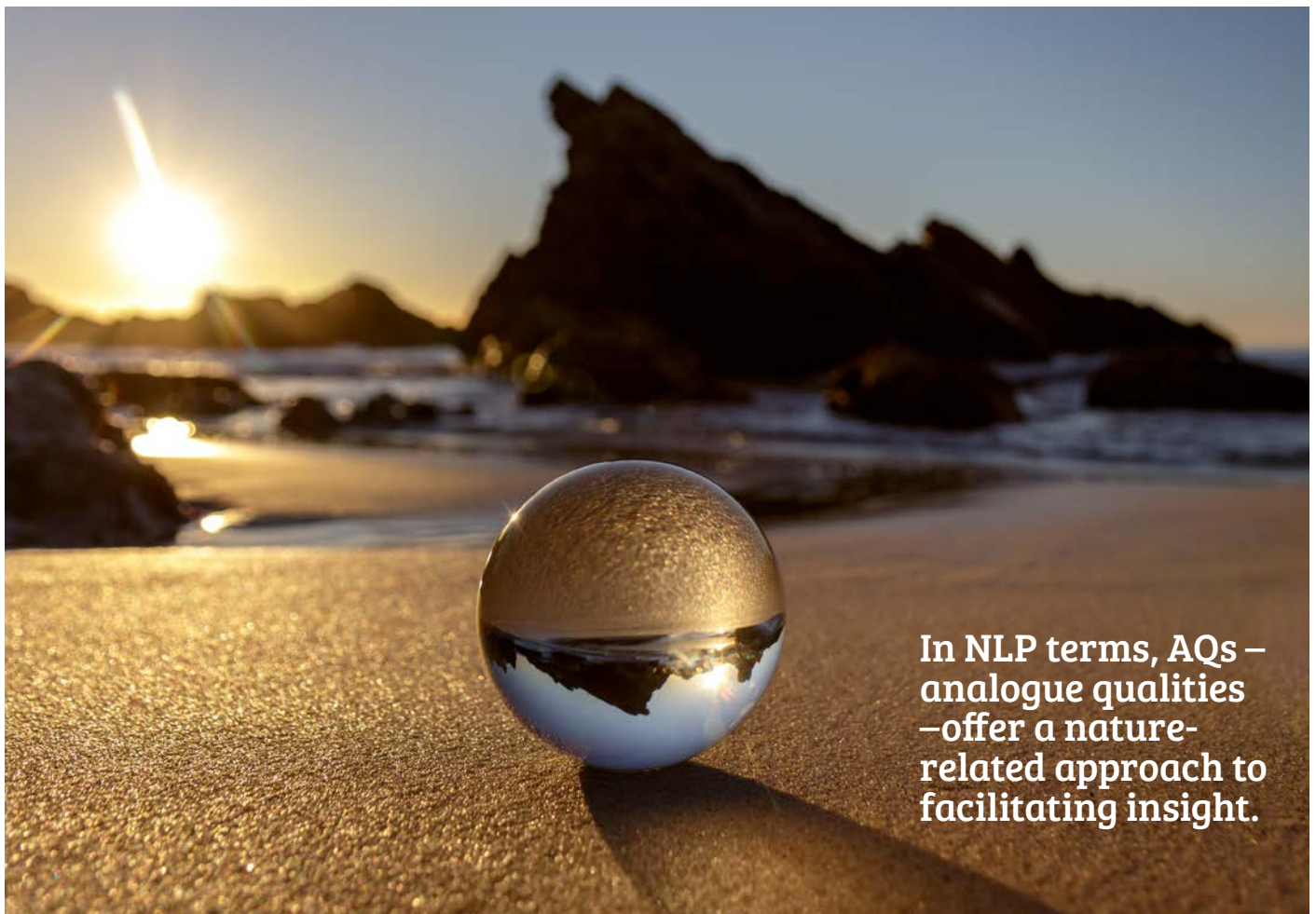


Analogue Insight – How Can Nuances Within Our Coastline Provoke Deeper Wisdom?



By Lizzi Larbalestier



In NLP terms, AQs – analogue qualities – offer a nature-related approach to facilitating insight.

Winter is a great time for reflection and as our landscape changes, the shifting light can invite nature's very own interpretation of a Rorschach discovery exercise.

In this article I am going to invite you to dip a toe into some self-reflection and introduce you to what we as blue health coaches call AQs – 'analogue qualities'. In NLP terms, AQs offer a nature-related approach to facilitating insight, awaking our attention to the sub-modalities of our surroundings and those within ourselves. AQs also provoke awareness of bias.

It has long been known that symbolic modelling enables the articulation of otherwise previously non-voiced thoughts and the surfacing of feelings that might have evaded our conscious awareness.

So let's take a walk on the beach in our minds – or, better still, take this copy of *Rapport* magazine to a real coastal location and work in real time on this exercise.

If you're working in your mind's eye, create a beach scene – maybe your favourite beach location – and place yourself within it; choose the weather

conditions and a sea state. This exercise and these questions will require you to associate yourself within the scene.

Starting with big chunks and, for fun, looking around the scene, complete the following sentences.

1 My life at this moment is like (or not like) this sea state because...

Notice the energy of the ocean, whether it's calm or turbulent, and have a sense of the resonance or dissonance between its energy and yours.

If we extend our perception of alignment to explore how world qualities flow through us, we can become aware of how we show up in the world and truly learn from nature.

- 2 The weather reflects (does not reflect) my mood in that...
Is the sky clear or cloudy? Are there colours? Is it raining or dry? How do you interpret any beach wisdom on offer?
- 3 The lessons I can learn from the wildlife around me are...
Go looking for what you would consider wildlife. Become fascinated by the way it moves, its shape, form, behaviour.
- 4 The rock formations and pebbles have insight to offer me in relation to...
Feel the texture of rocks or perhaps pebbles. Notice the different shades and become curious about how and where insight might emerge from something so simple as a stone.
- 5 My current decision-making approach mirrors (or is unlike) the soundscape and sensations I am experiencing, and I notice...
Connect with the auditory qualities of the location and the tactile aspects. Note and discern the visceral sensations evoked.

It matters not which element of the environment you turn your attention towards, but **how** your awareness is drawn and **where** your mind wanders, since **this** is the beginning of a coaching conversation.

If you take the first question, for example, to answer it you need to (in any sequence) pay attention to all aspects of the sea state – and pay attention to how you sense your life is right now...

Immersing your awareness in the sea state allows you to move into a space of soft fascination, which helps with creative thinking. After all, the question is deliberately vast...

What does it mean to be asked "How is your life right now?" There are so many potential estuaries to explore... It is reassuring that the most currently



pertinent aspect of **how you are experiencing life right now** will very naturally surface.

As NLP professionals, we can see that the questions above are far more complex than they at first seem and they each enable scope to explore widely and wildly.

We talk about alignment a lot as coaches and often this is seen as an internal exercise, engaging our full nervous systems, balancing our chakras, enabling our heart, head and gut to become coherent and communicative. If we extend our perception of alignment to explore how world qualities flow through us, we can become aware of how we show up in the world and truly learn from nature.

Let's chunk down to some of the amazing features our coastal location can offer. The number of these is infinite and in the field of blue health coaching we have mapped 15 pairs of qualities we most often work with. Some are opposites, others continuums; the rest are more abstract partnerships that enable insight to flow. These AQs can emerge from numerous landscape and seascape features.

So, bring your attention back to your coastal location and allow your gaze to be drawn to some of the following qualities in turn.

Light and shade

Notice the **light and shade** within your coastal scene/location; how in some areas it is static and in others it is changing, moment by moment. Observe the transition points between light and shade, gradual in places and more stark in contrast in others. See how light and shade work with one another, enabling depth and definition.

Now ask yourself where in your coaching practice do you invite light and shade? How do light and shade feature in the discussions you have with your clients? What life qualities or behaviour traits do they associate light and shade with? Do they favour one over the other? How much of each exists within their world and how fluid is this? Are there areas of their lives where more or less light (or shade) could help provide alignment, inform decisions, create choices?

When introducing terms like light and shade there is a myriad of directions our coaching conversation can take – neither one nor the other is better or worse and both are necessary for a healthy lifestyle.

Abundance and scarcity

Take a walk around your coastal location and contemplate **abundance and scarcity**. How and where do each of

▶ these have a role to play within your coaching? Seek out the landscape features and wildlife that invite discussions within this domain and those that evoke emotions associated with abundance and scarcity. Lean into the embodied wisdom that emerges when we view our lives and the world through these filters. How does more of one or the other shape decision-making? Where do each have importance and how do each of these impact motivation? Reflect on your current coaching clients and how they are navigating their change efforts in relation to a perceived abundance or scarcity of time, space, power, money, health, energy, friends, options etc.

As coaches, we often talk about the importance of having an abundance mentality and this can lead to imagining abundance awareness is superior to scarcity awareness. In fact, both are essential. If, for example, we imagine our coaching is climate change-related, it can be helpful to remember certain natural resources are scarce in order to apply an abundance of ideas to find solutions.

Symmetry and asymmetry

Coastal environments lend themselves to discussions relating to balance, *symmetry and asymmetry*. Maybe you

notice the characteristics of the cliff faces or cloud formations; perhaps you are captivated by the shapes of dune flowers or a butterfly. It is possible the shift in symmetry that occurs in a breaking wave is your entry point to a conversation about shifting boundaries.

Seeking balance can often be misinterpreted as seeking symmetry in our lives. If we reflect upon how we apply our energy, our context has a massive influence on where we direct our resources. This said, any shift in attention towards one area of our life by default takes our attention away from other areas.

Consider your clients – where is asymmetry in their life appreciated, healthy and valuable to them, and where would a little more symmetry benefit them and those they are close to? What is their definition of fairness, for instance, and how does this impact their relationships? Mapping out how life is right now and how they might like life to be can bring attention to how and where symmetry and asymmetry feature and enable our clients to explore the wider impact of how they choose to shape their lives.

Significance and insignificance

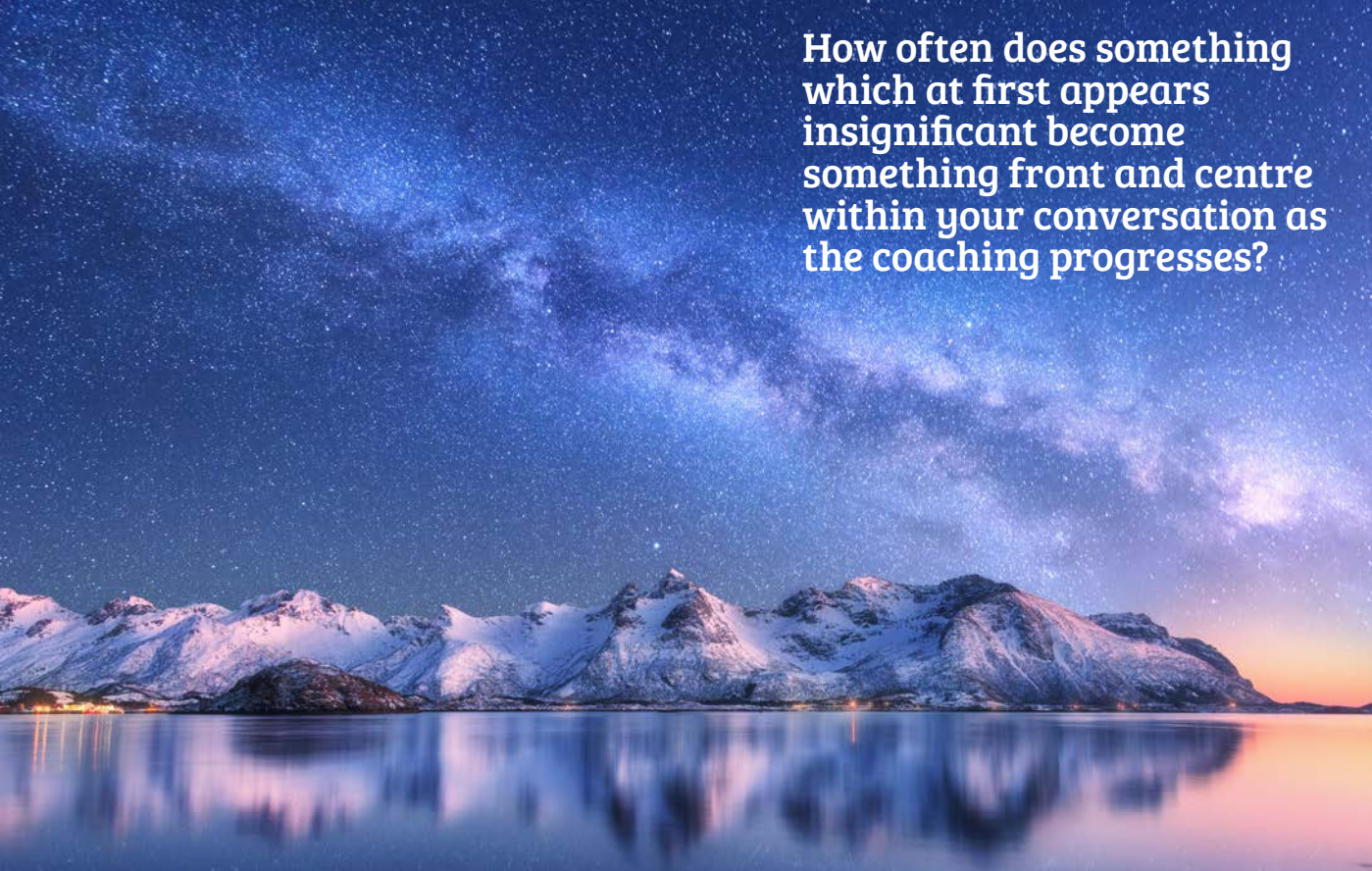
Finally, as you look around this coastal

space notice which features catch your attention most and which are less compelling, exploring *significance and insignificance*.

Now take a closer look at the less significant elements, asking yourself “How insignificant is this really?” Likewise, attend to what at first seemed to capture attention. Is this really the most important aspect of the scene?

Now reflect further on your coaching conversations. How often does something which at first appears insignificant become something front and centre within your conversation as the coaching progresses? Conversely, how many times has coaching revealed that what somebody thought was significant was in fact not important in the grand scheme of things after all? Artfully guiding discussions to explore significance can allow our clients to reorientate, ensuring their focus is on what really matters and what will make a difference for them.

There are so very many landscape characteristics that can provoke deeply insightful discussion. When we pay attention to our surroundings, our coastline is a co-facilitator of change – rich in beach wisdom. ■



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Lizzi Larbalestier is an ICF professional blue health coach and coach trainer specialising in marine-based change work in Cornwall and California. Disarming humour supports a highly provocative coaching style and she uses the coast as a landscape for trajectory-led philosophical debate grounded in neuroscience. Lizzi is the founder of Going Coastal Blue and Director of Coaching for Blue Mind Works. For more information go to www.goingcoastal.blue