

Meet the Trainers:
Joe & Melody Cheal of the GWiz Learning Partnership

“Learning with Melody and Joe in the atmosphere that they created has made an incalculable difference to me. I’m already doing things that I’d have felt were out of my reach at the beginning of this year.”

Viv Thackray - a GWiz graduate.

This month, we are meeting Melody and Joe Cheal, the couple who embody the ‘yin-yang’ of NLP training.

As you’ve written a number of articles about ‘logical levels’, perhaps we could use Dilts’ model to find out more about the two of you and your company. Let’s start with the spirit level – what is the spirit level of Melody, Joe and the GWiz Learning Partnership?

We consider that NLP has just begun a new ‘re-searching wave’ that is taking us beyond the past waves of simply ‘searching’. It is not about either/or, it is about a synthesis of the excitement of search and the ‘groundedness’ of research. We certainly align ourselves with those who are seeking to legitimise NLP through research, development and exploration. Joe now has an MSc in ‘Organisational Development & NLP’ and he spoke recently at the first NLP Research Conference at the University of Surrey. His topic was addressing paradox in organisations and how NLP could help. Melody is near completion of an MSc in ‘Applied Positive Psychology’ and she is currently researching the impact of NLP on Self Esteem.

Another aspect of spirit is our desire to contribute not just academically to the field of NLP but also to the people we come into contact with. We are passionate that those we train have an extraordinary learning experience... and fun of course! Together we want to inspire our fellow travellers and make their journey easier; ‘enlighten the way’ as it were.

What about identity – who are you?

In the context of NLP, we are certified trainers and we originally trained in NLP back in 1993. We are also business consultants with a broad portfolio of services in the fields of personal, interpersonal, management, leadership and organisational development. We have an approach that ‘NLP is not the only fruit... but it is a wonderful ingredient in the recipe’.

As a partnership, when we train together we aim to embody the nature of relationship in our training, to be role models in making relationships work. We both bring different backgrounds and resources to the training and we seek to create a synthesis of styles, like

the 'yin-yang', giving the course participants more than we could have achieved independently.

Melody is an inspirer of individuals and Joe confesses to be in awe of her ability to help people re-engage with their lives at the most profound level. Joe, on the other hand, is an innovator of ideas and Melody says she admires his ability to create new models and make links between theories.

What are your beliefs and values?

When training and working with NLP, one of our highest values is 'ecology'. Anything to do with gaining a greater understanding of the minds of others requires an ethical perspective. Ecology is not about having a long list of do's and don'ts, it is about awareness of the potential outcomes of our actions. Rather than using ecology to restrict our potential actions, it gives us a freedom to look at alternative ways of achieving what we want. Then we have choices to seek an action that works on as many levels as possible, from the individual to the universe! On the subject of ecology, we believe that it is important to offer people ongoing support after the courses. We actively promote coaching supervision and we provide a regular practice group.

We also believe that our course participants should consciously understand the principles of NLP by the end of the course, rather than simply to have been entertained. To date, we have kept the number of people on our NLP courses down to about twelve or so. We want 'course participants' not 'members of an audience'. We have sat in an audience through many courses ourselves and we feel there is something essential missing in that approach.

A significant part of NLP is being flexible and we encourage that in our delegates. Just because something has been done one way in the past, doesn't mean it is the only way of doing it! In an endeavour to be flexible ourselves, we have experimented with different course formats, running both modular forms and intensives. Different people like different things and have different values and learning styles. Of course, different people also like similar things and so we look for the patterns and the opportunity to find the common positive intentions in what people want. We believe that this is how we have continued to build a successful business by doing what we do, understanding the need for development and change.

How about the level of capability? What do you consider to be your skills and strengths?

We both have over fifteen years experience in training, coaching and facilitating and having worked with thousands of people in this context, we have a pretty good sense of where the group is at. One of our practitioners recently said that we have "a great ability to be empathetic with each individual within the group" ... which was reassuring to hear!

We love bringing other fields to NLP and NLP to other fields, to map across and draw connections. For us it is about modelling other fields and disciplines as diverse as management and leadership theory to quantum physics! If it works in one place, let's see how it works in NLP!

As mentioned above, an example of Melody's strengths is in inspiring personal change and unlocking individual potential. Joe's strengths are often in the big picture, perceiving organisational patterns and developing new concepts.

Now behaviour... what do you do?

As a 'yin-yang', when we are running the course, we laugh... a lot. We check in with each other and we respect each other's knowledge and 'airspace' (talking time).

As trainers, we encourage and give feedback. We presuppose that everyone is going to pass and do everything we can to make sure that they do. During the input sessions, we encourage true dialogue where we can build and add to knowledge rather than assume we know all the answers! Of course there are times when we need to let people know that "this is the NLP perspective". We see it as our responsibility to help people think about the ecology of their decisions and actions.

And finally environment... where do you run your courses? What kind of atmosphere do you create?

Currently we run the NLP courses in our home. We have a nice size place and it is easily accessible. Our practitioners have actively discouraged us from running courses elsewhere because they say they like the informal, friendly learning environment. Everyone can feel comfortable in a relaxed space and in our own home we have maximum flexibility to create that space.

The input and discussions take place round a large table. It's not quite Arthurian, but the principle is the same. Everyone has a voice and everyone has a contribution. This way, we continue to learn too. We have an open plan house which gives plenty of room for activity. We also have two library rooms which are firm favourites with some. This may be because whilst on the course, our practitioners have access to our reference library of over five thousand books.

The other benefit of holding the courses in our home is that it helps to keep the costs down which we can then pass on to the delegates. Whilst we are not necessarily the least expensive, we are certainly not the most. We want NLP to remain a valuable investment and at the same time be accessible to everyone. If someone wants to develop their capability and make their life extraordinary we want to be there to help them. It is in this

spirit that we can go to bed at the end of the day and truly say: “Well-lived life, well lived!”

It seems like we have returned back to the spirit level!

Isn't life like that...

The GWiz Learning Partnership is based in Bedfordshire. For further information on the partnership and their courses or to access some innovative articles on NLP, visit www.gwiztraining.com or phone 01767 640956.