

Anchoring

*“When I step onto the court at Wimbledon and smell the grass I feel great and know I can win”
Leyton Hewit*

What is an anchor?

An anchor is a specific stimulus that consistently elicits the same response or change in state. It utilises the stimulus response concept – without the gap. Whenever we respond without thinking, we are under the influence of an anchor. For example a picture of a relaxing place can cause someone to feel relaxed again as they remember and fully associate back into the experience they had in the past. Children use their favourite toy as an anchor for security or possibly a special blanket for going to sleep.

Why are anchors useful?

An anchor can be used to change your mind set in a deliberate way to access a more resourceful state and to generate a more useful performance. Anchoring can happen negatively as well as positively and understanding the effects of different anchors can open awareness and give us more choice about how we are going to choose to be in any situation.

Creating a positive anchor for making a presentation to a Board; preparing for an appraisal; or when giving feedback to someone can all help you maintain peak performance. This ability to access resourceful states increases your potential to access the emotions and beliefs that are enabling rather than limiting.

Being able to anchor someone else’s performance is a useful coaching and leadership tool. Anchors can be powerful, particularly when used in conjunction with positive outcome thinking.



More about anchoring

An anchor is any stimulus that evokes a consistent response pattern from a person. It can be a stimulus that is received via any of the five senses, singly or in combination.

Anchoring is the tendency for any one element of an experience to bring back the entire experience.

(Grinder and Bandler, 1981)

Anchors can be experienced via any of the senses.

- Gustatory** The taste of old fashioned honey-comb may take you back to a childhood experience on holiday. Or the taste of a particular herb may remind you of the place where you last tasted that and even flood back memories of who you were with.
- Olfactory** Smell is often the most powerful of anchors. The perfume industry is based on it! A smell may remind you of detailed previous experiences. The school corridor or changing room, the dentist waiting room.
- Kinaesthetic** The feel of velvet, or satin or rough wool. This is where the child's blanket, label or favourite toy is able to make them feel secure or sleepy. The footballer's lucky routine of always putting one sock on first. . You may have a particular movement that helps you to feel confident. Kinaesthetic anchors can be internal (emotional) and external (tactile).
- Auditory** The sound of chalk on a blackboard, Cliff Richard singing summer holiday, your very own "our tunes". Waves on a beach, the cry of a baby, the sound of a generator.
- Visual** A photo of someone's face. Your favourite colour. A holiday snap. A picture of a house where you once lived.

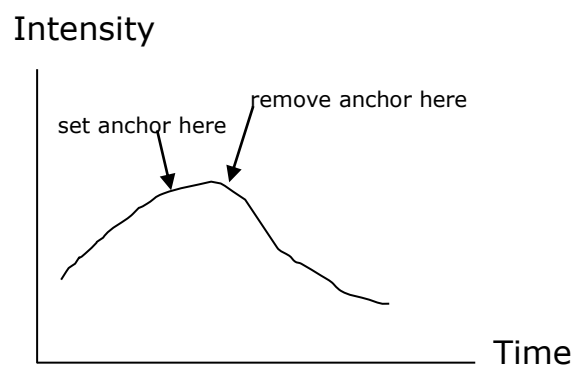
Anchoring - as a technique

Anchoring is used to **deliberately** set a response in yourself – or in another person by setting up an association between any of the senses and a present or past experience.

How to set anchors effectively

An anchor can be anything – touch (kinaesthetic anchor) is often used - so long as the following criteria apply:

- The anchor is unique and easy to reproduce
- The experience that is being anchored is intense
- You are fully 'associated' into the experience before the anchor is set
- The anchor is set just before the experience reaches its most intense
- There are no other conflicting anchors



What if

You take some time at home or at work to notice the stimuli that affect you most, and you become aware of those that trigger positive states and those that trigger more negative feelings.

You chose to anchor resourceful states that enabled you to perform at your peak whenever you wanted to?

You were able to switch your response to something from an unresourceful state to a much more useful state by the flick of an anchor?

Creating an anchored resourceful circle

"I feel good.... (da da da da da da dum)"
James Brown

What is an anchored resourceful state?

An easy and quick way of getting into an enabling state of emotion and thinking. You may see this referred to in other texts as a circle of excellence.

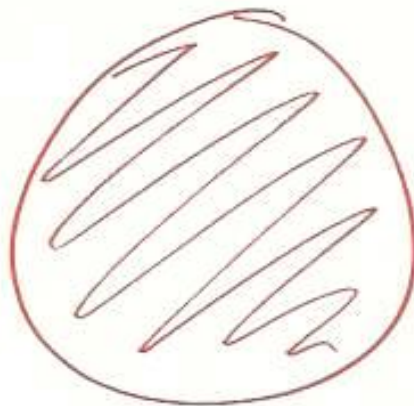
Why is getting into a resourceful state useful?

Understanding that we can have choice about our mood, state of mind and energy levels is for many people a real breakthrough.

Equally, recognising that if we are in a bad mood, state of mind or inappropriate energy level to get our outcomes – it is also because we choose to be can be a revelation.

At this stage we are going to work with the idea of creating a resourceful circle as our first experience of anchoring a resourceful state.

Resourceful circle to alter your state.



RESOURCEFUL CIRCLE

Further detail.....

A resourceful state is created using the fact that we have all at some time in our lives been resourceful! So we can be again. And particularly, we can bring this memory into an easy and quickly accessible way to use it to change our state in the current moment.

In other words we can choose to feel better than we do in the moment.

We may wish to feel confident, joyful, professional, focused, relaxed....these are all common examples of resourceful states people choose to create.

The following describes how to coach someone into a resourceful state. Once we have done this once we can more easily create such a state for ourselves and possibly even short cut this process.

In coaching terms, you would use this process if someone presented to you an emotional reaction to a situation that they would like to change.

Description of how to coach someone to create a resourceful circle

1. Ask the coachee to consider a resourceful state that they would like to have at their immediate disposal.
2. Then ask them to remember an experience when they were particularly resourceful in this way before. Ask them to choose one that has a high intensity of feeling for them.

Once they have a memory in mind ask them to recall it more precisely and actually be there – as if they are looking out of their own eyes on the scene. You might ask them:

'Where were you?' 'What can you see/hear/feel when you are there?' 'What else do you notice?' 'How does it feel?'

(Note: you ask these questions in the present tense as you want them to fully associate into their prior experience.)

3. Next, ask them to imagine a circle on the floor in front of them. Get them to describe precisely where it is and how big it is.
4. Now ask them to give the circle a colour that they relate to the experience they have just described. An exact hue that reminds them of that time.
5. Now ask them to think again of the previous resourceful experience now. To go back a re-live it
6. As soon as they have re-accessed those images, sounds and feelings ask them to take a deep breath and step into their circle.
7. As they stand inside the circle help them to intensify their experience by asking 'What else do you notice?' (If they have not described through all their senses ask them about their other senses) and 'What do you need to do to that picture/those sounds and feelings to make the feeling of being resourceful even stronger?'
8. Once they have intensified the feeling say 'So now, step out of your circle when you are ready to or as the feeling begins to diminish'
9. Once out of the circle break state by asking a question unrelated or making a comment
10. Now ask them to choose a kinaesthetic trigger that they can also use to anchor this resourceful state. It needs to be unique and relatively discreet.
11. Ask them now to step into the circle again and feel the resourceful feelings flood back through them. When the feelings reach their highest intensity get them to apply their kinaesthetic anchor and hold it until the feelings start to fade.
12. Then release the anchor and step out of the circle.
13. Break state again and repeat steps 11 through 13 until you and they are sure that the anchor has been set.
14. Now, to test the anchor - ask them to consider a time in the future when it would be useful to have this resourceful state. Then ask them to step into their resourceful circle, applying their anchor at the same time, and experience how this future situation unfolds in this resourceful state for them. Ask them what is happening in this future situation and allow them time to process this fully.
15. When complete ask them to step out of the circle again and break their state.
16. Finally, ask them to collect up their circle in whatever works for them so that they take it with them where ever they go.

What if?

You used resourceful circles to influence how you performed in the future – in meetings, interviews, presentations, going to visit your family and friends

What do you do if someone cannot recall a time when they were resourceful. Use these responses

- “What would it be like if you could recall just one experience that had some of these qualities – which experience would that be?”
- “OK, so if you could just imagine having this state, what would you be doing? What would you see, hear, feel etc?”
- They are still stuck and can’t imagine doing it. OK ask them to “act as if” they were someone else who could do this. What will they then be doing, seeing hearing and feeling??