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# Metaphors of Movement

**A training model in linguistic analysis and  
behavioural change**

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## Definition

Metaphors of Movement (MoM) is the commercial name for a system of forensic linguistic investigation, problem analysis and behavioural modification for problem resolution.

## Application

There are three primary areas to have emerged from the MoM system.

1. **Psychotherapy.** This is the most developed application of MoM. By using metaphor, patients are enabled to explore their difficulties in a safe manner that allows details of the original problem to remain undisclosed. A typical number of sessions for any patient is 1 to 3 sessions of around 1 to 2 hours each with some weeks in-between sessions.
2. **Business and Management Design and Development.** The forensic applications of the system allow for an analysis of communication within any organisation. This allows for a *reasonably* accurate prediction of behavioural activity of personnel within that organisation.
3. **Forensic Analysis of Linguistic Communication.** This demonstrates that during communication there are utterances occurring outside of conscious awareness which can yield useful data of which the speaker is unaware. The MoM system allows for large amounts of data to be extrapolated from very small units of spoken communication.



## History

Metaphors of Movement was originally developed by Andrew T. Austin, based on observations from working with chronic psychotherapy patients. Influences on this work came from American communications trainer, Charles Faulkner, the British psychiatrist, R.D. Laing and British anthropologist Gregory Bateson.

One observation was that the majority of therapeutic interactions involved lengthy discussion of the following four components of experience; which appeared to make little difference to the client's suffering:

1. Examples of the problem (*what happens*)
2. Emotional responses to the problem (*how we feel about what happens*)

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3. The consequences of the problem (*the effects the problem has on person's life*)
  4. The client's and therapists diagnosis of the problem (*the cause of the problem*)

Metaphors of Movement was a development resulting from the exploration of the client's idioms and metaphors that emerged during these discussions. Eventually the above four components were disregarded entirely from therapeutic interaction and all attention was placed upon the client's spontaneous idioms and metaphors.

It was quickly discovered that these idioms and metaphors were often communicated outside of immediate conscious awareness and understanding, and so suggested “unconscious communication” which was likely to reveal multiple layers of meaning communicated simultaneously. Investigation revealed a highly systematic and organised set of structures could be revealed by appropriate analysis of these communications, enabling significant amounts of data to be elicited from very small portions of verbal communication.

The system has been extensively field tested with psychotherapy clients and has been presented internationally to audiences comprising primarily of therapists and psychology professionals. This has enabled the model to be increasingly refined and corrected based on the feedback received.

Experience has demonstrated that the current method of teaching MoM enables this analytical method to be easily learned by the lay-person. The application of this methodology has wide ranging implications far beyond simple therapeutic application.

## Training

The information that comprises the Metaphors of Movement model has been organised that that it can be taught to students who have no prior experience of the subject matter or related fields. Experience shows that a typical audience will comprise primarily of psychological health care professionals (60%) seeking either additional skills sets and/or personal development, and lay-persons (40%) attending for either personal development and/or educational-recreational purposes.

The most common training is the four days Levels 1 & 2 program, which includes:

### **Level 1. The Foundation**

An overview of the structure of MoM and the delivery of the change work process. Level 1 is a two day training that equips trainees to safely practice basic content-free MoM sessions for remedial change work purposes.

#### (a). Introduction to The MoM Process

- Full outline of the MoM process and therapy session structure.
- Neurological rationale for the MoM processes.

#### (b). Introduction to Metaphor Taxonomy and Creating Digital Change

- The Structure of Outcomes.
- The Obstructions: external rules and values.

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The Containers: container metaphors, inherited status, families and long term problems.  
The Burdens: responsibilities and guilts.  
The Bubbles: beliefs and values.

## **Level 2. The Metaphoric Hierarchy**

Level 2 is an exploration in how different metaphors logically lead to new metaphors, idioms and simile and how these can be arranged hierarchically. The overall theme of this level is that of relationships and emotional health. Level 2 training completes the practitioner status initiated at level 1.

(a). Introduction to relationships and creating analogical and generative change

The Elevations: status games and awkward positions.

Relational Positions: where we stand in relation to others.

The Fulfillments: emotional trading and transactions.

The Hurts: emotional injury and emotional health.

(b). Symbolism and time predication in metaphor

Dream work and dream analysis.

Introduction to Metaphors of Time.

Introduction to Metaphors of Business and Money.

Whilst primarily designed to focus on therapeutic and change-work applications, these two training levels provide all of the core components of the MoM methodology and equips trainees to be able to apply the system to their own field of work as appropriate.



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## An Analytical Example From Therapeutic Application of Metaphors of Movement

A 55-year-old man self presented for treatment with a history of chronic depression and heavy alcohol consumption. Previous attempts at counselling has provided no benefit. The following exchange took place:

**Therapist:** “So, what's the problem?”

**Client:** “I'm depressed.”

**Therapist:** “And what's that like?”

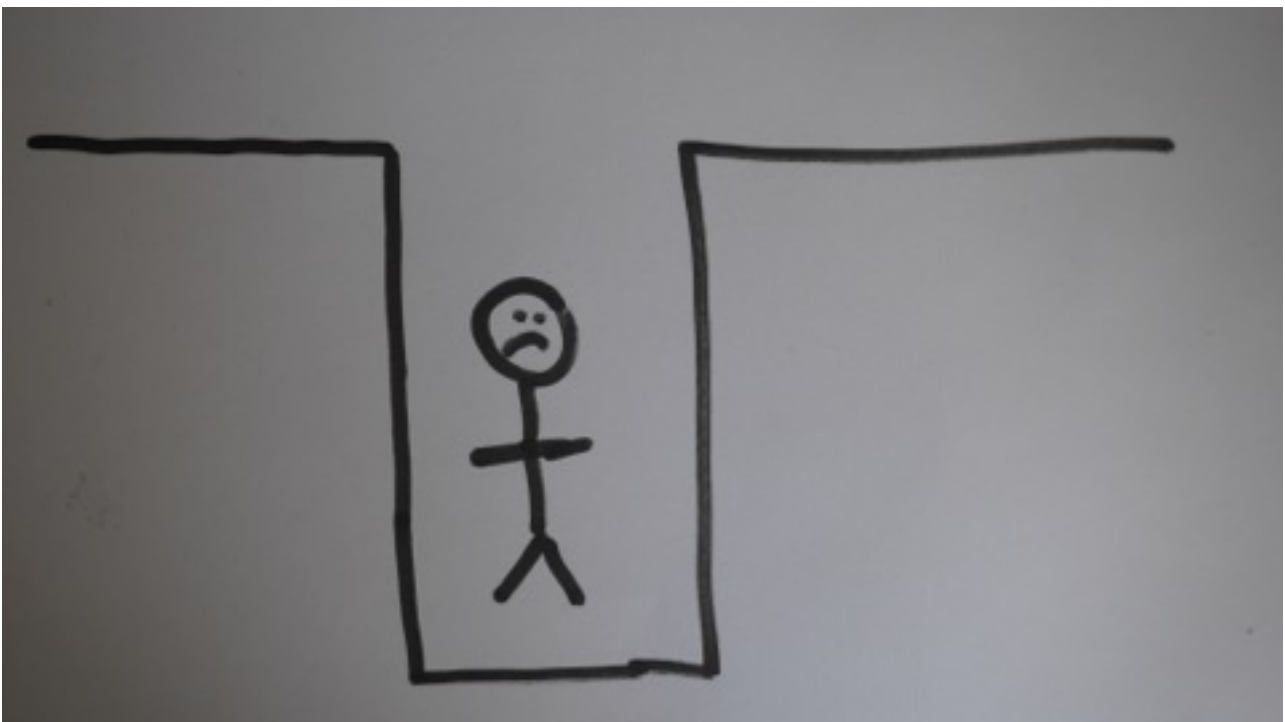
**Client:** “It's like I'm in the pit of despair.”

This use of idiom and metaphor is a good example of the information-dense utterance that the MoM model takes advantage of. Encoded in this utterance is nearly all the information the therapist requires. The exchanged continued.

**Therapist:** “So, what do you want from me?”

**Client:** “I want to you help me move forward.”

Although it may not seem like it at first, this utterance in another information-dense communication. Combining these two idioms together, we can draw this diagram:



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From this we can see the following taxonomies:

**Container metaphor:** container metaphor classically indicate long term problems, usually situations that have been present for the duration of adulthood. Container metaphors reveal the boundary conditions inherited by the family of origin. They are associated with idioms such as, “feeling trapped”, “stuck”, “not going anywhere”, “bouncing off walls”, “constricted” and so on.

**Elevation metaphor:** being a “pit” involves a loss of elevation. In metaphor, elevation is associated with status increase or decrease. For example status increase has associated idioms such as “going up in the world,” “being the top guy” and “the head of the company”. Status decrease has idioms such as, “going down in the world”, “at the bottom of the company” and “letting myself down.”

If we combine these two we can interpret that for this client, his family (the container) had lost status, or has low status (it is below ground level), it is his involvement within this family dynamic that traps him in the pit of despair.

We can also see that the client's attempted solution, i.e. moving forwards, will inevitably fail and he will quickly learn that he is stuck and unable to make any forward progress. The results of this is that he will seek out experts and professionals who claim to be able to assist him in moving forwards.



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The MoM training (second day of level 1) covers exactly how successful resolution can be achieved within a single session. Container metaphors tend to reflect a long term issue, and yet single session resolution can be achieved in these instances.

## **An Analytic Example from a Business Consultation**

A businessman self presented to explore his difficulties around his business design. When asked about the problem, the businessman's immediate reply was, "My business is not going anywhere."

When asked what he has done to date in order to get his business going, he replied, "I have spent two years building my business on solid foundations."

As is typical for problem states, the individual is unaware of the conflict between his own metaphoric structures.

He want his business to move ("to get started", "to launch", "to take off", "to fly", "to really get going", "to go places") and yet his behaviour has been based around giving it a solid foundation ("build a solid business", "base my business on something substantial.")