



Listen More. Be More.

Course Book (Transcription)

Creating a Connection

Creating a Connection Part 1

Welcome to this first module where the goal is how to create a connection effectively. Before we look at creating a connection I want to invite you to get into the mindset to develop your mindset for creating a connection.

Prepare your Mindset

Firstly, you're going to want to be open minded. Be open minded about the person to whom you are going to meet. Be open minded about what you might learn, what you might discover about them and yourself.

Secondly, to be aware of your own possible filters. The filters that we have are those that have been developed, if you like, by our own education, our upbringing, our culture and we all have filters through which we take in information, so just to be aware of the fact that we have filters.

Then to be prepared to make an effort. Making a connection requires effort. It requires being proactive. Know that you'll need to be prepared to make an effort in order to create a connection.

Finally, to be positive. Be positive about the opportunity, about the experience you're about to have.

What is a connection?

First of all, I want to look at what is a connection? Well, the dictionary describes a connection as a relationship in which a person or thing is linked or associated with something else. It is the fundamental foundation for developing strong relationships. The ability to relate to others that creates trust and understanding. It's also the ability to see another's point of view and for them to understand you and it's a skill that anyone can learn.

Why is it important?

Why is it important for us in businesses and to be successful in our leadership to create a connection with others? Why it's important is that we tend to make most of our business decisions based upon our connections rather than on technical merit. Others are more likely to buy or renew a service from us once we have a connection. It enables us to have a more positive and successful interaction. Having a good connection with your boss and team members will lead to a happier and a more productive environment.

Building a connection and creating connections is more important than ever now and one of the biggest distractions is that of the internet and digital age, where often we're facing people losing the skills to make connections with others, instead relying on social media and emails and text message, Instagram and twitter, whereas there is no replacement for us to make a connection at the human level.

This is what will make the difference in you being an outstanding leader - your capacity to understand and to have the social skills in how to make a connection.

How you build a connection

Let's have a look at that now. How can we create a connection effectively? Well, there are a number of ways.

The first way is to **find a common ground**, to consider the person and the environment and then to ask a relevant question, for example if you're at an event, a conference, it may be the question you open up with is, 'What brought you to this event?' It's significant in that it relates to where they're at and where you're meeting them and it's nice and open and also it enables the individual to share what they want to share.

Secondly, to be mindful of your **natural filters**. We spoke about that just a moment ago, as you're wanting to find a common ground is to really be present with that individual and to listen carefully for what it is that they're talking about and what their thoughts and while at that moment is just quietening down any filters that you have that may be coming to the fore.

For example, some of our filters may be the way we see people from a different culture, a different background and the way they do things and express themselves is different

from the way that we would so be open minded in this moment and be interesting enough to learn from the other person.

Also, to think about what you're thinking and challenge your perceptions with reality. Is what you're hearing and seeing in alignment with what you perceived about the individual or are you making up assumptions about the person. Make sure that you do challenge what you're thinking before you make any conclusions or judgements.

Secondly, is to be **empathetic**. Being empathetic is about stepping into the shoes of others, making them feel felt and acknowledge their feelings. Secondly, to seek the scope of their feelings in terms of that you might say something like, 'I'm trying to get a sense of what you're feeling. Is it frustration?' and in this way they feel acknowledged and that you are empathising and are really seeking to understand who they are and what they're experiencing.

Also, to tap into their values and this is a way to, once you've established their feelings is to help them understand 'why', for example, 'The reason you're feeling frustrated is because,' and as you listen further you can hear what it is that's driving that frustration. Also then to help them move forward, to help them move forward by asking questions such as, 'What part can you play in making this happen for yourself?' Similarly, to encourage and support them and what part can I play in helping you move forward with what you want to achieve for yourself.

Next, to **authentically seek their values and beliefs**. For example, ask about what is important to them. When you're wanting to build a connection with people this is a really key way to have this deep sense of connection by understanding what their values are and it may be something like, you could say, 'I notice your sense of loyalty in the way that you describe that situation.' You're picking up already something that they value, loyalty. It shows that you're empathising and that you're seeking to create a deep connection.

Notice also their **character strengths and acknowledge them**. It may be, for example, you notice somebody being proactive, and again, by letting them know that you witness that and acknowledge them for that will help them feel a connection with you and that

they matter and in our business environment what people want most of all is to feel that they matter, that their contribution is valued.

And to **seek their thoughts and listen for their beliefs**. For example, you may be in negotiation or you may be preparing for a meeting that you're going to about a client or a deal or anything in particular and you might ask the person, 'And what are your thoughts?' on whatever it is that you're having a meeting about. Then as you listen carefully to them and they share with you, 'Well, you know I believe that we should be transparent about the price.' In that moment you have heard their belief. Their belief in transparency, honesty and integrity and you're getting to know them at a deeper level when you authentically seek their values and also what they believe in.

And to **be interested more than interesting** is a sure way to create a connection at a deep and powerful level. You see, the more interested you are in another, the more the other person becomes intrigued with you and the more empathy they feel towards you so in this level you want to have fun and genuinely seek to learn as much as you can from them. For example, you might ask questions like, 'How did you get into what you're doing? What do you like most about it? What are you hoping to achieve and why is that important to you?' These questions are focused on the individual. It shows that you're interested in them. It enables them to open and to create a relationship that you'll begin to have based trust and mutual respect.

What we've had a look at so far is, what is a connection? It's a relationship in which a person or thing is linked or associated with something else. Why is making a connection so important? Because most business decisions are based on our connections, rather than technical merit and it is a skill that is increasingly important in this digital age and how to make a connection. So far, we've looked at how to find a common ground, how to be empathetic, how to authentically seek their values and beliefs and how to be interested more than interesting.

We will continue how to create a connection in our next part of the module. I look forward to speaking with you then.

Creating a Connection - Part 2

Welcome to the second part of this module; How to Create a Connection Effectively. Previously we looked at developing your mindset for creating connection, what a connection, why it's important and how to begin to create a connection. Let's now have a recap. We looked at when we want to build a connection we know that we need to find a common ground with others, that we want to be empathetic, to authentically seek their values, what is important to them and their beliefs, what they stand for and to be interested more than being interesting.

Managing Language Patterns

Let's now take a look at other ways of how we can create a connection effectively, firstly by looking at matching language patterns. We interact with the world and gather information using our five senses through what we see, what we hear, what we feel, what we smell and what we taste. Using these senses, we then represent the world to ourselves internally. In NLP, neurolinguistic programming, these are called representational systems. Most of us have a tendency to use some senses more than others and individuals will exhibit general preferences over one sense than the other.

When we're looking to create a connection you'll want to listen for words and phrases that suggest a predisposition to a particular pattern or representational system. For example, those with a visual representational preference will tend to use visual language, for example, 'I see you like to picture situations.' Others may have an auditory preference, 'I hear that you enjoy the sound of that,' and those who have more of a feeling, what is otherwise known as kinaesthetic preference might use words such as, 'I feel that's important to you.' In order for us to gain a deeper and more effective connection with others it's to listen for these patterns in others and adapt our language to suit theirs.

Visual Eye Accessing Cues

An extension of this is something called Visual Eye Accessing Cues. Now William James, the author of Principles of Psychology back in 1890 first suggested that internal representational systems and eye movements may be related. This observation was not

explored further until the 1970s when Richard Bandler, John Grinder, Robert Dilts and others conducted further experimentation in this area. According to neurological research eye movement both laterally and vertically seems to be associated with activating different parts of the brain. In the neurological literature these movements are called lateral eye movements and in NLP we called them eye accessing cues because they give us insights as to what and how people are accessing information.

To get an idea of this I'm going to invite you now to grab a piece of paper and a pen if you haven't already got that with you. I want you to consider the following questions. As I ask these questions I want you to think about, as you think of the answer is to notice the directions of your eyes, i.e. where they move, up or down, or to the side or if your eyes don't seem to move to notice if you have any sense that you're looking in a certain direction, if only for a fraction of a second. So here's the first question and as I ask it and you think about the answer is to just take a moment to think about where did your eyes go as you concluded the answer and then all the way through for the others.

The first question is simply what is the colour of your front door? Next question, what will you look like in 15 years' time? Next question, what does your favourite music sound like? Next one, what would your voice sound like if you had marbles in your mouth? The next, when you talk to yourself, what type of voice do you use? And finally, what does it feel like to be in a warm, nice bath?

Here's the thing, as you reflect on those questions that I asked you, did you notice that your eyes had a tendency to look up for the first two questions, to the side for the next two questions and down for the last two questions?

You see in general, if you're making a picture in your mind, your eyes will tend to go up, either to the left or to the right. For sounds your eyes will tend to move laterally, to the left or the right and they will move down, either to the left or the right for feelings or when you talk to yourself.

More specifically, if you're right-handed you may have noticed the following and for many people who are left-handed you'll interchange left and right in the following.

Question one, which was, what is the colour of your front door, eyes tend to go up and to the left. This is a question about something you've seen before and hence you remembered it, what we call *visually remembered*.

Question number two was, what will you look like in 15 years' time? Typically, your eyes go up and to the right. This is because it's a question about something that I assume you've not seen before and hence you constructed this picture, i.e. looking into the future. It's called *visual construction*.

Question number three is, what does your favourite music sound like. Typically eyes remain on the horizontal plane and to your left because this is a question about something you've heard before, *auditory remembered*.

The next question was, what would your voice sound like if you had marbles in your mouth? Typically your eyes will stay horizontal because you're moving to something you've not heard before and so it's represented by *auditory constructed*.

Question number five, when you talk to yourself what type of voice do you use? Typically your eyes will move down and to the left because this is a question about your self-talk, what we call *auditory digital*.

Finally, the last question was, what does it feel like to be in a nice, warm bath? Typically eyes go down and to the right because this is a question about your feelings, i.e. *kinaesthetic*.

On this diagram these are what you would see for someone who is typically right-handed and if you were left-handed you would need to just swap those around.

Choose somebody to work with and just in general conversation notice what happens to their eyes in terms of where they move, either upwards, downwards or horizontally and you'll begin to get a connection with them and notice how they process information, either visually, auditory or kinesthetically.

Match and mirror body language

Another way to create a connection is to match and mirror body language. Now you may have come across this before. The key thing here is to do it subtly. For example, when in conversation with somebody is to lean forwards in order to create a greater connection or backwards in terms of how and where they're sitting. For example, if you're round a table and somebody is leaning forward into the table I would encourage you to do the same. Likewise, if they're very relaxed and sitting back on the chair is to do something similar.

Secondly, is to keep an open body posture. You will have come across or perhaps seen when people fold their arms or fold their legs it quite often means they don't want to open up and they can even be quite defensive while holding an open body posture, that means that you're interested, willing to listen and wanting to create a connection with that person. Finally, to mirror facial expressions and when you do so to be sure you do so with sincerity. As I mentioned, the key thing about matching and mirroring body language is to be subtle, such that people don't notice it but the more that we mirror others, the more connection we have and feel with each other.

Pace

Another way is to notice your pace, the pace of your conversation, to match that of the other person. For example, if someone is very excited they tend to speak very quickly and sometimes high pitched and in other cases if somebody is being quite reflective they may slow the pace right down and be quieter. When you're wanting to build a connection with somebody it's to notice the pace of their speech and to match that appropriately. There may be times when you want to help someone move forward and actually by changing your pace it will help them move forward as well.

Secondly, notice your own level of comfort or confidence. This will be amplified and demonstrated if you like in your own pace, if you feel comfortable and confident typically you'll speak with a pace that is self-assured and not too fast, not too slow but it just demonstrates that you feel confident in your own presentation and having conversation. People who feel a little bit anxious or nervous tend to speed up. They tend to get short of breath as if they want to get through it as quickly as possible.

Notice your own level of comfort and confidence in terms of how you pace the way you interact with others.

As I mentioned, when you slow down the pace this allows for greater connection and also enables the person time to think, to think about what you're saying, to think about their own response and taking in the information that they're discovering from you and time to think about the question they want to ask you to get to know you more.

Appearance

Another aspect of creating connection is all about appearance, so to think about who you are going to meet with. Is it somebody more senior to you? Is it one of your peers, your colleagues, or is it people who you are a role model to who in fact are more junior and it is thinking about how you want them to perceive you in the role that you undertake.

Think about the location and the environment. Are you dressed appropriately for where you are. I recently went to visit a client and it was for a large organization, they invited me to one of their offices that was out of town. What I didn't realise was that they were going to show me around the operational aspect of the organisation, which involved a big storage area and seeing some of the robots in action and it was fascinating but when I turned up in my usual gear, thinking I was going to the head office, which it was but I didn't realise it was the operational unit, people were more casually dressed, so think about the location and the environment, in terms of the way people dress so that you can be appropriately dressed for the occasion.

I say that, choose appropriate attire because it also helps others feel comfortable. If you're dressed up to the nines with a collar and tie or a suit and they're open necked shirt or very relaxed in smart casuals they may feel uneasy, but at the same time it's important to be true to yourself, so dressing in a way that's appropriate to who you're meeting, the environment in which you're meeting and a way that will enable other people to feel comfortable as long as you feel and remain true to yourself.

Practical Tips

I'd like to offer some practical tips that you can take away and start implementing today in order to create a connection effectively.

Number one is to **make eye contact** at least 70% of the time. Now you may feel that this is uncomfortable but when we make eye contact with another it does show that we're interested and that they matter and when I say making eye contact it's when you're listening to someone that your eyes can stay on the eyes of the person you're talking to, because as we've just discovered, when we're speaking and someone's asked us a question, as we're thinking our eyes will wander. It depends on what we're thinking about, whether they go up, to the side or down. When you're listening to somebody and making a connection with them, ensure that your eyes remain a soft eye gaze on where their eyes go rather than a hard stare.

Use and repeat an individual's name. This can be really helpful, not only in anchoring their name so that you remember it but people feel valued when you use their name so use it appropriately throughout the conversation.

Smile. It might sound obvious but a really strong way to build a connection is by showing a smile. In fact when you smile it often triggers a positive response in others.

Ask open questions. Open questions such that you get to know the person, such that you show your interest in them.

When you're in agreement with someone, let them know. Acknowledge them for their thoughts and their views and let them know that you agree too.

When you're not in agreement also let them know, but first acknowledge their view and then offer your own different view and the reasons why. You see, it's ok not agree with someone and still be having a strong connection but the key thing is to ensure that their view is valued because it's their view but you don't have to agree to it and you can offer what's different about yours and why.

Admit when you are wrong. This is one of the areas where we want to create a connection that's really important and it's one of the things that can absolutely wreck a connection, when someone feels so strongly about their position and they're not willing to admit when they've made a mistake or their idea wasn't the best one or the right one at the particular time.

If we want to establish a deep connection with others we can admit when we're wrong and to **appreciate a quality** that you recognise in the individual. Again, this really helps to develop a strong connection, a connection that's based on trust by appreciating a quality, something that you recognise in that person, will make them feel valued and make them feel that they matter.

Action Steps

Let's have a look at your action steps. How and what can you put into play right now so that you can become even better at creating connections for your business?

Action #1

Action number one, first of all is to complete the representational system preference exercise in your workbook so that you can discover your preference. Do you, for example, have a tendency towards visual, processing information perhaps, or even auditory or kinesthetic. Review the different language patterns that we use in order to listen and also the preferences of others. When you do this and in the workbook you will see some sample phrases that people will use which will help you identify their preference because we've spoken previously about how to adapt your communication style to others and this is another way that you can do that. When you begin to pick up on the language preferences for others you can create a deeper more effective connection with them.

Action #2

Action step number two, I'm going to invite you to watch TV or a movie and turn the sound down, just for a few minutes and I want you to look at the non-verbal communication and specifically what do you notice in relation to the gestures, the facial expressions, body positioning and any matching or mirroring. As you watch this I would

like you just to make some notes in your journal and think about whether or not these people that you are watching if they had a good connection and if so, how can you tell?

Action #3

Action number three, when you're next in conversation with someone that you've just met I'd like to invite you to keep good eye contact, as I mentioned before at least 70% of the time. Use their name and repeat it throughout a few times. Notice their body language and subtly match it. Be curious and really interested in them with lots of open questions and reflect on your interaction. Make a note in your journal in terms of how did it go. What worked well for you?

Action #4

Action four, this time I want you to find someone else to work with. When you've got this exercise is only going to take about five or six minutes is to think about a topic that you both agree on. Discuss the topic for two minutes but I want you to show and be disconnected with that person. Think about the kind of behaviour that you want and how you show up that demonstrates you are not connected, you are not interested in that person and yet you're discussing a topic that you both agree on. Now I want you to think about a topic that you disagree on. Choose something that you have opposing views on or feel differently about. This time, discuss the topic again for two minutes but this time being in connection with that person. Again, think about the types of behaviours and how you will show up in this discussion in showing them that you're connected with them and yet you disagree on the topic. What did you notice? I'd like you to just reflect on that experience and note down in your journal what it was that you noticed in these two exercises.

To summarise, the most effective way to achieve quality relationships is to look for the best in others and then help that best into its fullest potential and you can do that by creating a connection. The goal today was how to create a connection effectively. I encourage you now to complete those action steps, to review and to record what you learnt and relearnt for yourself. I look forward to speaking to you soon on our next module.

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