

Life's Paradox

uncommon reflections of life matters

Modelling Intelligence: Is intelligence a transferable skill?

By Dr Yvonne Sum, BDS Hons, NLPTT, ACMC
International Speaker & Personal Coach

I have been discussing concepts in NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) as they relate to leadership, particularly TLC (Transformational Leadership Challenge) in my current series of articles. A question recently arose from one of my colleagues: “If NLP can be used to model peak performance in virtually any field, can it be used to model human excellence or intelligence of any description and make it a transferable skill?”

Let us propose a possible scenario. It will be so hard to replace Debbie, your sales manager extraordinaire, when she leaves in 6 months to be a fulltime mother. Can you possibly find someone as skilled as her? If not, can we train someone in the business to take her role? Or can we take someone new with much less experience than Debbie and transfer the desirable skills and behaviours of Debbie to this new person? What are the skills of Debbie that we are talking about here? Can we study them in such a way so we can pass them on to the new trainee? Can we do it in such a short time frame? In fact, is there a method we can design and conduct this training at all?

Here's another scenario. You are an expectant mother whose greatest desire is to be the parent par excellence. What are the specific skills, behaviour, beliefs and values you need? Are there books and courses? How would you practise it? Who could you

turn to for feedback? Do you need a mentor? Have you got role models, or experts that you can emulate? How do you study these experts so you can model them, and transfer the learnings to apply in your life?

Modelling Human Excellence

Modelling of experts is how the patterns of high performance in NLP are developed. The original models in NLP have come from a therapeutic model. For example, Fritz Perls (Gestalt Therapy), Milton H. Erickson (Medical Hypnosis) and Virginia Satir (Family Therapy) were studied so we can detail their expertise in Change Intervention and Communications Skills when dealing with their patients.

Today, the areas of modelling under study are endless. It ranges from peak performances of elite athletes, genius states from Leonardo da Vinci to Albert Einstein, outstanding leadership, to financial wizardry.

Modelling in the context of NLP involves 4 key aspects comprising:

1. Physiology

This includes studying how the expert (s) performs the task: the style, the sequence, the decomposition of the task itself into chunks of functional components that is reproducible. Eg if we were to study the skill of golfing in an expert like Tiger Woods, it would be too big a chunk. We would have to break the tasks right down to say, driving, putting, preparing for the next hole, etc etc.

2. Mental Processing and Neurological Strategies

The specific sequence of mental processes that are directly involved in performing the behaviour, ie what is going on in the mind of the expert before, during and after the performance of the task/behaviour. Eg if the task was Tiger Woods' drive, we would need to analyse what goes on in his head – the mental rehearsal prior to the drive, what occurs in the mind as he is driving, and what happens in his neurology immediately after he completes the drive.

3. Personality Typology

This can include a whole gamut of learning style preferences, personality filters, values systems, the role of emotions and the limbic system which can influence the expert in performing the task. There are many areas we can consider, eg Myers-Briggs Typology Index (MBTI), Enneagram, Meta-Programs, 4-MAT Learning Profile, Clare Graves Values, Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs etc etc

4. Beliefs and Belief Structures

These beliefs are rules by which the expert lives by, and relate not only to enabling beliefs but also to beliefs of what would happen if high performance is not achieved. This can include self-fulfilling prophecies and cause-effect complex equivalences unique to the expert in performing the task. Eg there was a musician who played practically every instrument in the orchestra. When asked: “Do you know how to play the saxophone?” He replied, “I don’t know, I haven’t tried it yet.” It seems his belief is that although the saxophone is an instrument he cannot play at this present moment, it is not an absolute that he cannot play it – he simply has not learnt how to, yet! That must be such an empowering belief. That’s why he plays so many musical instruments.

How do we work the Modelling process? There are a series of steps.

Identifying the expert

Firstly, it is obvious that we need to identify and select at least one expert to model. An expert is someone who exhibits the desired and predictable standard of behaviour consistently.

It is valuable to have several experts in modelling a specific behaviour to assist us in separating what is idiosyncratic to the person and what is necessary for the performance. Eg if we were to study the drive in golf, it will be necessary to look at not just Tiger Woods, but say, the top ten players with consistently strong drives.

Mediocre or poor performers can also be useful for a contrast frame. For instance, yours truly.

The aim is to extract only information pertaining to the high performance behaviour.

Eliciting information from the expert

We need to establish rapport and a well formed outcome with the expert we are modelling. Ensure that there is something in it for the model. If we do not satisfy ‘what’s-in-it-for-me’ aspect, the subject may not cooperate as willingly. It is vital that we enrol the subject into the project. Eg a Masters Psychology student went to elicit the expertise of award-winning Australian journalist Caroline Jones on her questioning skills in an interview. The humble Ms Jones was not convinced she was good enough an expert for the project! As the Masters student skilfully revealed to her the modelling process as it pertained to Ms Jones, she finally conceded, “I didn’t know how clever I really am!” Now that she knew how she worked, she was totally

engaged in the project. She was so genuinely thrilled to help as she knew this knowledge would help others learn her skill – and that she herself can not only pass it on, but is able to continue to improve the skill, now that she knows how she does it.

Next is to be clear in the task decomposition. Break down the skill or activity into specific functional components. Take into consideration beliefs, personality typology, strategies and physiology. Be aware of the heuristics or feedback loops.

When observing and interviewing the subject to elicit information, use as many different tools as possible such as simulations, videos, tape recordings, other people to have input (multiple perspectives). Do not expect to elicit the complete model in the first exposure. Constantly calibrate your subject – keep all your senses on full alert! Be persistent, yet be wary of what is interesting to you can be extremely tedious to the subject. Maintain rapport throughout!

It is a good idea to repeat this procedure with several experts, as well as mediocre performers, so the patterns of behaviour can be recognized.

Putting the information into an Action Plan

Once we have enough information, we create an approximation of the model of performance. The clearer we are of the categories of task decomposition, the better our building blocks for the final model.

Include in the model the deep structural patterns that underly the behaviour, eg. What does the expert know of or has experienced that allows for the behaviour to occur? Determining a hierarchy or syntax of critical behavioural components is also important.

Build and then run an action plan to test or expose redundant components and to increase reliability by installing into a trainee. We can make adjustments at his stage by continually referring to the expert.

The test of the action plan is to whether the trainee(s) can produce equal or near equal results to the expert. Streamline and adjust the action plan according to results and consistency.

Designing & Conducting a Training Programme

After adjustments are made, it is useful to have a preselection criteria for your trainees to transfer the expertise. Remember: Preselection always buys you more for your

training dollar. Trainees that have the right predisposition and epistemology is more likely to respond to the action plan and produce higher levels of performance. Eg if you were to train someone to expertly give a painless local anaesthetic, the predisposition of high manual dexterity and fine motor skills will be the preselection criteria to higher performance levels of these painless injections. Or if you were to train child pacifying methods, a preselection criteria for the trainee would be patience and a love of children.

What does this all mean?

So there you have it in a nutshell. There is a way of modelling human excellence in any context – sports, technical, business, family, self. It can be tedious – and yet, if there are those out there who are willing to sit down and study all the many tasks and behaviours of what makes the ideal, or at least range of ideals, of the above ... we can include them as part of any formal (say, in a university or training institution), or informal (say, in your own office or family environment) course in the training of all of the above.

We do not have to wait for formal education to embrace these techniques. You can start in your own corner of the world. And start making a difference.

The Call to Action – Do what you can!

Let's simplify things.

Instead of doing a full research into different experts to formulate a model, can we not just look at some of the things we ourselves do well already? Why not attempt to transfer them to others using the modelling guidelines above? Would that not work as a possible Mentoring model so we may pass on our skills and experiences to a new generation? For a start, we could mentor our children in our talents.

And what of those that we aspire to be – what stops us from just observing them using the modelling guidelines above? Is this not how we learnt best as children? Why don't we remember once again, and attempt to learn as we did then – and continue to improve ourselves? As we reach to achieve our highest potential, are we not role modelling others (such as our children) and inspiring them to do the same in their lives?

Another thought: What about modelling our children as expert learners? Are they not like sponges taking up massive new learnings? Perhaps they have a lot more to teach us than we realize!

Consider this. Imagine two people standing face to face, pushing palm to palm. If one pushes harder, the other has to do the same to keep the balance. What if one stops pushing altogether? The other is forced to stop too in order not to overbalance and fall forwards. So, stay focussed on improving yourself. Remember that when you change your life, you cannot help effecting change in all other areas of the system – ie those around you.

Have a good time exploring this possibility! Find the genius in yourself and pass it on.

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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 for more information.