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# Problem solving and creativity

# Finding your niche (using Clean Language)

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## **Purpose**

To help a client begin to explore future career directions and become more aware of what they do best. This is a less structured exercise and the client could take you anywhere with it!

## **Description**

This exercise works best if you ask the client to prepare in advance. With this strategy, we help the client to access their metaphoric descriptions by having them draw something on a piece of paper.

## **Process**

Depending on the context, you'd set them a preparation question: 'When you are working at your best, that's like what?'. (You can replace the word 'working' with another word to make it more appropriate to whatever they are working on.) The client's drawing then enables you to ask questions of all the metaphors that come up. You can explore how they see themselves by asking: 'And when [client's description of working at their best], whereabouts are you?' and then: 'What kind of "you" is that "you"?'. Stay within the metaphors if you can, paying attention to what the client is interested in.

A good, fail-safe question to use during this exercise is:

‘And what are you drawn to now?’. Ask simple questions of all the different elements that form parts of their picture. You can help the client see how all the pieces fit together by asking ‘relationship’ questions. For example, ‘And when you are dancing, and the tree is growing, is there a relationship between the growing tree and the dancing “you”?’. Or if the scenario is changing as the client is describing it you could ask, for example: ‘And when that flower opens up, what happens to the small round ball of fire?’.

Five minutes before you end the session, ask: ‘What do you know now about working at your best?’ and ‘And what difference does that knowing make?’.

### **Pitfalls**

This is a less structured exercise and the client could take you anywhere with it.

### **Bibliography**

Sullivan, W. and Rees, J. (2008) *Clean Language: Revealing Metaphors and Opening Minds*, Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing.