

Drumming with Confidence

West African Djembe

(six - eight time signature)

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NLP Modelling Project

for

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Abstract

My outcome with this project is about enabling confidence to flow generally when engaged in drumming on the Djembe, and in particular hand coordination when drumming the six - eight rhythm.

I have no musical training but have wanted to make music and especially to improve my sense of rhythm. After experiencing the rhythm, beat and energy of dancing to the West African drum, learning to play the Djembe could be a satisfying way of expressing my need to make music. I have been impressed by the flow and communication drummers seem to share, and wanted to be a part of that sharing.

I had been meeting with a friend, Nick, for a few weeks for drumming practice. Nick had been endeavouring to teach me how to drum out the six - eight rhythm by explaining which hand to use first and being very patient with my stilted thumping whilst I regularly blocked my progress with self-conscious behaviour and muddled hand co-ordination, when my dominant hand took control making the flow between my left and right hands awkward.

Methodology

I wanted someone who was approachable and accessible. My friend

Nick was both these things. Two taped interviews were arranged at my home lasting an hour each, finishing off with a free no holds barred drumming session at the end just for fun and to test out what I had learned.

The following skills were used:

- ❖ Outcomes
- ❖ Ericksonian Hypnotic Speak & Anchoring Resourceful State
- ❖ Rapport, matching body language & voice
 - o sensory acuity
 - o flexibility

- ❖ V A K Eye Accessing Cues & Predicates
- ❖ Implicit / Explicit Modelling
- ❖ Feature detection & Pattern recognition
- ❖ Submodalities
- ❖ Calibration
- ❖ Strategy Elicitation
- ❖ Multi - level strategy

- ❖ Logical Levels
- ❖ Meta Model 1 and 2
- ❖ Sorting Categories
- ❖ Criteria
- ❖ Congruence checks
- ❖ T.O.T.E.
- ❖ Backtrack frame
- ❖ Nerk Nerk state

Results

Because I know Nick, I didn't want to fall into old patterns of interaction. I had an outcome to approach my modelling project with him, clean and fresh.

This was accomplished by using hypnotic speak on myself whilst relaxing and anchoring a desired state, prior to our meeting. I was able to maintain a clean second position keeping my own model of the world out of the way.

Another outcome was to achieve good rapport at the onset in case the process, new to Nick, might have him feeling a little uncomfortable. I was careful to check sensory acuity and calibration often.

I had not been aware in my past interactions with Nick before doing the modelling project, that his V A K eye accessing cues and predicates told me that Nick's primary representational system is A K V. I had not recognised before the project this might have been why I was having difficulty following Nick's instructions, because I am K V A. My outcome of rapport was achieved.

I had acquired a tape recorder and ran the tape whilst Nick and I drummed together, then Nick on his own whilst I used implicit modelling. The pattern recognition skill I used most at this stage was observational. Calibration was important whilst second positioning Nick. Through out I watched for particular features in physiology. When drumming, Nick mostly had his eyes closed so I was looking for, body posture, breathing, emotional state and the quality of his movement. This enabled me to be flexible when moving into the explicit modelling stage.

I used a variation on the multi - level modelling strategy (because of the size of the drum it was not practical to physically keep moving Nick through the spatial element of the logical levels). I covered these through specific meta model

questioning of the six stages, interspersed with drumming, in order to prevent the interview moving into an intellectual exercise. Nick's linguistic tendency is to use deletions. Being able to recognise these enabled me to ask very specific questions.

The skills I used for elucidating features and recognising patterns were:

Analytical, Procedural, Conceptual, Observational.

Multi-Level Modelling Strategy:

Environment: For Nick it is very much a kinaesthetic need, "To get comfortable, 'Into the dance of it'." Indoors he likes dimmed lighting, candle light or fire light to create a "cosy feeling". In the open air, Nick needs to be warm, have a "sense of space", camp fire.

He also benefits from drumming with other people, "a communal thing" connecting with others via the music into the emotions, sharing, being supported.

Behaviour: Nick often uses the drum to assist a more desirable state change or to maintain and enjoy a desirable state, or to communicate with other drummers. Nick needs to be sitting comfortably with the drum between his knees or standing with the drum supported comfortably by a sling. A tune or music runs through his head. Nick uses his auditory senses to assist him in achieving his kinesthetic goal when drumming, "the rhythm comes to mind". The 2 submodalities are associated. The rhythm, which is sometimes a drum beat sometimes his voice, comes into the right side of his head and sets up a vibration down his non-dominant right arm and into his right hand.

At this point he sits with his eyes closed with his head turned slightly to the right. Nick is also listening for the base beat with his left ear. He associates this with his heart beat and his left dominant hand. When drumming Nick's process starts by being auditory and this kicks into action his kinesthetic submodalities.

Capabilities: When drumming Nick second positions himself, by what he calls, "the Watcher" a part of himself which keeps light attention on his actions. His "Watcher" is positioned back a foot or so on his right side and communicates via internal dialogue and rhythm through the right side of his head.

Simultaneously he experiences an energising sensation down his right arm and into his right hand. This is his non-dominant hand and produces the off beat, while he consciously controls the left hand which is producing the base beat.

When Nick creates a resonance, between his heart beat and the beat of the drum (this is often for him the six-eight time signature), he experiences a congruency signal which begins as a pleasant vibration in his abdomen. His breathing becomes full and the vibration spreads as a resonating space through the diaphragm and chest region. "As though I and the drum have become one with the muse". His arms and hands become more relaxed. At this point he is no longer aware of internal dialogue, only a state of "being ness".

Beliefs and Values:

A sense of space is very important to Nick, in the environment, also between the drum beats - not having to fill up all the space with the drumming. "The more I drum the less I play".

Nick has a lot of respect for African drummers, "the way they move and the respect they have for something powerful and nameless, music seems to be a part of that." There is a value for Nick in drumming, which takes him into himself. He believes that when he finds the space within himself, "in the belly area" that he is "into the music." The impact of this is such that he experiences what he calls a feeling of awe.

Each time Nick comes to the drum, he needs to get to know it, to say "hello" to it. "In the hands, that's where we meet - the drum has the music and in laying hands on the drum I'm drawing music from the drum". " I respect the drum, I have shy hands." "I am shy and coy in my relationship with the drum."

Identity: Nick identifies with the drum but "not too possessively" "I am its drummer." He speaks of himself as a " faithful servant to the music" which the drum contains. Through the drumming Nick feels connected to others, and to "a greater more whole self."

Spiritual: Nick feels he serves the Muse, the drum the music. Nick speaks about trusting in the music and the moment, trusting that The Universe knows what to do even if he doesn't consciously know.

Through out the interview I was sorting through categories and criteria. Backtrack framing helped maintain rapport and enabled me to clarify and move on to the next stage during the interview. As we progressed I regularly used mini-TOTE 's on myself and checked my own congruence signal.

At the end of the first interview we had a drumming session. I was amazed how much more confident my drumming had become, through finding out more about Nick's process! I had acquired respect for the drum. The difference between drumming at the beginning of the session and the end was greatly improved. I felt that I had gained confidence. I was producing a better quality of sound. However, I still had not satisfactorily mastered the six-eight time signature and I intended to fill in the missing links during the second interview.

T.O.T.E.

In the second interview I focused on [T.O.T.E. elicitation](#) questions. Again checking and re - T.O.T.E.'ing for myself as I went along. Some of the content from this interview is similar to the multi-level modelling strategy. I will only pick out from the second interview those points which were relevant to making a shift for me.

My outcome was to learn the six-eight rhythm, effortlessly drumming and coordinating my hands.

Question 1. In what context do you use this skill? For Nick the six-eight signature is one of the basic and most versatile beats in music so its use is part of the pleasure and relaxation in the act of drumming which enables him to make connections with himself, others and the universe.

Question 2. What goals, objectives or purpose guide your actions etc? Nick explained how he feels alienated in much of his daily life. His goal is to destress, to feel connected. "Drumming helps me to just be," "It earths me." The six-eight beat connects with his heart beat and assists in his focus.

Question 3. What do you use as evidence etc? Nick's main evidence is kinesthetic. His breathing gets slower, his shoulders and arms become more fluid and relaxed. He gets a sense of space, resonating in the diaphragm area. He believes he comes into a "wider spiritual self", a "ritual space". Nick used this quote. 'God is a place whose circumference is everywhere'

Question 4. What do you do to get these goals? (Also see multi-level modelling Behaviour & capabilities.) Nick begins the six-

eight signature with a base beat to the centre of the drum with the flat of his left dominant hand. He follows with an off-beat on the edge or circumference of the drum with the fingers of his non-dominant hand, then another off-beat hit to the edge with the fingers of his dominant hand. Nick continues this process whilst listening to the resonance with his stronger ear and connecting with his heart beat.

Question 5. When you experience unexpected problems, what specific steps do you take to correct them? The problems are usually, tension, tight breathing, too much self talk, irritation or competitiveness with other drummers. "My watcher says Whoa!" Nick stops drumming, even if just momentarily, consciously slows breathing, listens to the other drummers or the silence, listens to his heart beat and begins drumming to the base beat of his heart.

Again Nick and I drummed at the end of the session. I had not practised, a number of weeks had elapsed between sessions. However Nick and I noticed a marked improvement. At the end of the second interview I had managed to get the six-eight rhythm using my dominant right hand for the first beat. I didn't feel as confident with this as I had hoped.

A few days later I remembered that Nick's dominant hand was his left which was my non-dominant hand. When meta positioning him I had been aware of the difference in our dominant hands. I decided to go through the process that I had modelled but also placed myself in 'Nerk Nerk' state. Instead of using my dominant hand to begin, (which was the opposite to Nick's) I started the sixeight beat as Nick did with his left hand (my non-dominant hand) IT WORKED!!

My evidence is: in subsequent drumming sessions and in sessions where the guitar has taken part, I have experienced improved self-confidence and ease of coordination when drumming out the six-eight rhythm. I have experienced a sense of connectedness and sharing. I have become de-stressed and centred. I have received positive feedback from friends and musicians as to my greater confidence. I have dared to play more publicly and had fun.

A secondary benefit of the modelling project was for Nick, who felt much more aware of how he performed and believes that he will be able to use his new awareness to greater satisfaction.

Practical Application.

Take time to create an environmental space for drumming, which is comfortable for you. A suggestion might be to dim the lights or use candles. An out of doors environment by a camp fire, as long as you are warm and comfortable, can be a desirable setting. Drumming with friends who are supportive can be fun.

Sit with the Djembe supported between your legs and tilted slightly away from your body so that the drum base is only touching the floor at one point. This allows air to move through the drum and creates greater resonance. Or stand with your drum fastened to your waist with a sling. Check that it feels secure.

Spend a few moments looking, feeling and tapping the drum. Think of yourself as the Drum's Drummer. You are serving the drum and helping to bring its music out.

Become aware of your breathing. Breathe more slowly and deeply. Allow yourself to relax as much as you feel you can. Closing your eyes can help. Focus your attention on your heart beat, if you can hear it or feel it, become aware of the stronger base beat, then the lighter beat until you are aware of a rhythm. If you cannot hear or feel your heart beat, have a guess what it might be like, maybe you might even see a picture in your mind of a heart or a drum pulsing.

When you feel comfortable and you feel a sense of your heart beat or a heart beat-like rhythm, become aware of your arms and see if you get a desire to begin with your left or your right hand. You might get a sensation in one of your arms or hands or see your hand hitting the drum. Some people hear a voice telling them which hand to use. If you are not sure just make a guess. You may find that you start with either your dominant or non-dominant hand.

The six-eight beat proceeds as follows:

1. When you are ready make a hit to the central part of the drum with the flat of your chosen hand (which we will call hand A).
2. Follow for the off- beat with a hit of the fingers of your other hand (hand B) at the outer edge of the drum.
3. Follow that through with another hit with the fingers of hand A on the outer edge of the drum.
4. A hit to the centre with the flat of hand B.
5. A hit with the fingers of hand A on the outer circumference.
6. A hit with fingers of hand B to outer circumference of drum.

This sequence is repeated over and over. Practice speeding up and slowing down the beats. Practice hitting harder on some beats and lighter on others. Remember you are the Drum's Drummer. You are teasing the music out of the drum.

As you hear and feel a rhythm developing you will notice, at first only for a few moments then for longer and longer periods of time, a feeling of being more relaxed. Your arms and hands will become more fluid and flowing. You may experience a pleasant stillness of internal dialogue. If you are playing with other drummers you could begin to feel a sense of connection and communication with them.

If you are not experiencing these things, stop for a short while and check your breathing, your connection with your drum and heart beat. Be still and listen. Listen to your heart, other drummers or even to the silence. Imagine yourself standing back and looking at what you are doing give yourself helpful supportive self talk or images. When you feel ready have another go.

Most importantly have fun.