

# Potent Alchemy

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## Potent Alchemy

... **simplicity** in complexity ... **possibility** from improbability ... **adaptability** from fixidity

### 'Knowing' comes before 'knowing we know'

Last year I sent out a tweet: *'We can't see what we can't see until we can'*. As ever, I was commenting on something that suddenly had become blindingly obvious to me. I was reflecting on how I had come to 'know' something and realised that it had 'come upon me' over time. My knowing had to be present and playing within me before I could see it - before I could become an observer of 'it revealing itself through me'. In other words, my knowing had become embodied (in me) long before I could consciously articulate it - long before I had the language to express it in a way that I could begin to pass on to others. Is this the Way of learning?



Walter Freeman (2007) says *"the Self can only know and incorporate what the brain has created within itself."* I think he is alluding to the theory of autopoiesis proposed by Maturana and Varela (M&V). In essence, Freeman is suggesting that we learn only when and if we create that learning within ourselves. Nothing you do or say can **'make' me** learn on demand. You might offer up something in a particular way that acts as a trigger but neither it (the trigger) nor you can drive or determine if I will learn - and if I do, what I might learn, how or when. The corollary of course is also true..... I cannot guarantee you will learn either!



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### Breakthrough Learning Opportunities 2015

**For Practitioners who work with/ support others**

✿ **Embracing Complexity**

**Edinburgh: 19 Mar, 17 Sept**

✿ **Systemic Coaching with The Potent 6 Constellation**

**Edinburgh: 20-22 Mar, 18-20 Sept**

**For people in business, organisations, Sport & the Arts**

✿ **1-1 Confidential sessions for people who want change**

**Edinburgh/Glasgow, London/Claygate**

**Other locations may be available on request**

**For Practitioner opportunities:** [Eventbrite](#)



Think about the learning process of a baby, a toddler, a youngster getting to grips with the physical, social and emotional world around and within them. They don't have well-formed complex linguistic faculties to draw upon. Their monumental scale of learning comes, not through a conscious prescribed (linear) process of being told something and then following instructions, but through a complex interaction of visual, auditory, physiological and kinaesthetic cues and a whole bundle of practical experimentation. The baby learns to walk, the toddler to talk - and parents delight in the magic moments when those first steps and first words come forth. No one can predict when those events will actually occur.



Each child's learning is emergent and the best we can do, is try to influence it. As parents giving the best of ourselves, we may offer love, attention, repetition, illumination, curiosity, time and space for exploration and experimentation, encouragement and celebration; we express wonder, delight and compassion. We try to limit the worst of ourselves and hope we happen to be around when our child's sudden transformational shift of capability occurs. We can find explanation in diverse complexity sciences that offer us powerful lenses to better see and understand what is going on; and language through which to express and share what transpires.

Yet this complex, emergent reality does not sit well or easily with conventional beliefs and practices around teaching and skills development - and it certainly does not fit with policy-makers and decision-takers in governments, educational institutions and organisations who demand defined performance results and expected returns on investment. They would have us believe that learning outcomes can be invoked on demand. They can't.



## Fiona in the Frame

Hi, I'm Fiona Frame, Louie's Virtual PA from [Outsource-Typing](#). I am delighted to be able to write a column for you in this newsletter – thanks Louie! I'll take some inspirational sources and give you my view on them – please feel free to contact me regarding any comments you have! Here are three inspirational – and in the case of Pranav Mistry from MIT, simply tech-spectacular! – *TED Talks* we want to share with you: [Sugata Mitra - New Experiments in Self-Teaching](#), [Navi Radjou - Creative Problem Solving in the Face of Extreme Limits](#), [Pranav Mistry - The Thrilling Potential of Sixth-Sense Technology](#).

Navi Radjou's resonated most with me. Watching it brought to mind a clip I saw recently from the US programme [Shark Tank](#) featuring a moving presentation from a citrus farmer in Florida. His name is Johnny Georges and his company is [Tree-T-Pee](#). His product is a cone-shaped water and nutrient containment system which fits around the base of a tree and works to keep in moisture, thus using 90% less water, fuel and nutrient. As water resources in the western world are now starting to be affected, his invention is not only ingenious, but also responsive to change.

I particularly liked that Navi sees these inventors as "magicians", being able to master the art of "frugal innovation". Resource constraints are now starting to affect us all, therefore we need to close the gap and co-create to make more of what we have in delivering important services with and for people globally. These common-sense approaches of "doing more with less", as Navi puts it, remind me that, as my father used to say

Our challenge as change agents in this hostile context, is to become artists at influencing the conditions in which systemic learning might emerge.

It occurs to me that as adults, with our greater linguistic capability to fall back on, we may be in danger of limiting our capacity for learning by giving priority to the spoken and written word. Our reliance on words is not surprising. Language affords us the opportunity to evoke emotion and pass on meaning across time and place. We can write and then have our words conveyed across the world without our ever having to be present to deliver them. With present-day technologies, our reach can be unimaginably vast. And yet, without us to deliver our own words and enter into a generative conversation with others, there is always the risk that our intended meaning can be lost, confused, misunderstood, misrepresented. It is unsurprising that in this online landscape more people are taking advantage of audio visual media to convey their messages - so you can 'hear and see' rather than simply read. The potency of the person and the personal is powerfully demonstrated through the best of TED talks and YouTube videos... some of which you can read about from Fiona elsewhere in this newsletter. Perhaps our next offering later in the year might come in the form of a video!

So as I bring this newsletter to a close - I am reminded how vital it is to learn from how our children learn. If their capacity for learning is anything to go by, then amplifying our use of multi-sensory exchanges might prove more efficacious than the frequently emotionally-arid, word-dominated, aesthetically-sparse realms of adult teaching?

## 2015 invitations

### For Practitioners:

Our next training cycle in March is upon us. If you want a multi-sensory learning experience to deepen and extend your agility, fluency and artistry as a coach, facilitator, supervisor or therapist then do join us on our 1-day workshop: **'Embracing Complexity'**. Be ready to work with others and to stretch and play across the realms of what is known and unknowable; simple and complex; predictable and surprising!

If you feel ready to take your personal and professional mastery to a whole other level, then we invite you to sign up for BOTH **'Embracing Complexity'** and our 3-day course **'Systemic Coaching with the Potent 6 Constellation'** both of which can be booked by clicking this link ==> [Eventbrite](#). Do be aware that you cannot do the 3-day without first having attended the 1-day workshop with Louie. ONLY 6 places

often: *"necessity is the mother of invention"*.



## Emotions - friends or foes?

Over my 31 years of full-time work, I have discovered that very many adults have come to fear their emotions. I used to be one of them. Then I discovered that if I viewed them as simple data - when I paid attention to them - they opened up a portal through which I could begin to understand what was happening to me. I began to see and appreciate that there was a complex dynamical interplay going on inside me.... and over many years of living and learning, I began to see patterns and to discover what seemed to bring those patterns into play.

My very short story is that decades on, the Potent 6 Constellation came into view. It is the distillation of my life's learning thus far and I draw on it every single day - in my life, my work, my relationships with others; in the groups I facilitate; the organisations in which I consult and with the individuals I coach and supervise; and the friends and family I support. To aid the recognition and naming of emotions I created the (c) Emotional Palette.



They are beautiful, practical; and surprisingly powerful in how they illuminate and create the potential for personal change.

As a client of one of our recently trained Coaches exclaimed:

***'Moving around the Potent 6 Constellation enabled me to step out of the chaos .....this was probably one of the best coaching sessions yet, I can see it so clearly now!'***

available for these sessions in Edinburgh.

#### 1-1 Confidential:

We work with people in public sector, health, business, sports and the arts. If you want to find out more about our **Executive, Performance or Life-changing Coaching**, please email [Louie](#)

#### Organisational Consulting in complex scenarios:

For facilitation services (conflict, planning, teams etc.), Leadership Development, Organisational Change and stakeholder engagement projects, please email [Louie](#)

**And if none of this is a fit for you right now.... may I simply wish you well for 2015!**



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