

“To boldly go where no metaphor has gone before”

My Personal Journey with Clean Worlds and David Grove

By Angela Dunbar, November 2004

I was told that an unexpected and exciting opportunity had arisen: David Grove was to be giving two events in London during November of 2004. Having recently completed the “Symbolic Modelling” training with Penny Tompkins & James Lawley, I was very keen to meet the originator himself and see him in action, using what I was told were new methods. Clean Language had evolved into ‘Clean Worlds’.

So I booked myself on the weekend offering self discovery by way of a “Personal Journey”. This would be facilitated by David Grove within the setting of a small, supportive group.

When I arrived far too early on the Saturday morning, I awaited the arrival of the other participants most eagerly, sat in the comfy room attached to a small kitchen area. Philip Harland was the host, and this was his house within which we would be working – his space would be ours for the next couple of days.

When all had arrived, David gave us a detailed presentation on the process we were to take in order to physically chart and explore our metaphorical ‘psychescape’. We then simply got on with it, working mainly on our own initially to map everything out.

Step 1 – Describe your Mission Statement. Where do you want to get to? Write it down as verbosely as you like. Once written, investigate the words and the letters you have chosen – words have had a personal journey through history as well – it may be no co-incidence that you chose this one. Pay particular attention to any mistakes you have made – what are you subconsciously trying to tell yourself? Finally, find the space that represents where you want to be.

Having done a little bit of ‘clean space’ work on my Symbolic Modelling course, I knew what David meant. To intuitively locate a place in the space around you that feels like it’s the right spot. With some wandering around and trying on different spots and places for size, we were all able to place our Mission Statement with some degree of certainty. When it was the right space, it just felt right. Mine was on the window of the stained glass front door. I knew almost immediately, as David explained, my eyes were drawn to that spot. My Mission Statement was simply “Serenity and Harmony” and I had previously decided on a metaphor of two swans swimming side by side as my representation of it. The window on the front door had two coloured flowers slightly adjoined....different, but somehow the same as my image. I was very drawn to the colours as well...which made more sense as I got further into my exploration.

Did I discover anything interesting about my chosen words? Well, when I first wrote down the word “Serenity” I misspelled it to begin with, and the word I might have been writing was “Senility”! Does that mean I have to get Alzheimer’s before I find some peace? Interestingly, I made the same mistake as I wrote the word in this piece just now!

Step 2 - If your Mission Statement is “B” – where is “A”? Where are you now spatially in terms of where you have placed your Mission Statement? Pay particular attention to the angle, David advised.

Again, this I found easy, and saw the spot straight away, in the kitchen quite near to where I sat. A small oval mirror with a candle holder built into its frame caught my eye. *I am right there, I thought, right up close to that mirror, but there is no illumination from the candle. And I’m so close to the mirror I can’t see much else.* As I stood in the spot to see how it felt, I realised I couldn’t even see myself because my eyes were shut....so metaphorical even at this early stage in the process!

Step 3 – What’s in the space between A and B? Call this “C”. Write down your first brain dump. Any tangible real bits of furniture etc. that might have somehow, coincidentally ended up in the path between you’re A and B. Also the logical bits – what stops you getting there?

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Further thoughts to pay attention to were whether the space between A and B had a shape or a size, and whether it could be represented as a metaphor “What kind of space is that space?” or “It is a space like what?”

David gave some good advice here – don’t spend too long on this bit of the process – presumably something is stopping you from reaching “B”, otherwise you wouldn’t still be at “A”, and you have probably already spent much time exploring ‘that something’ without success...so maybe the job of ‘that something’ is to stop you knowing what it is! David explained that maybe the best way to get to “B” might be from a different angle, or start point, which was what we would be exploring.

“If you want to get there, I wouldn’t start from here!” as the Irish joke goes!

Step 4 – In three parts:

- a) From where you are now, identify in which direction is your past, and your future. Easy stuff, I’ve done time line work I know where I’ve been and where I am going. The directions were mapped out.
- b) Where were you born? Spatially, in this house, garden or local surroundings
- c) Plot any significant life changing events / defining moments in your life...stand in each spot. Ask yourself if you decided on a particular life mission at this stage.
- d) At what age were you ‘pristine’ ie. totally pure, at peace, and ‘at one with the world’?
- e) Is there a shape to the spots you have plotted?
- f) Look up any significant words as before

Again, David suggested we work through this as best we could, if nothing comes up for a question, don’t worry and move on.

My time line is a very clear upwards spiral, so I saw very specifically my life-changing event ‘spots’, although my problem was the past is lower down.

Just my luck I spent most of my time stuck down in the cold cellar!

So, the spot I was born was in the cellar. Events up to aged 12 were in the cellar. Other significant events were outside, in the cloakroom area under the stairs, in front of the radiator (thank God) and the spot for ‘being pregnant’ was a nice comfy chair in the front room. I couldn’t find a ‘pristine’ age.

I thought of life missions adopted at each spot, ones I have recognised previously.

Step 5 – Look for coincidences – in the space around you, objects, items, pictures, what is the space trying to tell you? These are co-inspiring elements, David explained. I couldn’t find any, but another participant had been exploring metaphors around ‘Brazil’ and ‘Brazilian people’, and he noticed a salt container attached to the wall in the kitchen – every home in Brazil has one of those, he explained. I’d never seem one in this country before...weird...

Step 6 – Stand on the spot where you were born (back to the cellar for me). Turn around 90 degrees. Lean towards the space that is just before you were born. Notice if you feel any boundary or resistance. Describe what that is like. Then ask yourself ‘Where did I come from before I was born?’ As well as a possible direction to your Mum and Dad’s lineage, David was looking for a story, or the ‘genesis’ of who we are.

Then, he said, step over into that space before you were born. Look towards your life from this spot.

Then ask yourself “What was my mission before I was born?” Write it down and compare it to the Mission Statement you wrote down earlier.

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Phew...

“Then,” David said, “You’ll be ready to work with me....”

David’s starting point would be to take us back to the “A” “B” and “C” spot and ask at each place “What do you know from here?” Then to have us turn around. Then ask “What does this space know about (another space)?” And to check out “What kind of space is around that space?” I never really got that far. My time was spent exploring before I was born, and all the ‘before’s’ before that.

I stood on the spot where I was born and pushed gently towards the space before it...surprisingly I felt a strong force push back and nearly knock me over!

I struggled for some time stepping into the space before I was born. When I did, I stepped into the beam of the single light bulb hanging from the cellar ceiling. And felt the warmth of the light on my face. This felt pristine! But I didn’t have a life mission. In fact, as I looked towards my life, I felt a distinct reluctance to go in that direction. Blimely! I didn’t even want to be born. I was pushed! Against my will...not a very nice start to life.

When David worked with me, we started at my “A” spot, in front of the mirror. He asked me what I know from here, and it wasn’t a lot. He said to step even closer to the mirror. I said I can’t see anything with my eyes shut. He asked “At what age were ‘eyes’ open?” This got me quickly back to before I was born, down in the cellar again. Back in the space before I was born, David’s encouraging questions helped me to notice that when in this space, in my mind’s eye I saw lots of twinkly blue lights.

These are aspects of you that didn’t come with you when you were born. They were so reluctant to be born that you left them behind. Now you’ve found them, you can gather them up and re-integrate them into yourself.

OK, I said yawning. By now, all I wanted to do was sleep. I felt quite disappointed with my pre-start to life as I’d hoped for some profound insight!

David said that I do need to sleep, and during my sleep these separate parts could come back to me. I sat back in the ‘pregnancy chair’ for a while, taking in all I’d experienced. Then I went home and slept soundly.

Day two I was not so early, but still keen to find out more. I was not so keen to go back to the cellar, however David said I needed to check out what, if anything had changed. I said I still felt I wanted to ‘find’ a life mission, and wanted to go back further.

I began this on my own, and when I stood back in the place before I was born, although I still felt the same sense of peace, the blue twinkly bits had gone. I couldn’t find where the space was before this one for ages, but eventually brought down a little table from the front room and sat on it (sorry Phillip now you know where it went to!) ‘Before’ was lower down, and by sitting I got a sense of before the before. I saw a bright iridescent blue. Deep and dense.

Oh, I thought, that makes sense, I came “Out of the Blue!”

I sat there for a long time, turning and twisting around, trying out other ‘adjacent’ spaces to find any new insight or understanding, but nothing else was coming

By the time Phillip came to check how I was getting on, I was back in the pregnancy chair, looking up words and feeling quite lost.

Phillip got me back into the process from where I was, by asking “And where are you drawn to?”

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I noticed a stained glass window in the hall had a bright blue panel. The blue was the same deep iridescence. Phillip had me go and stand near this spot. Further questions about what I know from here got a big fat nothing. He asked me to stand nearer to the spot, and repeated the questions. David joined in and asked me to turn around and got me back to the same spot as the deep blue 'before' "And what's before that blue?"

I got the impression of the beginning of the universe, the 'big bang', and saw my 'blue' as starting out as a very dense ball of super-charged energy. David asked "What's on the other side of that blue ball?" I couldn't answer the question. "There is no other side." Further questioning around what's outside of that space got me back on to the flow of being in the light with the blue twinkly lights, then being born as before in the cellar.

David was trying to help me find another way into the world.

Eventually, after repeatedly asking me what was on the 'other side' of the blue dense ball, I began to think of the ball as a hole in a tunnel, the 'other side' would be through the tunnel and out again. This was great progress!

I made my way through the tunnel, which in reality was along the hall, down some steps and back into the room with the kitchen area. The 'other side' was in the middle of this room, my new 'place of birth'.

The next step was to re-examine all the previous life events, where are they now? Have they changed at all? And finally to review your previous "A" and "B" spot. I, like most others, could not find a sense of where most of my previous life events had gone. The "A" and "B" spot seemed uncertain too.

David explained that by coming into the world from a different angle, I had gathered up the lost parts of me so could no longer sense events as separate 'spots'. They are all integrated within me now. And maybe even the elusive "B" is with me too.

The final review session with David gave us more information about the differences between the afflictions acquired through our natural life and those that were already embedded in the 'shadow world of our psychological DNA gifted from whence we came'.

David said it may take a week or so for the full impact of changes to be noticed, and after 3 days, I would say that something has shifted in me. I don't feel as stuck as before, and my "B" mission now seems achievable. I still feel I have further to go, but have a clearer sense that I will get there.

Also my time line spiral seems less clear to me. Maybe at the moment I am seeing my future straight ahead...this spiral has been so much part of my philosophy of life, that I'm not really sure I want to lose it...however I will go with the flow, with serenity and harmony, and see what happens next!

Thank you David for the fresh insights and new perceptions that you helped me uncover.