

*“Phil Parker has a way with words, and can teach you how to take command of your emotions, feelings, and hangups. Very cool!”*

**Prof Dan Moerman**, Author of *Meaning, Medicine and the 'Placebo Effect'*

*“The dû is an essential tool in any adventurer's armoury. It gave me the perspective I needed to continue.”*

**Ed Stafford**, the first man to walk the entire length of the Amazon

*“Phil Parker's latest book is extremely educational and presents a practical philosophy on life changing language patterns.*

*I've seen patients stuck in disabling dysfunctions achieve outstanding objective improvements in their health through practising these very considerate and careful suggestions.*

*I hope the importance of this innovative approach to medical health will spread rapidly to the practice of medicine and to all who need it. I feel we are in dire need of it.”*

**Dr Susy Mikkelsen**, MD, Dip Musculo Skeletal Medicine

*“This timely and important book teaches us the language of health. It explores a practical approach to the philosophy of salutogenics, teaching the reader how to think in a way that helps their health.*

*Phil Parker's book is, contrary to most works on language and its effect on health, easy to read and understand, and incredibly useful. Phil Parker offers us a way of thinking that will lead to positive changes in our consciousness and lead to constructive actions to free patients (and in fact any reader) of the unhealthy burden of certain hidden but destructive ways of thinking. The way he explains the effect of language on our life and, especially, the life of a suffering person, is very clear and I think very useful for the patient.”*

**Dr Jens Torning**, GP and Psychotherapist

## **Phil Parker**

DO Dip E Hyp P NLP MBIH Certified Master Practitioner of NLP

Phil Parker is an internationally renowned lecturer, therapist and innovator in the field of personal development. He has also changed the lives of thousands of people by designing the groundbreaking Lightning Process® seminars.

His core principle is that people are geniuses with amazing skills, qualities and talents, and he hopes he can help as many people as possible to find that out about themselves.

One of Phil's core developments is to introduce a whole new way of thinking about problems and solutions which has required the creation of the new verb 'dû'. The usage of this new concept and word is already rapidly spreading throughout the world, and Phil's vision for it is for it to eventually become part of everyone's everyday language.

Phil has created a wide range of books and audio programmes which have helped many individuals conquer stress, anxiety and panic attacks, sleep issues, weight issues and enhance their personal and professional effectiveness. His work has been translated into a number of languages.

Phil divides his time between his work, family, big motorbikes and loud rock music.

Follow the world of dû by going to [www.duing.org](http://www.duing.org)

# **Dû – Unlock your full potential with a word**

**Phil Parker**

**Do Dip E Hyp Psyc CMPNLP**



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And thanks to all those who continue to bring possibility, love and laughter into the world.



# Contents

<b>1. Beginnings</b>	<b>1</b>
How to use this book	1
What's it about?	2
This book and the Phil Parker Lightning Process (LP), Phil Parker Peak Performance (P4) and other programmes	3
What if?	5
<b>2. Talking Yourself Into Trouble</b>	<b>8</b>
The Negative Want	9
The Brain and Negatives	11
Hidden Negatives	15
Health Wants	17
Wellness and Disease Scales	20
Hidden Traps	24
<b>Other Publications/Courses by Phil Parker</b>	<b>26</b>

## **This Book's History**

During the course of writing this book it's had many working titles ranging from 'The book of dûing', 'Language - the rocket fuel of change' and 'On the stroke of midnight' to the final decision you see on the cover.

'On the stroke of midnight' came a very close second, as it so nicely conjures up both the changing of the date, year or millennium, as well as that moment in fairy tales when everything shifts; the carriage becomes a pumpkin again, the dress turns back to rags. And yet in the fairy tales not everything does return to as it was before; Cinderella's glass slippers for example stay changed, but even more importantly, once the new way of how the world could be is glimpsed, it can never be seen in the same way again.

You will hear echoes of this in the fairy tale woven through the book.

## 1. Beginnings

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*Once upon a time there were three little piggies; the cleverest, brightest eyed piggies you ever did see; all day long they snuffled and oinked happily, as they dug for acorns and truffles in the sunshine - until one Wednesday, at the height of summer, just on the stroke of midnight...*

### **How to use this book**

This book has been designed to be a practical guide to making your life better using the ideas and tools that it presents. In order to get the most from the book I recommend that you work through the suggested exercises as you go through it, although if you're anything like me, you'll skip these bits and come back to them later, kicking yourself for not doing it in the suggested order in the first place!

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In this book you will find a few words of jargon, like 'Language Pattern'. I will explain each technical word as it occurs in the book to help you become more familiar with them. I have also included a glossary of terms at the back of the book to help with this.

### **What's it about?**

I hope you will find this book as intriguing to read as it has been to write. Inside you'll find a practical approach and an in-depth consideration of three main themes:

- Discovering that the way we use our words is the secret to changing our future for the better
- Looking at the world, and the nature of reality, in a completely new way
- Considering a new and life changing philosophy

Apologies - although I used the 'ph' word, philosophy, so early in the book, please don't run screaming from the book shop where you're hiding from the rain or killing time before meeting a friend, quite yet. In my experience books about philosophy and language and the nature of reality are usually exceedingly dull and impenetrable, however I hope this book will be quite different. I hope it will be something that easily makes sense and can be applied immediately to the way you think, to rapidly improve your life and future.

As with any discussion involving a philosophy, it will evoke one of a series of possible responses. You may feel these concepts are something you have a degree of fluency with already and embrace them further. Or maybe you might initially be quite surprised by the newness and unfamiliarity of this approach. Or you may even possibly feel outraged by some of the ideas

presented, as on first reading they can appear quite challenging.

I hope that wherever you begin from you will be able to appreciate that the purpose of presenting these ideas is not to threaten anyone's world view, but to open the possibility of seeing things in a different way, so that if you ever find yourself stuck and decide that your current approach isn't delivering the solutions that you deserve, you will have another way to consider your options and maybe find a way through.

### **This book and the Phil Parker Lightning Process (LP), Phil Parker Peak Performance (P4) and other programmes**

As the designer of the LP, P4 and a number of other life changing programmes, there are bound to be some of you reading this because you have an interest in these. Others may not have come across the LP, P4 or my work in general, yet, so I'll include a very brief summary of these two programmes.

The LP is a profoundly transformational personal development programme. Run over three days, it is designed to help people make important and vital changes to their lives and health.

There is much literature about the LP but very little detailed information of the contents of the training programme. There are a number of reasons for this:

Firstly some of the core concepts presented in the seminar can initially seem quite challenging and complex. The seminar has been designed to allow for adequate and extensive discussion of these concepts, so that the participants have a good and full understanding

of them - but this makes it difficult to produce any brief synopsis that summarises the seminar contents effectively.

Secondly the LP is partly a personal journey, where some of its elements are best discovered whilst being guided and supported by a trained professional - a journey, which again, is very difficult to replicate and manage through just reading about those concepts.

The P4 programme is a two-day intensive change programme developed especially for peak performers in all fields, including business executives, creatives, sports performers, and extreme athletes and explorers. It trains people in how to achieve un-precedented levels of success in all areas of their lives and work. It too is an interactive training, which packs in a wealth of information and ground-breaking, easily implemented tools into a very short period of time.

So this book is not a 'how to do a Phil Parker seminar at home' book. To get the full benefit of one of those seminars you will need to attend one. It does for the first time, however explore some of the core concepts that drive and are an essential part of the LP, P4 and the other related programmes that I have designed.

This book also provides the right kind of forum for introducing these complex concepts. It should provide an opportunity to explore, explain and discuss them in a deep enough way that most readers will come away with a good enough understanding of what this philosophical approach is and how to use it practically in their lives.

## What if?

Philosophy, by its nature, is a best guess, or a model of how things might be, and although most philosophies start out as that, as time passes and they become more familiar and accepted, they begin to be seen as something quite different. They begin to be thought of as 'the truth', however as Nietzsche rather caustically stated

*“All things are subject to interpretation whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth.”*

The philosophical approach of this book is quite new, it doesn't have a long history or massive acceptance within humankind, so let's begin from the premise that maybe nothing in this book is really true. For some of you that might be a bit of a relief, as that perspective frees us up from having to either accept everything, or to challenge everything within these pages; instead treat this as just a discussion, a chat in the philosophical bar of life.

So if we don't have to accept any of the contents of this book as a truth, then what is the best way to approach it? My experience is that the most effective way to consider the ideas presented is not to ask, "Is this true or false?" but to ask instead, "What would happen and what would be different if it were this way?"

This approach has interestingly been behind some of the most radical advances in science which the noted scientific historian Thomas Kuhn has called 'paradigm' shifts (Kuhn, 1962). A paradigm (pronounced *para-dime*) is the word used to describe an idea that has become so familiar and accepted by experts that it becomes **the** explanation of the way something is. An example would be the idea that gravity is responsible for causing an

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object to fall when you let go of it. Kuhn describes a paradigm shift to be when the whole of a completely accepted concept and all the implications that come from it becomes obsolete. So if we were to discover that it was not in fact gravity that made objects fall but the downwards flight of billions of flying microscopic bacteria (it isn't) that was really responsible for the movements of the falling objects then we would have to reassess many other things that were based around our idea of gravity and its effects.

Radical advances and paradigm shifts occur when sufficient evidence comes to light to suggest that the current prevailing view (the best guess that has become the accepted truth) no longer fits the documented facts.

Science is riddled with such shifts, a famous example is the shift in ideas of what was at the centre of the universe. From at least the 1<sup>st</sup> century the Ptolemaic model of the universe (named after Ptolemy, a brilliant Greco-Roman living in A.D. 90) was the accepted truth. It stated that the earth was the centre of the universe and everything rotated around it. It took fourteen more centuries, and quite a period of transition to shift to the current Copernican model (named after Nicolaus Copernicus, 1473-1543). In this model the earth is considered to rotate around the sun and the sun is considered to be centre of the solar system, but neither are considered to be the centre of the universe.

The previous version of truth seems, historically, to cling on for as long as it possibly can, desperately avoiding extinction or change with the resilience and tenacity of a drowning man clinging to a sodden, sinking log.

Eventually it is finally replaced by the newer model which often, within a generation or two, becomes the new truth, and the cycle begins again.

*"A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it." Max Planck (Nobel prize winning physicist)*

So, my hope for this book and ideas within it are that they encourage you to make a small shift, a major shift or a paradigm shift in your world view that gives you a better chance of a happy and fulfilled life. Certainly thousands of others who I've presented these concepts to have done just that. I also hope that the ideas presented here are never taken as a truth, as the transition to that state tends to cause stagnation, righteousness and conflict. I would rather that they continued to be considered as a set of possibilities, albeit very powerful, empowering and life affirming ones.

So, why all this focus on science, philosophy and the nature of reality? Well, in this book we are going to go on a, hopefully, exciting journey of exploring what we think of as reality. And that's pretty important because all our decisions, choices and judgements, whether brilliant or disastrous, are based on what **we** think is real.

The journey begins by looking at one of the most important and often overlooked influences of success and disaster in our lives – language.

## 2. Talking Yourself Into Trouble

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*...for on that Wednesday night, just on the stroke of midnight, one of the piggies woke up with a start and realised that something was very different. He sniffed the air, and there was no denying it - the beautiful scent of the Enchanted Acorn was drifting on the breeze. Legend had it, as every young piggy in the world knew, that a piggy could find the secret of contentment once they dug up the Enchanted Acorn. The piggy woke up his friends, but even before they stretched, yawned and grumpily rubbed their eyes, the scent had disappeared, like mist in a forest.*

*Maybe, they suggested, the piggy had been dreaming, maybe he should stop thinking about the Enchanted Acorn and that fairy story for babies, and maybe he should eat less cheese before bed and keep his late night delusions to himself...*

Having spent years listening to people talk, both in everyday conversation and in therapeutic situations, I was consistently amazed at how much of what people say was either a vast and unpleasant distortion of reality or made the world a much more difficult place for them to live or be happy in. It appeared that people were unwittingly spending a lot of time *talking themselves into trouble*.

And often, it seemed, when people weren't talking in this way they were thinking it.

Of course it would be wrong to generalise and claim that this applies to all people all of the time but in my experience it was just far too common.

The focus of this book then is to explore and address some of the commonest types of troublesome language, and the first of these is the use of the 'Negative Want'.

### **The Negative Want**

The Negative Want is such an important pattern to notice and change. It shows up in so many places, each time

preventing life from being exciting, vital and fulfilling - spotting and dealing with them is an essential skill for getting a life you love. Spotting Negative Wants becomes even more useful when used in combination with the other main concepts we will be covering in later chapters.

It is easy to spot, as it classically shows up when someone expresses a desire for something, but instead of saying what they want, they say what they don't want. Consider the following example:

Barman: "What do you want to drink, sir?"

Customer: "Oh, not beer please."

Barman: "Excellent. So you don't want beer. What do you want?"

Customer: "And tonight I don't feel like a gin and tonic."

Barman: "Very good sir, but what do you want?"

Customer: "I don't think I'll have a red glass of wine from the fine vines of the Napa Valley."

Barman: "Good. But please tell me what you want?"

Customer: "I don't think I'll have a..."

And so on.

Although you might be quite surprised if someone operated like this whilst ordering drinks in a bar, it is actually very common to hear people answering questions about what they want with an almost endless collection of Negative Want's - just listen out for them and you'll start to find this trait everywhere.

In this apparently extreme example we can see that not saying what you want has at least a few disastrous consequences, namely not getting what you want and others starting to become less patient with you or starting to avoid you. In addition to that minor inconvenience there is another more sinister effect, which is all to do with the way the brain works.

### **The Brain and Negatives**

To understand the effect of Negative Wants on the brain, notice what happens when you work through the following simple exercise.

#### **Exercise 2.1**

For the next three seconds follow this instruction.

“Try not to think of the President of the USA, and don’t think of him juggling twelve purple monkeys!”

Notice what happened when you tried to not think of it... you would have found that, at least initially, you just couldn’t stop thinking about it.

This is because of the way the brain works. The brain processes these instructions by firstly considering all the elements of the instruction. In this case there are three major components of the instruction:

1. To avoid thinking about the two following things:
2. The ‘President of the USA’
3. And ‘him juggling twelve purple monkeys’

Clearly by step two we've already done the exact opposite of what we have been instructed to do just in an attempt to understand the instruction. This is why the brain just can't effectively process negative phrases like the one above without first thinking about what it's not supposed to think of.

It is a bit like sunbathing on a beach and noticing a sign, at a short distance out to sea, poking out of the water. Because the sign is difficult to read from that distance you might swim over to see what it says and when you get there it says "Danger Sharks, No Swimming!"

Alternatively if someone is nervous about a job interview and you are trying to help him or her to be better prepared and calmer you might helpfully ask, "What do you want to feel in the interview?" If they reply, which they usually will, "Not so nervous and stressed, not to have that stomach churning, sickly feeling", then you can probably already guess what their brain immediately thinks about as they say this (nervous, stressed, stomach churning and sickly feeling). Obviously this is not the kind of thing that you wish them to be thinking about, but you are too late, they were, unfortunately, just too quick at thinking about exactly the wrong things, and now, in spite of your good intentions, will be feeling even worse.

It can be really valuable to become more aware of your language, noticing the way you talk to others and especially the way you talk to yourself (yes, everyone does talk to themselves and it's not a sign of madness!) In doing this you will start to avoid these neurological dead-ends that just make life more difficult.

## **Exercise 2.2**

This exercise is designed to help you to recognise Negative Wants by presenting common examples. Once you've recognised the presence of the Negative Wants you can quickly identify how the Negative Want forces your brain to think of exactly the wrong kind of things. Consider these examples:

1. "Children, I don't want you to shout at each other again."

The instruction that the children's brains hears is:

**"Shout at each other again"**

2. This one is a classic from doctor's and dentist's surgeries around the world.

"I am going to inject you with a needle, it's not very big, don't be scared, it won't hurt very much."

What the brain actually hears is:

**"I am going to inject you with a needle" "it's very big" "be scared" "hurt very much"**

3. "Don't be nervous."

The instruction the brain hears is:

**"Be nervous"**

4. "I want to be unstressed, not worry and be care<sup>1</sup>-free."

---

<sup>1</sup> In this sentence the usage of the word care means worries.

This seems like a lovely thing to wish for someone, but a quick evaluation of it will show that the instruction the brain hears is:

**“Be stressed, worry and have cares<sup>1</sup>”**

5. “Don’t get dizzy whilst walking along that dangerously high wall and don’t fall off.”

What the brain actually hears is:

**“Get dizzy”** a reminder of how **high and dangerous** the wall is and **“fall off”**

Notice how in each example the person has achieved exactly the opposite of what they wanted by using the Negative Want.

### **Exercise 2.3**

Now use the following examples to practise spotting the Negative Wants:

“I don’t want to think about how crowded it is in here.”

“I want to believe I am not going to get it wrong again.”

“I am not going to get stressed.”

“I tell myself this is not going to be too difficult.”

“I am going to resist eating that cake.”

“I do not want chocolate.”

“I do not want to hate the gym.”

“I am not going to go to pieces when I give the presentation.”

## **Answers**

“I don’t want to think about how crowded it is in here.”

“I want to believe I am not going to get it wrong again.”

“I am not going to get stressed.”

“I tell myself this is not going to be too difficult.”

“I am going to resist eating that cake.”

“I do not want chocolate.”

“I do not want to hate the gym.”

“I am not going to go to pieces when I give the presentation.”

## **Hidden Negatives**

There is one further and brilliantly clever way we have of expressing things as negatives without noticing them, and I call these Hidden Negatives.

Look at the phrases: can you spot the negative?

1. I want to be bold when I deal with this
2. I need to be brave
3. I want to be in control
4. I want to be better
5. I want security
6. I want it to feel safe
7. I want to be free

On the surface these sentences look pretty good, positive and reasonable, but scratch beneath the surface and the problems start to show.

**Dû** unlock your full potential with a word. Sample version © Phil Parker

The problem is what these good positive words make you think about.

1. **Bold.** If you need to be bold to deal with '*this*', then what kind of a situation are you dealing with? Not a very nice one, it must be something that is quite difficult, challenging or scary. As a result the word 'bold' tends to make people think of those negative things.
2. **Brave.** The situation is very similar to the 'bold statement'. If you need to be brave when facing something, then you must be dealing with something fairly uncomfortable.
3. **Control.** Wanting to be in control sounds quite reasonable, until we pause to consider what kinds of things do we need to be in control of? Things that are going well, are predictable and tend to be reliable? No, on the whole we apply 'control' to those things that are dangerous, chaotic and are likely to get out of hand; things like crowds, traffic or dangerous dogs, etc. So when we think of the word 'control' it naturally conjures up ideas of chaos and danger because that's when we need to use control.
4. **Better.** Again this sounds like a good thing to want, but it instantly makes us ask the question "better than what?" and as soon as we do that we find ourselves thinking about the very thing we want to not have again.
5. 6. and 7. **Security, Safety and Freedom.** These are three of the most commonly wished for things - security, safety and freedom. Again on the face of it

they seem quite reasonable things to want, but like 'control' they have a darker side to them. The normal usage of the words contains a sense of getting away from something, as in:

- Safe from something
- Secure from something
- Free<sup>2</sup> from something

And as a result they are tainted with this idea and like the other examples in this section encourage the brain to think about the Hidden Negatives, precisely the things you don't want to be thinking about.

### **Exercise 2.4**

Make a list today of everything you say or think or anything you hear someone else saying that is full of Negative Wants or Hidden Negatives. Note down what was said and then quickly work out what you or they have actually told the brain to do. If it was you that was using these negatives then ask yourself "is that really what you want your brain to be focusing on?"

If not then create a replacement statement that only includes what you want.

### **Health Wants**

If you've tried the exercise above you might have been quite surprised at how difficult and unfamiliar it was to state things in a positive way. In my experience one of the trickiest areas for people to use positive words and wants rather than Negative Wants is in the area of health.

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<sup>2</sup> Although 'free' is not always referring to a negative - as it can sometimes mean absolute, complete and peaceful freedom - but that is a different experience to this concept of 'free from something'.

## **Exercise 2.5**

Consider the statements below:

“I want my back to not hurt and be stiff.”

“I want to not have this headache.”

“I want my legs to feel pain free.”

Clearly you can now spot the Negative Wants, but can you change them into positive ones?

Using the first example of “I want my back to not hurt and be stiff”, I’ve found that when most people try to change it into a positive, it sounds something like this:

Change 1: “I want my back to be less painful and not as tight.”

But again we can notice although these are different words, they are still Negative Wants.

Change 2: “I want a pain free back and for it not to seize up.”

Again we’ve run into the same problem.

Change 3: “I want my back to be better.”

This sounds good but ‘better’ is a Hidden Negative. As soon as you say ‘better’ your brain wants to know what you are comparing it too and asks “better than what?” the answer is “better than the amount of pain and stiffness I have right now” and once again we are in negatives.

It is surprising how difficult it is to complete such a simple exercise.

To help you out I've provided a short list below of some of the kinds of words that can be used for Positive Wants about physical issues:

Well, healthy, comfortable, fit, vital, soft, warm, cool, relaxed, energised, easy, flexible, fluid, supple, strong, etc.

Once people read the example words above, it all suddenly seems so simple, and they are amazed and curious as to why they found it so challenging to complete the exercise.

What is very interesting is that it seems that we have an enormous, easily accessible library of words to describe illness and poor health, but relatively few words, which we have to search quite hard to find, to describe how something is when it is working well. This is probably because we are relatively unaware and uninterested in our bodies when they are working fine and pay very little attention to them when they are well. Much of our focus and awareness of our bodies seems to be linked to times when they are not working well. It's in those times that we need to describe how our body feels to others and so that's when we build up our library of words that describe our body, as we start to think of words to explain what is going on inside us. The more we do this the more dominant and familiar those words will become when talking about our bodies and health; as we can see from our understanding of Negative Wants on the way the brain works, this is not generally a good thing.

## Wellness and Disease Scales

In medical research it's important to collect detailed information about any new treatment or approach to find out if it is useful or not. However there are a number of issues specific to humans, which make analysing this kind of data especially complex. One of these is the effect of negative language. In my research team's detailed enquiries into creating useful research protocols we have found one major difficulty. Based on your understanding of the previous section, can you identify what the problem is from these examples taken from currently used and well-respected research questionnaires?

From the Self Efficacy Scale used for clients with chronic fatigue. Clients can select a score between 1 and 10 where 1 is not at all confident and 10 is very confident. This all seems good so far...

Just for clarity let me point out that in this case I haven't added any additional bolding of the text or underlining. So all the bolding and underlining you see below is exactly as it is on the standard form handed out to patients.

"How confident are you that you can keep the **fatigue** caused by your disease from interfering with the things you want to do?"

"How confident are you that you can keep the **physical discomfort** or **pain** of your disease from interfering with the things you want to do?"

"How confident are you that you can keep the **emotional distress** caused by your disease from interfering with the things you want to do?"

Now you should be able to see the questions on these forms in a very different light. I am certain that whoever designed them designed them with good intention to help measure people's current health state so that changes could be recorded and measured, with a view to finding good treatment options for future clients. But without the knowledge presented in this chapter you can see how easy it is to unintentionally create problems with the data collected, and to influence how the clients feel as a result of filling in those forms.

If we now bold and underline all the parts of the statements that focus on the negatives, it starts to read like an instruction manual for how to get ill. Now read through the same form just saying the bold/underlined sections.

“How confident are you that **you can keep the fatigue** caused by **your disease** from **interfering with the things you want to do?**”

This instructs the reader to keep their fatigue, to think about their disease and how much it will interfere with their life.

“How confident are you that **you can keep the physical discomfort or pain of your disease** from **interfering with the things you want to do?**”

This tells them to keep their physical discomfort and pain and to focus on their continuing disease and how much it will interfere with their life.

“How confident are you that **you can keep the emotional distress** caused by **your disease** from **interfering with the things you want to do?**”

And this one asks them to think about their emotional distress as well as reminding them again to think of their disease and how much it interferes with their life.

In addition to the massive amount of negatives here in this particular questionnaire there are also some very powerfully Closed Questions. A Closed Question only has a limited number of possible responses to it.

An example would be:

Do you own any shoes?

The answer would be yes or no.

This is a relatively clean question, but some are a bit more problematic:

“Would you like to go to bed with or without a bath?”

The answer would be with or without; but, as every parent who has used this type of approach knows, independent of whether a bath is chosen or not, the child has implicitly agreed to the fact that ‘going to bed’ is not an option and that will it occur in the very near future.

The question,

“How confident are you that you can keep the **fatigue** caused by your disease from interfering with the things you want to do?”

is also closed, in that certain responses are allowed and other things are predetermined.

Based on the question, do they have a choice as to whether they will continue to have their disease or not?

Again based on this question, do they have a choice as to whether they will continue to have their fatigue or not?

There is also an implication that their disease and its fatigue will also interfere, to one degree or another, with the things they want to do.

Similar to the bath and bed scenario, in which the child's choices were limited to bath and bed or just bed, the only thing that is up for debate is whether they will have:

Disease plus fatigue and lots of difficulty carrying on with the things they want to do

Or

Disease plus fatigue and little difficulty carrying on with the things they want to do

The idea that they will definitely continue to have the disease and the fatigue is stated as a fact and the idea of 'not having the disease and fatigue' is just not an option.

Unfortunately my research team and I have found that these kind of language problems are present to one degree or another in most of the common and well respected scales and score charts that are currently used to assess change in clients. This is not done through malice, but just because it's not really considered as a factor that could really have any influence on the patient's physical health - but both my experience and that of others (Richter, Eck, Straube, Miltner, & Weiss, 2010) suggests that it does. We will be covering this later this in more detail.

## Hidden Traps

These negative ways of speaking were one of the key problems I noticed cropping up in people's conversations which kept their lives stuck - and now that you understand the concepts of Negative Wants and the effect they have on the brain, you will find they are fairly easy to spot and to change. However, I also started to notice another more subtle way of 'talking yourself into trouble' that seemed to cause even more problems - and due to its subtlety and widespread occurrence it seemed to be even more difficult for the individual to notice than Negative Wants. Like the widespread usage of the cancer causing asbestos as a standard housing material between 1945-85, the difficulty with trying to deal with anything that is harmful to you, whilst being unaware of any risk, is that until you realise what is going on any change is unlikely.

Identifying these subtle problems was therefore very exciting. It didn't take rocket science to work out that if I had been able to notice these ways of speaking, then it should be relatively easy to teach others to notice them and for them to then change those ways of speaking.

Consider the following statements. They are exactly the kind of statements that you will find nestling comfortably and apparently appropriately in a number of the conversations that you will hear today.

1. "This kind of cold and cloudy weather gets me down."
2. "My boss was really angry and made me upset again today."
3. "I would have been on time but the traffic made me late."

They are not Negative Wants and on first glance they may all seem quite reasonable and not that problematic as statements. However in order to understand these seemingly innocuous statements in a new light I'd like to introduce you to one of the core concepts of this book, Language Patterns.

## **Other Publications/Courses by Phil Parker**

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