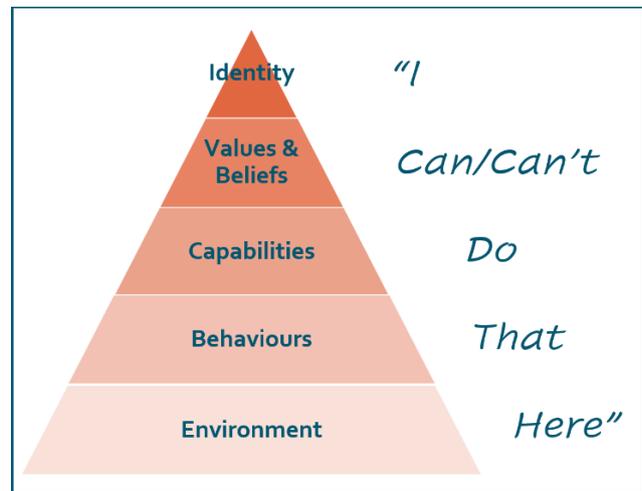




Your mind organises your life experiences into a generalised set of values and a complex web of beliefs. These inform your attitude, which directly affects your behaviour. In the 1990s, Robert Dilts developed a model called Neurological Levels that explains this in a practical way.

The model can be used by coaches to help people organise their thoughts, or to move up the hierarchy and consider deeper, more meaningful reasons for change. It's a core part of the principles and practice of Neuro-Linguistic Programming: reprogramming our language can help us change. The model is particularly useful in reframing individual mindsets and hence aligning individual change with your purpose and identity.



When to use it

If your client is feeling blocked in making positive change and you sense helplessness along the lines of, "I can't do that (here)". This arises from misalignment in the levels. You might notice this in what role they are playing (identity level), limiting beliefs (values and beliefs level), a mismatch in what they are saying and doing (beliefs vs capabilities/behaviours), unhelpful habits that inhibit successful outcomes (behaviours level) or an inability to influence the situation (environment level). It often manifests as frustration, anxiety or stress.



What it is

Dilts developed an understanding of neurological levels at play when change is underway. These levels form a hierarchy from bottom to top: Environment at the bottom; Behaviour; Capability; Belief; and Identity at the top. Sometimes, there is a sixth level – Spirituality– added to the top of the hierarchy. This indicates there is a higher purpose than Identity, although for many this is a moot point. For most clients, Purpose and Identity can be considered together



How it fits

The basic idea is that each level affects those below it, and not the other way around. Also, people often operate from one level, which blocks their ability to change. You can tell at which level people are operating by the language they use.



How to use it

As shown above, the phrase "I can't do that here" neatly encapsulates the hierarchy from top to bottom. Ask your client to say, "I can't do that here" and explore which word creates a tug internally for them. That is the level they are operating from; that is the level where something needs to change. Some possible coaching questions:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| I | Purpose/Identity: what is your purpose and how have you framed your mindset so you see the change as part of your role? The role label is not important; what is important is how your client has internalised it. |
| Can/Can't | Belief: what is your belief in yourself to make the change? "If you think you can do a thing, or think you can't do a thing, you're right." (Henry Ford). |
| Do | Capability: what further opportunities are there to develop new skills? |
| That | Behaviour: what is preventing you from behaving differently? Once a behaviour becomes a habit, it is almost undetectable. A coach can point this out and help a client explore how to develop a more positive behaviour. |
| Here | Environment: is the operating environment conducive to make the change? What else can be done to ensure your environment/organisation is ready for the change? If not, how might you remove yourself from the environment? |

Your role as coach is to help your client re-align their neurological levels. So, work at whatever level your client presents as the issue, and also consider going deeper to explore alignment in purpose, identity, values and beliefs. Alignment in thoughts, words and actions builds self-confidence: "I *can* do that here!"



More ideas

Recommended Reading: David Molden and Pat Hutchinson (2014) **Brilliant NLP**, London, Pearson Education