

# Welcome to the global ecosphere

Part  
Seven



By Lizzi Larbalestier

**T**he previous six articles in this series have explored each of the logical levels, applying these in the context of self-reflection, self-expression and our coaching relationships.

As ANLP's envoy for Environment and Ocean, this final article circles back to environment, seeking to expand our conversation to encourage each of us as professional communicators to truly promote a healthy ecosphere, reframing what we mean by environment.

I guess a good place to start is to clarify what I mean by ecosphere. Whilst definitions vary, for utility the *ecosphere* is the name we give to our planet when we think of it as a large ecosystem comprising many other ecosystems.

- The *biotope* of the ecosphere is made up of the lithosphere, the hydrosphere and the atmosphere (land, water and air). This is the abiotic domain and is often undervalued.
- The *biocenosis* of the ecosphere is called the biosphere and comprises all the living things on the Earth. This is the biotic domain.

One is not of more value than the other; our existence relies on the relationship between *all aspects* of the ecosphere and this is where we as coaches come in.

At the time of writing this article our human population is navigating through a global pandemic. As we know times of stress bring out the best and the worst behaviours. When making decisions at pace, repercussions can be far, wide and long-lasting and as a result, unintentional consequences are guaranteed. In the race to recover financial stability, or make up for 'lost time', seeking convenience perhaps, we risk making rash, unwise decisions creating negative systemic impact. Chemicals being washed into our hydrosphere, increased toxicity of our atmosphere... in solving one crisis we need to widen our field of view and be mindful in our decision making.

## Fostering ongoing compassion for our planet has never been so relevant

It is no surprise that during turbulence people have sought solace in nature – or missed access to it; we are wired to connect with the natural world after all. Fostering ongoing compassion for our planet has never been so relevant. We have potential to integrate valuable ecological lessons *if* we can raise our awareness long enough to fully pay attention. As coaches it is our responsibility to ensure that insights gained from acknowledging the *interconnectedness of all things* are not lost.

At the heart of all coaching lies wellbeing; regardless of the surface quandaries presented, fundamentally we work with promoting various combinations of 'wellness factors'.

### But what is it to be healthy?

The constructs we as coaches work within place humans at the centre of the universe – pivotal to success, failure, attainment, progress. In fact many coaching conversations will not include any reference to environmental impact, or at best they pay it lip service or refer to the environment in terms of location: the home environment, the work environment, the school environment, etc.

For me, as for many in the field of NLP, language matters. During two recent interviews, one about Formula 1 and one about premier football, both interviewees stated that the 'ecosystems of their sport were in jeopardy'. Their discussions primarily related to financial challenges and logistical complexities, which of course have a ripple effect in their wider ecosystem. This said, I felt 'industry' or 'infrastructure' would have more closely resembled the very clear focus of the concerns they were expressing. I was intrigued by their language choice and can only imagine (or mind

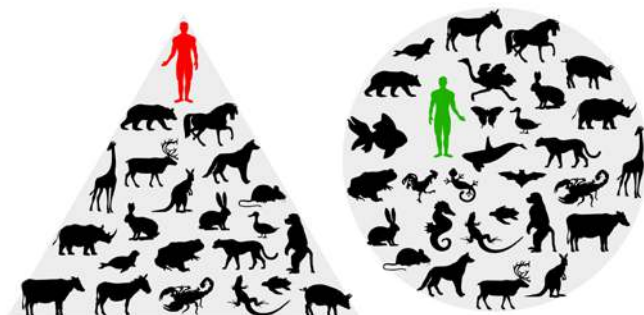


read) this was perhaps aimed at highlighting for the listeners an impact upon 'real lives'.

Since then, as we know, once something is in our filters... I have noticed an increasingly loose use of the term 'ecosystem' in the media. This highlighted for me that when we as NLP professionals speak of 'ecology-checking' going forwards we must include all aspects of our ecosphere. It is time to re-establish some sense of natural order and realise that we are in fact one of many cohabiting species.

### So, what can we as coaches do?

Firstly we can encourage a transition from an anthropocentric frame of reference to one that shifts the equity equation within nature, acknowledging interdependencies and adopting an ecocentric mindstate... since all existence beyond our lifespan is dependent upon the *health* of our environment (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. We are not above nature but within it.**

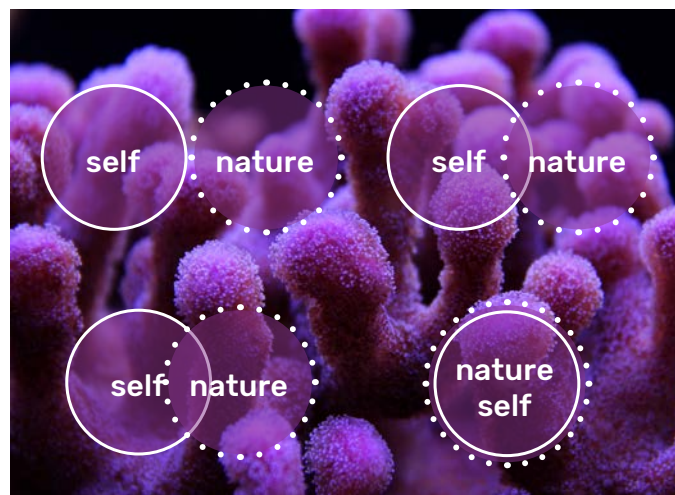
There follows three ways in which we can take action:

### Acknowledge and appreciate habitat

One exercise I love using is inspired by the Schultz 2002 Inclusion of Nature in Self scale; a simple visual/spatial exercise that can provoke useful discussions.

I ask clients to draw in the sand two discs. One relates to themselves and one relates to nature. Before they create their discs I tell them the discs represent how much they feel nature is a part of them and they are a part of nature. The discs can be completely separate, completely on top of each other or have any degree of overlap, like a venn diagram (Figure 2).

## How is your relationship with nature impacting your decision making?



**Figure 2. An exercise to see how much a person feels part of nature.**

It is interesting to see which circle is drawn first, whether the discs are the same size or one is bigger, and to note how they are placed. The further apart the discs are, often the more likely they will take a more anthropocentric stance, and the closer together, the more ecocentric.

A great question to ask is, how is your relationship with nature impacting your decision making?

I like to explore how each of the logical levels play out in relation to how people define their connection to nature. This is a great exercise for questioning alignment between how people describe themselves versus how they show up.

Awareness gained in this discovery exercise enables questions to be tailored to ensure the full impact of decisions and actions is taken into account.

### Explore temporal relationships

How we relate to time varies depending upon all aspects of the logical levels model: where we are and with whom, our activities, whether we are enjoying the experience we are having, the role we are playing and whether our actions relate to any bigger purpose.

An ecocentric perspective is accepting our transitional lifespan, inviting philosophical questions about time. Of course as NLP practitioners we can apply timelining techniques to further discovery, but for now, some useful questions to ask might be:

- How do you value time right now?
- Has the way you value time changed? And if so what changed it?



- What, if any, impact does your age/health/location have upon your perception of time?
- What denotes time wasted for you?
- What denotes a good use of time for you?
- If you were to summarise your relationship with time, how would you describe it?
- An important question to dive into (much like our question about the impact of nature connectedness) is:
- How (if at all) is your relationship with time impacting your decision making?

By acknowledging how time is passing for our clients we can enable them to spend it wisely.

### Redefining health ecology

Having explored nature connection and time perception, we return to our human experience and the 'wellness factors' I referred to earlier.

The difference being that when we question these in relation to space and time, and with the ecosphere front of mind, oftentimes insights are less siloed than if we had started with these and then offered a cursory 'ecology check'.

Wellness factors we can explore include social, psychological, physical and spiritual health. For each we can ask questions such as:

- What exactly does this mean for you?
- What do you want in relation to this?
- What jeopardises or enables this for you?
- How consciously are you attending to this domain?
- What changes can you make?

We can of course also invite inquiry into how the logical levels play out within each of these domains and once we have explored each area in turn, reflect upon the symbiosis between each of these wellness factors.

A 'so what' question I like to ask is...

- Beyond personal satisfaction, what is the benefit or cost to the ecosphere?

Encouraging reflection into how they really think and truly feel about the connection between their goal attainment and a sense of global citizenship promotes a sense of individual accountability and shared responsibility.

As coaches our role is to encourage our clients to discover, learn and grow and as such we hold within our gift the possibility of encouraging aims and actions that foster a healthy ecosphere, sustaining of all life.

This is a call to action for us all to actively ensure we lead with ecology. ■



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