



freshwaysforward

∞ Discovering You

October 2008

Why would you want to act as if something was true?

One of my favourite client stories is about Jenny, who wanted to get out of her current job that was making her quite unhappy, and to find a new one. She sounded exhausted and I could see in her drooping shoulders how miserable she felt in her current role. We began by working on defining her perfect (new) job with all the criteria she wanted it to meet. Her eyes lit up as she described it, I could hear the hope in her voice.

Ideally what she wanted was a job that involved working fewer hours in the week *and* paid her the same salary. However, she thought it was a lot to ask, and highly unlikely she would find a role like that. Coaching often involves tasking, where the coach suggests activities for the client to do that help them move towards what they want. So I asked her if she could look at jobs that only met *all* of her criteria, just for the couple of weeks until her next session with me. I asked her to pretend it was possible to find one just for a couple of weeks. She was sceptical, but also curious to see what would happen, so she agreed. She was acting as if jobs like this were totally possible to find.

Act as If

'Acting as if' is a presupposition from NLP I find particularly compelling (and fun to play around with!). It's about acting as if something is real, even when it isn't yet, in order to help us move towards it. We can act as if by believing something, thinking something or doing something. Let me give you an example that involves 'doing'.

A client I was working with a couple of years ago, Leo, wanted to lose weight and have more energy to run around with his grandkids, do more gardening and enjoy social sports. We looked at what his roadblocks were to making the changes to his diet and behaviour that would help him get this result. And as well as that I asked him what else he already does, and of course he already plays with his grandchildren. What he wasn't doing was playing any sort of sports at all, other than some sporadic walking. So one of the things I told him about was 'acting as if'.

For Leo this meant participating in social sports, going out to events, planning his garden. I asked him to participate in sports only to the degree that he was comfortably able to, even if it meant being a supporter on the sideline. No longer was he waiting to lose weight weeks or months down the track to be enjoying these activities. He was out with his friends and work mates soaking up the atmosphere, feeling part of the game, and excited about doing more of more of those things as he progressed. It's about allowing yourself to be doing things as if you already can.

You have probably already experienced 'acting as if' such as when you've gone to a job interview. Let's use the example of our first job. Usually we will have come straight out of school or university, where we've either been in a school uniform or living in jeans and a t-shirt. Suddenly we want to enter a more professional world. For a graduate of engineering, law or management, is it appropriate to turn up to a job interview in jeans? Not usually. At this time it's appropriate to don a suit or other appropriate garb for the profession one is looking to enter. We are acting as if we are already part of that profession, so that when we walk into the job interview, people see us as professional and qualified. It also makes us feel professional and fit for the job (or at least in helps in amongst the first-interview nerves!).

Play acting ...

What would happen if you acted as if these statements were true?

- Every behaviour has a positive intention behind it
- There is no such thing as failure, only feedback
- Everyone is doing the best they can with the resources they have available

Choose just one of them and try it out. For example, as you interact with others or observe your own behaviour, what's it like to do so when acting as if there is no such thing as failure, only feedback?



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Our beliefs also determine how we act. Jenny's story is a lovely example of this. When we met for our next session she was telling about this job she had heard about through friends. At the time she'd been thinking to herself "It'll be too many hours, and even if it's not they won't pay me what I'd like, etc, etc". However, because she'd agreed to act as if she could find a job that met all of her criteria, she made an inquiry and was asked by the company to apply for the job. She had an interview, and because of our agreement, she found herself explaining that she wanted to work just four days a week at her preferred salary. To her great astonishment and delight they quite willingly agreed, and she was offered the job. In less than two weeks she had found a job with reduced hours at the same salary. She is still in that role today, very much enjoying it, and her extra day off each week!

Even Albert Einstein, one of the greatest scientific minds of our time, said imagination is more important than knowledge. So how could you apply this in your life? In what areas of your life are you looking for the perfect conditions in order to make that career move, be healthier or enjoy a loving relationship?

Tid bits and tips: Stories that Inspire

I've just finished reading Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* which was an incredible book, so this month I felt inspired to share with you some of the more memorable autobiographies I've read. Great labour weekend reads!

◆ Long Walk to Freedom, Nelson Mandela

Mandela talks of his life and the trials of South Africa with profound honesty. He describes jaw dropping violence at one turn, and heartrending tales of family hardship in another. Of losing courageous comrades, and facing one obstacle after another towards peace. It's dramatic, compelling and infinitely inspiring. I couldn't put it down.

◆ It's Not About the Bike, Lance Armstrong

A headstrong and determined athlete, Lance Armstrong has written a number of books. If you're looking for an insightful motivating story of success in the face of personal challenges, take a read.

◆ Eat Pray Love, Elizabeth Gilbert

Elizabeth Gilbert left her home in the US, following a tumultuous divorce, and took herself to Italy, India and Bali. She tells her story frankly and with humour as she travels the world searching for her own path. I thoroughly enjoyed this honest, moving and delightful book.

If you have a book that has really inspired you, drop me an [email](#) and I'll pass on the recommendation!



"To different minds, the same world is a hell, and a heaven."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

