

## *Practising Purposefully*

# SYSTEMIC PRACTICE

## *CMM*

*Coordinated Management of Meaning*  
(V. Cronen & B. Pearce)

### What is it?

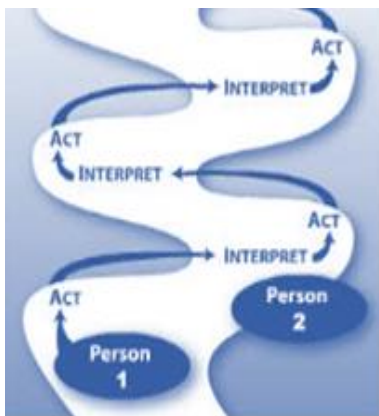
It stands for **Coordinated Management of Meaning** and is a practical communication theory which helps to make sense of the **context of language**. We can use it to examine use of language, reoccurring patterns in conversations and how to intervene and change unwanted/unhelpful patterns of communication.

The key theorists for this model are **Vernon Cronen & Barnett Pearce**. They viewed **language as a tool** or a resource which once better understood could be used more intentionally to help people in their relationships.

Each time we use a word we are making decisions about how to communicate, i.e. what our intention is behind the chosen words, the tone used to speak it, our morals about how to speak to each other, whether to obey our emotions or not in the language used etc. Cronen & Pearce say we should be looking **AT** communication not through it. It is more than mere words.

There are four models within this theory which are used to examine language:

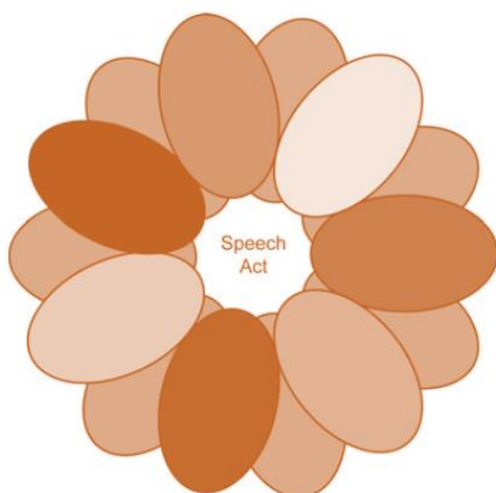
### The Serpentine Model



This model helps us look at our habitual responses in communication. Sometimes we provide answers without properly listening to the question or always respond in a certain way, such as always from a defensive standpoint without understanding what the other person's intentions were. We can become locked in patterns with another person – often these can be unhelpful such as during an argument.

At each of the 'acts' a person has a choice to make in how they will respond, this might be influenced by what emotions are elicited for them, what intention they have behind what they are saying, their interpretation of what kind of conversation they are having etc.

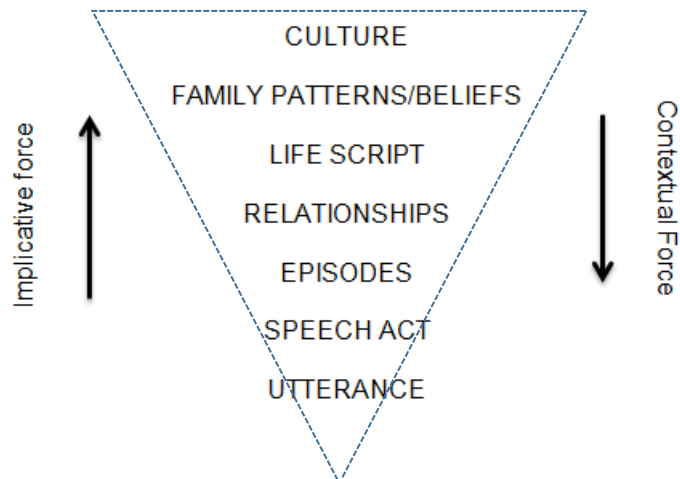
### The Daisy Model



To unpick the meaning behind the 'acts' of language you can use the daisy model. We never say all that we expect to be heard (although our body language, facial expressions, tone of voice can provide hints to the other person). We are always in more than one conversation at a time as our past stories provide meaning & motivations for the present conversations.

If we put the speech act in the middle we can unpick alternative ways of responding, explore emotions felt, beliefs about the conversation that come to mind, how we feel/think about the other person, hidden stories from our past which impact how we react etc. We bring all this into the consciousness. Once explicit we can make better communication decisions.

## The Hierarchy Model



This model is used to consider how beliefs at a higher context level (such as culture) give meaning to the lower levels of context (such as relationships). All of it feeds down into the very 'utterances' we use every day – our spoken words. It provides a context for our conversations. So, "I would say *that* because...of my relationship with you / how I was brought up / how we speak to each other in my family / how our society/culture expects us to communicate".

The section of the conversation which is held in the serpentine model could be seen as an 'episode' of speech – so a conversation about a certain topic, punctuated (start/stop points) wherever and however you wanted to, could be the episode. E.g. an episode of discussing who's making dinner, a conversation framed as 'sadness', a conversation at work, a chance discussion with a stranger at the bus stop etc.

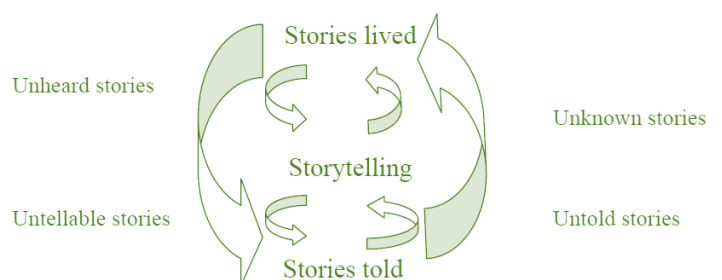
All episodes take place in the context of a relationship. Depending on the relationship between the people having the conversation, we will see different episodes and speech acts. E.g. I might swear in front of my friends down the pub, but not in front of my children at dinner time.

Relationships are seen in the context of our life scripts, which are seen in the context of our family patterns & beliefs which are based in the context of our culture.

If we ever get stuck in communication with someone it is helpful to think of the hierarchy and ask a question at a different level or remain curious about what is driving someone's behavior. This model can help people to understand their patterns of communication. It can free them from some of those patterns by understanding themselves and what influences them better.

## The LUUUUTT model

The LUUUUTT model unpacks the multiple stories that co-exist that can force us to act in certain ways. We have stories from each level of context (above). All have their own logical forces of what should and should not be done/said.



**LIVED** – what we actually did, day to day/ moment to moment

**TOLD** – What we say we did – an edited version of the stories lived, depending on the audience/relationship. We edit it within the 'story telling'.

**UNHEARD** – stories not recognised or heard properly, not enquired about by others.

**UNKNOWN** – missing information about an event/idea/belief. Yet to happen perhaps

**UNTOLD** – choose not to tell – yet. Might depend on the listener/relationship

**UNTELLABLE** – forbidden, stories around shame, guilt, embarrassment, abuse etc.

We should treat all stories as incomplete, biased and inconsistent - they are all valid within the person's perspective and thus, as workers, always be curious about other people's stories.