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Focusing on the future

# Action planning

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## **Purpose**

The purpose of this strategy is to bring a session to a positive conclusion with realistic actions that the client can commit to.

## **Description**

This exercise is a useful way of bringing other coaching strategies to a conclusion, particularly the Clean Language strategies. As with other Clean Language strategies, this one is particularly powerful if the client is using metaphor. It is a really great way to get an action plan – regardless of whether you’ve been using Clean Language previously with a client.

## **Process**

Whatever the outcome the client is working towards, having already explored it, this exercise begins with: ‘And what needs to happen for [client’s outcome]?’. Repeat back what they say, then continue to ask:

‘And what else needs to happen for [client’s outcome]?’, until they have nothing else to add. Repeat all the actions/points made back to the client. Then ask: ‘And what’s the first thing that needs to happen?’. Whatever that point is, ask: ‘And can . . . [client words]?’. If they say yes, move on to the next point. If they say no, ask: ‘What needs to happen for

[client's point]?' Work your way through all the points made in this way.

Although it's not totally clean, I would generally end this exercise by having the client agree when they will take each action. If the client is still using metaphor you will probably find that by asking them the 'And can . . .' question, they will find an appropriate action.

### **Pitfalls**

None.

### **Bibliography**

Tompkins, P. and Lawley, J. (2000) *Metaphors in Mind*, London: The Developing Company Press.