

# Process vs Content

*"The webs that you can tie and untie are at your command if only you pay attention to what you already have (language) and the structure of the incarnations for growth..."*  
Bandler and Grinder

## What is it?

Notice where your attention is when listening to a coachee. When you are noticing the 'what' of an experience, the details, the story, this is the *content*.

*Process*, by way of contrast, refers to how something operates, to its structure and form; to any processes that are in operation.

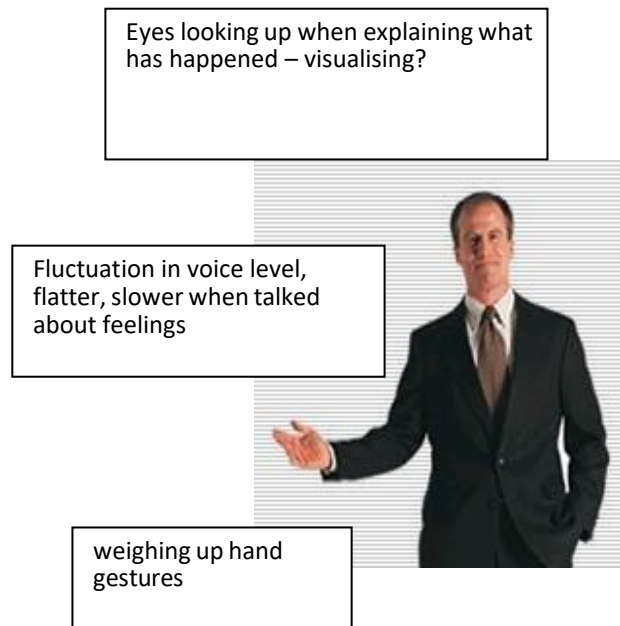
## Why is it useful

Being able to have a balance and a flexibility of what you notice can help the coach assist the coachee.

## Content



## Process



## Detailed what

Have you ever been 'sucked in' to a story or had a soap story relayed to you? How captivating it can be! If this has ever been true for you, the chances are you were 'in' the content. Content refers to both the juicy details about what someone did, when, where, and with whom. It describes the data that can overwhelm and seduce us into the content.

Process by contrast is any process that is occurring, the process of an experience, how it works, the structural frames, and contexts. We often work with people at a process level to bring about the change they want for themselves, however

with enough content for the person to relate to their own experience and outcomes.

There is no absolute right or wrong balance of process and content. The key, as a coach, is to resist the temptation to be seduced by the content as you may unwittingly collude with the coachee about how tough and difficult the situation is. Listening to some talk about their situation is enhanced by knowing what is content and what is process and where the leverage could be for that person to achieve their outcome.

### How - exercise

Last year a delegate talked to us about a situation she was experiencing and here are some of the statements that she made and observations of her under content and process.

#### Content

Fantastic, enormous opportunity  
Organised this, people lined up Same position to the day last year  
They don't think what it is like for me  
I believe it will happen  
I don't know what to do now Informal contact - Steven Not right, not fair  
Is the stalling telling me something  
Heard nothing  
Followed up..  
Empty diary  
Clients what these dates  
2nd positioning the organisation  
Needing to have courageous conversation Opportunity to develop others  
Space, time, hope

#### Process

Visualising - eyes looking up  
Arm movements - expand arms out wide to hands clasped together  
Weighing up hand gestures  
Fluctuation in voice level, flatter, slower  
Away from language - I'm nervous  
Focus on others and responsibility - people lined up Pattern repeat to same time last year  
What worked and how did they respond  
Trusting instinct  
Belief it will happen  
Anger displayed in closed body language  
Top half body movement

### What if - challenge

Watch and listen to an interview on the TV or at a presentation, noticing the content or process. What was different?

Experiment with primarily staying in process when with a colleague or friend are talking about a situation, and reflect on what that gave you both.

When reflecting on a coaching conversation, identify the proportion of content and process for you. How does that compare with how you would like it to have been? What will you do next time? You may want to assist your reflected learning by asking a coachee if they mind you recording a coaching session.