

## Clean Language Questions

The information in this note comes from two main sources (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000; Sullivan and Rees, 2008) which differ in detail and emphasis. And, of course, clean language is much more than a list of questions and the questions asked are dependent on the context.

A good starting point is an article by James Lawley and Penny Tompkins:

<http://www.cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/articles/109/1/Less-Is-More-The-Art-of-Clean-Language/Page1.html>

Lawley and Tompkins (2000) define nine basic clean language questions that are used 80% of the time. Then there are twenty or so further questions that can be used to supplement the basic nine. These are used in response to the client presenting or presupposing information that warrants such a question, and they are only clean in the specific context of the information presented by the client.

### Basic questions (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000)

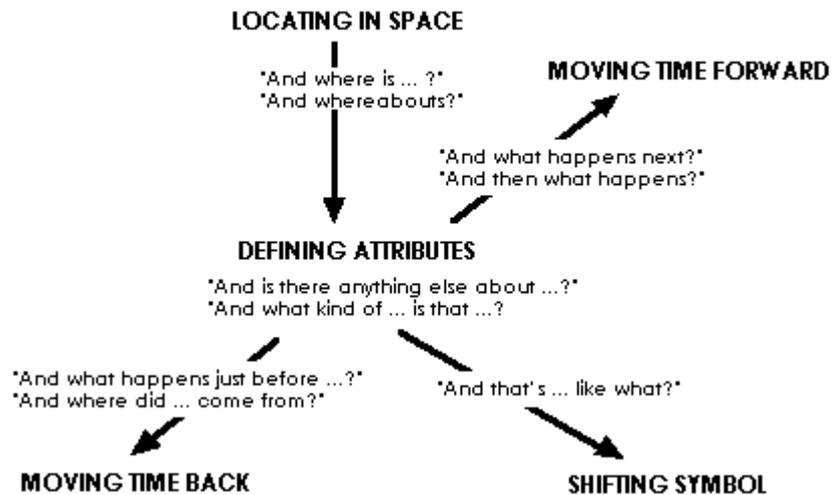
- And is there anything else about .....
- And what kind of ..... is that .....
- And where is .....
- And whereabouts?
- And what happens next?
- And then what happens?
- And what happens just before .....
- And where does/could ..... come from?
- And that's ..... like what?

Where '.....' is (some of) the exact words of the client.

Lawley and Tompkins (reference above) describe these in the following way:

To help navigate around the client's Metaphorical Psychescape we have devised a 3 dimensional compass:

## **9 BASIC CLEAN LANGUAGE QUESTIONS**



In Grovian Metaphor Therapy the 80:20 rule of Pareto applies. The 9 basic questions form the bedrock of the approach and get asked at least 80% of the time.

Sullivan and Rees (2008) add three intention questions to the basic list:

- And what would ..... like to have happen?
- And what needs to happen for.....?
- And can ..... happen?

### Supplementary questions (Sullivan & Rees, 2008 - slightly modified)

#### Attributes

- And does ..... have a size or a shape?
- And how many ..... could there be?
- And how old could ..... be?
- And what could ..... be wearing?

#### Location

- And how far is [symbols address]
- And in which direction is/does ..... [symbols movement]
- And is ..... on the inside or outside?
- And where is ..... [perceiving word, e.g. seeing] that from?
- And where are you going when you go there?
- And where are you drawn to?

#### Relationship

- And is ..... the same or different as/to .....
- And what's between ..... and .....

## Intention

- And would ..... like to ..... [intention]?
- And would ..... be interested in going to .....?

## Time and Sequence

- And what happens now?
- And what just happened?
- And what kind of ..... was that ..... before it was ..... [attribute]

## Source

- And what determines whether ..... or .....?

## Knowing

- And how will you know?
- And when you have ..... how will you know that you have .....?

## References

Lawley, J., & Tompkins, P. (2010). *Metaphors in mind: Transformation through symbolic modelling*. London: The Developing Company Press.

Sullivan, W., & Rees, J. (2008). *Clean language: Revealing metaphors and opening minds*. Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing.