



Personal Achievement

How to Achieve your Goals

Stephen Bray

The ability to achieve goals rests not so much in the hard work of determination so much as effective planning. It is particularly important to give consideration to context and resources before committing to any outcome. However, once these have been examined in a systematic way then full commitment should follow. Answers to the questions posed in this paper will be valuable to those planning for organisations; engaged in therapeutic practice as well as individuals wishing to make changes in their lives.

The one thing that is common to survivors of major illness is their belief in the treatment regime offered according to Robert Dilts, one of the early developers of NLP¹. Two sessions of hypnotherapy were all it took for ten out of eleven physicians to overcome their anxiety about exams. As reported in the American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis, the doctors had all previously failed their fellowship exams in Tasmania.

Calming metaphors and suggested images of success combined with behavioural therapy techniques were used with the doctors in two 50-minute sessions. All but one of the doctors passed the exam and all but two felt more relaxed². The ability to formulate powerful beliefs and relaxed states conducive to learning and healing does not have to be confined to the consulting room. Much can be achieved simply by having Well formed Outcomes³ and following them to their conclusions with faith, flexibility and resourcefulness.

Originally there were six essential components to creating a Well formed Outcome⁴ in NLP. This paper introduces a vital seventh component which updates the computer software analogy of the mind suggested by the early model to a quantum⁵ or spectrum⁶ model of self. This model gives credence to the view that events do not simply occur by chance but are pregnant with meaning. Fictional works such as *The Celestine Prophecy*⁷ support this view are backed by the writings of psychiatrists such as Carl Jung⁸ and Physicists such as Werner Heisenberg⁹.

The Six Components of Well Formedness

EVIDENCE PROCEDURES

1. State your goal or outcome in the positive:

What do you want? Some people have difficulty in phrasing a positive outcome. They understand that they want to be rid of some habit or feeling. This is a legitimate starting place. The positive outcome can be accessed by asking If you were rid of habit x what would this enable you to achieve? This reply can be refined into the desired outcome. A second question concerns behaviours: What are you going to be doing once you have achieved your outcome?

2. Descriptions should be sensory based and include at least three separate points of view:

This means they are stated in terms of seeing, hearing, feeling and possibly taste and smell. This makes the goal concrete. Ask: How would you know that youve attained your outcome? What would you be seeing, hearing, feeling? Another important element is to elicit alternative points of view*, for example: How would your (partner, boss, parent, therapist), know you had achieved your outcome? What would they see, hear, feel? It is also important to get a detached perspective: If someone were to follow you around with a video camera, once you had achieved your outcome, what would they record in pictures and sounds? If they showed you this video what would you feel about it? If they showed the video to someone who you have never known and you will never

meet, what would they see, hear and feel; what could they conclude from it? Are you comfortable with these conclusions, if not what needs to change?

ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

3. Outcomes must be achievable:

It is essential that working toward a goal can be started by a person or organisation, and also maintained. This presupposes resources and commitment. The following questions help people to create the mental map through which they are going to move forward:

What do you need to achieve your goal? The answers to this question may be very concrete, such as more money, a new wheelbarrow/video camera/evening dress, or much more subjective for example: more energy, being relaxed, greater commitment.

What stops you from getting what you want? is a question which elicits the current inhibitors. The part of the mind map which imbues energy into these limiting beliefs may need to be challenged. Such questions as: What is your contribution to this obstacle? and How can you influence these obstacles? may create some mental space. The larger the outcome, the more potential obstacles are likely to be present. If this is the case it may be appropriate to treat each obstacle as an individual outcome, and re-apply the Well-Formedness Formula to each of these. If the outcome seems quite small, then a useful question to ask is: If you achieved your goal, in what ways would it contribute to you as a person? Keep adding new outcomes until you arrive at a congruent, committed response. In Western Society it is useful to believe that nothing and no-body can prevent the achievement of an outcome or goal, if that goal is legal and worthwhile.

4. Well Formed Outcomes Generate Choice - Nothing is Taken Away

This means that positive by-products of the prevailing situation must be preserved once the outcome is achieved. Some people seem to be afraid of success. There are reasons for this. The following questions begin to address such areas in a systematic way:

What will happen if you achieve your goal? How will everything else around you be affected? These questions introduce the idea that the universe is divided by boundaries

which are more or less permeable. Change in an individual will therefore influence all the systems with which that individual is a part (holon), and all those sub-systems (holons) which co-operate together to comprise that individual person. The answers to these questions are designed to elicit constructs, or beliefs. They are not to be taken as observable facts about an objective reality.

These questions lead on to: What do you get out of your present behaviour? Is there any part of you that objects to what you want? Both of these questions acknowledge that if change were easy, then a systematic formula, or even therapy would not be necessary. They track the possibility of hidden benefits; the first construing a person as a conscious unified whole and the second assuming the presence of sub personalities¹⁰. If there are objections, then these may be gently explored by asking: How can these benefits be achieved at the same time as your goals attained?

5. The goal, outcome or new behaviour must be appropriately contextualised:

For example, if the outcome is to be a proficient dancer of the Lambada, then this goal may not be appropriate when engaged in the activities of ones work as a librarian. The time honoured questions generally addressed by clinicians to problems can usefully be adopted contextualising the desired changes: When ... Where ... Where would you not ... When would you not ... want to experience your desired goal or outcome? What are the worst consequences you can imagine if you achieved your goal? Are these acceptable? If not how can you adjust your outcome, or means of achieving it to provide acceptable worst consequences?

6. The outcome must fit the person it concerns:

If a goal is representative of who you are, or who you want to be, then if it meets the previous conditions it may not only be achieved but could even be surpassed. However, creating a well formed outcome is not magic. Questions such as: What will it take to achieve this goal? What attachment or behaviour might you have to give up? Is it worth the cost/effort? will determine the level of commitment to realising the goal.

So far the six pre-requisites for Well-formedness can be found in most basic NLP textbooks. Although I infer that some of the questions imply circular relationships with others such as colleagues, other family members or the environment and have suggested

that internal psychological and physiological sub-systems or holons may be affected by individual change; everything written so far could be understood in terms of the computer analogy of self. This in essence says: garbage in - garbage out: programme in - product out. This analogy is attractive, because it is simple. It appeals to what John Grinder refers to as first attention^{11** 12}. He writes: The preponderance of technical society operates in first attention and its going to get us in deep troubleWe have certain filters to the world which bias the information through our sensory apparatus into second attention and then into consciousness, first attention, in such a way that our symbolic representations are always going to be an interesting integration of what we can represent and whats out there in the world¹³ Moreover, beliefs, goals, outcomes, people and situations change over time. Plans can seem to become frustrated through unpredictable, seemingly unconnected external circumstances. However, the meaning of these external events will vary depending upon how we choose to depict their influence through our language¹⁴ and stories¹⁵.

In *The Art of Dreaming*, Don Juan tells Carlos Casteneda, ... most of our energy goes into upholding our importance ... If we were capable of losing some of that importance, two extraordinary things would happen to us. One, we would free our energy from trying to maintain the illusory idea of our grandeur; and two, we would provide ourselves with enough energy to ... catch a glimpse of the actual grandeur of the universe.¹⁶ Deepak Chopra defines this ability as Acceptance¹⁷ This is the ability to accept people, situations, circumstances, and events as they occur. He urges that we do not struggle against the whole universe, by struggling against the present moment, rather we accept things as they are, whilst taking responsibility for bringing about changes. Now, every so-called upsetting situation becomes an opportunity for the creation of something new and beautiful. Every petty tyrant¹⁸ becomes a teacher, (even if through the teacher we learn how to withdraw from subjecting ourselves to the painful lessons, and instead we become proficient in aikido and let such tyrants tire themselves).

A Quantum Consideration

The proposed seventh condition of Well Formedness acknowledges the power of a third attention¹⁹ that is to stay experiencing everything whilst knowing nothing. This meditative state of total subjectivity opens the prison of attachment to a goal enabling the freed prisoners to enjoy a journey which takes them towards the outcome. This state in the East is known as wu-wei²⁰, or non-acting. At the level of the quantum field there is

nothing but energy and information. This field is influenced by intention and desire. This is because at the quantum level there are no well defined edges, the holons seem to dissolve into a series of probabilities. Wu-wei is not simply abstaining from activity, but abstaining from activity that is out of harmony with the ongoing cosmic process. The noted sinologist Joseph Needham writes: Non-action does not mean doing nothing and keeping silent. Let everything be allowed to do what it naturally does, so its nature will be satisfied²¹ Questions which elicit this state are perhaps:

Knowing yourself, and what you want, what might it be like to surrender to the gap between and fully witness your outcome evolving naturally into something harmonious beyond reason? Knowing your goal, how will you know you are moving forward peacefully without judging yourself or evaluating your progress? What would it be like to know that your goal is in harmony with your environment? Knowing your intention and desires how will you appreciate the moment as it is and remain open to the infinity of choices that await you as your destiny unfolds? To truly not know is to be more than half way there!

HOW TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS (FOOTNOTES)

*News comes from difference and difference comes from multiple descriptions of the world ... you may not make a change unless you occupy enough context to occupy three positions: where you yourself stand-the position of your own referential index in the experience (or experience you are planning); the position of some or all significant others who are part of the relationship at some logical level. ... Lastly .. meta-position, as that higher logical level gets you kinaesthetic dissociation so you can escape the tyranny of the physiology you originally occupied. ... The wisdom exists in the whole circuit we must consider in gaining our news of difference, the basis for acting with some wisdom in the world - we must consider the contextual side of the loop. Grinder J & DeLozier J (1987) op. cit. pp 197-198 Peter Wryca has suggested a fourth position, that of witnessing beyond all positions, however, this is really the subject of 3rd Attention and covered later in this paper under the heading Quantum Awareness; see: Wryca (1997) Living Awareness, Bath, Gateway Books.

Holon a term originated by Arthur Koestler. In a biological or social system each holon must assert its individuality in order to maintain the systems order, but it must submit to

the demands of the whole to make the system viable. See: Koestler A (1978) Janus London, Hutchinson. The term is adopted by Minuchin and Fishman in: Family Therapy Techniques (1981) Harvard, Harvard University Press.

It is important to realise that the answers cannot be facts because as Checkland explains so succinctly: The concept of a human activity system is crucially different from the concepts of natural or designed systems. These latter, once they are manifest, could not be other than they are, but human activity systems can manifest only as perceptions by human actors who are free to attribute meaning to what they perceive. There will thus never be a single (testable) account of a human activity system, only a set of possible accounts all valid according to particular Weltanschauungen. See: Checkland (1981) Systems Thinking, Systems Practice, Chichester, John Wiley & Co. pp 14

Often referred to as secondary gains see for example: Rycroft C (1968) A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, Harmondsworth, Penguin. pp 56

** A term adopted by John Grinder in New Code NLP from: Carlos Casteneda (1984) The Fire From Within, New York, Simon & Schuster pp 83-85. Attention is the harnessing and enhancing of awareness through the process of being alive. Everything that one can think about is part of the first attention. Second attention on the other hand is a specialised state to do with the unknown to be avoided if at all possible. Known to some as a Transpersonal level. Wilber writes: These bands have not been as widely studied as others, for several reasons: (1) They scare the daylights out of most people; (2) Orthodox psychiatry considers them as signs of a very disturbed psyche; and (3) Enlightened Masters consider them mayko-illusions of the most deceptive nature: see Wilber (1993) op.cit. pp 254.

The full quote concludes: you have to take both sides of the loop to have an appreciation of what epistemology might be Grinder & DeLozier Ibid.

There are said to be two classes of petty tyrants. The first, pinches tiranitos persecute and cause misery without causing anybody's death. The second, repinches tiranitos, or pinches tiranitos chiquititos, are only exasperating and bothersome to no end. Casteneda

(1984) op.cit. pp 32.

According to Colin McGinn, Mind may just not be big enough to understand mind. quoted in: Zohar D. Ibid. Existence and relationship are as relevant to the Quantum Field as to everyday life. The wave/particle duality of quantum stuff becomes the most primary mind/body relationship in the world and the core of all that, at higher levels, we recognise as the mental & physical aspects of life. pp 80. At the level of consciousness that we understand, that which originates in our own brains, quantum relational holism could arise from the correlation of waves in the brains powerful electro-magnetic field created by the jiggling of charged protons or fat molecules in the neurone cell walls. This relationship would form something like a Frhlich-style Bose-Einstein condensate, the most highly ordered form of relationship available in this world. This is then what gives rise to consciousness, the blackboard on which all our thoughts, feelings and perceptions are written ... The mind/body duality in man is a reflection of the wave particle duality which underlies all there is. Ibid. pp 82.

At the sub-atomic level, matter does not exist with certainty at definite places, but rather shows tendencies to exist. At the quantum level the solid material objects of classical physics dissolve into wave like patterns of possibilities.

Meaningful coincidences are thinkable as pure chance. But the more they multiply and the greater and more exact the correspondence is, the more their probability sinks and their unthinkability increases, until they can no longer be regarded as pure chance but, for lack of a causal explanation, have to be thought of as meaningful arrangements. ... their inexpicability is not due to the fact that the cause is unknown but to the fact that a cause is not even thinkable in intellectual terms. This is necessarily the case when space and time lose their meaning or have become relative, for under those circumstances a causality which presupposes space and time for its continuance can no longer be said to exist and becomes altogether unthinkable. ... it seems to me necessary to introduce, alongside space, time and causality, a category which not only enables us to understand synchronistic phenomena as a special class of natural events, but also takes the contingent partly as a universal factor existing from all eternity, and partly as the sum of countless individual acts of creation occurring in time. Jung C Ibid. pp 519.

The Quantum self is, by the very mechanics of its consciousness, a natural self - a free

and responsive self - and its world will, ultimately, reflect the world of nature. Where it does not, that world will fail. Zohar Ibid. pp 220.

Bibliography:

- 1 Dilts R (1983) Applications of Neurolinguistic Programming, Capurino, Meta Publications
- 2 Stanton H (1993) Using Hypnotherapy to Overcome Examination Anxiety, American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis, 35, 3 pp 198-203
- 3 Grinder J & Bandler R (1976) The Structure of Magic Vol II, Palo Alto, Science and Behaviour Books
- 4 Bray S (1987) NLP Foundation Skills Manual, Manchester, Manchester Gestalt Centre.
- 5 Zohar D (1991) The Quantum Self, Hammersmith, Harper Collins
- 6 Wilbur K (1993) The Spectrum of Consciousness. 2nd Quest Edition, Wheaton, The Theosophical Publishing House.
- 7 Redfield J (1993) The Celestine Prophecy, Hoover, Satori Press
- 8 Jung C (1950) On Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle. Collected Works, Vol 8. London and New York, RKP, pp 520-531
- 9 Heisenberg W (1963) Physics and Philosophy, London, Allen & Unwin pp 46
- 10 Assagioli R (1965) Psychosynthesis, The Viking Press, New York pp 74
- 11 Grinder J & Delozier J (1987) Turtles All The Way Down, Bonny Doon, GDA
- 12 Carlos Casteneda (1984) The Fire From Within, New York, Simon & Schuster pp 83-85
- 13 Grinder J & Delozier J (1987) op. cit.

- 14 Anderson H & Goolishian H (1988) Human Systems as Linguistic Systems: Preliminary and Evolving Ideas about the Implications for Clinical Theory, Family Process Vol: 27 No: 4 pp 371-393
- 15 Ricoeur P (1983) Time and Narrative. Chicago, University of Illinois Press.
- 16 Casteneda C (1993) The Art of Dreaming, Hammersmith, Harper Collins
- 17 Chopra D (1994) Creating Affluence: Wealth Consciousness in the Field of all Possibilities, London, Transworld Publishers Ltd.
- 18 Carlos Casteneda (1984) op. cit. pp 26-63
- 19 Carlos Casteneda (1984) Ibid. pp 83-85
- 20 Wood E (1977) Zen Dictionary, Harmondsworth, Pelican
- 21 Needham J (1956) Science and Civilisation in China, London, Cambridge University Press

Copyright 1998 Stephen Bray