

Master Practitioner Modelling project

Are We Engaged?



David Brunt
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Vulnerability

“When we were children, we used to think that when we were grown-up we would no longer be vulnerable. But to grow up is to accept vulnerability... To be alive is to be vulnerable.”

Madeleine L'Engle

“I have been sick, really sick, on flights in the last few weeks. And, I have been amazed by the kindness of strangers. There is, indeed, something about vulnerability that helps us to connect with people — even when we're holding one of those little bags from the seat pocket of an airplane.”

Jan Denise

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1. Introduction

My modelling project had, at its genesis, a self discovery of an ability I was not aware of in myself. This led to self modelling and then modelling of others in order to enhance and enrich my model. An alternative title could have been 'beyond rapport' – rapport is of course key to any interaction and in my experience 'gets you' so far. I have therefore chosen the word 'engagement'. True engagement takes you to another level of relationship in real time with the other person or persons.

Engagement is about establishing a connection with the other person at a level that means that real and meaningful transactions can take place. Often these can be transformational.

So...for me engagement is that deep connectedness with the other person(s) that goes beyond initial rapport. And my hope is that this description of the model will enable you to adopt and use it.

What would that be really like for you if you adopted the model?

When you are fully engaged with a person

- You are totally 'with them' and not 'in yourself'
- You are strongly identified with their map and what they are experiencing you start to sense what they are sensing, and get insights into their world.
- You are totally present, in time,
- You are entirely open to the other person, and connected (and therefore vulnerable)
- Once engaged the magic can begin... and that depends on what you and the other person does next. The channels are now open.....

2. My Models of excellence

Frankie Armstrong –voice and singing coach

Frankie was invited to lead a session in my Master Practitioner training. She has severe visual impairment and has issues with her hearing. She is a remarkable person. As a voice coach she is used to leading groups of people – both professional and amateur. Though she has these physical challenges I was struck by her ability to establish meaningful connection with the group and individuals and was intrigued how she did this without the visual cues that I, and many of us, am used to and indeed depend upon in many circumstances.

I arranged to model Frankie over the telephone.

The things that I found were common in Frankie's model and with some of the other people I modelled were (in her words):

- A strong sense of purpose 'I would like to contribute something to this world.' She seeks to 'live out my value system in the context of the workshop.' I want to serve 'more than my ego or bank balance'
- She is most connected with the group when she is connected with herself.
- Being 'totally present is the key' and is really important to her. For Frankie this comes in a very physical form- being present in the body. Spending time preparing to be present is what Frankie does before every workshop. 'Being totally present is part of my preparation.'
- Though Frankie is visually impaired, she make the effort to establish eye contact with people, using here hearing to locate people spatially. This is for the benefit of the other person rather than herself.
- Kinaesthetically Frankie walks a 'tightrope between calm and excitement'

Lynsey Stevens Former HR Manager for Supply Chain – ICI Paints

Lynsey is a young, senior, HR manager. She is different. When I was in a job level assessment meeting, she stood out from her colleague, another HR manager, simply by her ability to establish excellent rapport with me, really connect with me and draw me in and 'control the space' in the meeting. It was an enjoyable experience. I was intrigued about what was the distinction her interaction with me and the impact of the other HR manager. Lynsey agreed to meet up face to face for me to model her.

The headlines of her model that were common to others are:

- The focus on what the other person will get out of the interaction 'think about what would be good vs excellent in terms of a result.', 'What is important to that person, I will hit that'. i.e. a clear purpose.
- Listening –demonstrating a genuine, honest approach that breaks down barriers
- The focus on rapport
- The importance of body language and in particular eye contact in connecting with the person. 'I can't build effective rapport without eye contact'
- Total focus on the interaction to the exclusion of other things. Holding that time and space for them. 'The 'issue' is the only important thing. I am thinking about what it makes them feel. '
- Interacting in real time.

Dominic (Dom) Keohane

My modelling of Dom came about almost accidentally.....

He was one of the facilitators on my master practitioner's course and we got talking in one of the breaks. I discovered that he has a conscious model for how he connects with people in a coaching context and in a group. I had identified his excellence as an insightful coach and so was interested to find out about his model of engaging with other people.

The essence of what Dom does that had resonance with the other people I modelled is the following:

- There is an invitation given to the other person, not necessarily explicit 'Invitation first'.
- A focus on the outcomes for the other person 'I want the person to get what they want'
- A concentration on the interaction to the exclusion of everything else. 'The whole world is on pause', and 'there is a clarity around you – all other things are defocused'
- An out-of-time experience 'It is powerful, timeless, and safe'.
- Kinaesthetic - a sense of energy and excitement – like static electricity
- A strong kinaesthetic 'It is a warm feeling from the chest'.
- A positive feeling for the other person 'In that moment I feel absolute care and love for the person'.

Gene Early

Gene is an amazing exemplar for many things. I had been looking forward to meeting him for a few years – because I knew that Sue Knight had been taught by Gene and had modelled many aspects from him. I admired so much in Sue and I presupposed that in part this came from her modelling of Gene. Gene facilitated for a couple of days on my Masters and was instrumental in the discovery and development of my own model for engaging with people.

I came to model Gene by a rather circuitous route! I had been looking to model people from outside my NLP connections and so Gene was not on my radar initially. When I was modelling Dom, which happened almost accidentally, I discovered that part of DOM's model was learnt from Gene. Dom shared Gene's model with me and I wanted to understand his model first hand.

A précis of some of the common essences that were common to Gene's model and my other exemplars:

- My state is a state of invitation – of 'who will engage with me'

- Entering into a place out of time 'I enter that place of eternity out of time'. For Gene this has strong spiritual relevance.
- One of compassion – willing to be intimate. 'you have to be willing to be intimate with that person in front of you'. This is closely linked to his purpose.
- He has an internal kinaesthetic from his chest prior to engagement
- Strong eye contact and focus on the other person 'The intensity of my gaze increases significantly I feel everything inside of me focuses. I have a laser focus on the person'
- A kinaesthetic - my shoulders relax, a general relaxation of the body "A whole body feeling of excitement is what reinforces my doing this kind of work".

My Self Modelling

During the master practitioners course Gene Early challenged all of us to explore what being 'unfettered' was for us as an individual. For me part of this was being prepared to be more *vulnerable*. This in turn had the consequence of removing the barrier of self consciousness which then opened the door to being able to engage with someone at a deeper level that I had ever done before.

With the help of a fellow coach I was able to understand the structure of this in myself and this was the start of the journey to enhancing the model by learning from others.

The element in my own model that I found were common to others - in my own words are:

- A sense of calm and being totally present.
- 'Checking in' with my purpose which is about reaffirming why I am there and how they relate to my value of making a difference for the other person(s).
- A warm feeling (kinaesthetic) in my chest.
- A total focus on the other person to the exclusion of everything else. This is where I am 'out of time' the consequence of this for me is an avoidance of self-conscious focus on myself.
- A deep and resting eye contact with the other person.

3. **My journey and experience of modelling**

My journey started, surprisingly, through my own experience of engaging with people on a deeper level and this came from some of the work I did on the being unfettered with some of my co-learners during the course. The order of events was:

1. I sought out what unfettered meant to me.
2. With help, I discovered that unfettered is about being more open and prepared to be vulnerable.
3. Through coaching I identified the deflecting behaviours in myself that prevented vulnerability.
4. I received encouragement to demonstrate this unfettered/ vulnerable behaviour publicly.
5. Through this I experienced my unfettered self in a very real way. The vulnerability meant that I was able to engage or connect with individuals in a way I had not experienced before.
6. With help I analysed the structure I used to get this engagement.
7. This allowed me to build my own model.

So, having identified my model I then sought out models of excellence, where I had experienced excellent engagement from others. I chose my models of excellence with specific objectives in mind.

Because one to one visual contact was important to my own model I wanted to explore means of engagement that didn't necessarily depend on this – hence my choice of modelling Frankie Armstrong. Because she cannot depend on her sight and predominantly works with groups I was intrigued about how she engaged effectively with people.

How would engagement work using other forms of interaction such as email and phone? I covered off these forms with Gene during our sessions.

It was important to me to involve people that were not necessarily familiar with nlp or the language of modelling- hence the modelling of Lynsey and Frankie.

So how was it...?

The modelling sessions were highly rewarding in themselves. I found it a real privilege when people were prepared to open up and share what and how they did certain things they were excellent at. In addition to creating a model, modelling gives the modeller a window on the world of the other person and is the start of understanding their map.

During the course of my modelling I learnt a number of key lessons for myself.

- Approach each modelling interaction with a completely open mind. Do not be tempted to hold a 'prototype' model in my head and try and fit the experience of the new exemplar into it. Harmonisation can take a bit of time and is best done offline.
- I always got so much more than what I was looking for. By keeping an open mind I learnt about the model I was seeking to construct and also so much more than what I set out to model. Like discovering unexpected treasure.
- The importance of testing my own experience against others. I found it important to assume that my experience may be different to theirs even though superficially they may be described in a similar way. What is their deeper structure?

4. The structure of the Model

(Preparation – associate into 'my')

1. Be Present - physically relax, be at one with myself – K^i
2. 'Check in' with my Purpose for that interaction – e.g. to make a difference for the other person. K^i
3. Feel a warmth in my chest. K^i
4. Move my attention from within me to the other person. K^e, V^e
5. 'Lock on' to the other person through resting eye contact. V^e
6. Defocus everything else, turn down the volume on external noise except the person's voice. V^e, A^e
7. I am engaged. V^e, A^e, K_{ie}

5. How I have integrated the 'it' into myself.

When I was first aware of my own model I really had to consciously work hard to apply it and use it. This took quite a bit of effort and time to get 'into' the model. Through my modelling my examples of excellence my experience was different. I started to get a sharper focus on the essential components of the model. This was in contrast to my own self model which, in comparison, was slightly 'fuzzy'

For me, this meant that I was able to deploy it more quickly and with greater ease in a greater number of situations. The more I have used it the more it has become part of me. My 'it' is becoming the norm for my interaction with people (if they in turn choose to engage with me). Some of the specific contexts where I have found it particularly valuable are:

- Coaching
- Performance reviews
- Presentations to groups of people
- Discussions with my manager
- Ad hoc 1 to 1 interactions

The outcome?

I have found that this model gives the following outcomes:

- Open up the ability to communicate on a deeper and more meaningful level whether it is with individuals or groups.
- Gives a greater freedom and space to share insights with others – what I call 'spontaneous coaching'. It provides the context to give powerful encouragement, strong challenges and difficult words
- Is the foundation for stronger and deeper work relationships.
- Provides the foundation for effective presenting. Try it and ask for feedback.

6. Sharing the model

Having discovered a model that is so effective I wanted to pass it on to others and test its 'portability'

Formally I have done this in two ways:

1. I shared my model with a new graduate in my team who was willing to experiment with it.

She had good communication skills, though at times she would break engagement and lose eye contact. Through using this model her experience of engaging with people improved – evidenced from my experience with interacting with her.

2. I used this model as a basis for a 1 day workshop that I created. Called 'engaging presentations', the aim was to encourage attendees to use the model whenever they gave presentations. The feedback from the day, formally gathered, was all positive with people commenting that it has taken them forward in their presentation effectiveness.

From these 2 experiences I am confident that this model is 'portable' and can be deployed by anyone with the desire to engage at a deeper level.

My challenge is to ask ourselves when interacting with others – 'are we engaged?'