



Familiarity – The Hidden Value

Virginia Satir, when asked to name the most powerful force in human beings, reportedly replied "Familiarity." The desire for the familiar, for things to be the same as they were yesterday, has a long pedigree. Humans have a natural resistance to radical change. After all, what we did yesterday enabled us to survive to today. It has a track record.

Oh, I know that people don't *consciously* want things to be the same as they were yesterday – but it's your unconscious that's running the show, and your unconscious knows that what you've done so far has made you an evolutionary success. You're alive. It worked! If a person has been busy not-having a Ferrari for 20 or 30 years, that's a highly familiar state of affairs. Now some people will say "But I've been working on myself for

years, I should be done by now." But there's that old devil familiarity again. If you've been working on yourself for years, then *working on yourself will have become familiar*. Or they say "But I've been *trying* to change." There it is again – *trying* has become established as the familiar state. Anyone who's been struggling for any length of time might like to consider the possibility that the struggle itself has become familiar.

You may think that this familiarity business is damned inconvenient for someone who wants to be a Super-Mega-Goal-Achiever™, but stop for a moment: If your body temperature suddenly increased by 20 degrees, or the acidity of your blood dropped by a few ph, you would die instantly. Your body-mind has a set of controls and balances that help keep you in a state of equilibrium. This equilibrium is called 'homeostasis'. When we encounter change, the 'familiarity sensors' in and around our nervous system start sending 'alert' messages to the brain. The system then begins to take

action to return it to a stable state. If someone's stable state is 'Cortina', getting a Ferrari will set their familiarity sensors all a-flutter. We'll explore some ways to work with homeostasis shortly.

The Thinker and The Prover

Leonard Orr modelled the mind as having two aspects: a thinker and a prover. The thinker is incredibly flexible, without limitation, able to think anything (the world's flat, the world's round, foreigners are dangerous, people are brilliant, I'm stupid, I'm brilliant, Jim Davidson's funny, the world's spherical, I'll always be poor, I can be rich, there is no God, the universe has a plan for me, etc). The prover's job is much simpler: whatever the thinker thinks, the prover proves. If a person thinks he or she is stupid, they will sort and filter all incoming data to prove it true.

Start Where You Are

Milton Erickson was a master of meeting people at their model of the world, and the skills of 'rapport' and 'pacing and leading' have (deservedly) become established as some of the most powerful approaches for helping people enrich their maps. Skilled NLP Practitioners are rigorous about using these techniques with others, but how often do people fail to establish rapport with themselves?

Now I know this seems dualistic (who is the self who gets rapport with which self etc), but it's just a way of thinking about it. You might like to think in terms of your conscious mind establishing rapport with your unconscious. However you choose to model it, if we accept that rapport is valuable, it presumably applies to all of us. So how do you go about getting into rapport with yourself?

Acceptance

Acceptance is the WD40 of growth, development and results. Accepting a situation is not the same as saying you like it, are happy with it, or are even willing to put up with it. Acceptance merely means that you recognise the reality of the current situation. Some people use the headline of 'positive thinking' to deny the reality of the current situation. This makes matters worse. Acceptance is the opposite of denial. When you accept the reality of your current experience, you free yourself to change it. Paradoxical, huh?

Paraphrasing Fritz Perls, the homeopath Ian Watson says, "What you resist persists, but what you accept dissolves." So what's acceptance got to do with Ferraris? Well, you don't help someone get over a phobia by telling them to stop being afraid, and you don't get yourself to change your circumstances just by saying what you want. You need rapport. When you accept your current circumstances, you get into rapport with yourself. This is an excellent starting point for enjoyable 'self-influence'.

Tips for change

Here are a few tips to help you turbo-charge your development and enjoy the process:

- 1) Establish a daily practice**
Some people like tennis, others like writing, some like yoga, and others like running. It doesn't really matter what it is. What matters is that you have it. A daily practice creates a core of consistency in your life. This allows the familiarity sensors to relax (a bit) when you want to make changes. The process of change becomes less effortful when you have a daily practice.
- 2) Find out what your thinker and prover are up to**
Take an honest look at the circumstances of your life, and ask yourself what you must be believing to have those results showing up. Once you have an idea of what you're believing. . . .
- 3) Accept yourself exactly as you are**
When you get into the habit of self-acceptance, you'll be amazed at how things which you've struggled with for years start to melt away.
- 4) Relax and enjoy the process**
We live in a society that prizes results. The implication is that success, happiness and fulfilment are dependent upon achievements that are external, and often distant. But most of life takes place during the process of creating the results. Relax and enjoy the process of getting where you're going. Then, by the time you have the Ferrari, you'll be able to relax and enjoy that ride too.
- 5) Open to the mystery**
Life by its very nature is chaotic, non-linear and essentially mysterious. As Kierkegaard said, "life is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived." Open to the mystery of life and, as Bill Hicks used to say, enjoy the ride.

more information

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"If NLP's so Great, Where's My Ferrari?"

"If NLP's so great, where's my Ferrari?" OK, so I've never actually heard anyone say that, but I can sense it, lurking in the collective unconscious of the NLP community. The content, of course, varies: "Where's my million pounds?", "Where's my Nobel prize?", "Where's my perfect partner (or queue of slightly imperfect ones)?", but the form remains the same. And why do you never hear these words spoken aloud? Because having been lured by the promises of NLP ("You can have whatever you want, be whoever you choose, do whatever you wish") into investing time, money and belief, people are terrified that the emperor might be sporting little more than a thong.

Now you may think that this is a strange thing for an NLP Trainer to be saying, but I'm hoping that by shedding some light on these shadowy concerns, we can ensure that everyone in the world of NLP gets all the fame, fortune and Ferraris they are entitled to.

Jamie Smart

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