

Master Practitioner Project

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Giving Presence

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Giving Presence

Like many people on the Master Practitioner, my 'IT' went through many transformations until I found one which fitted with who I wanted to become. Originally my 'IT' was about me having confidence in all situations – and I had listed over 40 areas! This I now know was far too large chunk to be meaningful, and to make a difference. How to break it into small chunks, and in what situations did I most want confidence, was something that eluded me for a while. It was at the end of the second module that my 'IT' suddenly had a shape. When this happened, we were working in small groups, discussing ideas for our projects. I never got an opportunity to discuss my ideas. As usual I just allowed the others in the group to speak until we ran out of time. It was then that my 'IT' was suggested to me, and my new 'IT' became making space for myself in a group situation. In other words, being present in a group and sharing the gifts I have. On reflection, this is something that I have found very difficult to do. I am comfortable with most individual situations, but when I am faced with a group setting, particularly with people I perceive to be more intelligent, or professionally or socially higher than me, I remain quiet. My belief was that I wasn't as intelligent as these people and felt that if I did speak out I would be perceived as not making sense and revealing my ignorance in what was being discussed. This is something that has held me back both professionally and socially. 'Giving Presence' is about me being present in a group, in terms of being able to participate without being self-conscious, and also to contribute without the fear of worrying about what people's perceptions of me are.

My models of excellence

My models were people who I felt really demonstrated the qualities that I was looking for. Having said that, there were many others that I could have modelled, but if I had done so would have meant that the project would be a little on the large side! The qualities I was looking for, and which my exemplars demonstrated were an apparent ease of being able to speak out in a group without showing any signs of nervousness, self-consciousness, whilst appearing to enjoy themselves and learning from what was happening around them. From my perception, all my exemplars had these qualities, so all I had to do was to find out what their model was and how I could adapt it for myself.

Nick Naylor

I first met Nick on the introductory NLP course, and have been fortunate enough to share all my NLP experiences with him on both the Business and Master Practitioner courses. One thing about Nick that I find inspiring is his ability to talk openly and confidently in group situations. He appears to adapt to his environment and just 'go with the flow', and be in the moment. When he speaks he makes sense and also seems to enjoy participating. I certainly get the impression that he is open to learning.

Liz Carrighan

Liz was an assistant on the introductory NLP course. She has the ability to be openly present in a group situation, without actually saying anything. She appears to be open to learning, and as a result is prepared to share her learning with the rest of the group. When she speaks, she does so with such passion that she is compelling to listen to. As well as helping my own learning, she has the power to draw people into her own world.

Pam McHale

I first met Pam a couple of years ago at a conference in Belfast. She is a very genuine person and is passionate about Social Inclusion, which is her line of work. I have attended many meetings with her, and observed her influence everyone around the table. Because she believes in what she does, she has the ability to draw people to her, and as a result persuades others to take on her own passion. Last year she was a delegate at a conference and halfway through the day was invited to sit on a panel, on the stage, and take questions from the floor. Although she appeared to be nervous, she appeared to change her state and answer questions in a clear, concise way, still maintaining her passion and still making sense.

Jaz Binnings

Jaz and I used to work together. He is an incredible guy with very strong beliefs. He is a Shik, and this underpins everything that he does. I have also attended many meetings with him. My observations of him have been that he takes great interest in what is going on without actually saying anything. He has the ability to know when the discussion is not moving forward and that is when he starts speaking. He is able to draw the discussion back to basics, and then he gives his opinions and his thoughts on the topic, which enables the discussion to draw to a close and reach a conclusion. He is so positive and kind when he speaks that it impacts on the entire group so that the meeting ends positively. He has an amazing ability to focus everyone's attention, and also to digest a lot of information whilst appearing to understand the subject matter.

The process

Unfortunately I was not able to meet with all of my exemplars face to face. Liz's interview was carried out by phone (although I did meet up with Liz after the course had ended). Whilst it meant that I was unable to observe her, it proved to be an interesting experience as the conversation flowed easily as if we were in the same room together. I also found that with Liz and Nick I didn't have to ask them many questions. Whether this was a result of their own experience of NLP and clean questioning, or whether it was their desire to help me, my experience with them was that they asked their own questions and delivered the answers! Neither Pam nor Jaz had experience of NLP, which made the experience completely different as they were totally focused on the questions they were asked. I also found that I didn't always use clean

questions when talking to Pam or Jaz. I was aware that neither had experienced clean questions before and I didn't want to come across as being interrogating. The process worked well and I was able to elicit their models of how they are present in a group environment.

Whilst carrying out the modelling process, my 'IT' actually divided into two parts. One part was about being present in a group environment, and the other turned into facilitating a group. This wasn't what I wanted to pursue at this stage but it was interesting in that my exemplars had different perceptions on how to be present in a group situation.

Their models

I have so much information, which came out of the modelling process that the best way to present my exemplar's models is through the neurological levels of change.

Nick Naylor

Environment

- Doesn't often know the details of the environment in advance.
- Thinks back to other times and places in which he has been a member of a group and has enjoyed himself. Anchors that to previous enjoyable experiences in that environment.

Behaviour

- 'Try to be me'.
- Listens attentively to what is going on.
- Allows others to express themselves while he listens and gets a feel for the group. **(Everyone makes the best choice available to them at the time they make it).**
- Builds rapport from the word go – finding areas of commonality and shared interest.
- Enjoys finding out others stories.
- Joins in as appropriately and 'typically' asks a lot of questions.

Capabilities

- Assesses filters and language and looks for matches/mismatches as a means of calibration.
- Contributes when has something to say or contribute, or when opinion is asked, or when he can't hold back.
- Enjoys 'Just being me': a feeling of oneness and openness.
- Can't help but speak out – if someone has said something that doesn't fit with him or if someone has touched him in a particular way. **(The person with the most flexibility in thinking and behaviour has the greatest influence).**

Beliefs and values

- Everyone has something of value to contribute.
- I can learn from everyone in the group.
- We are all important and see things from our own unique perspective **(Each person is unique / the map is not the territory)**.
- I will enjoy the interaction and what we are doing is worthwhile.
- To have a good time and will benefit from that interaction.
- My contribution will be of value.

Identity

- There to support others, and create an open, comfortable environment so people can say what's on their mind.
- If I have insight, learning or opinion that others find valuable, I'll express it.
- I'm there to learn or find out something.
- To be a teenager and have fun.
- 'I am a bump on a log, peaceful in a rushing stream.'

Spirituality/purpose

- Always looking to learn and find like-minded people.
- Continuous learning.
- The group takes learning back to the system in which they operate.
- To be the best I can be and encourage the same in others.
- To make a difference by opening eyes to the possible and by being an example. **(If someone can do it – anyone can do it)**.

Nick's overall strategy of being in a group:

- Before or as he arrives he thinks back to other times and places where he has enjoyed himself and anchors that to the current situation. (Vir),
- He talks to people when he arrives, gets to know them and finds out something about them. (Vic).
- He sits and listens allowing others to express themselves so he can get a feel for the group. (Aic).
- He speaks out when he feels he can contribute, especially if someone has said something or has touched him in a particular way. (Ki).
- He leaves the meeting believing the group takes the learning back to the systems in which they operate. (Aid).

Liz Carrighan

Environment

- Not important would only visualise it if facilitating the group.

Behaviour

- Stands back and watches.
- Lets people approach her.
- Notice things about people – tries to gauge how they are feeling e.g. are they stressed/relaxed, open/closed?
- Quiet, disassociated but full of positive intention. **(Behind every behaviour is an unconscious positive intention).**

Capabilities

- 'I am like oil which has to warm up. Once I'm warmed up I am on a roll.'
- Calm and contentment.
- Ready for anything e.g. sudden change in direction.
- Open to learn. Feels like a sponge soaking up data that will make sense with time.
- Will participate (speak out) when feels the need to.

Beliefs and values

- Holds belief of choice. If Liz doesn't say anything for three days then that is because she chooses not to.
- If things do not make sense at the time – believes they will at a later stage.
- To be true to herself i.e. not saying something because she feels she needs to be noticed. Comfortable in the space that she is in. **(Everyone makes the best choice available to them at the time they make it).**
- When Liz does contribute it is because it is important for her to stay being true to herself.

Identity

- A sunflower. No matter how dark it is, or how much Liz doesn't understand, she knows she will grow above the darkness and become stronger.
- It's ok to go with the flow, it's not about saying anything and it will happen.
- Creates a warm oil feeling of oneness and calm. **(Mind and body are part of the same system).**

Spirituality/purpose

- If there is anyway that Liz can learn more / or help others then she will speak.
- Her role is to make a difference and get the most out of the group.

Liz's overall strategy of being in a group:

- Liz is not concerned with the environment.
- She stands back and watches, and lets people approach her. (Ve).
- She associates herself as being oil, which has to warm up, and then she is on a roll, ready for anything to happen. (Ki).
- Liz will only speak if she remains true to herself. She is comfortable in the space she is in. (Ki).
- She will use the group as an opportunity for learning and to help others. (Aid).

Pam McHale

Environment

- Not important.
- Doesn't think about where the meeting is or what the environment is. However, does concentrate on the subject matter.
- Prepares by researching as much as possible to gain the knowledge.
- Likes to be able to go into any situation fully prepared so that she is able to fully participate.

Behaviour

- Deliberately thinks of the colour blue. To Pam, this represents tranquillity and calm to slow the heartbeat.
- Also associates blue with water, and both visualises it and feels it.
- When nervous will take deep breaths.
- Is open to knowledge (learning). **(There is no failure only feedback / there is only learning).**

Capabilities

- Meetings have become easier as Pam has got older as she now feels she has more knowledge.
- Will only say things if she knows it will add value.
- She feels that it is important to have more knowledge than others. She feels vulnerable if this doesn't happen.
- Has a 'naughty' mode – will bamboozle people with information.
- Gets information across in a way that is accessible to everyone.
- Enjoys it – she has learnt to enjoy it.

Beliefs and values

- Believes that knowledge is important.
- She is evangelical about Social Inclusion.
- 'I am serious as I believe in what I do – Social Inclusion is a very serious business to influence.'
- I can make a difference.

Identity

- People can take me or leave me.
- To turn everything into a positive (**There is a solution to every problem**).
- Bad things make you strong – ‘I think I’m tough’.

Spirituality/purpose

- To influence the organisational agenda and to make a real difference to people that matter. (**The person with the most flexibility in thinking and behaviour has the greatest influence**).
- In very small ways I can make a difference.
- Being humble enough to know what you know and what you don’t know.

Pam’s strategy for being in a group:

- Pam will research as much as possible so that she is fully prepared to go into the meeting so that she can be calm. (Ki).
- When she is nervous she deliberately thinks of the colour blue to calm her down. (Vic).
- She will listen to what is going on around her. (Aic).
- She will speak when she knows it will have value, a feeling she gets deep down in her stomach. (Ki).
- When she feels the meeting is not going well, she will act positively by speaking out with real passion. (Ki).

Jaz Binnings

Environment

- Takes things to a simple level.
- Doesn’t change the environment but does change the stuffiness by employing humour.
- Will get to know what his role is in the meeting so that he is aware of what is expected of him before he attends the meeting.

Behaviour

- Is nervous but gets on with it.
- If he has the facts and figures he is more productive and confident. His confidence is in knowledge.
- He is still but listens.
- At work he metaphorically wears a purple turban as this creates a professional image for him as purple is the corporate colour.
- In extreme situations of nervousness he imagines an orc army of 100,000 marching towards an army of just him.

- To create confidence he feels as if he is in an impenetrable bubble / force whilst the Orc army is coming towards him. This makes him feel protected.

Capabilities

- Plays it by ear and then picks up on questions. **(The person with the most flexibility in thinking and behaviour has the greatest influence).**
- When he doesn't have the knowledge he builds up the confidence to ask the questions.
- The right questions depend on trial and error.
- Has the confidence to build confidence in others by feeding them the information to participate.

Beliefs and values

- Believes no one ever admits that they don't know something.
- People respond more positively and contribute more productively when I share my ideas.
- Believes: 'I can make a difference'.
- Believes when he speaks people will listen to him.

Identity

- To challenge people's views.
- To have an impact.
- It's like a central avenue with loads of alleys with each one being an idea. Jaz likes to get the best out of everybody by looking at each alley and coming back to the central point. **(We have within us all the resources we ever need).**

Spirituality / purpose

- Faith plays a huge part.
- Respect, integrity and giving.
- To try something new and to create confidence in others.
- To make a difference to people's lives.

Jaz's strategy for being in a group:

- Will clarify his role before he goes into the meeting so that he is prepared. He does this by constructing an image of what he should be like. (Vic).
- He is nervous but he will recreate the picture of the orc army to gain confidence. (Vic).
- He listens to what is going on around him. (Aic).
- When he feels the meeting isn't moving forward he will speak out. (Ki).

Although I modelled what I thought were initially four very different individuals, they all held similar structures in how they participated in a group environment. Although they were all quite visual in their language and their eye accessing, actually their deeper structures were essentially kinaesthetic. When they described their feelings, when things were going well for them, they explained it as a warm feeling of which the core is based in the chest / heart area. All of the exemplars believed that their contributions in a group would make a difference and add value to people's learning. All also were open to learning and were positive about being in group situations and the richness of their metaphors gave me their true structures.

The exemplars experience of the process

I asked each of my exemplars how they found the process, whether it had helped them and what they learnt from their models. The following are quotes from them:

Nick 'It has been great to be modelled. Like many, I am very happy to talk about 'me', particularly when the person I am talking to is really interested in what I am saying, it is a real luxury and incredibly flattering that someone would want to do it.'

' I have learnt a lot about how I am in a group situation and to some extent I use the same strategy when facilitating. I am a coach in both situations.'

Liz The process was 'very useful as it has made me think and made me far more conscious of some of the things I do and beliefs that I hold.'
It has 'given me the insight to hold some of the beliefs I have when part of the group to when I am in front of the group – that could make me a lot calmer in the latter situation.'

'The questioning was very logical (and clean) and it really did help the process for me – the only question that doesn't really work for me and I don't know why is 'Does it have a shape or form?'

Pam 'I found the process really interesting. I didn't realise I had a structure for participating in groups and thank you for helping me to find it.'

Jaz 'The whole process made me realise that I had positive attributes I never realised and that from time to time it is good to take time out and review yourself like this. Does wonders for the confidence.'

My model

My initial reaction to how I was going to get my model from all of the information I had been given was overwhelming to begin with. However, I decided to break each element down and try it on for size to see how it fitted with me. By doing it this way I was able to build a model which completely fits with my beliefs and who I wanted to become.

My new model:

Environment

- Not able to influence the environment but I can concentrate on the people and the gifts they bring. **(Each person is unique / the map is not the territory).**
- Also to prepare as much as possible beforehand so that I can participate positively both in what I'm going to say and also how I'm going to prepare my state.

Behaviour

- Be open, and expect learning from the group. **(There is no failure only feedback / there is only learning).**
- Be calm, taking on Pam's metaphor of thinking of blue.
- To enjoy the experience.
- Talk to people and find out a bit about them, building rapport. **(Each person is unique / the map is not the territory).**
- To just be me.

Capabilities

- I will speak out when I feel I can contribute.
- I am good at listening and therefore I can pick up on the thread of conversation easily.
- I will learn as much as possible remaining both positive and confident. **(Everyone makes the best choice available to them at the time they make it).**

Beliefs and values

- I can talk to people on a one to one basis; therefore I can talk out in a group.
- People will listen to me.
- I too, can make a difference.
- If things do not make sense at the time, I will have the courage to ask for clarity.
- I can learn from everyone in the group. **(There is no failure only feedback / there is only learning).**

Identity

- I am there to learn from others and also for them to learn from me.
- I am me and I can give of myself to others.

Spirituality / purpose

- To make a difference to people's lives and to give them my gifts.

My overall strategy:

- I will concentrate on the people that will be there and to build rapport with them as they arrive. (Vic).
- I will be calm and enjoy the experience. (Vic).
- I will listen to what is going on around me. (Aic).
- I know I will speak out when I feel I am able to contribute. (Ki).

Since beginning the modelling process I have consciously adopted elements of my exemplar's models. Nick was the first person I modelled and it was his metaphor of being a bump on a log, peaceful in a rushing stream that I first tried out. This was a turning point for me as for the first time I was able to speak out in a group without feeling nervous. I felt calm and actually felt that I was making a difference to everyone present by speaking out. Since then, and as my model has taken shape, I am becoming more confident. In some ways I already had this model at an unconscious level, taking on the presupposition: **What we recognise in others mirrors the structures we hold within ourselves.** This realisation happened on the last module when the brass quintet I am a member of, were invited along to play to everyone on the Master Practitioner. This was an amazing experience as although I was nervous, it was wonderful to do something that I had, and still have, confidence in, and also to invite people into my world of music sharing the joy I receive from it. It is difficult to play the tuba without speaking out through it in the group. Without the tuba there is no bass line to keep the band going. It is virtually impossible to play the tuba without sitting upright and taking deep breaths to support the sound. This is something that I have now adopted in other aspects in being present in a group. My metaphor is now the tuba and what that means to me. It has become my identity and I now use it as an anchor to enable me to speak out. Through the tuba I am present in the band, and now by using it as my anchor, it helps to reinforce my model in being present in a group environment.

My first conscious attempt at testing out the model was at the presentation itself. I had prepared the presentation well in advance, but to me it wasn't compelling enough for me to give my model to others. People from the course had already noticed that I was beginning to speak out in the group, but how could I share my model with them so they could take adopt it as their own? After playing in the Quintet, what I really wanted the group to experience was the feeling of holding the tuba and what it was like to play it and just become part of it. For me, this was incredible to observe as people were passing the instrument to each other and producing sounds from it. It was then that I knew they had my model of giving presence, and the look on their faces that they could do this reinforced to me that I can speak out too, without the tuba. Since that experience I have attended several meetings (and also played in several concerts) and I have been able to speak out and ask questions – a real turning point. In order for me to pass my model onto others at work and in other areas of my life, the only way I can do so is by being the example of

giving presence and allowing others to do the same, so that I too can make a difference.

What next?

My journey in NLP has been interesting and although it has been uncomfortable at times, it is now that I am able to reap the full benefits and I feel that the real learning has now started. So much so that I am now changing careers and am moving into music therapy. This is a real opportunity for me to give back to others what they have given me. The modelling process has helped me in that decision and I know I am now embarking on a new modelling project which is modelling those that have set up their own business and also talking to people who are already doing music as their chosen career.

My belief is that anyone can express themselves through music, regardless of their capabilities and who they are. I have started putting ideas together and have now worked out a programme of action. I have discussed my idea with many people, and all have reacted positively. As a result new opportunities are opening up for me and I have been invited along to a primary school to try out my ideas. It is an exciting time, although a bit scary, and I am so looking forward to testing out my ideas and giving presence to others. It has been an incredible journey and I am so grateful that I was given the opportunity to realise my gifts – thank you so very much.