

*Tracking Dragons in and out
of all the Matrices of your Frames*

Dancing with Dragons

by L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.

"Okay, who's got a Dragon? Did anyone find one?"

"I do and I'm sick and tired of it," Phil said.

"Good, come on up here and let's play with that dragon in your mind and see what we can find. What do you call this dragon, Phil?"

"It's my fear of being seen as inadequate dragon. That's what it is. I've lived with it all my life and I'm sick and tired of it."

"You sound ready to go. So, Phil, if you don't want to fear your inadequacies any longer, how would you prefer to feel about them?"

"Well...ah..." Phil was taken back for a moment by the question, but soon he said, "No...you don't understand. I don't want to be inadequate at all."

"Really? So you want to be *The Renaissance Man*, or even better, *God*?"

"No, of course not. I just want to be...ah..."

"Super competent in all aspects of human experiences"

He picked up on the lightness of the comment, "Yeah, why not?!"

"Phil, say hello to your dragon. Say hello to 'Why can't I be Perfect and

always Competent?' dragon. You do have a default program for perfectionism, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Okay, so do you remember accessing the state of acceptance that we did yesterday? [Yes] Good. What was that small thing that you used to enter into the state of acceptance? ... Good, feel that...and as you do just welcome in your imperfections and inadequacies...there you go. And is the dragon roaring inside?"

It was and so the dance continued. We named it, embraced it a dozen times, analyzed it, discovered the dragon food that fed and nourished it so that it was a plump and well-fed dragon, and of course, we meta-stated it up and down the levels of Phil's mind. That's the way it is with dragon slaying and taming—you dance with the dragon.

Becoming Masterful at the Dragon Dance

One of the most challenging aspects of *Dragon Slaying* involves tracking the dragon down, flushing it out of its cave, identifying it, and naming it. Dragons especially hate being

named. They know that to name them robs them of their power. Every time you *name* a dragon, the dragon gets weaker. It gets weaker because it exposes the dragons for what they really are, and that demystifies them. It exposes the black magic which only operates for the uninformed by trickery, seduction, lies, and deception.

All of this is, of course, metaphor talk. Our use of the idea of *dragons* is only a *way of talking* about something. But what? What are we actually referencing when we talk about tracking down dragons, flushing them out, naming them, slaying them, taming them, transforming them? What are we actually doing and to what are we actually doing whatever it is that we are doing?

A *dragon state of mind-body-and-emotion* is just that—a neuro-linguistic or neuro-semantic state. It's a set of thoughts, feelings, ideas, beliefs, understandings, memories, imaginations, etc. That's all there is inside. Nothing else gets in as Bateson noted. It describes these mental-emotional states *turned against* us in some way so that we experience them as stressful, distressful, hurtful, painful, unacceptable, terrible, horrible, etc.

What then is a *dragon state*?

The “Emotion” Scale

1.) *Out-of-control states that overwhelm*

A dragon state may be a primary state that has become too big, too much, overwhelming, or out of control. This makes anger, fear, disgust, contempt, judgment, blame, hate, jealousy, etc. prime candidates for becoming “a dragon” to us. Yet don’t be lulled into thinking all dragon states are made out of negative emotions. Too much silliness, ludicrousness, playfulness, sexuality, desire, passion, love, etc. can also get out of control and become a *dragon* to us.

Too much of anything creates the dragon of being out-of-balance. It leads to extremes and then to over-striving at polar ends of values, responses, actions, etc. that create an unecological experience. These kinds of dragons are not to be destroyed, wiped out, or slain, but *tamed*. We temper these dragons with various qualities to bring them into balance. We texture them with the resources that then allow us to tap into their energies and use them.

2.) *Negative states turned against ourselves*

More frequently, however, a dragon state involves a meta-state construction. We turn a negative state of fear, anger, disgust, contempt, etc. *against ourselves*. We fear our anger, we get angry at our fear, we feel contempt at our fear of our anger.

To create an “emotion” we have to have both a *map of the world* with all of our ideas, understandings, beliefs, rules, values, expectations, values, etc. and an *experience of the world*. With these two experiences (map and territory), the “emotion” arises as the difference between them. Does our experience of the *territory* live up to our *map*? If yes, then we feel neutral, okay, or positive. Our map works! It leads and navigates to what we had mapped. If no, then we feel various degrees of upset, stress, fear, anger, etc. The negative emotions are signal messages that our experience of the *territory* doesn’t live up to or match our *operating map*.

The territory side of the balancing scale moves *Up* when our experience lives up to and exceeds our map and we feel positive. The territory side of the balancing scale dips *Downward* when our experiences fail to come up to the level of our mapping. That’s when we feel negative.

All of this is registered in the body (soma) as an “emotion.” The somatic feel of this experience creates a psychosomatic state that we call an “emotion.” This means that an emotion registers the difference between Map and Experience of the Territory. And, knowing that, we now know that every emotion offers significant and valuable *information* about two facets of human experience: our maps and our experiences. This means that no emotion is good or bad. An emotion is just a signal message about how our map is doing in real time.

Now you know why we create dragon states every time we turn our negative emotions against ourselves. In themselves, “emotions” are neutral and not moral or immoral. They can’t be. They are derivative of our mapping in the context of our experiencing. This makes them all acceptable as “emotions.” Hate them, deny them, attack them, judge them, blame them, repress them, etc. and you only attack yourself. These are the dragons that we slay—that we refuse to operate in that way. Paradoxically we slay these dragons by kissing and embracing them.

Hate your anger, fear your sexuality, or despise your passions and you will only be trying in vain to cut off the registry of how you evaluate a certain aspect of your experience and your awareness of it. Judge your negative emotions as unacceptable and you damage your signal system for letting you know how well your map is working as you navigate through the world. It only damages you. And in that damage, we install a *dragon*. More about that in a bit.

3.) Toxic ideas and beliefs that lead us into self-defeating experiences

We can distinguish yet another form that dragon states take. Sometimes our dragons are not so

much emotional states, but toxic ideas that poison us with false expectations, pseudo-hopes, misunderstandings, and illusions. It happens when we bring *thoughts* reflexively back to ourselves that map things inaccurately; we then develop a frame of mind and orientation that will not work and will not take us where we desire to go. It sets us up for disappointment because our experiences of the territory will never measure up to or exceed the map because *the map is wrong from the start*. This creates a dragon.

“People should always be polite and thoughtful.” Consider that map as a useful guide for navigating the world of humans who sometimes

wake up grouchy. This “shoulding” thought puts a constraint on “the world” at large and puts us at odds with it. It’s an inaccurate map.

“If I want to be successful as a movie star, then that desire alone will get me there. It has to be. I feel that I deserve it.” Now the toxic quality of the frame becomes worse. This map will create motivation and desire to move in a certain direction and lots of *demandingness* of the world, and an attitude and feeling of *entitlement*. But will the demandingness and entitlement actually help to learn the skills and get along with people on the way to movie-star success? Probably not.

"Just do what you love and the money will follow." Here's another interesting map. Yet it is incomplete. It doesn't map anything about the market value of the activities that you love or the importance of fitting what we love with actual skills, talents, and contexts, or of getting sufficient training in the area of what we love.

These are the kinds of dragons that we may either tame or slay. It all depends upon how unbalanced, irrational, or toxic the idea. Some just need some balancing and tempering—adding in some needed concerns and other features. "Do what You love...give yourself to it to find out if you are good at it, learn how to develop

your skills in it, find a mentor to help you become disciplined in that passion, make sure that it leads to creating a marketable product or service, learn how to identify that market, sell within that market, etc. and the money will follow as you offer things that truly add value to the world."

How We Create and Install Dragons in our Minds—and Bodies

We now have three kinds of dragons to go hunting for: out-of-control primary state dragons, meta-level neuro-linguistic energies turned

against ourselves, and meta-level toxic mapping dragons. We experience the first dragons as *overly intense states*. We experience the second dragons as *internal conflict and self-judgment*. We experience the third set of dragons as *the frustration of our maps* that won't take us where we want to go and so we feel that either we or others (or the world) is stupid and not co-operating.

The primary state dragons come and go according to context, environment, and situation. But let them arise from time to time and most of us "draw a conclusion" and meta-state ourselves with fear, dread, disgust, anger, blame, etc. of that experience. This creates the next level dragon. We turn our psychological

powers against ourselves. Our intention is good, but the result is not. Our intention is to deal with the overly intense emotions, yet we end up making them worse and undermining our own powers and blinding us to the processes. That's why the solution is so paradoxical and counter-intuitive. We have to *accept* the negative emotions!

"I want you to just welcome that anger at Jim into your awareness... and..."

"I can't do that. I hate my anger. It always gets me into trouble."

"Yes, I'm sure that's true. Your anger in those instances was probably too strong, too intense, expressed inappropriately or something and so you have come to learn to fear your anger. That was the mistake. Your anger is just an emotion. A signal message about some map that felt violated. The problem was not the existence of anger, but perhaps the map and perhaps *how* you expressed the anger."

Fearing our ability to feel anger only damages *us*. We need our anger. Our anger (and all of the other negative emotions) serve us well by giving us a somatic evaluation of how well our map is working *so that* we can keep adjusting our map so that it can navigate us to the experiences that we desire. Attacking our neuro-semantic system for weighing a map's effectiveness up against the territory only damages our equipment for using our emotions intelligently. That's why *Emotional Intelligence* involves self-awareness, self-acceptance, recognition of emotions, managing emotions, etc.

"Here Dragon, Dragon, Dragon... Here Nice Little Dragon!"

It takes *emotional intelligence* to flush out dragons... or to put it another way, it takes *meta-stating ourselves* with acceptance as human being with thoughts-and-bodies that create a full range of emotions. It takes meta-stating ourselves with awareness, mindfulness, ownership of our responses, respect, dignity, and appreciation. When you do that—most dragons either shrivel up and disappear or become tamed so that we can use their energies. This, by the way, is what we have designed into the *Accessing Personal Genius* training.

As we call forth the dragon and deal with it, whether by slaying, taming, or transforming, we do so in a series of steps. This can be tricky. After all, there's no ordered sequence to these steps because you never know from where the dragon will appear or what elusive patterns it will use. We just have to learn to dance with the dragon. This Dragon Dance involves several dance steps so your own flexibility moving from one to the other is crucial. The following describes the key steps in the Dragon Dance.

Naming the Dragon is the technique that allows us begin the process.

Embracing the Dragon offers us the way to reverse the damage of non-acceptance, rejection, judgment, fear

and anger, inhibition, and taboo. In a very simple and direct move, we meta-state ourselves, our thoughts and emotions with acceptance and permission. More often than not, magic occurs at this point. Dragons disappear. Poof! We welcome, embrace, and kiss them as just "human stuff" and nothing demonic, alien, or even dangerous. Just emotions. Just thoughts. Just awarenesses. This doesn't condone or approve of them, it just acknowledges, accepts, and breaks the old taboos. From there we reframe.

Reframing the Dragon occurs first as part of the embracing. We embrace anger, for example, by reframing it as a valuable signal about something violating our maps. Then we can move to the next step about how to handle our state, or how to express our displeasure, or how to take effective action in the world of things and people.

"I welcome my anger as a valuable feedback signal in my body about the relationship of my map's interface with the territory so that I can use my anger appropriately and effectively."

Reframing the Dragon afterwards sets new frames (or meta-states) about the "dragon." With anger, we might frame it as *thoughtful* anger, *compassionate* anger, *respectful* anger, *calm* anger, etc. These frames texture and temper the anger and thereby transform the Dragon so that we can harness its powers. This framing describes how we meta-state ourselves and our states.

Analyzing the Dragon is yet another step in the Dragon Dance.

“Lie Down Here on my Couch, Mr. Dragon”

It would be nice if the dragon would enter into our office and lie down on the couch. But they will not do that. So we do the *analysis on the fly*. The dragon will not willingly submit to this because, *made up of language*, the dragon is sensitive to critical analysis. And doesn't that make sense? After all, the dragon thrives on inaccurate maps, misunderstandings, irrational thinking, cognitive distortions, deceptions, lies, tricks, etc.

Does this make catching the dragon or taming it or slaying it seem really hard? Surprise. It is not. Actually, it is easy. *It is easy if you know the*

Meta-Model. It is easy if you know how language works and the neuro-linguistic and neuro-semantic structure of how we make sense with language.

How?

Simply ask lots of indexing questions, questions that *index the specifics*: what, when, where, who, how, with whom, which, etc. These are the precision questions that allow us to probe into the linguistic and semantic structures that drive the irrational heart of the dragon. By these questions we enter into the dragon's lair and understand the dragon's world: the dragon's intentions, understandings, beliefs, emotions, form, etc. And *the very process* of turning on the light inside the dragon's lair brings forth a mindfulness that can frequently *magically transform* the dragon or even cause it to vanish. Poof!

These questions have, at the same time, both a deframing influence as it pulls the semantic structures apart and a meta-stating influence as it invites new light and mindfulness to remap the matrices of the mind as one hears and answers the questions. If a specific questioning and exploring into the dragon's world doesn't deframe or outframe, then it at least provides us with high quality information about how that universe works. And, as we model the structure of the dragon, we are then empowered to use other processes for working with the dragon.

When You Encounter the Dragon's Dragon

Dragons that persist are usually only one level of the dragon and not

the ultimate dragon, the granddaddy dragon or "the mother of all dragons." For those you have to go higher. I recently went into full-fledged battle with a dragon that wouldn't let go. The dragon-thought and state was that of being unaccepted, unloved, treated as inferior and second class. The man brought all of those thought-feelings states against himself for a host of primary state factors: being shorter in stature than his sister, having endured persecution during World War II, feeling unloved by his parents.

When we attempted to *name the dragon*, no name seemed the right name. That allowed the dragon to remain slippery. To, "What do you

feel?" I received a whole list of negative emotions. I finally said, "let's go with 'The Unacceptable Dragon.'" He didn't like that.

"Is that the dragon speaking?" I finally said when I realized that we were running around in circles chasing the tail. Dragons do that. When we're just about to put the spotlight on them, they slip off into a cave.

"Welcome that dragon in... Suppose you were unacceptable to your parents... suppose they didn't get a license when they took Parenting 101, suppose that was their problem... just embrace that dragon and give yourself permission to have been raised by someone without understanding of child psychology."

My oh my... did that dragon roar! Complaints, fussing, refusal to try on the acceptance, all kinds of things. "Just do it... let's see what happens... Sure it is imperfect and *that's* the problem, nonacceptance of imperfection... Go inside and do it." I said.

"I don't like this. I feel like I'm dying inside..."

"Good... the dragon is screaming... let it die if it needs too... just accept and embrace it as the cards that life dealt you and that you have had to play."

"But I don't like it... it shouldn't be that way."

"Yes, I know. Acceptance doesn't mean approval, just acknowledgment of what did happen. We don't need to moralize about the facts, only our responses to the facts."

This went on for some time and then he said, "The dragon will come back. It's too strong." I said, "Oh really... and give me a reason why it would come back." "Because this is the only way I know to be me..." Ah, the dragon's dragon.

"Go inside... notice what happens when I say, 'And I give myself permission to let all of the old definitions of me... just fade away... so that I can and will build up new empowering definitions that esteem me as a valuable human being and that take pleasure in inventing new things as I move...'"

"But who will I be... and what about my friends?"

"...because you know now that you can run your own brain and create any kind of empowering map of yourself... that will invite the best

kind of people to hang out with you ...and release those who don't allow you to be a growing and developing person..."

"But what gives me the right to do that? I don't understand."

"The right is yours because you are a human being...and you don't have to understand it all... being imperfect and continually learning is your innate right...and as you welcome that in even more fully, just be with those feelings..."

As a Dragon Master, don't be seduced into buying into all the lies, deceptions, fears, and toxic ideas that the dragon and the dragon's dragon breathe out as blasts of fire.

The Bigger the Dragon, the More Sure the Fall!

Dragons of *negative emotions or states turned against us* go wrong from the first meta-jump. That's why the rest of their development of thoughts, feelings, memories, experiences, etc. are all wrong. The pathway went wrong from the first meta-move. Now you can follow the dragon on up the levels of the mind finding out more and more of the reasons, beliefs, history, explanations, excuses, justifications, etc. that have been recruited to support the dragon, but none of that matters. Not really.

What matters is that first meta-move of bringing negative thoughts and feelings and framing our first state with them. That started the whole

meta-muddle. That's why we continually move back to the root and chop at it there. What was the first layer and frame that went wrong? Intolerance of being imperfect? Then tolerance of imperfection is the cure. Fear of being angry and where that will lead? Then acceptance and appreciation of anger is the first step.

As Jack cut at the foundation of the beanstock, the whole structure with the clinging giant fell, so with the dragons and meta-dragons in the matrices of our mind.

"Dragon, No More Dragon Food for You!"

There's another reason for eliciting the language of the dragon, once we identify that language and how it works, we often find the dragon food. We find the very words and lines and sentences and stories that feed *and nurture* the dragon. Then we can use the next step—*Starving the Dragon*.

Starving the dragon means kicking away the food dish and refusing to keep inducing the same dragon trance.

Summary

Dancing with the dragon is an art ...an art of working with our neuro-semantic states of thoughts, emotions, ideas, concepts, memories, imaginations, etc. And it is a learnable art. It begins with tracking down (or *up*) the dragon, naming it, embracing it, analyzing its structure and form, finding the language and images that

feed it, interrupting it, casting new spells, and looping around from these many steps as the dragons tries to slip away.

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