

most exciting theory of the first year was the discount matrix: because here was a road map, a treatment plan, for working with denial. I loved it but it was the one piece of TA theory that I could not share with my clients; it was too complicated.

Over time I found myself discussing the *existence* and the *significance* of major problems that they were discussing; and the possibility and desirability of making different *choices*.

Discounting was almost always on the level of 'Significance'.

What I was intuitively doing was working in a single column of the matrix, as indicated at the base of Fig. 1.

The model of Antecedents, Behaviour, Consequences, was already being used by CBT trained therapists. Now I think of,

- Present: Accept that there is a difficulty.
- Past: What led to being in this difficulty.
- Future: What can be done to minimise the

impact going forward or avoid this situation in the future.

Now, just one column of the grid is considered at a time, as shown in Fig. 2, and this was my CBTA (Cognitive Behavioural TA) approach to working with people on a community drug addictions program.

It indicates a clear line of contracting, from clarification of the problem to commitment to change that the client has identified as feasible for them, in a way that is easily communicated. It automatically gives responsibility to the client and clear indications of progress.

This diagrammed, structured, approach can also 'anchor' Aspies in an otherwise potentially stressful 'open-ended' process. Even the purpose of 'exploration' is given a place.

Anger management

When I started working with children, I realised that many had never had the resolution of difference, misunderstandings or disagreements modelled in their family. They would come, angry, frustrated, and in trouble because their angry feelings got expressed in angry behaviour; shouting, intimidation, violence; either emotional deregulation or behaviours that had been modelled for them.

They were experiencing something that angered them; other people were responding in a way that did not work for them. They were experiencing discounts; so now these steps became a tool for assertiveness. (See Fig. 3)

Some Aspies have trouble identifying their feelings, so they may need help to express the *significance* of what is happening in language that is meaningful to them and understandable by NTs. When working with clients who are developing friendships or romantic relationships, the *significance* is that 'I don't like/want that' – and in a relationship where you say you care, that should be reason enough for change. (See Fig. 4)

With most clients, we will draw this diagram with the statements to be made to the other person filled in below each step. Then I can coach them on how to say what they want to say. Then they take that with them. In one diagram we have the Awareness of what they want, the Permission to act on that awareness and the Program, the Adult means to deliver the message.

The most generalised form that I teach to students, Fig. 5, is framed as the 'bullseye' form of a negative conditional stroke – because you can hit every level of discount in one sentence.

Being able to express to another person what it is that reduces your comfort or trust in a relationship is the way

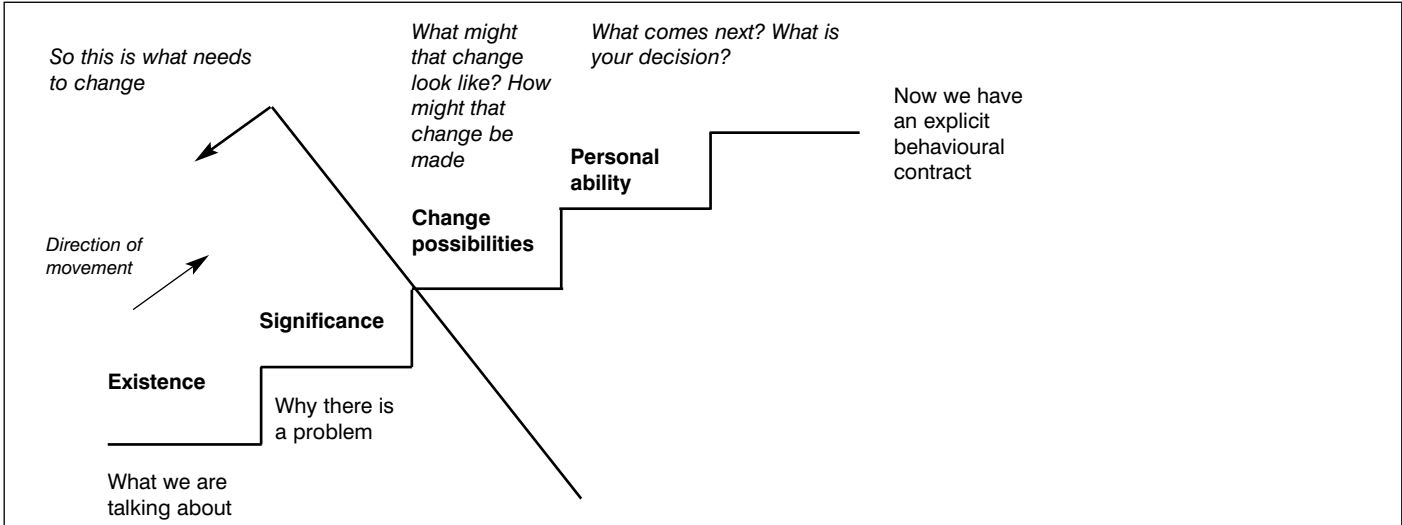


Figure 2: From denial to change. Diagramming a treatment plan

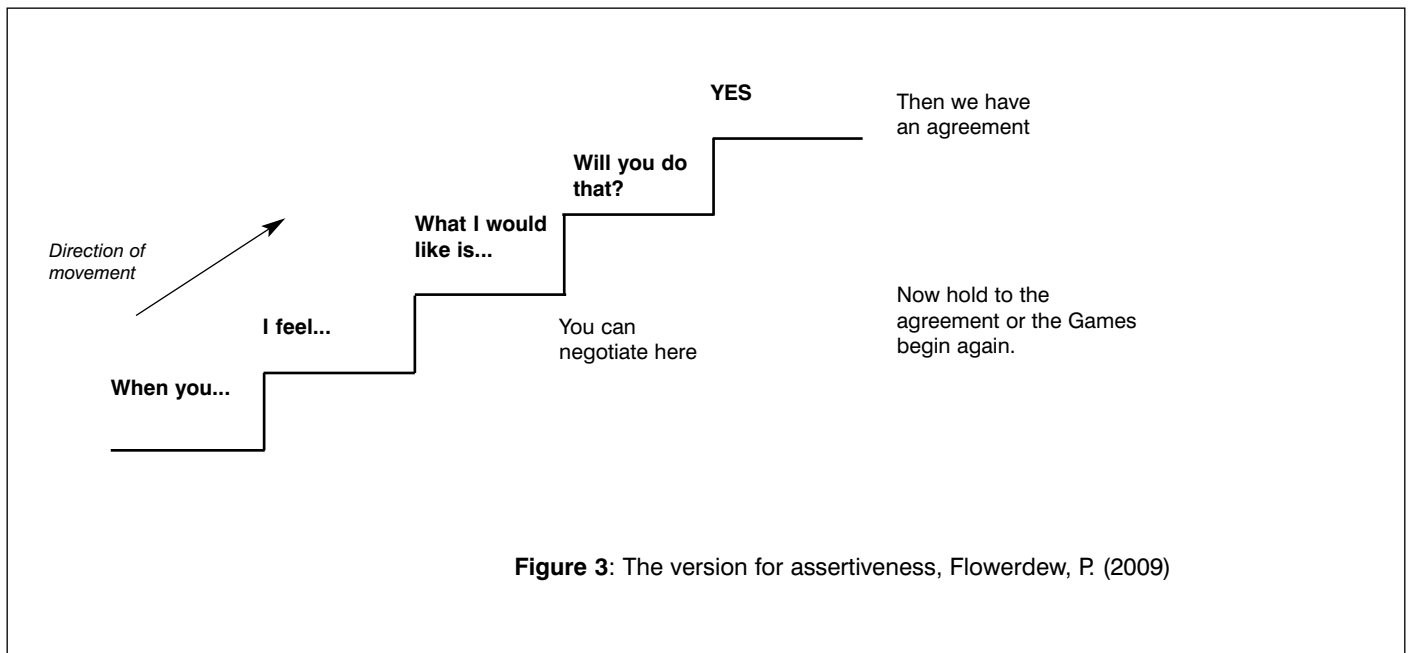


Figure 3: The version for assertiveness, Flowerdew, P. (2009)

to achieve a sense of safety. We cannot keep ourselves safe if we are unable to protest and be heard. So, I consider this the single most important tool in relationship building. My catchphrase is: 'if I can tell you what I don't like and expect to get less; and I can tell you what I do like and expect to get more; then this relationship is becoming more valuable to me'.

A bit of theory

I am aware that in educational TA (Napper & Newton, 2000) and developmental TA (Hay, 1995) there are 'step' processes based on addressing levels of discounting. These, I understand to focus on the development of an

individual or the management of change in an organisation. The tools I have outlined are designed to improve personal relationships by addressing Rackets and Games; they are fundamentally relational, can be placed within the model of Time Structuring (the next article) and can be understood as sub-elements of the discount matrix, as indicated in Fig. 6.

The steps can be applied to the present situation, to the antecedents or the consequences. If applied to all three, that creates the matrix (Fig.1). The steps and the matrix can be applied to 'self' or the 'other' or to the 'situation.'

If the conditional negative stroke is not accepted, the

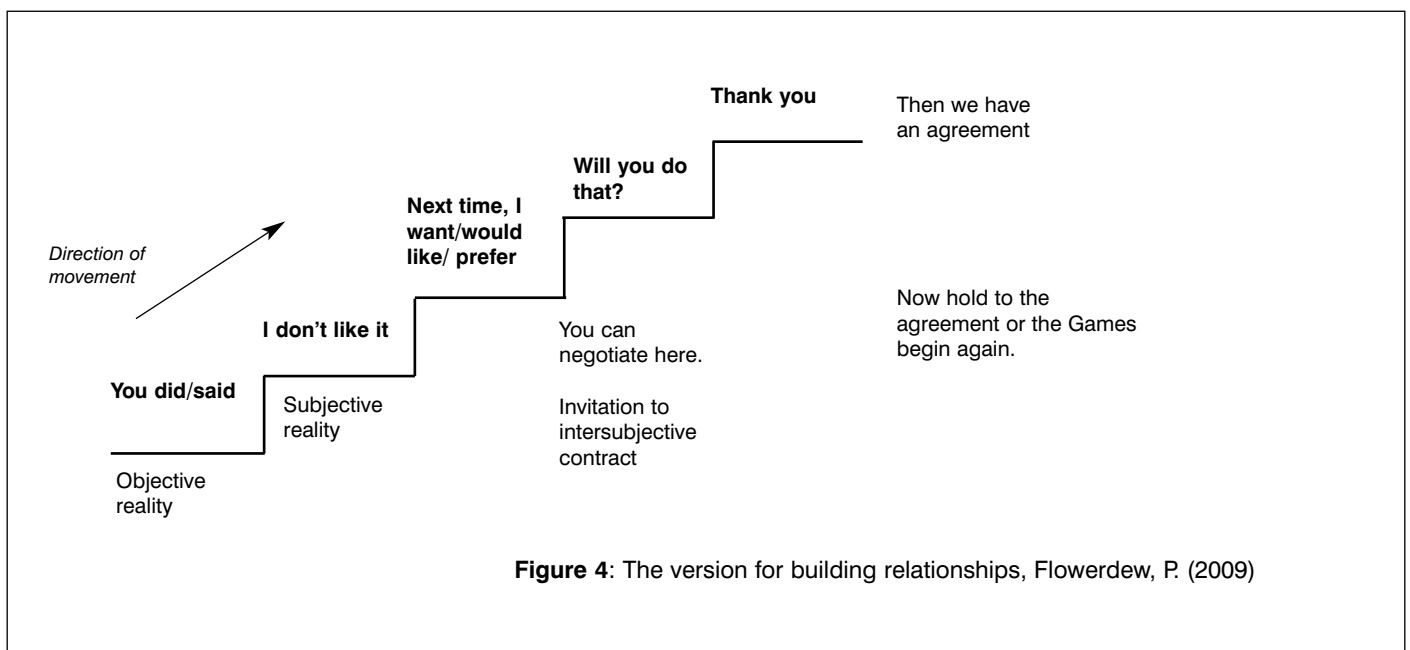


Figure 4: The version for building relationships, Flowerdew, P. (2009)

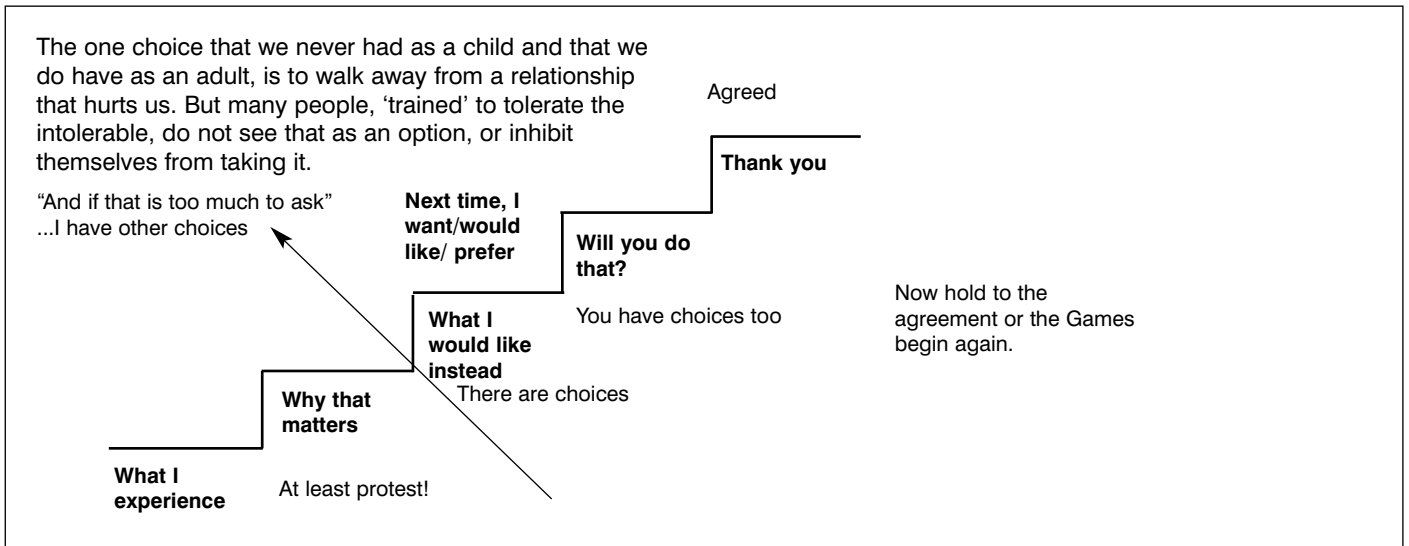


Figure 5: Steps to change a relationship. Flowerdew, P. (2009)

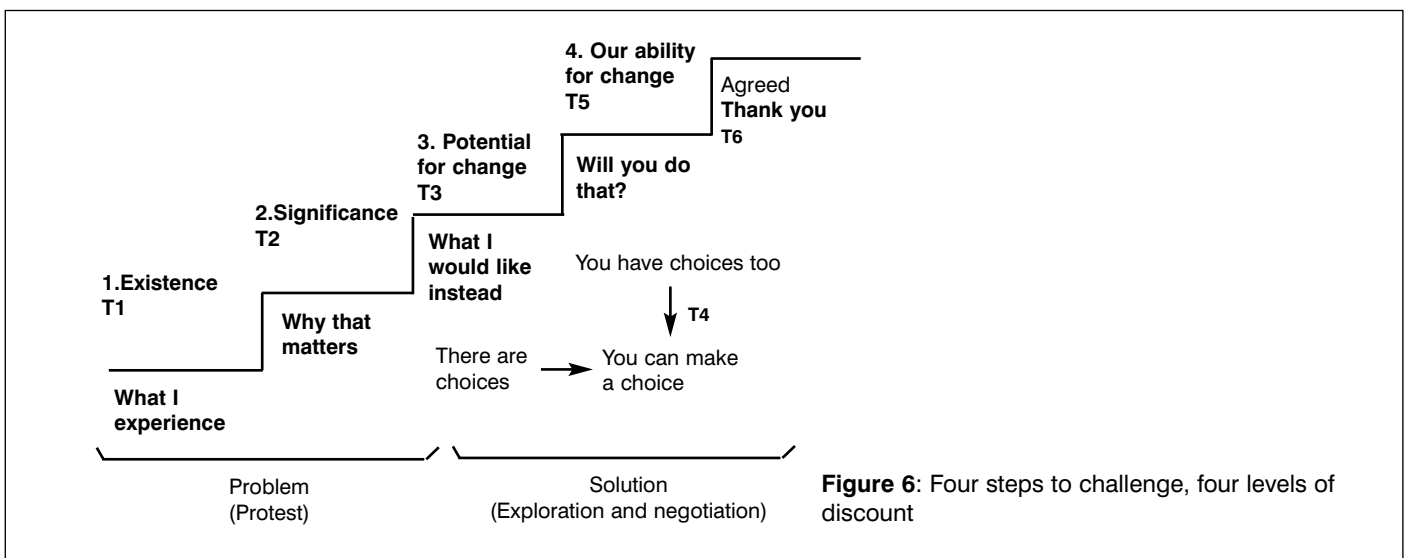


Figure 6: Four steps to challenge, four levels of discount

person using the tool can identify on which step the discount is occurring and address it; then move upwards through the remaining steps.

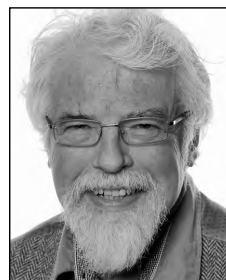
I hope that you find these tools useful for yourself and for your clients.

References

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- 1 A Neurotypical: in this context, someone not an Aspie.
- 2 Someone with significant traits of Asperger's Syndrome –unhelpfully conflated with childhood autism in DSM5, but differentiated from it in ICD10



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