APPROACHES TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Peter Beven

a Northern Cultural Skills Partnership /
literaturetraining co-commission

Northern Cultural Skills Partnership

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Approaches to Professional Development Planning

This guide has been co-commissioned by Northern Cultural Skills Partnership (NCSP) and literaturetraining and is based on a NCSP short course programme which was delivered by Peter Beven of Northumbria University in January – July 2008 to support people providing Professional Development Planning (PDP) and Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) in the cultural sector in the North East of England.

About the author

Peter Beven

Peter Beven is an experienced trainer and lecturer in the Advice Guidance and Counselling area of work. He is currently Programme Leader for the Advice Guidance and Counselling route of the BA Joint Honours degree at Northumbria University, a Senior Associate of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Teaching Fellow of Northumbria University.

Research interests include the use of a range of different approaches to support clients in self-assessment, learning and decision-making. He has delivered training sessions for a wide range of organisations in the public and private sectors, both in the UK and abroad.

Selected recent conferences and training courses:

Border crossings: students' situated experiences of learning and teaching, Higher Education Close up Conference, University of Cape Town, South Africa, July 2008

Developing Information Advice and Guidance Workers in the Cultural Sector in the North East, Northern Cultural Skills Partnership, January – July 2008

Enhancing Student Motivation in Guidance Settings, Institute of Career Guidance National Conference, November 2007

Motivational Interviewing, ICG Professional Practice Day for Guidance Services in Northern Ireland, Armagh, October 2007

Motivational Interviewing and Guidance Practice, International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance, Padova, Italy, September 2007

Student Perspectives on the Relationship between Mentoring and Self Assessment, Higher Education Academy Annual Conference, Harrogate, July 2007

Tutoring for Transition, Northumberland Teachers In service Programme with Connexions, Northumberland, October 2007

Solution Focused Supervision, Training for Lead Personal Advisers, Connexions, Tyne and Wear, March 2007

Using Personal Construct Theory as an Assessment Tool, The Danish Institute for Educational Training of Vocational Teachers, Copenhagen, September 2003

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About Northern Cultural Skills Partnership (NCSP)

NCSP's aim is to enhance access to relevant professional development in order that people working in the cultural sector can develop their careers. We are a membership based organisation with over two thousand members working in all corners of the cultural sector in the north east of England. Many of our members are freelancers, or work in micro businesses – in short, our membership is a microcosm of the cultural sector itself. Very few have the benefit of HR departments, and most have to find resources for ongoing professional development from within their earnings.

At the heart of our work is a belief in the importance of professional development planning, and of the value skilled advisors can bring to that process. Our experience of providing guidance services over the last four years provides convincing evidence of the value our members attach to this provision at all stages of a professional journey. This can be when starting out in a career, helping to build a bridge between education and professional life, or at later stages, when reviewing progress, or needing to make changes to lift activity to a new level, or quite simply as a tool to re-invigorate a sense of direction and ambition. Where resources are scarce, it is obvious that decisions need to be made from an informed position, not easy if you are a sole trader with a host of personal as well as professional tasks to consider.

In 2007 we carried out a brief scoping exercise to establish who else in the region provides this service to the cultural sector workforce, and what opportunities for professional support exist for this aspect of their work. We were not surprised to discover that for most, providing guidance was not core to their paid activity, and whilst some held formal qualifications in IAG, most did not feel that this equipped them with the full range of skills needed to support them in their work in the sector. With this in mind, we met with Peter and with his invaluable expertise, mapped out the programme of seminars on which this publication is based.

We are greatly indebted to Peter for his sensitivity to the brief. We are also lucky through CreativePeop!e (www.creativepeople.org.uk) to be in contact with literaturetraining and through them, to have this opportunity to bring the work to a wider audience.

We hope you find the publication is a useful resource to support the development of guidance services for the cultural sector. We welcome feedback so do get in touch through our website – www.ncsp.co.uk.

About literaturetraining

literaturetraining is a wing of the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE), run in conjunction with our other partner literature organisations Academi, Apples & Snakes, Lapidus, NALD, renaissance one, Scottish Book Trust, Survivors' Poetry and writernet, with a specific remit for providing information and advice on professional development for writers and literature professionals. Drawing on the expertise and experience of our partners, our links with networks such as The Playwrights Network curated by writernet, and our role as a partner in CreativePeop!e (www.creativepeople.org.uk), a national network of organisations supporting professional development in the arts and crafts, we work to bring knowledge together and make it relevant to the new writing and literature sector. Our online directory at www.literaturetraining.com acts as a first stop shop for up-to-the-minute information on training and professional development opportunities in the UK. We publish a fortnightly jobs and opportunities e-bulletin and produce a range of resource materials on key topics relating to creative and professional practice.

One of our key objectives is to support the development of professional development planning (PDP) within the literature sector. Having successfully run a pilot PDP service, we're now working to help build and support a national network of providers. The first step, we felt, was to develop a pool of people with the skills to deliver PDP sessions so we commissioned experienced PDP guide Jude Page to devise and deliver an introductory training programme. This was supported by an in-depth handbook which is available as a free download from our website. In 2007, we published *Getting to where you want to be*, a DIY guide to PDP, and we have started to offer workshops using exercises from this as a way of introducing people to PDP as a process. We now plan to set up a register of PDP guides on our website as a resource both for organisations seeking people to deliver sessions and for individuals looking for a guide.

We are enormously grateful to NCSP for allowing literaturetraining to 'gatecrash' the excellent short course programme run by Peter Beven and for co-commissioning this guide so that literature and other arts professionals can benefit. Final thanks go to Peter for his enthusiastic support for this publication and for so generously sharing all his expertise and experience.

About the literaturetraining partners

The National Association of Writers in Education (lead partner)
The one organisation supporting writers and writing of all genres in all educational settings throughout the UK
www.nawe.co.uk

Academi
The Welsh National Literature Promotion Agency and Society for Authors
www.academi.org

Apples & Snakes
England's leading organisation for performance poetry – stretching the boundaries of poetry in performance and education
www.applesandsnakes.org

Lapidus
Membership organisation promoting the benefits of the literary arts for personal development, health and wellbeing
www.lapidus.org.uk

The National Association for Literature Development
The professional body for all involved in developing writers, readers and literature audiences
www.nald.org

renaissance one
A leading organisation for the curation and production of literature and spoken word tours and events
www.renaissanceone.com

Scottish Book Trust
Scotland's national agency for reading and writing
www.scottishbooktrust.com

Survivors' Poetry
Promotes the poetry of survivors of mental distress
www.survivorspoetry.com

writernet
Provides dramatic writers with the tools to build better careers and redefine the culture in which they work
www.writernet.org.uk

Contents

1
Introduction

Professional Development Planning (PDP) is a supportive activity aimed to help individuals make decisions about their own professional life and future. At the heart of good practice for guides providing this service must be the notion that *participants* in the PDP process should be taking an active part in making these decisions.

The question for guides offering PDP sessions to address is – how might we do this, given the rich variation of personalities, confidence, readiness to embrace change and decision making styles we are likely to encounter talking to participants in this area of work? This guide aims to provide an introduction to some tried and tested approaches that cast different perspectives on the process.

The **Egan *Skilled Helper* model** is a flexible, general purpose helping strategy that uses a step-by-step structured approach to supporting participants who are considering and making changes. It is a good starting point for PDP work with its emphasis on change and setting goals.

Another goal-related set of tactics has emerged from the ***Solution focused*** school of thought. Here the aim is to avoid 'problem talk' and to concentrate instead on what it is the participant wants to change and how they might effect this change.

Like solution focused approaches, ***Neuro-linguistic programming*** (NLP) moves away from discussions about 'what is the problem?' to 'what do you want?' The emphasis is on the participant's ability to change, to be more effective in their professional lives. By listening carefully to the participant's language patterns, and observing / discussing behaviour, the guide can bring to light 'the map' the participant is basing their ideas on. A key message in NLP is that 'the map is not the territory'. In other words, there are other ways of representing the reality of the situation.

Personal construct theory is an approach based on the idea that, within PDP sessions, it can be very useful to understand how the participant 'constructs' their view of their current situation. This is an advanced approach, quite challenging to understand and to put into practice, but very helpful to establish an individual's key constructs and 'drivers' that affect decision making and how the participant sees the world**.**

Another very useful set of tactics emerge from using ***Narrative approaches*** within the PDP session. As in personal construct theory, central to this is the idea that we all construct meanings about our work and life situations. Narrative approaches are about trying to establish what the individual's 'story' is and what role(s) they play in different parts of their lives. It also looks into possible different ways of looking at experience to examine future roles an individual might play in the workplace setting.

Motivational interviewing was developed from research completed in the addiction field, but has great potential to be used more widely in PDP sessions. It provides a way of assessing how ready – or unready – to contemplate change an individual is.

Finally, as a guide it is important to take into account that individual participants vary a great deal in terms of *how* they make decisions, what *factors* are important to them, how *ready* they are to make them and how far participants are prepared to live with uncertain outcomes. The section on *Decision making* introduces some important considerations to take into account when working in a PDP setting.
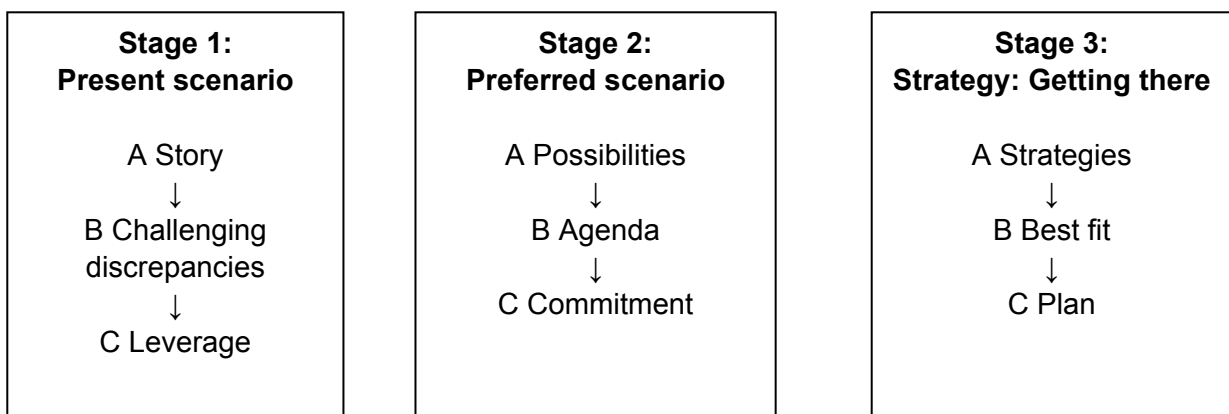
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The Egan *Skilled Helper* model

Origins and key features

One model of help which has potential to be effective in a wide range of professional development planning situations is that suggested by Gerard Egan in his book *The Skilled Helper* (8th edition, 2007).

Theoretically there are a number of antecedents to Egan's *Skilled Helper* model. For example, for the first stage of the helping process, it draws upon the ideas of Carl Rogers which emphasize the adviser / participant relationship as being critical. It is also influenced by Carkhuff's theory of high-level functioning helpers which indicates that those with the skills of empathy, respect, and immediacy are most effective; Strong's Social Influence theory which explains that helping is a process whereby participants are influenced by others and that this influence is powerful and empowering when the adviser avoids coercion and is instead collaborative; and Albert Bandura's Learning theory in which individuals are seen as acquiring skills through coming to understand the processes of learning and developing appropriate ideas about self-efficacy, that is, expecting to achieve their goals by learning useful behaviours.

Helping is understood as a three-stage process – see outline below. Different skills and strategies are appropriate at different stages.

Stage 1: Present scenario	Stage 2: Preferred scenario	Stage 3: Strategy: Getting there
A Story ↓ B Challenging discrepancies ↓ C Leverage	A Possibilities ↓ B Agenda ↓ C Commitment	A Strategies ↓ B Best fit ↓ C Plan

From this simple plan, Egan goes on to suggest a range of strategies for helping individuals in a variety of situations. It is a very useful starting point from which you can begin to look at your own communication skills and professional development planning structure. The model is flexible, adaptable to a range of individual needs and situations. The approach works best if attention is paid to Carl Rogers's 'core conditions', the helper's approach to the participant being based on genuineness, respect, and empathy, and if principles of good active listening are remembered throughout.

Using the Egan model within PDP

The cliché 'first impressions are lasting impressions' rings particularly true in the professional development planning session. The opening will probably determine the course and effectiveness of the whole discussion. It is therefore important to be able to start well. The first stage is therefore the introduction.

Introductions
1   You should (re)introduce yourself clearly to the participant concerned. It is a mistake to assume that they will automatically know who you are and what the possible functions of the session might be.
2   You should try to put the individual at ease and establish a rapport.
3   Ascertain whether the individual has any expectations of the meeting, and, if s/he has, discuss these – ending with an agreement, or CONTRACT as to what the next stage of the discussion might be about.
4   If you are to take notes, make sure that the participant agrees to this, is reassured, and understands the reason for note taking.

Stage One: Getting at the Story
The stage one skills of the Egan *Skilled Helper* model are based upon the exploration of the participant's situation and they broadly match the counselling skills of the Person-Centred Approach. The purpose of stage one is to build a non-threatening, purposeful yet supportive relationship and help the person explore their situation and then focus on chosen issues. In this stage, the Skilled Helper helps the participant to identify and clarify problems and opportunities and assess their resources.

The function of this first part of the discussion is to try and find out more about the individual, to get her/him to 'tell their own story'. Often, in order to help the individual, you may need to find out quite a bit about them. You may have to investigate their interests, strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes as far as their work, education and training background is concerned, their motivation behind any ideas, perhaps any relevant health issues.

Remember, the type of information you will need to elicit will vary according to the specific situation. It is therefore impossible here to dictate what order this discussion might take. The idea is it flows as naturally as possible from the agreement reached with the individual at the outset. You should reflect back on the agreement reached with the participant at certain points during the discussion to review how far your initial agreement has been met. In some cases you will need to re-contract with the individual a new set of objectives in the light of new information.

Stage Two: Development: Possibilities for change
In this part of the discussion, you might try to elicit any ideas the participant might have had and how they had developed the ideas. Then you might add in possible options based upon your own knowledge. You might ask questions that 'reality check' the potential of the ideas discussed.

As part of this, you will need to explore with the person any pros and cons of different possible options, challenge effectively any apparent contradictions and explore fully what is important to the individual concerned.

As you go, you should attempt to summarise at various points. This will help you to clarify the main issues, as well as showing the participant that you are listening and giving him/her the chance to correct any misconceptions you may have picked up.

Stage three: Strategies for change and closing the session
The third and final stage is closing the session. Some of the main points might be:
1   Identifying, summarising and emphasising the main issues discussed. Review how far the contract agreed has been met. This will be much more effective if the participant is encouraged to take an active part in this.
2   Agreeing an action plan for the next stage. This can be reinforced in some settings by written action plan documentation if appropriate to your role.
3   Sometimes closing the session by way of an agreed contract is a good way to ending purposefully. For example, the adviser might agree to act as advocate for the individual provided that they agreed to investigate an information resource.
4   The discussion should draw to a clear and definite end, avoiding any tendency to let the discussion drift to an unclear conclusion.

Key text:

Egan, G. (2007) *The Skilled Helper* 8th edition Brooks/ Cole

Additional texts:

Bandura, A. (1991) Human agency in social cognitive theory *American Psychologist*, 44, 1175 -84

Bandura, A. (1997) *Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control* New York: W. H. Freeman & Co Ltd

Carkhuff, R. R. (2000) *The Art of Helping in the 21st Century* Amherst, MA: Human Resource Development Press

Rogers, C. R. (2003) *Client Centred Therapy* London: Constable

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Solution focused approaches

Origins and key features

The solution focused approach was developed by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg and their colleagues at the Brief Family Therapy Centre in Milwaukee.

Solution focused methods derive from a short-term, goal-focused approach which aims to help participants change by focusing on constructing solutions rather than dwelling on problems. A key idea is that elements of the desired solution are often already present in the individual's life and can become the basis for ongoing change. The ability to articulate what the changes will be like is often more important than understanding what led to the problem or current situation.

Solution focused approaches are based on the idea that if our aim is to help participants *change and develop*, we ought to use things related to how change happens rather than concentrating on how problems develop. Understanding the details and 'cause' of the problem is often not necessary to finding a solution. The important issues are: how does the participant want things to be different and what will it take to make it happen? The idea is that being able to envision a clear and detailed picture of how things will be when things are better creates hope and expectation and makes solution possible.

Solution focused approaches focus on the future (and how it will be better when things change) and attempt to establish clear goals.

Using solution focused approaches within PDP

Some specific examples of strategies that might be used in a PDP context:

Scaling
Ask a question requiring the participant to think about their current professional role in relation to an 'ideal job' for them.

The question might go something like, 'On a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being an ideal for you, and 0 being the worst possible job for you, how would you assess the activities in your current job?'

Then be prepared to ask follow-up questions, on the lines of:

'What would it take for you to rate the job as a __' (Pick a number one higher than the current rating)

Follow up the answers with reflective listening which should help you learn about what is important to the participant in their job role. Try to help the participant to identify goals and to clarify what would be different if the score was higher. What would they be doing differently? What would other people be doing differently? What goals emerge as a result of this?

Variations: Think about questions such as

'What is it about your job that stops it being rated 10?'

This is useful in ascertaining positives – even in situations where the participant may feel negative overall.

Scaling with abstract ideas
Try using the scaling exercise with an apparently abstract idea like 'confidence'. Firstly pick a work task or activity.

Then the question might go something like,

'On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being very confident, and 1 being not at all confident, how confident are you in performing that role?'

Be prepared to ask follow-up questions, on the lines of:

'What would you have to be able to do, that you can't do now, for you to rate your confidence in this as a __' (Pick a number one higher than the current rating)

The Miracle Question
Here is an example:

'You wake up tomorrow morning, and while you were asleep, a miracle has happened and the concerns you have brought today have been resolved. What will be different? What will you be doing differently? What will other people be doing differently? What small step would be a sign of moving in the right direction / being on the right track?'

Follow up the answers with reflective listening which should help you learn about what is important to the participant in their current role.

Exception Finding
Think about asking this question in an informal way. For example:

'I'll bet there are times when you expect the problem to occur and it doesn't. What's different about those times? What are you doing differently? How do you make that happen? When is it less of a problem? or When is the problem just a little different?'

Making Exceptions Meaningful:
'How did you manage to handle that? Did you know you can influence this? Was it easy for you or difficult?'

Key text:

O'Connell, B. & Palmer, S. (2008) *Handbook of Solution Focused Therapy* London: Sage Publications

Additional texts:

Besanson, B.J. (2004) The application of solution-focused work in employment counselling. *Journal of employment counselling, 41*:183-191

de Jong, P., & Berg, I. K. (2002) *Interviewing for solutions* (2nd ed*.).*Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole

George, E., Iveson, C. and Ratner, H. (2004) *Problem to Solution: Brief Therapy with Individuals and families* (expanded edition) London: BT Press

McMahon, M., & Patton, W. (2000) Beyond 2000: Incorporating the constructivist influence into career guidance and counselling. *Australian Journal of Career Development, 9*(1), 25-29

Miller, J. H. (2004) Extending the use of constructivist approaches in career guidance and counselling: Solution-focused strategies. *Australian Journal of Career Development, 13*(1), 50-58

Useful web sites:

http://www.psychnet-uk.com/psychotherapy/psychotherapy_brief_solution_focused.htm

http://www.ebta.nu/

http://www.solution-news.co.uk/

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Neuro-linguistic programming

Origins and key features

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) was founded and developed jointly by Richard Bandler and John Grinder, under the tutelage of anthropologist Gregory Bateson, at the University of California, Santa Cruz during the 1970s. It began as an exploration of the relationship between neurology, linguistics, and observable patterns ('programmes') of behaviour.

It may be useful to examine the component parts of the title of this approach:

Neuro: This refers to the way we use our senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell to translate experiences into thought processes consciously and unconsciously.

Linguistic: This refers to how we use language to make sense of our experience and how we communicate both to ourselves and to others. The language patterns we use signify how we think.

Programming: This means the impact of the patterned ways in which we think, feel and behave on our experiences and ability to learn.

In the early 1970s, Bandler and Grinder had an interest in how we might learn from expert practitioners. They studied the communications skills of gestalt therapist Fritz Perls, family therapist Virginia Satir and founding president of the American Society for Clinical Hypnosis, Milton H. Erickson. They realized that these expert communicators were doing things in their sessions that were not described in the writings about the particular approaches they were working with. Despite apparent differences in theoretical orientation, they were all displaying behaviours and patterns of communication that could be analysed and copied.

Bandler and Grinder attempted to learn, to *model* these behaviours. Modelling is one of the key features of NLP. It implies that we can always learn new ways of handling problem situations. Bandler described NLP as both an attitude (of curiosity on behalf of the guide) and methodology (of modelling). These two components have led to a range of techniques.

Using neuro-linguistic programming within PDP

Like solution focused approaches, NLP moves away from discussions about 'what is the problem?' to 'What do you want?' The emphasis is on the participant's ability to change, to be more effective in their professional lives. By listening carefully to the participant's language patterns, and observing / discussing behaviour, the guide can bring to light 'the map' the participant is basing their ideas on.

A key message in NLP is that 'the map is not the territory'. In other words, there are alternative ways of representing the reality of the situation. Bandler and Grinder claimed that all successful support involves a change in the participant's representation of the world. This links with ideas of Personal Construct Psychology, an approach also introduced in this guide.

Another aspect of NLP that is particularly pertinent to PDP is the conceptual model of Logical Levels (Dilts and DeLozier, 2000).

The Logical Levels are (from internal to external)

Identity: Who
Beliefs and Values: Why
Capability: How
Behaviour: What
Environment: Where / When

It is important to listen for the words participants use that signal what area/s it is important for them to talk about. Similarly, if we ask questions from one of these areas, it will elicit responses based upon that territory. For example, if we ask 'why' questions it will lead to explanations, justifications etc. which rest upon beliefs and values. The key is to address the participant on the appropriate level.

Modelling within NLP involves the guide working with the participant to deconstruct their perception of the professional development issue to be discussed. The presupposition is that there is a structure to a problem situation which can be unpacked and looked at differently and reframed in different ways. For example, what are the patterns and sequences at play that contribute to things going well or not going well? What would effective practice consist of?

A cautionary note
Since the early days of NLP there have been a massive variety of developments in different directions. One prominent question about NLP concerns its theoretical base and there are several writers (e.g. Sharpley, 1987) who argue that NLP is primarily a collection of models and practices without an overriding coherence. Bandler and Grinder themselves were dismissive as to how far the tactics on which NLP are based *can* be researched. They comment, 'We're not offering you something that's true, just things that are useful' (Bandler and Grinder, 1990). Further research into NLP is needed to evaluate practitioners' claims for the approach and to discover the experiences of participants.

Key text:

Bandler, R. And Grinder, J. (1990) *Frogs into Princes* Eden Grove Editions

Additional texts:

Craft, A. (2001) `Neuro-linguistic Programming and Learning Theory', *The Curriculum Journal* Vol. 12 No. 1 pp. 125 - 136

Dilts, R. (1990) *Changing Belief Systems with NLP* Capitola, CA: Meta Publications

Dilts, R. And DeLozier, J. (2000) *Encyclopedia of Systematic Neuro-Linguistic Programming* Scotts Valley, CA: NLP University Press

McDermott, I. & Jago, W. (2001) *Brief NLP Therapy* London: Sage Publications

Sharpley C.F. (1987). "Research Findings on Neuro-linguistic Programming: Non supportive Data or an Untestable Theory". Communication and Cognition *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 1987 Vol. 34, No. 1: 103–107

Useful web sites:

http://www.purenlp.com/society.htm

http://www.itanlp.com/

http://www.anlp.org/index.asp

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Motivational interviewing

Origins and key features

Motivational interviewing is a method defined by Rollnick & Miller (2002) as a client-centred intervention combined with directive elements. It aims to help individuals to explore and resolve any ambivalence about changing. The approach originates from research and practice undertaken working with people with addictive behaviours.

Defining motivation as a state of readiness

In this approach, motivation is def*ined as a state of readiness to take action.* We need to move away from any stereotypical notions of individuals either being *motivated* or *not motivated.* It seems evident that motivation is always context specific, is changeable over time – sometimes quite a short period of time – and is influenced by perceived power relationships.

It is probably useful to reflect upon a behaviour change model that has been influential in the evolution of motivational interviewing, although originally developed independently. Prochaska and DiClemente (1984, 1992, and 2002) described their Wheel of Change model as a result of their research in the addictions field. They noticed that individuals seemed to follow a pattern of change typified by certain statements and attitudes towards making changes in their lives. The Wheel of Change gives us a way of conceptualising change as consisting of a series of stages.
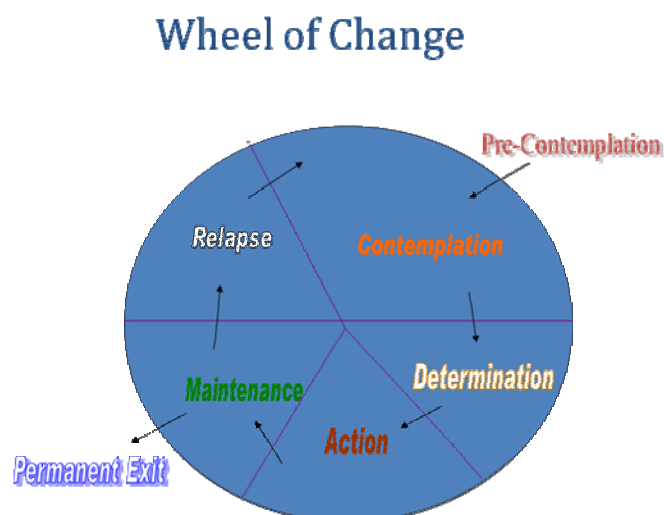
Although this behaviour change model derives from the addictions field, it also resonates strongly for individuals making career changes. It is possible to identify statements and attitudes derived from career guidance cases that coincide with each of the stages indicated above.

For example:

Precontemplation: The individual is not even thinking about the possibility of change. They may have been referred by others; they might report, 'I haven't got a problem' or might express surprise or unhappiness at having to attend a discussion. They might be defensive too: 'I'm only here because I was told I should come.'

Contemplation: This is where there is some awareness that there might be an issue to be addressed. Often it is characterised by *ambivalence* – feeling two ways about change. An example might be: 'Yes, I suppose I could go for that development opportunity but there's no point really because I never do well at that sort of thing.'

Determination / Preparation: This is where the balance shifts to intention to act. For example, the participant might start to say things like, 'I've got to do something about this.' or 'I really need to make some changes to bring in some money.'

Action: This is where the individual is taking positive steps to achieve change such as applying for courses or opportunities – in other words doing something constructive to make a change happen.

Maintenance is basically keeping going with the plan for change; reviewing progress and hopefully not giving up if at first things don't work out immediately.

Relapse: Relapse is when an individual, having made some attempt to change, 'reverts back' to problematic behaviour. Many advisers will be familiar with the person saying, 'Well, I applied everywhere for that type of work but I got turned down every time. There's no point in going for anything now.'

Using motivational interviewing within PDP

Motivational Interviewing is particularly useful when working with someone feeling ambivalent towards change and provides a way of assessing how ready – or unready – to contemplate change they are. It offers some specific tactics for encouraging participants to talk about the possibility of change in a constructive way.

For those at the precontemplation and contemplation stages, reflective approaches may be helpful in illuminate their own view of their current situation. The idea is to provide space for the individual to explore what they like about their current situation as well as encouraging them to explore potential risks in staying as they are. Open questions in the initial stages, combined with reflective listening, are used to understand the individual's perception of their current situation.

The objective is to evoke what William Miller originally called 'self motivational statements' or talking about change. Depending on where the person is in terms of the stages of change model, 'change talk' statements can be evoked by strategic questioning and reflective listening.

For participants at the precontemplation stage, it may be appropriate to encourage statements relating to any problems experienced in their current position, or any concerns they may have. Corresponding to later stages of change discussion might attempt to evoke and reinforce statements relating to intention to change and optimism for change.

Key text:

Miller, W. R. and Rollnick, S. (2002) *Motivational Interviewing* New York: The Guilford Press

Additional texts:

An article linking Motivational interviewing to career development:

Beven, P. (2008) Learning from Motivational Interviewing: Implications for Guidance *Career Guidance Today* September 2008

Useful web sites:

http://www.motivationalinterview.org

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Personal construct theory

Origins and key features

Personal construct theory originates from the work of the psychologist George Kelly. Kelly was interested in finding ways to investigate how people make sense of the world around them. Kelly's original work, *The Psychology of Personal Constructs,* first appeared as long ago as 1955. In recent years the approach has been developed and is applicable to a variety of settings, including PDP. (See, for example, Fransella, 2005, and the web site Enquire Within http://www.enquirewithin.co.nz/.)

The basis of this theory is that we are all different with differing construct systems. In other words we all *construct* and interpret events differently. If you accept this, then it follows that it is illogical to make assumptions about the way in which someone arrives at a preference for one thing rather than another without asking them why.

Kelly based personal construct theory upon a number of key ideas:

- **Constructive alternativism** appears at first sight an imposing, not to say abstruse term, although essentially it is not a difficult concept. The central notion underlying the theory is that we all construct our own picture of the world around us and how we relate with the world. Perhaps there is nothing startling in this observation. We are all familiar with the situation where one event is viewed in different ways by two observers. A newspaper report of a football match may differ significantly from your own experience of having attended the game. 'A solid defensive display' in the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* might be reported as a 'Series of desperate clearances' in a London newspaper. ' Similarly, one person's 'terrorist' is another person's 'freedom fighter'. The assumption behind constructive alternativism is that we are all capable of changing our interpretation of events – we can interpret experience in a different way. In a PDP setting, therefore, personal construct theory becomes a means of exploring and questioning ideas, beliefs and values.

- **Constructs are hierarchical**: Some constructs are more deep seated, more 'central' to an individual's identity and therefore possibly more resistant to change. Some constructs are subordinate to others.

- **Every person as scientist:** Kelly thought that everybody is engaged in trying to make sense out of their experience, and everyone tries to use their experience in order to predict what might happen when faced with a new situation. When the experience confirms the anticipation, the person enjoys 'validation' of her/his constructions. When the experience does NOT confirm expectations, the constructions are invalidated and the individual may re-assess the situation. However, in some situations, we may be at best faulty scientists, sometimes sticking to our inaccurate picture of the world despite evidence to the contrary.

- **Constructs are bi-polar:** When we make a distinction between things by affirming one thing, we are simultaneously implying it is not like something else, although perhaps this implicit contrast may not always naturally emerge in professional development planning.

Using personal construct theory within PDP

Personal construct theory provides a tool for exploring an individual's constructs, the *repertory grid*. The repertory grid is simply a skeletal structure which enables you to focus on certain key aspects of the participant's ideas.

The grid has three main components:

a) The '**elements**' that define the areas of investigation. In the example overleaf, it is job titles but they could just as easily be activities within a job, important people in a life etc. etc. It is really important that the elements come from the participant. In other words, they need to be from the participant's 'frame of reference'.

b) The '**constructs**' which are the way the individual *differentiates* between the elements. Typically, the constructs are generated by taking the elements in groups of three and asking: *How does one element differ from the other two?*

The important constructs in the example, generated by comparing the elements, are *discipline* opposed to *providing support*, *educating others* opposed to being *self-seeking* and so on.

c) Some sort of '**linking mechanism**' – a score/rating/ranking scale which shows how each element is judged on each construct. In this example, each element was rated by the participant on a five point scale according to whether the constructs were an important component of the job. The score 5 = very much like the left hand pole of the construct, through to the score 1 = very much like the right hand pole of the construct.

Below is an example of a partially completed grid where the participant is contrasting important parts of their current portfolio of work.

Elements → Constructs ↓	Freelance writing	Literacy support in adult education	Web site authoring	Teaching	Proof-reading for technical magazine	Ideal job	Elements ← Constructs ↓
Provide discipline	5	1	1	1	4		Provide support
Educate other people	1	5	3	5	1		Self-seeking
Unsociable hours	5	4	1	1	1		Normal hours
Advisory work	1	5	3	4	2		Direct intervention
Service to people	1	5	1	5	1		Serving business

The next step might be to encourage the participant to complete the 'Ideal Job' column based upon their own constructs – the things that are important to them derived from current activities.

The repertory grid can, therefore, be a useful starting point for examining what are the important ideas and constructs that drive the individual in terms of their professional development and for posing the question: Does the current portfolio of activities satisfy what is important to them, and if not, how might further development meet future needs?

There are some excellent detailed examples of using repertory grids in the web sites listed below.

Key text:
Fransella, F. (2005) *The Essential Practitioners Handbook of Personal Construct Psychology* Wiley

Useful web sites:

http://www.enquirewithin.co.nz/
This is an excellent site that demonstrates examples of using the repertory grid as well as useful information on the theoretical ideas behind the work.

http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/personal.htm
This site also gives some variations of repertory grid work and how to use them.

7
Narrative approaches

Origins and key features

The urge to tell stories about human experience is probably as old as language itself. There is a long tradition too of using stories or personal narratives in a therapeutic context (see Angus and McLeod, 2004). In the last decade or so there has been a growing interest in the role narrative approaches might play in career and personal development (e.g. Savickas, 1997).

Narrative approaches are influenced by ideas derived from social constructionism – that we construct how we see ourselves in relation to other people and the contexts in which we live, work and learn. The stories we tell about ourselves are important in understanding this individual perception. For example, is the story we tell one which has us overcoming difficulties and succeeding against all odds or do we relate the story with ourselves portrayed as victims of circumstance?

Narrative approaches aim to investigate what story participants are telling about their professional development to date. What messages might there be here? What role is the participant playing in the stories they are telling? Is it active or passive? Might there be other ways of constructing the story? In these discussions, the guide is not merely passively reflecting back what the participant is saying; rather s/he plays an active part in helping the participant look at the experience and perhaps encouraging, where appropriate, different ways of constructing the story.

Using narratives within PDP

There are many techniques that can be used to encourage participants to tell their story. These are just some suggestions:

Life line: A line is drawn horizontally on a page with 'birth' represented at one end and 'today' at the other. The participant is encouraged to plot key events, good things above the line, bad things below. A discussion can follow about the role they played in these key events. What would they do differently in the future? Might there be other roles they wish to play?

Newspaper headlines: What would the headlines about an individual's professional development be to date?

Autobiographical life chapters: If the participant was to write a book about their professional journey to date, what would the titles of the chapters be?

Role model when young: This could either be a 'real' person or a character from a book, TV programme, cartoon etc.

Favourite films / books / magazines / TV shows and reasons for liking them

The objective of this line of questioning is to help the participant to 'tell their story'. The role of the guide is to help the individual to identify the key elements of their story. For example, what type of role did the participant play in important turning points? The guide will attempt to work with the participant to identify potential themes that may emerge. Is there a pattern to the roles played in the past and in the present?

The guide can then relate these to the professional development issue at hand, perhaps working at a joint interpretation of their professional journey to date and working to re-author the story. If the participant was to describe a future narrative about their career, what would that look like, what role would they play? How would that differ from previous roles?

Vocational card sort: This activity requires some initial preparation. The purpose of the exercise is to elicit personal criteria for evaluating professional development options. This is a starting point to establish *what matters* to the participant in making choices. For this task you can use job titles or activities within a current job role. The example given below involves using job titles.

Preparation: You will need to create a series of cards, each with a different job title on them. For this exercise it is good to include a wide variety of types of job as the purpose of the exercise is NOT to match the person to one of the jobs on the card, but rather to use the participant's reaction to the job as a springboard to discover what is important to them in making decisions about the type of work and professional development that might be appropriate for them. In using this exercise, it is suggested that you include cards with office based jobs, factory, sales as well as creative and health related occupations. There are no hard and fast rules about this. At the end of this section you will find a suggested series of job titles that have been successful in generating constructive ideas from participants.

Instructions

1   The participant is asked to shuffle the cards and divide the cards into three piles:
    a.   Those they might consider or would find attractive in some way
    b.   Those they would definitely reject
    c.   And those the participant is uncertain about (maybe consider or maybe reject)

2   The 'maybe' pile is removed form the table.

3   The main sorting can begin with either the 'accept' or the 'reject' pile. Let's say we start with the reject pile. The participant is asked to divide the cards into small groups that reflect a common reason for rejection.

> TIP: If participants have difficulty in doing this, ask about reasons for rejecting one particular job title and then ask if any of the others fall into the same category.

4   Whatever the participant says then becomes the subject of elaboration and interpretation. Think about asking about the opposite of the disliked items (as in personal constructs).

For example, if the participant suggests that some jobs are rejected because they are 'too routine' – find out what the participant thinks a job or activity would be like that was not 'too routine'.

5   Use the accept pile in the same way. Ask the participant to identify things in common with the cards selected and group them accordingly.

6   Think about using 'laddering' as a question technique to establish core values:
Why would you prefer Job X to Y?' 'What advantage is there in X?'
If they answer, for example, 'I would have more control of my own work in Job X or group of Jobs X' then ask, 'Why would you prefer to have more control of your own work?'

The key idea is to help the participant identify what common themes emerge in terms of what is important to them in their professional development. In this exercise, identifying activities that they would NOT like to do and why can be as helpful as positive ideas.

Vocational card sort: Suggested job titles

AIR STEWARD	BAKER	HGV DRIVER
DENTIST	CARPET FITTER	LAB TECHNICIAN
YOUTH & COMMUNITY	TAXI DRIVER	JOURNALIST
WORKER	PRISON OFFICER	PERSONAL ADVISER
JOINER	SPORTS COACH	TATTOO ARTIST
PHOTOGRAPHER	AEROBICS INSTRUCTOR	HOTEL RECEPTIONIST
WEB SITE DESIGNER	TEACHER	CLEANER
SALES ASSISTANT	NURSERY NURSE	LIBRARY ASSISTANT
ACCOUNTANT	VET	HAIRDRESSER
DRIVING INSTRUCTOR	BRICKLAYER	SOCIAL WORKER
ENGINEER	CHEF	AEROBICS INSTRUCTOR
PAINTER AND	DJ	MACHINE OPERATOR
DECORATOR	FREELANCE WRITER	LAB TECHNICIAN
SOCIAL WORKER		COUNSELLOR
NURSE		
POSTAL WORKER		

Key texts:

Angus, L. E. and McLeod, J. (2004) *The Handbook of Narrative and Psychotherapy* London: Sage Publications

Bimrose, J. et al (2000) *Career Guidance: Constructing the Future*, Institute of Career Guidance

Cochran, L. (1997) *Career Counselling A Narrative Approach* London: Sage Publications

Savickas, M. (1997) *Handbook of Career Counselling Theory and Practice* London: Davies-Black Publishing

Useful web sites:

Hazel Reid's article about using narratives in a career counselling setting: Reid, H.L (2007) 'Introduction to Narrative Career Counselling, in *Constructivist Approaches and Narrative Counselling*, National Guidance Research Forum on http://www.guidance-research.org/EG/impprac/ImpP2/new-theories/constructivism/narrative

8
Decision making

Origins and key features

Decision making has always been a fundamental human activity. At some stage within the PDP process, decisions are made. In some cases, the decision might be to make far-reaching changes. In others, little change might ensue, but a decision has still been made, even if the result, having considered the consequences, is *not* to change.

As a guide, it is important to take into account that individual participants vary a great deal in terms of *how* they make decisions, how *ready* they are to make them, what *factors* are important to them, and how *far* they are prepared to live with uncertain outcomes.

The traditional way to handle decision making within PDP is to see it as a rational, almost linear process. This is illustrated by the Janis and Mann model as exemplified in the balance sheet exercise overleaf. The aim of this exercise is to encourage a rational approach to PDP. Typically this involves an evaluation of available options with a look at the pros and cons of each, taking account of the participant's personal circumstances.

In practice, of course, the process of making a decision is influenced by all sorts of things. In everyday terms, the decision making may in fact be driven by the irrational, the 'quick fix' solution and in some cases, prejudicial ideas, perhaps based upon ingrained or outdated ideas. Gerard Egan describes this as the 'shadow side' of decision making. De Bono's thinking hats exercise (see page 29) attempts to factor in some of the emotional and other factors linked to decision making.

As individuals, we can vary in the style of decision making we use. For some decisions, we might take a '*logical*' approach based upon the linear thinking mentioned above. For others, we might make a '*no thought*' decision, either because the matter is so routine it doesn't require any thought or because we just want to make a quick fix so we don't have to think about it any more.

Sometimes participants in PDP sessions may talk about their realisation that they should have looked into a decision further before rushing into one course of action. Some individuals employ a *hesitant* style of decision making, where decisions are delayed as long as possible, whereas others may make a choice based upon an *emotional* response, what feels right subjectively. Finally some participants might make decisions that can be classified as *compliant*; that is based upon the perceived expectations of what other people want. A key role in PDP is to identify how a participant has made previous professional development decisions – and whether the approach seems to have worked for them. Might there be other ways of deciding that lead to better decisions?

Using decision making exercises within PDP

There is a broad range of tools available to aid the decision making process within a professional development discussion. Here are two introductory examples. Further examples are available via the references and web sites below.

Balance sheet
In its simplest form, this consists of two columns representing two choices. The advantages and disadvantages of each choice can simply be listed. Sometimes the very act of writing down pros and cons can bring clarity. Sometimes subdividing the headings into advantages for me, advantages for others, disadvantages for me, disadvantages for others, can yield a richer analysis. Janis and Mann suggest this process.

A slightly more sophisticated use of balance sheets might involve the participant completing the sheet as above initially, then the guide producing a list of other suggested factors that the individual may not have considered. These can either be included, or ignored, by the participant.

An example of a simple balance sheet

	Option One – Staying as I am	Option Two – Change
Advantages for me		
Disadvantages for me		
Advantages for others		
Disadvantages for others		

Approaches to professional development planning

Six thinking hats

This tool was created by Edward de Bono in his book *Six Thinking Hats*. Each 'thinking hat' represents a different style of thinking (see below).You can use it within PDP as a way of helping the quality of the participant's decision making by encouraging them to consider a decision from a range of perspectives. This can be done either metaphorically – as in 'imagine you are wearing the white hat' – or by having cards each with the name of the hat and a brief description of the 'way of looking at things' that the hat brings with it. The cards can be shuffled and dealt to the participant in turn.

White hat

With this thinking hat, the participant is encouraged to focus on the data available. Look at the information they have about themselves and see what they can learn from it. Look for gaps in their knowledge, and either try to fill them or take account of them. This is where the participant is encouraged to analyse past experiences, work roles etc. and try to learn from them.

Red hat

Wearing the red hat, the participant looks at the decision using intuition, gut reaction, and emotion. The idea is also to encourage the participant to try to think how other people will react emotionally to the decision being made and to try to understand the intuitive responses of people who may not fully know their reasoning.

Black hat

When using black hat thinking, look at things pessimistically, cautiously and defensively. Try to see why ideas and approaches might not work. This is important because it highlights the weak points in a plan or course of action. It allows the participant to eliminate them, alter their approach, or prepare contingency plans to counter problems that might arise. Black hat thinking can be one of the real benefits of using this technique within PDP, as sometimes participants can get so used to thinking positively that often they cannot see problems in advance, leaving them under-prepared for difficulties.

Yellow hat

The yellow hat helps you to think positively. It is the optimistic viewpoint that helps you to see all the benefits of the decision and the value in it, and spot the opportunities that arise from it. Yellow hat thinking helps you to keep going when everything looks gloomy and difficult.

Green hat

The green hat stands for creativity. This is where you can develop creative solutions to a problem. It is a freewheeling way of thinking in which there is little criticism of ideas.

Blue hat:

The blue hat stands for process control. This is the hat worn by people chairing meetings. When running into difficulties because ideas are running dry, they may direct activity into green hat thinking. When contingency plans are needed, they will ask for black hat thinking, and so on.

Key text:

Gelatt, H. B. and Gelatt, C. (2003) *Creative Decision Making: Using Positive Uncertainty* Boston: Thomson House

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Additional texts:

De Bono E. (2000) *Six Thinking Hats* London: Penguin Books

Egan, G. (2007) *The Skilled Helper* 8th edition Brooks/ Cole

Kahneman, H., Slovic, P. and Twersky, A. (eds.) (1999) *Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Janis, I. L. and Mann, L. (1979) *Decision making L*ondon: Macmillan Publications

Plous, S. (1993) *The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making*, McGraw Hill

Useful web sites:

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_TED.htm
The Mind Tools web site contains a wide range of exercises to help with decision making.