

In the beginning there was the word

(A brief discourse on the power of the word, Clean Language & Self-Generated Metaphor by Maurice Corrigan MLBCAI, Clean Language Facilitator and Symbolic Modeller).

Which of us haven't hurt or been hurt with words? Not quite 'sticks and stones' injuries but hurt none the less. Which of us honestly can say we never retaliated nor acted in a pre-emptive way with hostile barbs? Which of us either intentionally or unintentionally, have never misled or confused others with our language? Who amongst us can claim to have never engaged in that one-sided conversation of self-reproach?

Inherent in the above discourse lies the potency of language and words (even as silent self-talk). Of course a similar potential but with different effect exists in words of comfort, kindness and encouragement.

Over three hundred years ago John Milton in his epic 'Paradise Lost' cautioned about our internal words that form beliefs. "The mind is its own place, and in itself, can make heaven of Hell, and a hell of Heaven." (First Publication 1667)

John the evangelist acknowledged the genesis of human experience and the creative power of words opening his gospel thus;

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1 (KJV).

So it is, words not only function as principle carriers of meaning but also are at the source of meaning, humanity and virtual creation. Find new words and you have found the capacity to create new worlds.

Surely the lesson is, watch your language! Regardless of the nature of ones work most are aware of the importance of clarity in communications. Whether in the workplace with colleagues, clients and customers or at home with spouse, partner or children all can benefit from attention to the word. Clean Language is a new, exciting, and effective method, easily learnt and practised.

So what is Clean Language and what of its origins? 'Clean Language' is largely accredited to the work of the late David Grove, a New Zealand therapist. Grove was observed by James Lawley and Penny Tompkins who created a model of how he worked. David's language during his work with clients relied to an extraordinary extent on the words of the clients. He tended to introduce as few words as possible in his interventions. To

generalise he used simple reflection with a gentle inquiry which developed the client's information further. A pattern of nine basic questions were used some 80% of the time during sessions. During the other 20% of the time David used more specialised questions but the core of his interventions were made up of 9 basic questions. These became known as 'Clean Language Questions'.

“Clean questions encourage metaphors, ideas, self-reflections and ah-ha's into being. When personal change is the goal, Clean Language invites a client's perceptions to evolve and change organically — one question at a time..... Because of its ability to respectfully invite clients to attend to particular aspects of their inner world, Clean Language influences the direction of a client's mind-body-spirit process (without contaminating the content of their experience). Other processes may do this too, but none do it so cleanly or in quite the way that Clean Language does, and none are so tailored to work with metaphor.”ⁱ

Grove noticed during his work with patients who were traumatised that they tended to express themselves through metaphor more so than through conceptual or emotional language. He found that when he enquired about these metaphors using their exact words, their perception of the trauma began to change. This process is also sometimes known as Grovian Metaphor or Grovian Therapy. Having modelled this aspect of his work Lawley and Tompkins developed what they called 'Symbolic Modelling'. This method integrates modelling, metaphor and 'Clean Language' and is used to facilitate the client to successfully self-model states, strategies and approaches. It is also used to change limiting metaphors and to develop more useful ones for clients.

Although these interventions were originally designed to work therapeutically with clients' metaphors and symbols, these days they are more often used conversationally in hundreds of ways — by researchers, teachers, the police, managers, consultants, health practitioners and many others.

Maurice Corrigan is a Life & Business Coach (and also a coach trainer) of many years standing. He has studied Symbolic Modelling in the UK with James Lawley and Penny Tompkins, recognised world leaders in this exciting new field. They are authors of “Metaphors in Mind, Transformation through Symbolic Modelling”.

For details in any of Maurice's trainings in this cutting edge process call him on 093-35400 or 086-8060964 or www.maximisecoach.com

ⁱ Penny Tompkins www.cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/articles/177/2/Gallery-Tour/Page2.html