

NLP Modelling Project for  
John Seymour Associates Practitioner Training  
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**USING 'ACTION REPLAY' TO  
HELP A CHILD SUCCEED**

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## 1. ABSTRACT

Gillian Edwards is a teacher at The New Learning Centre (TNLC) (1), an organisation offering 'Skills for Success at School and Harmony in the Home'.

'Action replay' is one of the techniques used at TNLC to enable a child to achieve a positive change in his behaviour. Having identified the unwanted behaviour, the teacher models the required behaviour and then gives the child as many tries as he needs to carry out the required behaviour. The result is that the child gains in self-esteem, having proved to himself that he can succeed.

The essentials for the teacher are to believe in the child, to believe in the technique and to maintain her composure and open, patient attitude towards the child.

NB I have referred to the teacher as 'she' and the child as 'he' in order to distinguish between them, not to stereotype them!

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Preparation

Prior to visiting TNLC I watched a video of Gillian Edwards presenting the work of the Centre to a group of interested parents and teachers. Assisted by Alison Seddon, who role-played a 'difficult' child, Gillian demonstrated the skills and techniques used by the teachers at TNLC and taught to parents for use at home.

I observed both Noel Janis-Norton, the Director of TNLC, and Gillian Edwards running Saturday morning sessions with a group of five children, during which 'action replay' was used. All the children were in danger of being excluded from their respective schools, so they and their families were attending The New Learning Centre.

TNLC has a long list of rules governing pupils' behaviour and, although the sessions I observed were based on academic work, principally English composition, the emphasis

appeared to be placed on behaviour. The underlying philosophy is that a child needs to feel good about himself and to have a sense of achievement before he is ready to learn. I was very impressed with the consistent attitude of the teachers and the success of the technique.

Gillian also talked me through a recent exchange between her and a ten year old boy. As this was a typical example we used this for the modelling project. Having had several opportunities to observe my model in action, I decided to use simply paper and pen to record my findings.

## 2.2 The Model

In the example chosen, the boy answered a question with "Yeah", while looking at the floor, instead of the "Yes" with eye contact which is considered appropriate when speaking to a teacher. Gillian reminded the boy of the rule and explained that she would ask the question again, giving the boy the chance to answer again, correctly. In all, five repeats were needed for the boy to be successful.

I began with the TOTE elicitation questions, moved to the Multi-level Modelling for the 'Operate' section, then returned to the TOTE questions.

As it became clear to me that maintaining state was an essential part of the technique, I decided to use Gillian's response to the question: "When you experience difficulties . . ." to analyse her process in fine detail, using Strategy Notation. This is detailed in paragraph 3.3.

Having unpacked the process, I then took the role of teacher while Gillian took the part of the child.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 TOTE Elicitation Questions

1. Context for using 'Action Replay': when a child has behaved inappropriately or broken a rule. (Can also be used in any training programme with parents, teachers, adults or children)
2. Objective: to enable the child to repeat the appropriate behaviour, following the rule.
3. Evidence: see (Ve) the child's new behaviour and hear (Ae) a different tone of voice. Within self, become aware (Ki) of relaxation - absence of tension.
4. Specific steps: see para 3.2

5. If it is not working: 'active waiting' and reflective listening

'Active waiting' involves maintaining the state described in para 3.2.2. Reflective listening involves second positioning the child, imagining what he is thinking/feeling and reflecting this back in words,

eg "It's hard for you to do this, isn't it? Nobody's asked you to do this sort of thing before"

(See Paragraph 3.3 for more detail)

### 3.2 Multi-Level Modelling Strategy

1. Environment: in a school room with the least possible distractions, seated (perhaps at a table) and both wearing name badges. Gillian would have a small notebook and pencil and would be dressed appropriately for school, ie casual/smart.
2. Behaviours: maintaining eye contact, smiling, alert posture (sitting up straight), engaged. Gillian initiates then waits for the boy to carry out her instructions - 'active waiting', maintaining state. After the initial response, Gillian continues to look at the boy, smiling, making sure her words to him are clear and steady.
3. Capabilities: 0 being pro-active, not reactive

0 able to dissociate from child's comments - not taking them on as a personal affront

0 finding something to praise by describing appropriate behaviour which is usually taken for granted, (2)

eg "You're still sitting in your chair. You haven't made any silly faces"

4. Beliefs/Values: 0 knowing that the child is not yet trained, ie has been allowed to get away with being disrespectful/sloppy and has not been made aware of his actions

0 a belief that the child can do what is required

0 a belief that the process of being positive, firm and consistent works

0 a belief that his present behaviour is not serving him in creating good relationships, and that the new behaviour will have a positive knock-on effect

0 a belief that changing the child's mood (by reflective listening and descriptive praise) will lead to co-operation and thus generate a feeling of being approved of

5. Identity: Gillian is the trainer/teacher

6. Spiritual: Gillian is acting in the child's best interest; an increase in his self-esteem and consequent improved behaviour will decrease the parents' anxiety - therefore the whole family will benefit.

3.3 Strategy Notation

3.1 As explained earlier (3.1.5), I analysed Gillian's response to "What do you do if it's not working?" by using strategy notation.

3.2 Ve child is still looking at his feet

Ae child is muttering to himself under his breath

Ki feeling of tension/annoyance (although with experience this is so fleeting that it is instantly dismissed; for the inexperienced teacher it may be necessary to do Ke and leave the room before reacting and saying something inappropriate) Aid "Oh bother" (or something stronger!) "We are going to have to wait a bit longer. Remember he's not been trained. He has a positive intent behind this behaviour. I know the process works. We will have to do it again."

Meanwhile . . . .

Ke continue to smile, maintain posture

Ve look for tiny things to praise, eg "You've only sworn once this time, and much more quietly. You're really managing to control yourself."

3.3 From this analysis, the Internal Dialogue seems to be the key to maintaining state, and the process continues as before.

#### 4. PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Please read Section 2.1, Preparation.

4.1 The purpose of Action Replay is to enable the child to succeed in the new, desired behaviour. Once the child has tasted 'success' in this context, his feelings of self worth increase, together with the satisfaction of really communicating with the adult. He is then more motivated to continue with the appropriate behaviour and to co-operate both at school and at home.

The process itself is simple: give the child as many tries as are necessary to do what is required. Carrying out the process needs specific behaviours from the adult.

4.2 As the trainer, Gillian has a number of guiding principles:

T she believes that the process works

- n she recognises that the child has not yet been trained in what is required

- n she believes that the child is capable of what is required

- n she believes that the child will benefit from the experience

- n she believes that changing the child's mood (by reflective listening and descriptive praise) will lead to co-operation and thus generate a feeling of being approved of

4.3 Gillian's own behaviour is very important. She needs to keep her "cool" throughout the whole process, continuing to smile, appear open, calm, alert and confident. She uses the same firm yet kind tone of voice and always looks at the child, even if the child is not returning the eye contact.

4.4 It is useful to practise "keeping cool" by developing the ability to notice what is happening in your own body - any tension, holding of breath, clenching the jaw or fists. You can also imagine being a 'fly on the wall' observing yourself, sensing what is

happening, listening for your own voice tone. Having noticed what is happening, you make whatever changes you need to recapture the original way of being.

- 4.5 Another skill to practise is to be able to find something to praise about the child's behaviour - no matter how small. This is likely to be something which is normally taken for granted and so is not generally remarked upon.
- 4.6 A further skill is the ability to imagine what it is like to be the child - what he is feeling, thinking, experiencing - and then to put that into words.
- 4.7 In the example I have chosen to describe, the boy has answered Gillian's question with "Yeah", while looking at the floor. He knows that this is considered 'inappropriate' by TLNC and that he is required to look at his teacher and say "Yes".

Gillian keeps smiling, looks directly at him, reminds him of the rule and says firmly:

"I'm going to ask you that question again and I'd like you to look at me and answer 'Yes' this time."

- 4.8 If he manages 'Ye.' Gillian will say: "You've said the first part; now I'm just waiting for the 's' and for you to look at me while you say it."
- 4.9 If he protests or does not respond at all, Gillian will engage in what she calls 'active waiting':

making sure she keeps her 'cool' (para 4.4)

imagining what he is going through (para 4.6) and saying something like: "This is hard for you, isn't it? I don't suppose anyone's ever asked you to do this before."

She will also find something positive in his behaviour to describe (para 4.5):

"You're still sitting on your chair and you haven't made any silly faces!"

4.10 Gillian will repeat the question, continuing to praise the boy's progress towards the required response, until he is successful.

#### 5. POSTSCRIPT

Although I modelled this technique in the context of helping children, I have found myself using Action Replay with my partner. On occasions he will respond to a question using highly charged language. Rather than becoming defensive or using attacking language myself, I remain calm, explain that I think his response is exaggerated or extreme, and ask him to rephrase what he has just said. I am then willing to listen to his point of view, and we have a constructive discussion!

#### NOTES

1. The New Learning Centre, 211 Sumatra Road, London NW6 IPF

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2. Descriptive praise is another highly effective technique in its own right, which can be used in almost any teaching or training situation.

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