

About The Method of Levels

Tim Carey posted the following to an email group in January, 2006 in response to suggestions that MOL be used with couples and in groups.
For more, see the Postscript in Tim's book *The Method of Levels*

MOL is not what gets people better. Reorganization is what gets people better. Reorganization is a private event that occurs within the neural hierarchies of each individual. To the extent that therapy facilitates the process of reorganization, then, therapy can only ever be individual. So, MOL is not the way people get better, reorganization is the way people get better.

MOL does not make reorganization happen. Reorganization is a natural process that occurs within individual neural hierarchies from probably before a baby is born. There is still much to learn about reorganization but it certainly doesn't belong to the province of psychotherapy. Reorganization can occur on a plane or in a train (this sounds a bit like Dr Seuss ...), it can happen in a crib or in a classroom. Reorganization also happens with cats and rats and elephants and the three towed sloth.

Awareness seems to be linked in some way to reorganization. Many therapeutic approaches and even Eastern psychologies have acknowledged the importance of awareness in achieving certain states of mind. All of these approaches seem to have tapped into something useful but, because their theories are useless, there's been a haphazard and serendipitous approach with regard to what to do about awareness.

MOL doesn't make awareness move. The fluidity of awareness is a natural phenomenon that is not well understood but undoubtedly exists. Awareness floats around while you're driving a car, while you're on the beach, when you spot a clever bumper sticker, and while you're engaged in conversation. In fact, it's probably harder to make awareness stay still for a minute or two than it is to get it moving. Awareness moves up and down and side to side and back and forth and round and round.

Awareness, like reorganization, is a private event that occurs within individual neural hierarchies.

As an outsider we can never be sure of what's happening with the awareness of another person but we have hypothesized that, when a person disrupts their own stream of dialogue, with a pause, or a grin, or a shake of the head, that disruption might indicate that the awareness we can't know about might have just moved around. Some of this moving we've supposed has been a move to a higher level system that is, in fact, setting the references for the lower level system/s of which the person was previously aware.

MOL does not make disruptions to dialogue occur.

Disruptions to dialogue occur in the course of normal everyday living. They occur at dinner parties, down at the pub, and after a game of croquet. If you ever watch politicians or athletes being interviewed on television you can often notice disruptions to their dialogue. Sometimes, even in an email, you can spot a sentence that seems to be a comment about the words that came before. Is any of this making sense? Those sentences might signal that the typist had a shift of awareness.

So, MOL is not what gets people better, it does not make reorganization happen, it does not create the fluidity of awareness. So what is MOL? ***MOL is a way of helping people get themselves better.***

MOL is not the only way of helping people get themselves better. People have been getting themselves better through various courses of psychotherapy before MOL ever came on the scene. People don't just get better in psychotherapy. Sometimes, people discover what they need to get better, by searching on the internet, or going for a jog, or doing a course, or chatting with a friend.

MOL is the minimalists way of helping people get better. What you, Bill, proposed, and what I have developed is a structured and systematic approach that, based on the principles of PCT, does the least amount possible to helping people get themselves better. It is a method that attempts to do the only thing necessary and nothing that is unnecessary in helping people get themselves better.

The least amount possible is not nothing at all. Something different from what is currently happening needs to occur if the person's situation is to change. It is also not sitting in front of a person and passively listening to them discussing their experiences. These things are actually doing something, not doing nothing. They are providing a time for the person to remain in the place where their awareness currently is. Curiously though, even in these situations, some people manage to get themselves better.

So the least amount possible turns out to be, talking with someone about that which they want to discuss, and then, when a disruption to their stream of dialogue occurs, asking them about that to investigate if their awareness just shifted to a higher level. Then do it all again from where their awareness is now at.

MOL has been developed as a method to use with individuals who voluntarily access psychotherapeutic services. Obviously, there are more problems to address than those involving the individual psychological distress of internal conflict. Clearly, people getting themselves better is not the only problem we have to tackle. How should learning best be facilitated in classrooms? How should workers best be managed? How can group cohesion best be promoted by a group member who is an equal player? How can group satisfaction be enhanced by someone who is facilitating the group? How can people who don't think they need help be helped? How can we more appropriately assess someone's physical and psychological functioning? How can we address physical diseases more accurately?

All of these are important issues and areas that require serious thought from a PCT perspective. Some of that serious thought, in some of these areas, is well underway and that is something I completely endorse. MOL, however, is not the way to address these problems. MOL is not a panacea for all the dif-

ferent kinds of problems that can occur as the living of autonomous, biological control systems unfolds. These problems all need solutions but attempting to use MOL in these situations is not the solution that's needed. Using MOL in these contexts is an inappropriate use of the method that will only serve to impede the progress of the development of both MOL and the other approaches that are sorely needed.

The term MOL is not synonymous with talking to someone. The approach was developed for a specific purpose and someone using the approach should adopt particular purposes while they are engaging in MOL. A person is not using MOL whenever they ask someone else about their goals. Nor are they using MOL whenever they notice a disruption in someone's dialogue and wonder if the person has just gone up a level. These things are components of MOL to be sure but they are no more MOL than carrying a tennis ball around in your bag means you're having a game of tennis.

MOL needs further focussed attention and development. Continued expansion and sophistication of the research being conducted is a priority.

Other approaches also warrant serious and, in some cases, urgent consideration. This is unlikely to happen, however, when methods become blurred and the techniques of one are used to achieve the purposes of another. Maybe some techniques, wrapped up in a different package, will be able to achieve different purposes and maybe they won't. We'll never know the answer to this if we undertake to apply MOL in areas in which it is not designed to be used. Based on the precision and sophistication of PCT, managers need ways to manage, parents need ways to parent, group facilitators need ways to group facilitate, teachers need ways to teach, folk need ways to get along. What we don't need is people trying to make MOL do things it was not designed to do. What we need are more applications for specific contexts not the expanded application of a specific approach.

It will be a great day when we have the same (or even similar) number of applications and programs and packages based on PCT principles that we currently have based on stimulus-response/cause-effect principles.

Warm regards, *Tim*