

Inside information and the power of six

how new knowledge heals

The Power of Six was devised by David Grove, creator of Clean Language, as a methodology for eliciting and utilizing our inner intelligence. Philip Harland is a Clean Language psychotherapist who worked closely with Grove.

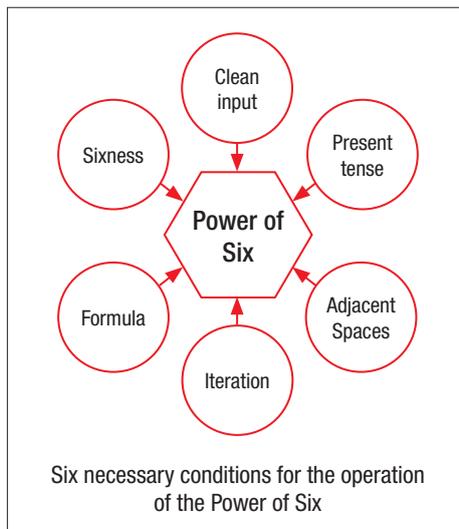
Throughout our lives, we encounter problems that we find hard to understand or resolve. We create these problems in ways that are uniquely structured to our personalities, which means that the solutions have to arise from the same uniqueness. We achieve this by tapping into the inner worlds of our own wisdom, those immeasurable reservoirs of information that maintain us as individuals and to which no one else – no partner, teacher, coach or counsellor – has access. The Power of Six supports us to retrieve the specific information we need in a process of ‘emergence’ which leads inevitably to self-reorganization. It is a radically different approach to the medical model and to conventional therapies, yet it is entirely compatible with either.

The information retrieved is, literally, ‘in-formation’, that which is formed from within. Properties and patterns in the form of memories, metaphors, images, snippets, thoughts and sensations that are processed and evaluated by the brain to influence the formation of other properties and patterns. Information is thus potential knowledge. It is what emergence researcher Maurice Brasher calls “a candidate for knowledge”. It becomes knowledge when we recognize it, ascribe primacy to it, give it significance, order, meaning, a name.

Information, like energy, does real work. It changes brain chemistry, it changes neuronal connections, it changes behaviour and it changes lives. Systems thinker Gregory Bateson identified it as “the difference that makes a difference”. There is no need for the conscious mind to perceive, much less appreciate, how this difference happens. It is our inner intelligence at work.

Six Principles

The emergent self knowledge process of the Power of Six is driven by six necessary conditions.



1 Clean Input

Questions are minimally assumptive, non-suggestive and metaphor-free. If as a facilitator you were questioning the client directly, rather than questioning something the client had written or drawn, your opening question might be

What do you know?

followed by

And what else do you know?

which is repeated four more times

And what else do you know?

ending with a learning or consolidation question

And now what do you know?

2 The Present Tense

All Power of Six questioning, all client information, knowledge, and experience, whatever time scale it may refer to, is elicited and maintained in the here and now. What do you know? And what else do you know? And now what do you know?

3 Adjacent Spaces

The mental and/or physical spaces the client's information occupies have a notional boundary

within which the facilitator's questions are addressed. As the problem and its location relative to the client are established, the spaces that define the client's construction of the problem appear. New information is accessed in adjacent spaces.

4 Iteration

The Power of Six questions have an iterative effect, each client response feeding back to inform the next. The same thing happens in the networking of spaces and in further rounds of questioning: as information increases and iterates, complexity builds and eventually collapses or reorganizes, allowing self-healing or resolution to emerge.

5 Formula

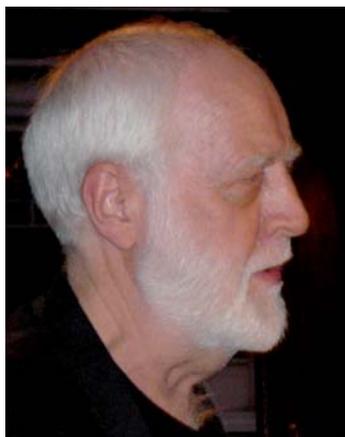
In each round of questioning, the same procedure based on the same questions is repeated. The predictability of the Power of Six de-emphasizes the client/facilitator relationship and encourages the client to develop a relationship with their own intelligence. They discover what they need to know for themselves.

6 Sixness

Six numbers drive the process. They form an orderly sequence and they also work together as nodes of a network, where the sum of their parts depends on the interaction of the properties each part possesses. Six is the optimal number required to form an information network from which new knowledge will emerge. There are six basic questions to a round, six rounds to a series and six parts to an action plan.

Emergent Knowledge

'Emergence' is the meta-process these six principles serve. Emergent knowledge is a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. All Clean processes encourage the emergence of new knowledge; the Power of Six actively promotes it. The first two conditions – clean



Photograph by James Lawley

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input and the present tense – are common to all Clean processes. Adjacent spaces, iteration, and formula are shared with Clean Space. All six conditions are present in the Power of Six. Sixness is exclusive to it.

Musicians find it difficult to improvise music without a beat. The repetitive patterns of the Power of Six send a message to the higher nervous system that here is a measure around which the mind can play safely and securely. This is not the kind of security that written music provides. No-one here tells the performer what to play. The cue from the Power of Six conductor is more on the lines of: “I will look after the beat; this is your time and space; you can now be yourself”.

Like Clean Language and Clean Space before it, the Power of Six emerged within the framework of a philosophy dedicated to helping people help themselves in the way only they could. These were never intended to be elitist procedures. David Grove was adamant that his methods should not only support sophisticated therapeutic interventions, but also be capable of combining with other disciplines – medicine, coaching, counselling and so on – and be straightforward, teachable, and transferable. Increasingly in my work as a therapist I find that whatever the client or the condition, the patterns of the Power of Six deliver emergence at least as well as more elaborate methodologies and often more quickly. Given the many choices of approach available to me when working with a client, it then becomes more a matter of my will to be simple.

Formulaic Questioning

How did the idea of a standard pattern of questioning take shape? When Grove was developing Clean Language and Therapeutic Metaphor for the symptomatic treatment of trauma, the sequence in which the first questions were asked was gradually refined by David and his partner Cei Davies into a code that followed a typical and teachable (though not, in practice, invariable) order:

- And how do you know when [e.g. you're feeling very sad]?
- And where is [the feeling as described by the client]?
- And whereabouts is it?
- And does it have a size or a shape?
- And that is like what?

There was no shortage of directions in which the questioning could go at that point, but the first inkling of a formula had appeared. Another formulaic trace appeared in Grove's practice of Intergenerational Healing, when the search for the origins of a symptom or the source of a redemptive metaphor would take the client back in time:

from body → to biography → to ancestry
→ to culture → to land → to cosmology

in a methodical six-stage time trail which led eventually to work in spatial sorting and was later formalized into the basic six-step, and then more sophisticated twelve-step, quasi-formulaic procedures of Clean Space.

The Power of Six abides by the same procedural logic, but takes the systematic principle further. Philosophically and practically, the formula is different to any other you may have come across in the fields of therapy, coaching and self-development. “All great things are simple”, Winston Churchill once said. Because the Power of Six is such a simple operant it is able to contain complexity. The numbers at its heart hold the client's problem so that client and facilitator do not have to. It is a *modus operandi* for seeking solutions at any level of expertise; an algorithm that enables the emergence of new knowledge and healing whatever the client's starting point; a prescription that, if followed to the letter, will engage clients with their symptoms directly and change the neuro-chemistry of the brain in ways that are wholly self-generated.

Self Organization

The neural pathways of learning have been

well documented by scientists such as Joseph LeDoux in *The Emotional Brain*. LeDoux describes the chemical changes that strengthen and stabilize synaptic connections, resulting in what he calls the creation of “extinction-resistant learning” in the brain.

After conditioning, the response of individual cells to the conditioned stimulus is increased (the same input produces a bigger output). In addition, individual cells develop stronger interconnections, so that when one fires the others also fire.

Applying this critical finding in the context of self-organization, we can say that the procedures of the Power of Six condition the brain to learn from itself. This is no ordinary conditioner. It disentangles, improves manageability, and restores shine and vitality to the parts other conditioners cannot reach. The repeated question *And what else do you know?* becomes a conditioned stimulus that prompts not just more of the same with each repetition, but a series of enhanced outputs leading the client beyond rethinking and modified feeling to extinction-resistant learning.

Physical or psychological symptoms are not something to be feared, ignored or evaded. They are signals from the bodymind that it is attempting to heal itself. The Power of Six weaves a formulaic spell over such symptoms. It enables them to proclaim what they know, to reveal their strengths and weaknesses, and to tap their reserves – and yet to go further, for that is the nature of emergence. Information iterates and emerges as new knowledge that heals. ●

To learn more about Emergent Knowledge and sixness visit www.powersofsix.com This article is an edited extract from the book *The Power of Six, A Six Step Guide to Self Knowledge* by Philip Harland, dedicated to the late David Grove and published by Wayfinder Press. It is available via the powersofsix website and from amazon sites and bookshops.