CLEAN LANGUAGE

Revealing Metaphors and Opening Minds

Wendy Sullivan and Judy Rees

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by Wendy Sullivan and Judy Rees

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- "It gives you the confidence to really get results with your clients."—Mark Hawkswell, coach and trainer

- "When you use Clean Language in the classroom be prepared for a leap in learning. Colleagues have been surprised by the speed of impact. Children learn to think deeply and to express their ideas with clarity. They come to appreciate each other's specialness and to value differences. They learn to think about thinking and become more comfortable exploring challenging ideas… especially their own!"—Julie McCracken, primary school teacher

- "Clean Language is a simple yet amazing set of tools that is effective in unlocking a client's assumptions, communication, and thinking. This powerful process is a must for anyone involved in the coaching, managing or teaching profession."—Steve Nobel, author, coach, and a director of Alternatives.

- "Clean Language is a fantastic tool. It's so versatile and so respectful."—Sheena Bailey, management consultant to UK health services

- "Clean Language should be on the curriculum of every secondary school in Great Britain. It will boost confidence and give anyone a much greater understanding of what it really means to be human."—Pamela Hadfield, learning consultant working with teenagers

- "Quite often, projects succeed in building to the requirements on paper, but still fail to meet the client's expectations. It's early days, but I think using Clean Language is leading to better results, and more aligned expectations of what is going to be built." Roland Hill, IT business analyst, IPROFS, Netherlands.

Introduction

We needed to find a snappy story to open the book.

"What kind of snappy?" we wondered.

- Snappy like a smiling cartoon crocodile?
- Snappy like a game of cards?
- Snappy like the snap of fingers, instantly attracting attention?

When you think of a snappy story, what kind of snappy is *your* snappy story? We'll tell you about ours at the end of the chapter.

What happens when you think about these snappy stories? Each kind of snappy is a different metaphor – a different comparison of one thing (snappy) to another (crocodile, cards etc).

We do this kind of comparing all the time. That is, we think in metaphor[1]. Metaphors are fundamental to how we make sense of the world, and how we organise our thoughts, and yet we're not usually aware of our metaphors.

This book explores an unusual way of thinking about thinking which will enable you to grasp the importance of metaphor in thinking, in language, and in communication.

You'll learn how to use Clean Language questions to help other people to explore their thinking and the metaphors which underpin it. And as you get to grips with the material in this book, your own metaphors will emerge, opening up new realisations about yourself and the way you think.

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[1] 'Metaphor' in this book includes analogies, similies, parables, metonymies, parallels, literary metaphors etc.

Using Clean Language can:

- Help people to make changes they would like in their lives
- Provide both you and them with valuable information about the way they think and how they do things
- Improve communication, understanding and rapport.

Other specific benefits often reported by Clean Language users include:

- It helps people do their best thinking, setting the scene for greater creativity and for new information to emerge
- It encourages people to take responsibility for themselves
- It empowers people to decide the way forward for themselves
- It honours each individual's uniqueness, making it especially valuable when diversity is an issue
- It can maximise collaboration and innovation
- It avoids 'leading the witness' while getting to the truth
- It enables you to talk another person's language, so that they feel acknowledged and heard
- It is flexible and can be used alongside a number of other approaches to improve their effectivness.

If your job involves gathering information from other people and/or assisting them to change, in almost any context, using Clean Language questions will help get better results.

Clean Language has its roots in therapy, but is branching into a wide range of other fields. It has been used successfully by coaches, mentors, consultants, managers, health professionals, parents, teachers, journalists, salespeople and people in many other occupations: the list keeps on growing. It seems that it can be used in almost any field of human endeavour.

Clean Language is useful in one-to-one situations and with groups, in formal settings and in casual conversations. By using Clean Language, you and those you spend time with can expect to make better decisions based on more complete information, and so achieve goals more easily.

- "This amazingly powerful tool could transform the way we interact, and run meetings and appraisals, within our

business."—Caroline Frost, Director of Marketing and Training, Informa Healthcare

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Clean Language is simple, and yet has fascinating implications.

At the most simple level, Clean Language is a set of twelve questions from which assumptions and metaphors have been 'cleansed' as far as possible. These questions are good for obtaining information from another person in a structured way that helps you and them to get a really clear understanding of what they mean.

As a complete approach, Clean Language can be combined with the metaphors a person uses, creating a bridge between their conscious and unconscious minds. This can become a profound personal exploration: a route to deeper understanding of themselves, to transcending limiting beliefs and behaviours, and to resolution and healing. The person asking Clean Language questions gets a new understanding of people, and even of the nature of consciousness.

It often surprises beginners to find that the same twelve questions and the same basic principles are used at both the simple level and when using the complete approach. This makes Clean Language very flexible.

Clean Language isn't useful all the time. Clean is not a persuasion tool, although it can certainly help you to understand what will convince someone. It's not a good way to force people to change against their will. It is not a method of interpreting metaphors. It may not be the best approach in an emergency or at times when you are delivering specific information. And it can be extremely useful in a wide range of other contexts.

This book is an introduction, to equip you to take your first steps on a journey. We hope it will whet your appetite for more learning, and we've included details of further resources later in the book.[2]

Some people find that Clean Language comes naturally to them, and that they can relax into asking the Clean Language questions in lots of different situations, right from the start. Others find it takes a little longer. The fact you've picked up this book means you're interested, which is really all that's needed.

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[2] For readers with an appetite for theory, a short essay, '*Theoretical Underpinnings of Symbolic Modelling*' by Judy Rees, is available online at http://www.cleanchange.co.uk

As we saw earlier, once you have a name and address for something, you can:

● Remember it easily
● Make a quick, precise note of it
● Stay in touch with it
● Reveal connections between it and other things
● Expect the other person to remember it
● Return to it easily if you need to do so in future.

The Name and Address Questions help a person to get specific about what they are thinking and talking about. When these questions are asked about a person's metaphorical words or phrases, they help make the metaphor more tangible and bring its existence into their conscious awareness.

The Developing Questions, and the Name and Address Questions in particular, are especially useful when exploring emotions. Have you ever noticed that, when you feel an emotion, you tend to feel it somewhere in or around your body? Perhaps you haven't consciously noticed this before; usually with a little focus on how you know that you're feeling happy, jealous or calm, etc. you will become aware of the associated physical feelings. Helping someone become aware of the location of an emotion enables them to become aware of any other information that the emotion holds for them.

Example transcript: Champagne bubbles

(Clean Language questions highlighted in italics)

> **Questioner:** When you are curious in just the way you like to be, *that is like what*?
>
> **Speaker:** It is like I have a buzzy feeling and my eyes and ears open wide.
>
> **Questioner:** A buzzy feeling, and *where is that* buzzy feeling?
>
> **Speaker:** It is in my chest.

Questioner:	*Whereabouts* in your chest *is* that buzzy feeling?
Speaker:	Quite high up.
Questioner:	A buzzy feeling, quite high up in your chest. *And what kind of* buzzy feeling *is that* buzzy feeling?
Speaker:	Mmm … I've been trying to work out what that feeling is … it's a bit like popcorn popping but that isn't quite right … No, I can't get it.
Questioner:	A bit like popcorn popping but that isn't quite right. And when popcorn popping isn't quite right, *is there anything else about that* buzzy feeling?
Speaker:	It's like it dances about … Oh I know, it's like champagne bubbles in my chest!
Questioner:	Champagne bubbles quite high up in your chest. *Whereabouts* quite high up are those bubbles?
Speaker:	Right in the middle of me.
Questioner:	Champagne bubbles quite high up in your chest, right in the middle of you. *And is there anything else about* champagne bubbles like that?
Speaker:	Their popping makes me sit up and take notice.
Questioner:	You sit up and take notice, *and what kind of* take *notice is that?*
Speaker:	It's to do with opening my eyes and ears.
Questioner:	Opening your eyes and ears. *And what kind of* opening *is that* opening?
Speaker:	Mmm … it is like the champagne bubbles pop them open—wide open—so that I can drink in everything that is available.

This transcript gives you a worked example of using the Name and Address Questions and shows how just using these three questions can enable someone to go beyond what they already know to access

Chapter 12
Beyond Words and Into Space

"It requires a very unusual mind to undertake the analysis
of the obvious"
—Alfred N. Whitehead

Human beings have bodies and live in space. Everyone knows that we are not disembodied minds, and the way we think is based in our physical, embodied experience. Obvious as this seems, it has major implications.

Whenever we see, hear or feel something, we see, hear or feel it *somewhere* in space. And the metaphors we use are grounded in the reality of being a person living in a body, influenced by gravity. So, in Clean Language facilitation, space is accorded a special significance. The facilitator keeps their space to themselves and focuses their attention on the client's space. You would never dream of moving someone's physical belongings around in their office or home—and in a Clean Language session we extend the same respect to the location of the client's symbols in their imaginative space.
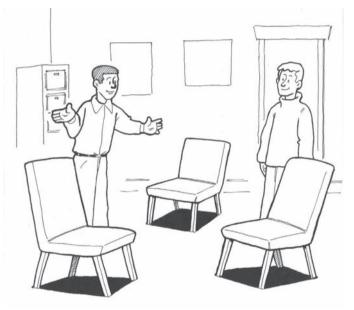
Beginning a Clean Language session

A Clean Language session is carried out from the client's perspective. Although the client may not be consciously aware of it, where they are in the room and in relation to the facilitator can make a big difference to how readily they can attend to their metaphor landscape. So at the start of a session, it's usual to ask the client to choose where they would like to be in the room and where they would like you to be:

– *And where would you like to be?*
– *And where would you like me to be?*

The order is important, first the client positions themselves and then they position the facilitator.

Once you are both seated, the usual opening question is:

–   *And what would you like to have happen?*

Before a meeting or session, set up the room so the client has a real choice of where to sit or stand. Remove your belongings, stand up and move away from 'your' chair before you ask. This sends an important message—this session is about them, not you. Being able to place themselves and you in an optimal position can enhance their ability to think, learn and grow.

As the client selects where to sit, they may be unaware of the reasons behind their choice. But, like their words and the non-verbal elements of their communication, this choice can prove to be metaphoric, or 'point' to metaphoric information. David Grove said that in choosing where to sit, and where to place the facilitator, the client is aligning the metaphor landscape with the physical space. So it's not unusual for furniture and fittings in a room, innocuous at the start of a session, to start to play a part in the client's metaphoric landscape and they will often turn out to be in 'just the right place'.

Would you like better relationships, a deeper understanding of the people around you, and a simple yet powerful way to help them achieve their life goals?

Clean Language can offer all this and more.

This elegant and powerful questioning technique is simple to learn. It opens a door to a new way of thinking about how people's minds actually work. By getting people to explore their internal metaphors you will find it much easier to truly understand them, motivate them or help them to change.

Counselling Psychologist David Grove devised Clean Language to help clients resolve deep trauma. The approach is now used by some of the sharpest and most innovative people in the world – business people, coaches, educators, health professionals and many others - to cut through complex problems.

"Forged from the brilliant and original ideas of David Grove, Wendy Sullivan and Judy Rees bring their own professional experiences to offer the reader thought-provoking and invaluable information to challenge everyday beliefs, thoughts and decisions made in business and personal development."

Cei Davies Linn, former wife and partner of David Grove

"This book promises to transform the way we think about language and meaning."

Psychologies Magazine

"One of the most fundamental and important tools available in NLP and coaching. This book stands out for the clarity of its explanations and makes Clean Language commonsense. The communicators' bible."

Toby McCartney, WestOne Training, author of *Mastering Memory*

Wendy Sullivan is a specialist international trainer of Clean Language and Symbolic Modelling. Her students, who work on five continents and include both private individuals and corporate clients, use these powerful approaches in personal development and to improve communication, relationships, team working and business success. Wendy is a coach, registered psychotherapist and a certified trainer of NLP and, with Judy Rees, owns West London-based Clean Change Company.

Judy Rees is a former news reporter and media executive. She has been instrumental in highlighting many potential applications of Clean Language beyond coaching and therapy, and enjoys devising and developing new ways of using the approach and linking people and ideas. She uses Clean with individuals and groups in sales and marketing, interviewing, online networking, and in personal, team and business development. **www.cleanchange.co.uk**