



## The Rhythms of Time...

In **Charles Faulkner's** previous article, *Worlds Within a Word*, he elaborated and applied the Cognitive Linguistics commonplace that a basic conceptual metaphor for Time is Space. Charles presents a model of his work on TimeLines and asks, **HOW** do we experience a journey along our Source-Path-Goal?

Natural language examples include: "Going for your goals," "Overcoming obstacles," "Getting through a rough patch," "It was worth it to get here," These are expressions for our biologically embodied experience of life having the qualities of Source-Path-Goal. We are somewhere and to get where we want we take a Path. Every Path has four distinct characteristics: Location (here/there), Distance (near/far), Direction (on/off) and Momentum (slow/rapid). The Environments of a Path has five distinct characteristics: Blocks and/or Gaps, Terrains, Burdens, Persons and Personifications, and Energy.

My claim is that through successive and successful experiences with thinking and acting as if Time is Space, we will tend to specialize into just a few of these nine characteristics. If "breaking through" was particularly and/or consistently successful, then new situations which are conceptualized in terms of Time is Space will also be experienced as opportunities for "breakthrough." At a certain point, either through over application of a particular metaphor and/or a specific misapplication of that metaphor ("breakthrough relationships"), there will be diminishing returns.

At this point, we will usually seek a way to increase the amplitude or the intensity of the current metaphor in order to achieve results similar to our past experiences. Counter to this formula, I suggested that the prevalent metaphor is over-generalized, and that a return to using less prevalent metaphors within the same structure, such as "getting back on track," "taking it one step at a time," "smoothing things over," "no one can hold you back," or even "topping off your

tank” will have the effect of reducing reliance on the prevalent metaphor and reactivating a greater portion of the range.

In the late 1990s, I began to wonder: If Source-Path-Goal are WHAT we experience when we make time into space, HOW do we experience that journey along our paths? I very quickly realized that despite the popularity of Timelines, it was not linear. What follows is the model from that work.

When Time is Space, physicalizing time on a line, even one unseen, is easy. It's simply a matter of showing the inner spatial relations by the outer spatial relations – one of the many inner uses for outer space. And when it's 'in' outer space, it's much easier to observe how movements along someone's timeline often indicate corresponding states and strategies. External stops and starts can be matched up with internal difficulties and motivations, outer efforts with inner struggles, and plodding along with a resigned and limiting belief.

Whether it's seen on the inside or outside, how we move along our Path from where we were (Source) to where we're going to (Goal) is different from the characteristics of that Path as well as different from our metaphoric formulations. The Terrain of our Path may be an up hill climb (characteristic) and we might lag behind (metaphoric formulation). How we organize our experience to overcome this is how we experience time. If we do more and more, and more and more, our experience is that of gathering up (or gathering in) and then doing it again, and again, and again. Our “subjective experience” of time has a sense of periodicity, a rhythm without conclusion, because there is always more. Contrast this with someone who is always pressing forward. Here there is constancy, but without conclusion. Contrast that with the experience of after the peak is reached. When that happens, some of us will rest since the way we organize time is one thing after another.

In 1970, Eric Berne, the founder of Transactional Analysis, published a book in which he described his correlation of six life scripts with six distinct sentence patterns. He named these scripts: never, always, until, after, almost, and open-ended. Someone with never would never complete anything. Someone with always had to stay the same. Someone with until had to wait for something to happen. Someone with after had something bad coming. Someone with almost would never get there, and someone with open-ended didn't know what would happen. Berne's considerable clinical experience gave him great insight and a bias toward bad endings. Of the six scripts, only open-ended had an opportunity to turn out well.

Meanwhile, most of us know some people who turned their lives around for the better after getting married or the first child is born. The idea that there is only one of six scripts for each living person belies the enormous variety of lives people live. With due respect to Leo Tolstoy who wrote, “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way,” my own experience is that there are very few families that fully fit either of these categories, and certainly not as Tolstoy intended. Most of us have many moods and most of us know that our unhappiness is much more predictable than our happiness – with and without our families. Berne has made a beginning and there are certainly more patterns than the six he describes. What is needed is to ground his clinical insights in neuro-linguistic observations.

The Presuppositions The Subordinate Clauses of Time (before, after, during, as, since, prior, when, and while) and the Change of Time Verbs and Adverbs (begin, end, stop, continue, proceed, already, yet, still and anymore) contain many of the ways in which we experience time. Time can have the qualities of before and after, of always or never, of sometimes this and sometimes that, of only this or except that, of its already having happened, of later, of last, and of now. As I set out to enumerate these different qualities of time with their corresponding natural language, I became acutely aware that established linguistic categories are not designed with this task in mind. So I reorganized them into as many primary experiences of time as I could find. They are rhythms in the sense that they punctuate our experience of time. And they are rhythms in how they combine with other rhythms to create a specific 'beat' that makes sense of our own and others' experience of our life-time.

It was here that a very observant colleague, Cathryn Modrall, pointed out that just as time takes on qualities beyond a line, time also exceeds the list of natural language presuppositions containing its name. As she described her experience with professionals possessing (or possessed of) a particular language pattern, I recalled a retort of John D. Rockefeller. He was already one of the richest men in the world when he was asked, how much money is enough? His response – “More!” She went on to

explain its presence in people with addictions and addictive behavioral patterns. And More is everywhere. The most common conjunction is and – an example of more. As well as as well as, and also, and while. More has a lot to do with Causal Modelling and more prevalent than I knew. I would soon find that was the case with most of the rhythms of time.

The Rhythms of Time are the different ways in which we experience time. They can appear alone, in sequence, simultaneously, combined, embedded or hierarchical to one another. The listing below starts with the name, then offers a simple symbolic representation of one form of the rhythm followed by some natural language examples. Whenever possible, the right hand column offers how people have characterized their experience of the rhythm.

### The Rhythms of Time™

Name	Symbolic	Natural language	Experience
Now		now	
Begin	[+     ]	first, begin, start	
Always	[     ] or [+++]	always, forever, still	
During	[ [ ] ]	as, while, with, along	
Never	[- - - -]	never, can't	
More	[ , , , ] or [+ , + , + ]	and, also, while, more	[Addiction]
Only	[+ , but   ]	only, except, but, however, although	[Compromise]
Sometimes	[+ , , + ,   ]	sometimes, whenever, often	[Dilettante]
Almost	[+++   , +++   ,]	almost, soon, nearly, next, not enough	[Over & Over]
Enough	[+ , + , + , =]	enough	[Satisfaction]
Until	[   , ++]	until, before, unless, if only	[Frog Prince]
After	[+++ , - ]	after, then, once, since, when, therefore, too late	
Otherwise	[   (   )]	stop	[Catastrophe]
Already	[+] or [ ]	(looking into past or future)	[Déjà vu]
Later	[.....(+/-)]	later, after while, soon	
Last	[..... +/-]	last minute, nick of time, eleventh hour	

After you've familiarized yourself with "the rhythms," you'll begin to notice them in what you hear and read. Sometimes this happens after only a little exposure, although some people like more review until they're easy. When you apply them to an area of your experience, or if you are a counselor, coach or consultant, to the experience of another, you will develop an even greater appreciation for their pervasiveness.

I recently did a demonstration with an older woman whose sentence structure tended to compound phrases and changing Perceptual Positions when not lacking one completely. This created a fractionated rhythm of sometimes this and sometimes that. She confessed she would finally act at the last minute. Her Rhythm of Time can be described as More Sometimes Last. She has wanted to move house for some time and needs to do a clear out, and she hasn't. When asked if this is a familiar pattern, without hesitation she answers that it is very familiar, and she



wants to do something about it.

This familiarity – across contexts and time frames - is something many clients have shared with me. This may indicate the fractal nature of these time patterns. Since these rhythms are scalable, their neuro-linguistic expression in a single sentence can be a kind of kernel of the person's life story or script. We all know someone who is waiting until After that promotion. Or someone who Sometimes does one thing and then another, but Never excels even though s/he is multi-talented. Or someone who Almost makes it, again and again. And, of course, then there are those who want More.

These life rhythms are immortalized in folklore, fairytales and children's stories. Pinocchio is an example of a positive After story, while Sleeping Beauty combines a negative After story with a positive Until story. Meanwhile in so-called real life fairytales, Bill Gates, Don Trump and Paris Hilton live for More while Oprah Winfred Already has Enough.

Returning to the demonstration, what I want to do is reintroduce Rhythms of Time she's forgotten she knows. Like so many unseen things on her shelves, these patterns are near, but not utilized. I suggest she mentally place her goal in front of her and walk a bit of her timeline between here (Source) and there (Goal). I watch her plodding distracted steps and after a few instruct her to step off with a deep exhale. She does so and I guide her back around to before the spot where she started. I suggest there are many things she is Already doing and continuing to do. She readily agrees and begins to talk to me about one. I see her accessing that rhythm and I suggest that she could sense in it her mind's eye and mind's body and taking it with her as she (now) walks that timeline and notices what happens. With large smooth strides she makes her way ending well beyond her imagined goal. When asked about the situation, she reports it is much smoother and easier and that she feels freer and has already set to it in her mind's eye.

That same evening, I talk to a professional musician whose sense of his practice is to do more and more until it meets a very high criteria, except that he doesn't do it well enough and must again do more and more. This is a typical, and unhappy, use of the More pattern – cycling around and around exceeding many other professionals in the world, but not in one's own mind. So after having him create a short stretch of his timeline that embodied these rhythms, I offered him the possibility that sometimes he didn't make the criteria and sometimes he did, and to take that into his timeline and notice what happened. He expressed relief and lightness and acknowledged that indeed he effort did, on occasion, meet even his own high standards.

A businessman explained his strategy for becoming rich. His investments are sound and they will pay him quite handsomely in the future, though they are not paying well right now. I suggested to him a pattern that a "market wizard" shared with me. "Right now, your investments are making you money. Think about it. Right now, people are working to help make you rich. Whatever their occupation, they are practicing it and when they apply it for you, they will be even better. Right now, certain friends, family and colleagues are holding in their minds thoughts and encouragements for your success. Right now and every now." The structure of this is simply to bring to now the success so many put only in their futures.

And so can you. Have the time of your life.

**Charles Faulkner is an internationally recognized NLP trainer and modeler. He is the author or co-author of 10 titles including the ground-breaking *Metaphors of Identity* (1991), the popular book and audio program *NLP: The New Technology of Achievement* (1994), and the NLP training and coaching game *Trimurti* (2001). His modelling of futures traders is featured in numerous books – famously, *The New Market Wizards*. Recently married to a UK citizen, he divides his time between the US and the UK, between research and training, and between family and friends. This article is an excerpt from his forthcoming *The Cognitive Unconscious – How Metaphors Shape Our Meaning*.**

For more on Charles work go to [www.influentialcommunications.com](http://www.influentialcommunications.com).

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