



Practicing Meta-Stating

First: State Awareness

Coaching Is About Choosing Your Attitude

He stepped out onto the stage while it was still dark. One. Two. Three. Then back. One. Two. Three. We couldn't see him, only hear his footsteps. The microphone in front on the stage picked them up clearly. One. Two. Three. And back. One. Two. Three.

For six years, those steps were all he could take. Captain Charlie Plumb, a graduate from the Naval Academy at Annapolis, flew the F-4 Phantom jet on 74

successful missions. On his 75th, five days before he was to return home, he was shot down, captured and imprisoned by the enemy. For 2,103 days he was a Prisoner of War. His cell was 8" by 8". Three steps took him from one wall to the other.

Though there's no contact with other prisoners, they find inventive ways to communicate through code. About 200 miles into his experience, Plumb is approached by Shumacher – another P.O.W. – through a metal wire that he



put through a hole in the wall between their cells.

Luitenant Commander Bob Shumacher: "How you doing, buddy?"

Ah, that was Charlie's cue, he had been looking for somebody to tell his sorrows, so he said: "I'm doing terrible! For goodness sake, my President sent me over here, I get shot down. It's his beautiful little war, now look who's paying the price. And then some idiot mechanic put a faulty transmission in that airplane, something went wrong, it wasn't my fault! And get Congress over here, let them sit in this prison cell! I'm gonna rot away and die in here, help me!"

Bob: "You want to know your biggest problem?"

Charlie: "Oh man! You mean I got problems bigger than the ones I can see?"

Bob: "Sounds like you're suffering from a fairly common prison disease. Around here we call the disease Prison Thinking."

Charlie: "Prison thinking?"

Bob: "Roger, you think you're a prisoner."

Charlie: "Look at this, I'm bleeding from four open wounds. I have four holes in my body where blood's running out. I've no medical care. I have boils all over my front, all over my back, I'm down to 115 pounds, my sole possession in life is a rag that I've knotted around my waist to hide my nudity. I am rotting away in a communist prison camp, and now – to



add insult to injury – they put me next to a positive thinker! But OK, tell me about this prison thinking stuff.”

Bob: “Don’t you see? When a fighter pilot is first blown out of the sky, (or a manager is rebuked one more time, or a sales person is turned down one more time, or a mother is having challenges with that unruly child one more time), what the first emotion for all of us? Oh God, why me?! This is so terrible, what can be worse than this? This event will never have any value. In fact, the best this can be is make it through this tough time and try to forget it. Emotion number two is ‘hey, I didn’t start this war, I didn’t build this airplane, I’m the victim!’ I’ve no control over my destiny. Emotion number three: If it’s not my fault, it’s gotta be somebody’s fault. Problem here is you start blaming other people for your problems, you give away control of your life. ”

Thinking you’re a prisoner: That’s what got prisoners killed. Why? Because they saw no way out, they felt **powerless** and either gave up or spent all their energy fighting their circumstances. In his presentations, Charlie Plumb draws parallels between his experience as a P.O.W. and the challenges of everyday life.

*We all get ourselves stuck in ‘prison thinking’ from time to time. Our thinking determines the way we see the world, and how we feel about it. When we habitually think a certain way, it becomes our attitude towards life, situations and people. That’s when things get tricky. Since we are so deeply invested in our thoughts at that point, and we’ve identified with it, it becomes our truth. It *feels* true. And then it*



becomes our filter for understanding the world around us.

The truth is, however, that our understanding and beliefs are liable to error. We draw conclusions based on limited information, and many of our beliefs are formed at a young age where we have a limited vocabulary so things get distorted. And since many of our beliefs have been with us for a long time, they become our blind spots. Charlie Plumb only became aware of his attitude when someone made him aware of it. This awareness brought him to **choice point**: either stick with his attitude or choose a more empowering one. Without awareness, we are unable to choose our attitude.

Awareness is the first step towards choosing our attitude. The next step is to quality control our attitude and determine whether it empowers us or not. Does this serve me? Does it give me more freedom, joy, creativity, etc? Or does it hurt me? Once we've made this **choice**, we can determine what would serve us better. What state of mind and emotion can I bring to this situation so I can be more effective?

Our ability to reflect – through awareness – is unique to human beings. It allows us to step back from our own thoughts and feelings (our state) and reflect upon those thoughts and feelings. This is when we can choose our thoughts and feelings ABOUT our thoughts and feelings. For example, we can feel angry at our own anger, but what if we felt calm about our own anger? Would that make a difference? It would, wouldn't it?



During this training, we will be using our ability to step back, reflect, and step into a different state (way of thinking and feeling) about something. This process is called Meta-Stating.

Here's how it works:

We are *always* in a state. We are *never* not in a state. As the sum of our thoughts and feelings and physique at a given point in time, our states are constantly changing. The quality of our state is determined by the quality of our thoughts and feelings, which in turn determines the quality of our day, our week, our month, etc.

A primary state is comprised of our thoughts and feelings about an external event. It doesn't stop there, though. We continue to have thoughts and feelings *about* our thoughts and feelings, and then we have thoughts and feelings *about* those thoughts and feelings. This process goes so fast, that we aren't aware of it. In essence, we are bringing one state to another state. And since "meta" refers to a relationship or "aboutness", those thoughts and feelings about our thoughts and feelings are called meta-states.

We often think that external events trigger our states. Something *made* us angry or happy. What happens, though, is that the way we evaluate and interpret the event ultimately determines our state of mind. And since this happens inside of us, it is something that we can control. Victor Frankl, in his book "Man's Search for Meaning", wrote about his experience in a concentration camp and he said about it:

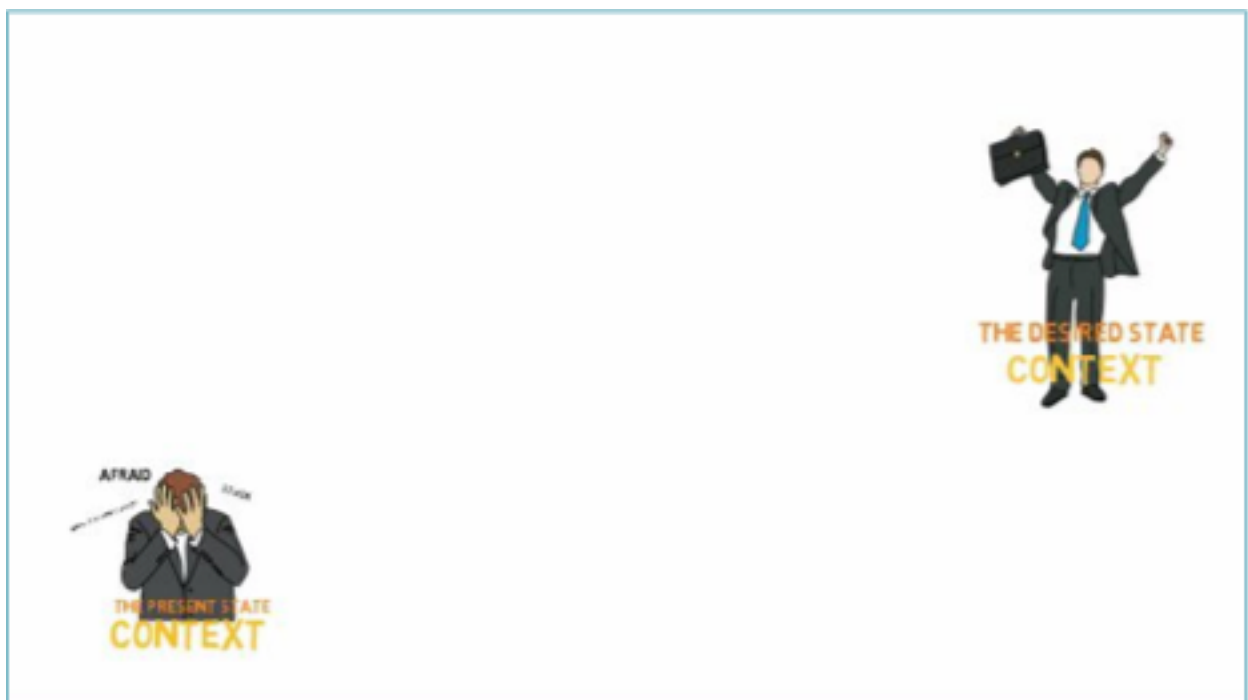
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“They can’t make me hate them.”

He described this as the ultimate freedom that cannot be taken from a man; His freedom to choose his responses.

So how do we use the notion that we have thoughts and feelings about our thoughts and feelings (meta-states) in coaching? Well, we can help our clients choose different thoughts and feelings (a different state) about their thoughts and feelings. When we choose something more empowering, we create a new experience for ourselves. And that means that we get access to different actions, and different responses, thereby going from where we are to where we want to be.

From Where I Am To Where I Want to Be





So far, we've discussed a little bit about states and how they are triggered by external events. Essentially, your state (the sum of your thoughts and feelings at a given moment in time) determines your behavior, what you will say, how you will say it, and how you come across to others. Your client's state, therefore, plays a key role in getting from where they are to where they want to be. Effectively, as a coach you are a state facilitator. In order to facilitate this in others, you will naturally need to be able to manage your own state.

When we want to help someone from their present state to their desired state, we will need information about both. We need to know the specific context in which the client wants to make a change. This is important because he/she may feel confident in other areas of his/her life, but not when speaking in public. The mere thought of speaking in public gets your client in an un-resourceful state. So it's not that he/she can't access confidence, it's that he/she can't access it in that particular context. So what you'll need to know is how that works. What is the state your client is in, and what beliefs/understandings/etc hold that in place. And you will then also need to know the desired state.

Ultimately, coaching revolves around states. And so we start by understanding states, how to change them, and creating awareness of our states.



State Awareness

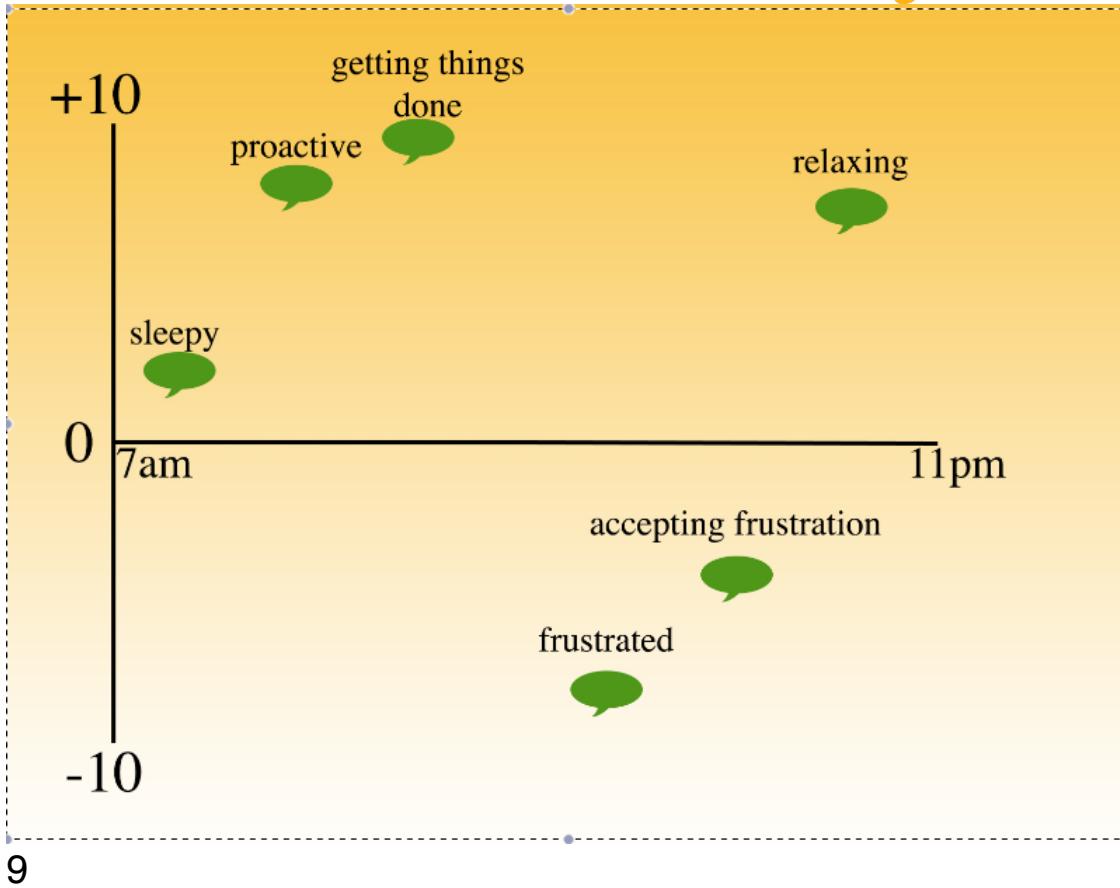
How do you choose your own state, shift when you are in an un-resourceful state, and what is the best state for you to be in?

If you want to choose your attitude (which is determined by your state), you first need to create awareness of your states. A great way to do this is to map it out over the course of a day.

What state are you in when you wake up? And what state are you in 15 minutes later? An hour later? Two hours later?

The image below gives you an idea of how you can write that down. It will give you an overview of the states you go through, and in what intensity. From 0 to 10 are “positive” states and from 0 to -10 are “negative” states.

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States: How do they work

Once we have awareness of our state, we want to be able to change it if it's not resourceful in a given situation. Since a state is the sum of our physiology, our thoughts and feelings, we can use either our body or our mind to change our state. This can be done in three ways:

- Change our physiology
- Think of something that happened to us in the past that made us feel that way(memory)



- Think of a situation where you can imagine yourself feeling like that (imagination)

Playing Around with States: Meta-Stating

Once we know how to step into a state at will, we can apply this state to another state. We can, for example, bring a state of calmth to our anger. This is a process that we naturally do, for better or for worse. Those who become aggressive, are getting angry about their anger. And then they have angry thoughts and feelings about that anger. Which increases their state and turns into something bigger than just the primary source of anger.

This process happens automatically, so fast that we aren't even aware of it. Understanding this process, though, allows us to actively start applying it in our lives.



These are the five basic steps (5 A's) involved in Meta-Stating:

1. Access a resourceful state.

What resource state do you want to *bring to bear on* or apply to the primary state ? A “*resource*” can be a thought, feeling, idea, belief, value, memory, imagination.

2. Amplify fully.

Juice up the resource state and establish an anchor for it by touch, sight, sound, word, etc. Do you have a sufficiently strong enough state with which to work?

3. Apply to the primary state.

Bring the resource to bear on the primary state (this creates meta-level anchoring), or embed the primary state inside a resource state.

4. Appropriate *to your life, to specific contexts, or to the future (future pacing).* Where do you want to experience this meta-state? Imagine having this layered consciousness in your mind as your frame as you move out into your future.

5. Analyze the quality, health, balance (ecology) of the system.

Would it enhance your life to set this resource as your frame-of-reference for the primary state experience? Would every facet of your mind-and-body align with this?



Practicing Meta-Stating

Meta-Stating Basics

Fold a piece of paper (letter-size) into 8 pieces. On each piece, write down a state (it doesn't matter which one). Cut the pieces of paper and place them face down on the table.

Take a piece of paper and read the state that's written on it. What does that state feel like? Access the state and notice where in your body you feel it.

Then, take the second piece of paper and read the state. Access that state, feel it in your body, and bring that to the first state. (So for example, you may have gotten serious the first time and then playfulness the second time...you then bring playfulness to seriousness. Playfully serious). As you try that on, notice what happens to the first state. Is (as example) serious still as serious? How has it changed?

Do this with a 3rd, 4th and even 5th piece of paper.

It's important to remember that the highest frame (state) drives the lower states. So if your highest meta-state is anger, that's the one that drives playfully serious. So it's an angry playful seriousness.

Note: It doesn't always make sense what meta-states you get. It doesn't have to. This is not logical, it's psycho-logical.



You can also reverse this process by picking a state you don't like so much and notice what you can do to diminish its power over you (like bring acceptance, appreciation, calm, etc to it). Just start layering!

Accelerated Learning

(source: Accessing Personal Genius Training Manual)

Dream about an accelerated learning state.

Brainstorm for a few minutes about how you want to refine and texture your own personal learning state. What resourceful states do you want to bring to your basic learning state? How do you want to sequence these states-upon-states?

Access, amplify and apply each resourceful state to your learning state.

It really does not matter *what* state, frame, or context you apply on your joyful learning state. Only one thing makes a difference. Does it generate the effect of having a program inside your head and nervous system for *implementing new learnings*?

Menu List of Possibilities:

Playfulness - Experimenting - Ferociously - *Going for It!* - Future-pacing - Implementing - *Decisiveness*: "I always take immediate action on new learnings that I value so that I get it into my neurology."

(Example: Let's bring playfulness to your learning. When was the last time you felt really playful? It can be small, simple moment. Who were you with? What were you doing? As you go back to that moment, what do you see? And how does this playfulness feel? How strongly do you feel that right now? What do you need to do to make it even stronger? Now, as you feel this playfulness, I'd like you to look through the eyes of this state at your learning. How does that change



the experience of learning? What does that open up for you, this playful learning?)

Adding other layers of meta-states

What resourceful thoughts, ideas, beliefs, values, understandings, emotions, etc. would you like to set over your playful (eg.) learning state that will accelerate and empower your learning?

Examples: curiously playful learning or relaxed, playful learning. Take a step back from the playful learning and access a relaxed state (through imagination, memory and your physiology). How do you feel relaxed? Where in your body? How do you know that you are relaxed? And then take that to playful learning. What does that open up for you?