with business network, family, friends and social acquaintances. Pounce at the opportunity to turn that explosive argument around with your significant other. (I don't know about you, but the closer I am to someone the more emotional the interaction can get.) What about those debates you have with your mates concerning say, your favourite sports team? And those dinner parties when a controversial topic gets unveiled and those present start to stake out their battle stations?

You will be amazed at how just one person altering their response completely changes the dynamics of the situation. Once again, don't take my word for it. Go test it.



Resolving conflict through multiple perspectives is about the getting of wisdom. Just do it, and notice how easy and elegant it is. Don't try and do it right. Have fun.

Rest assured that the more you learn and practise these skills, the more you realize the impact of NLP applications in all areas of your life. The more you are conscious of different perspectives occurring in different contexts from day to day, the more you will notice the transformation in your ideal way of being who you are when relating to colleagues, team members, patients, acquaintances, friends, family and all those meaningful people in both your personal and professional life.

I know your life will never be the same again. Enjoy your Mediation Intelligence.

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### **Transformational Leadership Challenge™ (TLC):**

*Unleashing your children's potential through you*

The overall outcome of the TLC (Transformational Leadership Challenge) for actualizing parents is a simple one. This workshop (endearingly dubbed "***The Greatest Challenge on Earth***") treats parents as leaders not only in their family, but more so as a leader in their own lives. By setting the example as a role model for the rest of the family, they become aware of how they can lead the best lives for themselves and hence be a credible mentor, effective manager, coach and leader of their families. For instance, a parent can sometimes call upon their child(ren) to do their utmost best in life to achieve their highest potential in their chosen contexts – eg. career, family, health, physical, intellectual, emotional, or spiritual. In the process, the



parent may place most of their family resources in the endeavour. However, the parent themselves short change themselves on opportunities to personally develop themselves. For instance, the parent may not pursue their own love of a talent or a gift – and hence, do not maximize the potential themselves. They do not walk their talk, so to speak. As we know, children are by far the best role modelers. As is commonly said: “Monkey see monkey do!” So what message are we truly conveying to our children when we do not “go for gold” ourselves – at the expense of letting the children savour all the opportunities? TLC truly brings that home. Live your dreams and values, and your children will follow suit – with unsolicited respect.

Respect is not automatically deserving just because you are a parent these days. That more traditional Confucian ethic is not alive and well! Respect is earned. You show children respect, and it is more likely to be reciprocated. One way to show respect is to be consistent with word and deed. In the “old days” – the boundaries were clear about what is expected of parent roles, and that of the kids. It tended to be set by social norms. Behaviour considered as “right” was more black and white then. Today, it seems it runs mostly into the grey area. Hence, each family has to clearly define what their values, goals and boundaries are, and to run their unit accordingly. There is no hard and fast rules.

As leaders of corporate organizations spend time and money planning their goals, vision, values and purpose so everybody within it understands the culture and expectations. Do we as leaders of our family unit do the same? Have we even thought about what it is we are about? What are our individual dreams? Are all members aligned in values? Do we have useful methods to communicate amongst each other about how we envision our family unit striving synergistically towards individual goals whilst respecting each other’s values? Can we all contribute towards each other’s goals whilst satisfying each other’s needs? What are our beliefs about our children – do these hold them back or drive them forward? The TLC program strives



to constructively take these issues and put them into realistic Life Plans for individuals whilst being aligned to a greater Family Vision.

### **Review of NLP, NS as models that drive TLC**

Neuro Linguistic Programming (or NLP for short) and Neuro Semantics (or NS for short) describe programs by which we naturally (and mostly unconsciously) run our brains by default – out of habitual use of those patterns. Many of these patterns serve us – and we take them for granted. The awareness will allow the parents participating to utilize these patterns more consciously and consistently. Some of these patterns however may not always be useful. The TLC parenting workshop instils processes that will create awareness of these patterns in ourselves and provide an opportunity for the parents to discover new ways to replace or override these unresourceful patterns whenever we choose to obtain new results. For example, there may be an emotional outburst from the parent every time a teenager comes home later than expected from an evening excursion leading to further shutting down of already poor communications between parent and child. It may be useful to attempt to generate a new response to that trigger. NLP and NS can provide a variety of ways to override the habitual pattern above with a new one that may get a more appropriate result.

Another example: a parent may have a belief that there is a need to shelter their child(ren) from the world for there are too many hazards out there. The more protective they are, the paradox is – they are preventing the child(ren) from learning life skills that continue to hamper their independence and self-sufficiency. NLP and NS can intervene through one of their many belief change patterns to give the concerned parent new choices of how to protect the child from the dangers of our world by giving the children opportunities to learn self-initiated life skills of managing when their parents are not there.

The TLC program offers opportunities for individuals in each family to maximize satisfaction of each other's needs through awareness of the issues that drive each of us. Another outcome of the program is to create a Family Vision that continually develops over time through a mutual understanding of the ever-changing boundaries that affect each family unit. Hence, it is a program by which you can truly unleash your children's potential through you.

**About the Author: Dr Yvonne Sum** is a pioneer in Parent Leadership coaching. She is on a quest to co-create joyful learning partnerships between parents and children to simultaneously bring out each other's authentic best. She inspires parents to learn from our children mirroring to us what we most need to learn about ourselves and vice-versa. Through her series of **Transformational Leadership Challenge™ (TLC)** programs, Dr Sum is committed to transform leaders of tomorrow today by highlighting family values and celebrating parents as role models and heroes in life who proactively unleash our children's potential through self actualization, intentional living and powerful leadership centred on love and high purpose. She expresses this passion to bring out our authentic best through her roles as an international speaker, writer, transformational corporate facilitator, executive and parent Meta-Coach, Neuro Linguistic Programming trainer, business woman, wife and mother. Please visit [www.dryvonesum.com](http://www.dryvonesum.com) for more information.