

BOOK REVIEW

The Matrix Model

The 7 Matrices of Neuro-Semantics and the Construction of Meaning

by L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.

Reviewed by Judith E. Pearson, Ph.D.

Morpheus: You know that something is wrong with the world. You can't explain it, but you feel it, like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad.

Neo: The Matrix?

Morpheus: Yes, the Matrix. The world has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.

Neo: What truth?

Morpheus: That you were born into slavery, into a prison you cannot see or smell... a prison of the mind... Unfortunately, no one can tell you what the Matrix is; you have to see it for yourself. Take the Blue Pill, and you will wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. Take the Red Pill and... I'll show you how deep the Rabbit Hole goes.

In the sci-fi movie, *The Matrix*, Neo, the hero, takes the Red Pill, and discovers that his life is only a computer-generated dream—the Matrix. Reading Hall's *Matrix Model* is like taking the Red Pill. His purpose is to reveal that we create and live our so-called "reality" through "the symbolic world of ideas, language, beliefs, etc." To master the Matrix is to take control of one's mind.

Hall's Matrix is a model of the mind, composed of frames of meaning, understandings, values, rules, and beliefs. The Matrix shapes our working model of the world. Living in the Matrix is akin to living in a movie that we continuously edit, direct, and produce—only we don't know it.

The mind, body, and emotions work as a system of embedded, interacting frames. The frames within the Matrix are belief structures that govern reality constructs. The six essential frames are Self, Power, Time, Other, World, and Intention. The seventh is Meaning; the frame that drives and organizes the other six. Making meaning relies on the processes of perceiving, representing, classifying, making associations, evaluating, and framing experience.

The frames of the Matrix are layered around each other and figuratively "flash on and off as they are activated." Within the system are feedback and feed-forward loops and "leverage points for transformation." The frames do not form a hierarchy, but a holarchy in which every part of the whole contains the whole. Hall puts forth that the Seven Matrices Model

...provides the newest model in Neuro-Semantics that unites all the component pieces, distinctions, patterns and models in Neuro-Linguistics in the past 25 years. It provides a framework for how to use NLP and Neuro-Semantics effectively as a coach, manager, therapist, or communicator. It also integrates the four meta-domains of NLP; Language (the Meta-Model) Perception and Thinking Patterns (Meta-Programs), the Psycho-Logics of States and Levels (Meta-States), and the Cinematic Features that we sense on the theater of our mind (sub-modalities or Meta-Modalities). (pp. 24 – 25)

We are born into a Matrix that is determined to a large extent by culture. We have no choice about living in a Matrix, but, once enlightened, we can choose *which* Matrix we live in, and change our frames at will.

A Neuro–Semantic Framework

Hall gives the following as the basic principles of his neuro–semantic framework:

- The mind–body–emotions system operates from and constructs frames of mind, meaning, and reference.
- The system is a Matrix of embedded frames of meaning. These frames are solidified through culture, language, and learning.
- The frames are activated by events and information.
- Our neuro–semantic structures are systemic, interactive, and dynamic.
- The Matrix is revealed in language and is dialog–activated.
- The Matrix operates from multiple intelligences, such as problem solving and reasoning, personal and relational intelligence, and philosophical intelligence (meaning, value and significance).

The Matrix Model organizes the information, distinctions, and patterns of human psychology and provides a systemic way of thinking about subjectivity. The processes within the model are non–linear and simultaneous, with energy flowing in various directions. The input is events and information, the throughput is internal processes, and the output is behavior. Sometimes the system spins out of control. Sometimes it reaches homeostasis. Sometimes, to maintain balance, it operates through self–fulfilling prophecy.

The way to “enter” the Matrix (your own or another’s) is through communication that begins with rapport, safety, respect, and acknowledgment. Here are some additional principals to keep in mind:

- We create meaning by reflexive meta–stating; classifying, labeling, and evaluating, and associating to emotions.
- The frames within the Matrix are self–organizing and operate simultaneously.
- Whatever we focus on becomes an “attractor frame” that can seem so “real” that we identify with it.
- Our response at any moment is a function of our meaning–making style.

- The energy and information in the Matrix creates a “movie” that plays in the mind, with sub–modalities as the embedded code.
- Within the Matrix, resistance is a response to perceived danger.
- Symptoms offer communication about the Matrix.

Hall gives pointers for working with a problematic Matrix. He advises readers to examine feedback and feed–forward loops, account for multiple variables, map self–organizing patterns within the “neuro–semantic network of structural patterning,” and “identify emergent properties of the layering of the holarchies.” The main message here is to think systemically about the Matrix of the mind.

We relate to the world via neurological, representational, and conceptual maps that constitute a unique version of reality. Our subjective perceptions lead to states—mind–body experiences of awarenesses made of thinking, emotion, and sensation. Our frames are “state dependent,” resulting from sensory–based representations and language. We meta–state by interpreting and reflecting on our states. State management is the art of awareness and control over states. This is the focus of NLP and Neuro–Semantics.

Meaning, or “invented reality,” is the core of the Matrix. To control states is to control meanings. All other matrices emerge from the Meaning Matrix. It is the source of

the categories, classifications, associations, evaluations, values, and beliefs that create an internal neuro–semantic reality. Meaning is a fluid, dynamic, ever–shifting process with an illusion of stability. We project meanings onto the world, and then think our meanings come from the world. Yet, external events have meaning only as we make them meaningful. To control our meanings, we must ask whether they serve us, and if not, we must learn how to change meanings.

Working with the Matrix

The Matrix Model examines the role of meaning in each of the other six matrices: Self, Power, Time, Other, World,

and Intention. For each matrix, Hall suggests NLP patterns for coaching and therapy, meta–programs to explore, meta–model inquiries, and mind–lines (sleight of mouth patterns) to apply.

Self emerges from the first meta–state; self–awareness. Self defines who we are, and all dimensions of self. Self involves facets of thought–and–feeling such as self–confidence and self–esteem, and sub–selves such as social self, cultural self, work self, etc. An exaggerated sense of self results in feelings of entitlement and strained relationships. A weak sense of self results in co–dependency and neediness. A healthy Self Matrix assumes one is worthy, valuable, and lovable, in contrast to seeking experiences in the world to justify one’s worth, value, and lovability.

Power is about having the resources to handle challenges, solve problems and take effective action. It has to do with aptitudes, capabilities, and mastery. “It’s the difference between learned helplessness and learned optimism.” To strengthen a weak Power Matrix calls for effective strategies for living.

Time involves frames about past, present, and future, as well as the daily sense of time. Time influences emotions and performance and ties into several Meta–Programs. We can over–value or under–value the past, present, or future. To strengthen the Time Matrix is to develop a healthy relationship with time.

Other governs what we believe, understand, and expect of people and relationships. The Other Matrix is largely influenced by developmental

experiences and is closely tied to the Self Matrix. The Other Matrix determines dependence, independence, and inter-dependence in relationships. The Other Matrix can be strengthened through enhanced social, communication, and relationship skills.

World refers to everything outside of self: people and places, as well as institutions such as religion, politics, government, and society. The World Matrix is about what is safe and dangerous, good and bad, —our “world view.” Our Meta-Programs determine how we relate to the world and our “style” of being in the world. Working with belief patterns, strategies, and Meta-Programs is important to strengthening this matrix.

Intention addresses goals, purposes, reasons, motivation, and direction. It is about what we want to accomplish and why. Intention is closely tied to Power. A well-developed Intention Matrix combines purpose with wisdom and spirit to make goals meaningful, while we still enjoy moment-to-moment experience; finding joy in the journey as well as in the destination.

“Mind” is a fluid process that spirals upward through layers of meaning and association. Hall likens the mind to a whirlwind, an electromagnetic image, or a kaleidoscope. Thinking is not linear, as the strategy model portrays, but looping, recycling, darting here and there in “systemic networks of multiple processes.”

Hall provides interview questions that can guide practitioners in developing a “Neuro-Semantic Profile”

that reveals the content of ones Matrix. *The Matrix Model* can also lend itself as a diagnostic tool. Hall offers diagnostic guidelines that explore development, meaning, beliefs, reflexive thinking, concepts, principles, attitudes, emotional predispositions, intentions and values, ego strength, and personal power.

Conclusion

Once more, L. Michael Hall, a distinguished psychologist, author, and trainer, has expanded the knowledge base on NLP by presenting a comprehensive, dynamic model of the mind. He has put forth a theory of human psychology that far surpasses

those I learned about in college and graduate school.

The Matrix Model is not an easy read, and sometimes gets heavy with “systems” jargon. I confess that I will probably never be able to “identify emergent properties of the layering of the holarchies,” nor will I consider it necessary to the successful practice of NLP. Hall, himself, cautions readers that more than one than one reading may be necessary to get a full grasp of the book’s complexity.

Lest you think that *The Matrix Model* is long on theory and short on application, remember that this book is intended as a companion volume to many of Hall’s other books such as

The Matrix Model

The 7 Matrices of Neuro-Semantics and the Construction of Meaning
by L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.
is now also available at the
Anchor Point Store

To order visit our web site:
www.nlpanchorpoint.com
call 800-544-6480 or 801-534-1022
fax 801-532-2113
e-mail info@nlpanchorpoint.com

Dragon-Slaying, Sourcebook of Magic, Time-Lining, Secrets of Personal Mastery and his "frame game" series (*Games for Mastering Fear, Games Business Experts Play, Games Slim People Play, etc.*).

The Matrix Model does several things for NLP. It creates a scholarly blending of NLP and Neuro-Semantics into a coherent model of Mind. It provides a paradigm for the environment within which NLP interventions take place. It is an intriguing theory of NLP and cognitive psychology, in general. It emphasizes that thoughts are not "things" but fluid, recursive, multi-dimensional and holographic processes.

One of the major tenets of *The Matrix Model* is this: everything you think is true about the world and all your understandings are "made up." Your beliefs are only constructs of your mind. That fact brings up a number of philosophical issues. For example, if we experience states of pain and distress, an option is to change our meanings. Yet meanings are hard to change, because they seem self-evidently real and true, otherwise why would we spend so much effort and energy upholding them? Most of us would much prefer that the world change to suit our meanings, rather than give up our values and principals that form those meanings.

The freedom to change meaning poses a dilemma. After all, we may suffer, but consider it worthwhile, if we believe it is for a higher cause. Then we can value our unhappiness and suffering. Or we may believe that our suffering is "justified" as a valid response some hideous circumstances. In that case, we'd have to look

very hard at the hidden values we attach to being a victim. Despite these dilemmas, we cannot refuse to assign meanings, because then life becomes meaningless. While our meanings may plague us and cause great suffering, they are also the source of joy, inspiration, awe, and bliss! The challenge in life lies in constructing meanings that bring positive states on a consistent basis. The question behind all of Hall's work is not whether our meanings are true or false, right or wrong, but whether they serve us so that we live resourcefully.

To purchase *The Matrix Model*, and other books by Dr. L. Michael Hall visit www.neurosemantics.com, or contact:

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