

Basics of psychology of mind psychology essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Psychology of Mind, also known as Health Realization and Philosophy of Everyday Living, shares NLP's experientialist orientation. Like NLP it originated on the West Coast of North America in the 1970s, took a radically different approach to mainstream psychology, and expanded from therapy to use in other settings. However, the differences are more interesting than the similarities.

In this article I outline some basics of Psychology of Mind or POM. It is only fair to warn readers that this is equivalent to someone writing about NLP after a foundation course and reading a few NLP books. Someone with more experience of POM may well question my summary. There is also the issue of examining one discipline through the lens of another. By way of analogy, a psychoanalytic review of NLP would provide a poor introduction to NLP.

I have three main reasons for going ahead with the outline. Firstly, NLP has its origins in the study of effective psychotherapists. Psychotherapy requires communication with people who may be overwhelmed by their emotions, experiences and unhelpful beliefs. An approach that works in therapy, despite such impediments, is likely to have applications in the wider world. POM is very different from the approaches to therapy known to me.

Secondly, POM appears to have succeeded in a range of areas from business leadership through to coaching through to "difficult to treat" groups such as drug dependants and the long-term mentally ill. POM already has wider applications than many other therapies. Thirdly, to date no one else has offered to write in Rapport about POM.

In the article I present beliefs as I understand POM holds them, rather than repeatedly saying POM believes, POM claims etc.

Background

While working on culture change in BT I learned that another project, The Advanced Leadership Programme (ALP) was being made available to senior managers. POM, though not mentioned by name at ALP events, was a key part of that programme. I was intrigued by some of the ALP ideas and how they impacted on people who adopted them.

Often concepts introduced as part of a change programme are altered to suit the perceived needs of the business or to keep people in their comfort zones. I was curious to learn about POM from primary sources.

The website dedicated to POM, www.pomhr.com, provides information about how POM is applied in different settings. I was particularly impressed by reports of “ Health Realization Community Empowerment Programmes” in a number of U. S. high crime areas and POM’s positive impact on burn-out in the helping professions. While the website was tantalising I did not understand how POM worked. Later I realised that one barrier to my understanding was expecting to learn a number of techniques. POM is very wary of techniques and claims not to use them.

Through the web site I contacted Bill Gleave, a UK business leader. Bill had attended a POM seminar in Switzerland a year before and had decided to underwrite bringing POM presenters to the UK. Last year Bill and I organised the first, public POM workshop in the UK as a not-for-profit event.

The Origins of POM

In 1974 a Scottish immigrant in Canada, Sydney Banks, had an experience that turned him from an unremarkable person into one with profound insights. Despite his limited education, after this experience Sydney profoundly influenced many people with advanced qualifications. In 1976 he met two traditionally qualified therapists, George Pransky and Roger Mills. Pransky, Mills and others applied the ideas of Banks to therapy and POM was born. In 1981 the first annual POM Conference was held and in 1990 the first book on POM, “ The Serenity Principle” was published.

Two Types of Thought

Free-flowing

Effortless, non-fatiguing, enjoyable

Intelligent, lucid, intuitive, creative

Ideal for when we don't have “ all the information”

Useful for “ too much data”

Comes from a free & clear mind

Depth of Flow thought is variable depending on quietness of mind

Thoughts may appear random but are purposeful

Negative thoughts may come up but are not held onto

Generates universal emotions such as contentment, joy, compassion, humility, humour

<https://assignbuster.com/basics-of-psychology-of-mind-psychology-essay/>

Process

A learned way of thinking that relies on memories

Compares, sorts, evaluates, computes, calculates and plans

Requires effort / has a stress factor

Most useful when variables are known and we have a formula

Highly prized in western culture

Excessive Process leads to stress, anxiety, boredom, depression and panic

Because it needs effort, children are at first reluctant to use it

Education is overwhelmingly about Process thinking

POM on Thinking

Each person is capable of two types of thinking – Free Flow or Flow and Process

Both types of thought are useful. Both can be misused but most problems arise from inappropriate use of Process thinking. In Process we are working with memories. Even thinking about what might be relies on memories being accessed and utilised. When memories are negative and we dwell on them this generates negative feelings. A typical response to a negative feeling is to focus on the feeling or the thought that first led to it and this response maintains Process thinking.

Process thinking finds it hard to resolve problems where there is incomplete information. Process is helpful when we have all the information we need

<https://assignbuster.com/basics-of-psychology-of-mind-psychology-essay/>

and know the “ formula” to apply. Flow is much more useful when we do not have perfect knowledge, when there is just too much data to make sense to analyse, or when we need to be creative. From Flow we can access Process thinking as needed.

Everybody has both types of thinking but the proportions vary enormously. The proportion of and quality of Flow has major implications for an individual’s sense of well-being and general resilience.

Flow is associated with “ the zone” in Sport and other states where people “ just do it”. NLP modelling of excellence frequently finds people using “ Flow” type states. One of the challenges of transferring the results of an NLP modelling is helping others to access this kind of mental processing. I think POM’s experience of Flow and Process may be of assistance here.

In Flow thoughts may appear to be random and diffuse but are responsive to the present. For example, a hungry driver in Flow would notice where food was sold. And someone looking for a solution to a technical problem would have insights relating to this. However, there may also be insights about related potential situations not previously considered relevant. These types of insights are called epiphanies, vertical jumps or moments of truth. Flow makes more of our resources available to us.

Flow mode does not necessarily produce pleasurable thoughts but negative thoughts are not held onto. They pass through uneventfully and, in profound Flow, may even heal old hurts and promote forgiveness.

Even when used productively Process thinking produces a certain amount of stress. When misused it can lead to high stress or chronic stress. George Pransky claims overuse of Process thinking is “ equivalent to sleep deprivation” and that “ All chronic stress and distress come from one source - the misuse of processing thinking”.[1]

The feelings from Process thinking are learned in individual ways whereas Flow generates emotions shared by all humanity. The particular emotion that Flow generates depends on the focus of the moment. For example, a focus within leads to self esteem, a focus on the future yields hope, a focus on the present produces peace of mind, and a focus towards the past makes for gratitude.[2]

Essence of POM

The practical essence of POM consists of two things:

Learn to recognise when we grind our thoughts in Process mode, counter-productively.

Learn to respond to inappropriate use of Process by switching to Flow.

Recognising Process is relatively easy. Feelings tell us what kind of thinking we are using. With practice, thought recognition becomes automatic.

Learning to switch to Flow may be more difficult we are all familiar with this type of thinking. We lived in Flow as children and every adult has moments of Flow.

It is a case of rekindling or building on what is already there. No matter how damaged someone may appear to be, provided that there are lucid moments, the POM approach can be used.

Poor Thought Recognition

Experientialism emphasises that we do not perceive reality. Each person's perceptions are unique because sensory data is translated into subjective experience. The system for translation is complex and involves:

What energy the eye and brain register

What else one is paying attention to, externally and internally

The bio-chemistry of the brain and body at a particular moment

Which parts of the brain get involved and to what extent

What the neural networks associate information with

How language/thought is used to model perceptions

POM shares NLP's emphasis on the subjectivity of perceptions. People are taught to expect that others will have different points of view. POM links rigid views with poor mental health. Roger Mills writes that, "The ways that people tend to become attached to their separate reality tends to reinforce and perpetuate insecurity".[3]

The ability of people to recognise the subjective nature of reality is POM's measure of mental health. At one extreme are those who suffer paranoia and hallucinations. Consider a man who hears a voice telling him to run naked in

the High Street. If this man believes that the voice is an external and authoritative reality, he feels compelled to obey. A person with excellent mental health accepts that all perceptions are “ created” and knows how to change feelings by using a different type of thinking.

For POM, mental health is more about understanding thinking rather than observable behaviour. Behaviour follows on from thoughts and the feelings that come from thoughts. Poor “ thought recognition” leads to searching for the causes of unhappiness. This searching focuses on unhappy thoughts and feelings and is likely to make us feel worse. Poor thought recognition also supports expectations that happiness can come from what we acquire or do outside our heads.

On the ladder, Profound well-being is marked by frequent, deep levels of reflection in flow mode. An individual secure on this rung will not just feel extremely well but just by interacting with others, will help them to feel more positive.

Just below what POM calls “ The Mental Health Line”, is the level of Chronic low stress where people can still perform at work and have stable relationships but enjoyment is impaired by stress.

At Chronic deep distress - “ Every thought is real, creating an intensely frightening reality ... protecting themselves from this “ reality” is a full time job”.[4]

Listening

POM applies the distinctions between Flow and Process to listening (see Figure 3). The more people are in Flow when they listen the more they are paying attention not just to the speaker but also to their own insights. I think Flow listening is akin to states described in New Code NLP[5] where one tries to limit the effect of previous experience on perceptions and be open to other possibilities.

While POM emphasises Flow and listening to someone talk, I think the model is applicable to reading, viewing, listening to or creating music, physical sensations and activities.

Understanding = Understand another's reality by being open to my own insights. These insights connect data that we previously thought was random.

Implication = Attentive listening but the need to make sense in terms of what we know already interrupts access to Flow.

Application = Listening to be able to apply what we already know. Access to Flow is limited by commitment to our own agenda and models.

Agree / Disagree = Listening in order to judge in terms of what is true in my reality.

Hear My Story = Listening for openings to tell how my experience is different or similar.

Not Listening = My thoughts are not related to what the speaker says or repeatedly drift from related to non-related thoughts.

State Management vs. Moods

POM tempers its experientialism with a pragmatic acceptance that people have moods and that fighting a mood fuels it. POM teaches people to distinguish between a passing mood and a more lasting problem. When you sense this is not mood in which to make a decision, wait for better time. If your mood is off and you can defer tackling someone about an issue or repairing the vacuum cleaner, then wait for a more useful mood.

The habitual pressure of many jobs means that people feel enslaved by schedules. I appreciate POM's attitude towards moods, both personally and intellectually. For me it is a commonsense that I had not articulated before encountering POM. While I still practise and teach state management, POM gives extra choices.

In therapy and coaching I have begun to pay more attention to the mood of the client both on arrival and through the session. I try to match the more challenging or uncomfortable work with when the client is in a better mood. There are many NLP techniques for helping a person feel more resourceful. I still use these. If someone is in a good mood to start off with, it is like topping up a half-full glass rather than half-filling an empty one.

Using POM with Other People

There are a number of POM concepts of special interest for people working as coaches, therapists, and consultants. Not all of these are new or unique to POM.

<https://assignbuster.com/basics-of-psychology-of-mind-psychology-essay/>

For teaching others:

Listen in neutral to gain understanding of how the person is thinking

Teach only what you know (mea culpa)

Teach in an impersonal way - getting involved does not help, stay out of the details, and maintain a wide, clear view. Point to logical consequences rather than giving personal opinions.

Teach in real time, work with what is going on now.

Teach healthy functioning, how to distinguish between Process and Flow and how to access Flow more readily

Notice small changes and ensure the individual also notes and appreciates them and where they have come from

POM emphasises:

The health of the helper, one needs to be living what one is teaching

A "state of service" - not working from a personal agenda

Noticing and appreciating innocence (similar to the NLP concept that at some level every behaviour has a positive intention)

Paying attention to health: the task is to attune people to their innate potential

The need to build rapport and maintain it

Asking permission to teach- not assuming that your agreed role means you can do whatever seems appropriate to you

Humility – avoiding any feelings of superiority, treating others with respect, not condescension

Compassion rather than sympathy. Sympathy is seen as encouraging a person to wallow in the mire of their emotions

POM is psycho-educational. It seeks to assist people by teaching them how they can deal with the present and how thinking works. For example, what is the difference between a passing thought and a thought attack or how self-fulfilling prophecies happen.

POM does not seek to transform past experiences by accessing and “reprocessing” them. It believes people spontaneously deal with trauma when they are ready for it. Focusing attention on painful experiences encourages Process Thinking. It is the greater use of Flow that will hasten the spontaneous transformations.

Be Here Now

One of the messages of POM is “ Be here now”. This saying reminds people that they can only really deal with one thing at a time and the things to deal with are those where one can make a difference now. The difference can be either to one’s feelings or to the physical world.

“ Be here now” applies as much to leisure activities as work tasks. For example, how easy it is to spoil the immediate joy of a holiday by thinking

about what it doesn't have that last year's vacation did have. Or instead of appreciating a painting to be thinking about where you might go for lunch.

POM sees a link between being in the moment and Flow Thinking. If we are remembering something else or thinking about our future then Process Thinking has taken over.

To be here now, POM recommends four things:

Listening for understanding

Accepting when you do not know the answer

Having faith that Flow thinking will come up with answers

Having faith in the "back burner"; believing that once you have absorbed the elements of a situation you can leave it and solutions will pop into your head at a later stage.

POM Workshops

People going to POM workshops expecting them to be like NLP will be disappointed. POM is averse to the use of techniques. The emphasis in my workshop was on each person discovering what POM believes is true for everyone through a combination of teaching, question and answer, exercises, meditations on questions and group reviews.

I did detect techniques at my workshop. These are things that I assume POM culture adopted because they were found to work. I do not believe the presenters consciously used them as techniques. Here is an example of one of the techniques I noticed.

<https://assignbuster.com/basics-of-psychology-of-mind-psychology-essay/>

At several stages of the workshop we were asked to reflect a particular topic.

Two examples of the topics were:

What happened when you listened to other people's introductions?

What do you need in order to experience something as if for the first time?

Only on one occasion was a question written on a flipchart. More typically, the two presenters would take it in turns asking the question in slightly different ways. A question might be asked as many as eight times with different emphases and presuppositions. Most people would think the purpose and effect of this elaboration was clarification.

The effect on me of this approach was two-fold. Firstly, before the reflection began there was overloading of my conscious mind. I was in Process mode trying to remember each of the alternatives. Then as reflection began there were wider and deeper transderivational searches (the process by which we look for meanings to give to words). As I tried to relate the meaning of one phrasing to another my inward focus became stronger. Overloading, transderivational searches and inward focus are all ways of inducing trance.

Some trances share much with Flow mode. It seems to me that one way of helping people to experience or access Flow is through trance induction.

NLP & POM

I think NLP has a deeper understanding than POM of how beliefs are acquired and changed. POM certainly fosters particular beliefs but I suspect it goes about this somewhat blindly. NLP is very innovative because it uncovers

underlying structures and looks for models outside NLP. POM is more of an orthodoxy and appears less interested in learning from other approaches.

POM has a mystical undercurrent. However, the presenters I worked with were at pains to make clear that religious or spiritual beliefs are not required. Humility is often mentioned and demonstrated. After the commercialism typical of much NLP I found POM refreshingly unworldly.

For NLPers POM is a rich source of thinking and beliefs that have helped people make profound changes in different settings. NLPers could bring to POM richer models of how we put together our subjective experience.

My intuition is that POM will have lasting appeal only to those NLPers who feel relaxed straddling two very different approaches. My hope is that more will join me to explore POM and to enrich ourselves and NLP.

Taking POM Further

Like NLP, I think POM is best learned experientially. POM uses both one-to-one and group or workshop experiences. If you wish me to inform you of future POM events in the UK send me an email and I will notify you. Please note that I have no financial interest in these workshops and this year I am not an organiser. wendwell@btinternet.com

If you want to read more about POM, I recommend beginning with “ Slowing Down to the Speed of Life”. It is well written, readily obtainable from larger bookshops and online retailers. “ The Renaissance of Psychology” is a more comprehensive introduction and deals more with POM as therapy but appears to be out of print. (Note May 2001 - it is out of print and George

<https://assignbuster.com/basics-of-psychology-of-mind-psychology-essay/>

Pransky has decided not to reissue it) “ The Health Realization Primer” also provides insights into POM as an approach to therapy.

Paul Burns is an Organisation Development Consultant, Psychotherapist and NLP Trainer. Paul and Sue Crofton provide employee assistance, OD and HR consulting through their Wendwell Partnership. Paul has a particular interest in mentoring/coaching, employee focus groups and Action Learning.

Books

Bailey, J. The Serenity Principle, 1990, Harper, San Francisco

Carlson, R. & Bailey, J. Slowing Down to the Speed of Life, 1997, Hodder & Stoughton, London

DeLozier, J. & Grinder, J. Turtles All The Way Down, 1987, Grinder, DeLozier & Associates, Bonny Doon, Ca.

Mills, R. C. & Spittle, E. B. The Health Realization Primer – Empowering Individuals and Communities, 1998, R. C. Mills & Associates, Long Beach Ca.

Mills, R. C. Realizing Mental Health – Towards a New Psychology of Resiliency, 1995, Sulzburger & Graham, New York.

Pransky, G. S. The Renaissance of Psychology, 1998, Sulzburger & Graham, New York.

© Paul Burns 2000. This article may be used free of charge provided that the text in this box appears with each copy

wendwell@btinternet. com www. wendwell. co. uk Tel. 020 8385 2900

<https://assignbuster.com/basics-of-psychology-of-mind-psychology-essay/>