Most of us have watched the movie *The Matrix* (or at least recognized it as one of the movies released in the past couple of years). Recently, I revisited the movie again and remembered how in my current coaching and facilitation work and previously as a dental professional, I have been fascinated by the amazing Matrices I have navigated with my clients and patients. I have chosen to write about the Matrix Model today to share with you my learnings and realizations.

In the movie, the Matrix is “…the world that’s been pulled down over our eyes to hide us from the truth … It is a prison of our mind … a neural-interactive simulation, a dream world that we live in, the inside of the map, not the territory.” The main character, Neo is invited by Morpheus to take the Red Pill to know the truth of our reality, or to take the Blue Pill and to live in blissful ignorance.

So, what would you say if I propose that every one of us lives in a unique Matrix that identifies each individual as a multi-dimensional system of dynamic self-organizing neuro-interactive frames by which we create our sense of reality? Seems like Science Fiction or Alice-in-Wonderland stuff? If you wish to pursue this further and (ahem)
The Matrix and You

“Follow the White Rabbit”, take the Red Pill and read on…. If not, then take the Blue Pill and stop right here.

The Matrix as a Model

When we develop models, we do so in order that they help us navigate our journey to various experiences. No model is real or absolute. No model is “the truth”. Models are just maps that we can use to go explore with.

Dr L. Michael Hall, who developed this Neuro-Semantic Matrix Model I am referring to, designed it to provide a way to map human meaning-making and experiencing so that we can more easily find the critical frame for change and transformation. It provides a way to profile experiences, model best practices and expertise, and to suggest steps in replicating excellence, refining and reframing meanings, and designing new frames for higher quality of living, loving and contributing. As a model, the Matrix allows us to enter into our own or another’s Matrix to learn and recognize the frames in action.

What relevance has this to do with attaining success in our lives? As a person, we are leaders in each of our own individual lives. How would it be like to be able to discover more about yourself by journeying through your own Matrix to understand what makes you brilliant and where you could be different?

We interact with our significant loved ones such as our co-parenting partner and our children, with the intention to transform them not only by physically providing them a material environment to best nurture their highest potential but through facilitating changes in their behaviours and beliefs to co-create more resourceful lifestyle habits (eg diet, hygiene, exercise, relationships, stress management, balancing life contexts etc) to best allow them to self-maintain the longevity of the changes you have manifested together. Imagine how useful it is to be able to enter each individual’s Matrix so that you may not only understand your loved ones better, and also be able to help you and your family transform our health, wellbeing and self-esteem easily and elegantly.

Then there is your work team and colleagues. I am curious to know whether this could be a great process to be able to navigate their Matrix to model excellence in skills and behaviours of certain stellar team members so you can emulate their roles/skills/attitudes in training/mentoring other members in your work team. What about the possibility of deconstructing expert Superstar performers within our midst by our ability to track through the Matrix of how they perform their excellence?

The Human Matrix

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According to Dr Hall, we are all born into a matrix of frames of reference of our thinking-and-feeling. These frames are incorporated into the language we learn, the family into which we are born, the culture that we assimilate, and the education that guides what and how we learn. These social realities arise long before we arrive and serve as the cultural matrix or womb into which we are born. Inside of all the cultural frames of beliefs, values and expectations our mind-and-emotions are ‘cultures’ and ‘cultivated’ so that we are fitted for life in a given social reality. For example, some of us may have entered the profession of our choice because our culture we were born into was to nurture individuals who have a professional career through a University education for a secure financial future.

In addition, each of us individually invent and create a matrix of frames that subsequently governs our sense of reality. We built these frames from the experiences that we happened to encounter in life. To this day, we continue to construct frames as we seek to understand things and to create meaning. Perhaps there are those of us who chose to not attend University because we have constructed beliefs around the school of hard knocks being the best place to find our calling. It may be a contrast frame to those of us who see in our own family of middle class mediocre success of university career graduates, so we rebel to be like our perceived ultra-successful dyslexic school dropouts like Charles Schwab, Richard Branson & Bill Gates. So, what is your identity of your Self in your chosen manner of how you express yourself and contribute in the world? What power or resources do we perceive as having (or not) to be able to change your world?

The Human Matrix is “the reality” that we live in. It is the reality that emerges as a result from all our models and maps about things. It emerges from the ones we inherited and from the ones we invented. All of these frames of reference and frames of meaning make up the Matrix we live in, and from which we engage the world of people and things. This
is the World as we know it from the inside. It’s made up of all the maps and models, the memories and imaginations, the fears and hopes that give structure and form to our life. So what is your World constructed of? Is your identity in the world of your career different or exactly the same as the one in your family, golfing buddies, wealth creation network, health club, mensa group, spiritual community…? Step back, reflect and notice these nuances in your World.

Is your World powered by “8 Sources of Success” from which your drive and energy is derived? Or do you hold a mindset that “Life is Hard” – and these contexts of your life literally drain you? What would you truly want to be, do or have in each of these areas of your life?

**Breaking down The Matrix**

Hall designed the Matrix Model as a “womb” of meaning frames and definitions. This Matrix is comprised of sub-matrices. All of these frames, embedded within frames, make up the essence of our personality, our attitudes, and our perceptions. They govern who we are and what we are about. They are built around our mind-body-emotion states, and come from developmental psychology particularly from the work of Erick Erickson in the psycho-social stages of human development.

Our **State** is hence the foundational matrix that grounds all our frames. **Meaning/Value** and **Intention/ Purpose** make up the 3 **Process Matrices** whilst the other 5 **Content Matrices** are **Self**, **Power (or Resourcefulness)**, **Time**, **Others (or Relationship)** and **World**.

From the meanings, intentions and states that we create and experience, we construct meanings about specific subjects. The particular content about some things are so critical that they determine the very feel and fabric of reality for us.

For instance, my previous life as a dentist allowed me to experience patients highly apprehensive about dental treatment has constructed a reality around the **Meaning** of dentistry being threatening, and their **Intention** is to avoid visiting the dental operatory as much as possible and they get into a **State** of high anxiety every time they even think about the prospect of doing so! The identity of **Self** as a dental patient is one of a helpless victim; their **Power** in that situation is their perceived total lack of control or resources to handle the situation; they feel unable to speed up the **Time** when in the dental chair to overcome the unpleasantness; they perceive the dental team as the **Others** who are dangerous and punishing rather than partners in a healthy partnership; the **World** of dentistry to them is frightening and a preferred place to not venture into.
It would be interesting to explore each individual Matrix of everyone that we interact with to help us and them deal with our mutual experiences more comfortably, to relate much better together and to all learn & develop from.

The Matrix and You

The Matrix is our world of frames – our frames of meaning, frames of reference, and frames of mind. The Matrix is the world of meanings into which we were born and educated. It is the World that we have received as “real”. It is this Matrix of frames that governs how we perceive the world, how we react, and ultimately the choice of behaviours available to us. Again as a start to navigating your own Matrix, step back and reflect upon your self:

State
- What are you thinking and feeling right now?
- How intense is this state of mind, emotion or body for you?
- Do you have a name for this particular state?
- How do you get yourself into this state?

Meaning/Value
- What does this situation, event or persons in it, mean to you?
- What and how much significance do you give this?
- What is the quality and style of this meaning?

Intention
- What is important to you? Why?
- What do you really, really want?
- When you get this, what does it do for you, or what do you get from it?
- For what purpose do you want this?

Self
- What are you like? How do you define yourself?
- How valuable are you as a person?
- Do you have conditional or unconditional self-value?
- Does this support and enhance your life?

Power
- What natural talents do you have?
- What mental, emotional and behavioural skills are you confident about?
• What skills do you need to further develop and refine?
• How much self-efficacy do you feel about your basic powers?

**Time**
• Is time your friend or enemy?
• What time zone do you normally live in – past, present, or future?
• Do you have ability to sequence time effectively?
• Are you able to step out of time and enjoy the eternal moment when you so choose?

**Others**
• What audience do you carry in your mind and play your life to?
• Are they open, friendly & rewarding or are they fearful, dangerous and punishing?
• Do you easily enter a trusting relationship or hold back?
• How much of a team player are you?
• What are you best social & interpersonal skills & states?

**World**
• What do you think about life and the human adventure?
• Is the universe friendly or frightening?
• What specific worlds (eg. Building, surveying, architecture, engineering, design, project management, finance, sports, learning, friendship, computers, coaching, business, leadership, parenting, religion, parapsychology, etc) captivates your interest and fascination?
• In what worlds do you never explore?

While the Matrix seems to be all around us, it is actually a world of our own making and construction. In fact, we invent as we go … everyday we add belief frames, value frames, understanding frames, decision frames, intention frames … all of the so-called “logical levels” of our mind are but the embedded frames within frames that make up the Matrix of our mind-body system, our neuro-semantic reality.
Entering The Matrix

When we meet someone, the Matrix is invisible. Then you say “hello”. The other returns the greeting and the Matrix is activated. The response you get tells you the first little bit about the frames and the matrix of frames that the person lives in and operates from. Our Matrices are invisible until they are activated and then they come alive. It is information and activity that activates the Matrix.

The farther we go into the Matrix (whether our own or that of another), the more information we receive, the more of the Matrix of Frames we activate. This allows us to see the world inside and the universe of meaning that creates felt life.

Whether our own or that of another, seek to enter the Matrix rather than fight it. How? By respecting it and honouring the person rather than contempt or judgment. Fighting the Matrix means that we don’t understand and that elicits defensiveness so that the Matrix will not show itself. We then become self-blind and unaware or misunderstanding of another.

With another, we enter the Matrix by matching and mirroring what we receive from the person. This paces that person’s reality and validates it so that the person feels heard, understood and safe. It is the sense of safety and not being attacked or judged that allows
us entrance into another’s Matrix. Offer anything that remotely sounds like attack, judgment, criticism or rejection and the Matrix will close to you.

With our own Matrix, we enter through acceptance and even appreciation as we respectfully welcome our frames as frames and seek first to understand. This means seeing and hearing that reality for whatever it is.

It is through recognizing and respecting that everybody’s Matrix is special and totally unique and that no one else lives in that same internal world of frames. There are no two Matrices alike. They all differ.

Paradoxically, it is through welcoming and embracing the mystery of our Matrices, that we are able to transform it. How can you tell when you are in the presence of a very different Matrix? Listen for the language of uniqueness:

“I just can’t get inside his head”
“I don’t know where she’s coming from.
“I wish I knew what makes him tick. It’s a mystery to me.”
“I can’t relate to her. Was she born on a different planet?”

Making The Matrix work for you

So how do we use The Matrix?

Essentially, for the Self, it is a useful exploratory tool of self-awareness, discovery, acceptance and appreciation. As Socrates said, “Know thyself for the truth will set thee free.”

As a modeling tool of extraordinary performers in any context, industry or profession – be it sports, business, management, wealth creation, design, architecture, surveying, engineering, research, coaching, medicine, dentistry…. The Matrix Model is a very useful tool to navigate the Matrices of these individuals in an effort to replicate their stellar experiences and achievements in our own lives. Imagine what it would be like to track and unpack the Matrix of a successful entrepreneur like Richard Branson, or that of a Golf Pro like Tiger Woods, the Creativity of I.M. Pei, or the Life Mastery of Nelson Mandela.

I wonder what you can do to enter and appreciate the Matrix of each of the significant people in your lives in an effort to truly deliver treatment modalities that pace and respect their values, beliefs and identities so that you can make longer lasting transformations in your and their lives not just through the physical assistance you have administered to each other but through the facilitation of behavioural interventions that will change each one of your lives.
Entering the Matrix is essentially about tolerance, acceptance and appreciation. It is about making our World one of more choices through awareness and respect of each other’s Matrices. It is about celebrating what is great and unique about each one of us and the decision to transform that which we prefer not to be, do or have.

Go on. Follow the White Rabbit further and see what you find in your Matrix.

**Bibliography**


**About the Author:** Dr Yvonne Sum is a pioneer in Parent Leadership coaching. She is on a quest to co-create joyful learning partnerships between parents and children to simultaneously bring out each other’s authentic best. She is about parents learning from our children mirroring to us what we most need to learn about ourselves and vice-versa. Through her program *Transformational Leadership Challenge™ (TLC)*, Dr Sum is committed to transform leaders of tomorrow today by highlighting family values and celebrating parents as role models and heroes in life who proactively unleash our children’s potential through self actualization, intentional living and powerful leadership centred on love and high purpose. She expresses this passion to bring out our authentic best through her roles as an international speaker, writer, transformational corporate facilitator, executive and parent Meta-Coach, Neuro Linguistic Programming trainer, business woman, wife and mother. Please visit [www.dryvonnesum.com](http://www.dryvonnesum.com) for more information.