The Emperor’s New Clothes
Meaningful Interactions in Stressful Situations

By Portia Tung and Jenni Jepsen
Introductions

Portia Tung
- Consultant
- Coach
- Storyteller
- Agent of Change

Jenni Jepsen
- Consultant
- Coach
- Writer
- Strategist

Blog: www.selfishprogramming.org

www.goagile.dk
Meaningful Interactions in Stressful Situations

Know my goal  

Reach my goal
Beware the Grey Cloud of Stress

Know my goal

Reach my goal
Current Reality at Work

Causes
Threat, Pain, Fear

Effects
Stress
Do the wrong thing
Say the wrong thing

Outcome
Fail to reach my goal
Banish the Grey Cloud of Stress

Know my goal → Congruence → Reach my goal
Future Reality at Work

Reach my goal

Meaningful interactions

Do the right thing

Body follows

Say the right thing

Brain engaged

Be aware of self, other and context

State of Mind

Am relaxed

Causes

Effects

Outcome
Session Success Criteria

- Understand what Congruence is.
- Recognise incongruent behaviour in yourself.
- Recognise incongruent behaviour in others.
- Be aware that you can move from incongruent behaviour to congruent behaviour in stressful situations.
- Understand that it's possible to prevent many stressful situations by making congruence a habit.
The Magic Formula

1 Fairytale + 1 Model + Applied Theory = Happy Ending
About the Session

Chapter 1
  • ‘The Emperor’s New Clothes’ - a Danish Agile Fairytale

Chapter 2
  • The Emperor’s New Clothes Adventure

Chapter 3
  • Your Journey Towards Congruence
Chapter 1

‘The Emperor's New Clothes’
A Danish Agile Fairytale
Once upon a time, there lived an emperor who loved beautiful clothes. He had an outfit for every hour of the day, and spent a lot of time in his closet.
One day, an imposter came to see the Emperor. He said he was a tailor who made beautiful clothes using magical cloth. “This magical cloth is invisible to fools.”
“Lovely,” thought the Emperor. “If I have these clothes, I can recognise who’s clever and who’s really stupid”— and he immediately asked the tailor to get started.
A couple of days later, the Emperor wondered where the tailor had got to. The Emperor decided to send his minister to check on the tailor.
Off the minister went to visit the tailor, but he couldn’t see the suit. “Wow, it’s beautiful,” he said anyway.
When he reported back to the Emperor, he lied and said that the magical fabric had a pattern so beautiful that no words could describe it.
The day before the Emperor was to go out in his new suit as part of the royal procession, the tailor had the Emperor in for a fitting. The suit fit him to a tee...
The Emperor walked out – the citizens gasped when they saw him. Then they remembered only fools couldn't see these magical clothes and they began to cheer.
“But he doesn’t have anything on,” said a little boy.
“Oh my, why yes,” said the father. And one person whispered to another what the child had said. “He doesn’t have anything on, he doesn’t have anything on.”
“He doesn’t have anything on!” whispered the citizens. “We’ll continue anyway,” he thought. The Emperor walked on while his ministers carried his invisible train.
The End
Chapter 2

The Emperor’s New Clothes
Adventure
What happens when we get stressed?

Know my goal

We lose our cool.

Reach my goal
We cope.
The 5 Coping Stances

Stance #1
Blaming

Stance #2
Placating

Stance #3
Super-reasonable

Stance #4
Loving/Hating

Stance #5
Irrelevant
(aka Distracting)
Warm-up Exercise!
Stance #1 Blaming

“It’s all your fault!”

The Emperor
Stance #2 Placating

“I’ll do whatever you ask, just don’t hurt me”

The Minister
Stance #3 Super-reasonable

“I’ll pretend to look at just the facts
(so you can’t see me)”

The Citizens
Stance #4 Loving/Hating

“The Emperor is naked!
He’s an idiot. I hate him!”

The Little Boy
Stance #5 Irrelevant (aka Distracting)

“It’s the perfect birthday suit (even though it’s not your birthday)!”

The Tailor
Exercise # 1

Form groups of 5.
Without looking at the cards, everyone picks a card.
Get into your stance.
Act out your stance.
Debrief

1. What happened?

2. When you were in your Coping stance:
   • How did you feel?
   • What did you think?
   • What did you see?
   • What did you hear?
Chapter 3

Your Journey Towards Congruence
The 5 Coping Stances

Stance #1: Blaming
Stance #2: Placating
Stance #3: Super-reasonable
Stance #4: Loving/Hating
Stance #5: Irrelevant (aka Distracting)
3 Factors in Any Situation

- Own needs and capabilities
- Needs and capabilities of others
- Reality of the situation we’re in
The Other Choice:
Be congruent
What’s ‘Congruence’?

“Congruence (geometry) means exactly the same size and shape”
- Wikipedia
What’s ‘Congruence’?

“Congruence is the state achieved by coming together, the state of agreement”
- Wikipedia
Definition of ‘Congruence’

- Say what you mean and mean what you say
- You appear on the outside as you feel on the inside
- Believe in having choices
Take all 3 factors into consideration

- Own needs and capabilities
- Reality of the situation we’re in
- Needs and capabilities of others
Being Congruent

“I am self-aware, aware of others and the situation we’re in.”

The Adult
Congruent Communication means...

“I’m OK, you’re OK, the situation we’re in is OK.”
On Your Own

Come up with some concrete ideas on how to behave congruently.
Exercise #2

Stay in the same group of 5.
You are still faced with the same problem.

Behave in a congruent way.
Debrief

1. What happened?

2. When you were in your Coping stance:
   • How did you feel?
   • What did you think?
   • What did you see?
   • What did you hear?
Towards Congruence

✓ Recognise incongruence
✓ Make adjustments to your own behaviour
✓ Connect with the other person
✓ Wait for the other person to respond
✓ Repeat this process as required
✓ Use each encounter as an opportunity to learn
Learn to recognise the stances

Stance #1
Blaming

Stance #2
Placating

Stance #3
Super-reasonable

Stance #4
Loving/Hating

Stance #5
Irrelevant
(aka Distracting)

Look out for behaviours that remind you of the Coping Stances.
Ask yourself **why** you behave the way you do

- What’s happening? What do I see / hear?
- How does it make me feel?
- Why am I thinking what I am thinking?
- What does it really mean?
- What’s my responsibility?

Ask yourself Clarifying Questions.
Recognise your preferred stance

Stance #1  Blaming
Stance #2  Placating
Stance #3  Super-reasonable
Stance #4  Loving/Hating
Stance #5  Irrelevant (aka Distracting)

Learn to recognise when you adopt your “goto” Coping Stance.
What’s your “goto” stance?
Exercise #3

In small groups:

Identify your “goto” stance when under stress at work. Identify your “goto” stance when under stress at home.

For each of your “goto” stances:
• In what circumstances do you adopt your “goto” stance?
• What did you? How did you behave?
• How could you have acted congruently?
Tips for Recognising Incongruence

Watch soap operas

• The really stressful kind full of drama all the time - call out the name of each stance as they appear

Role-play for fun

• Act out each stance. The more exaggerated and ridiculous the better. This will help you better recognise it when you see it
• Do this with colleagues, friends and/or family
Tips for Practicing Congruence

Actively recall S.O.C.
- Say to yourself: ‘Self-Other-Context’
- Ask yourself: ‘Am I OK? Are you OK? Is the situation we’re in OK?’
- Follow up with congruent behaviour

Practice S.O.C. anytime, anywhere
- Practice on your commute
- Practice with your colleagues, friends and/or family

Mental rehearsal
- Before a scheduled meeting or encounter, play out the scenario in your head and visualise yourself behaving congruently
The Bare Essentials

Rule #1: Focus on being congruent yourself

Rule #2: Practice the Agile Values
Communication, Simplicity, Feedback, Courage and Respect

Rule #3: Work at a sustainable pace
Session Summary
The Magic Formula

1 Fairytale + 1 Model + Applied Theory = Happy Ending
(at least heading in the right direction)
What happens when we get stressed?

Know my goal → Brain → Reach my goal

We lose our cool.
The 5 Coping Stances

Stance #1  Blaming
Stance #2  Placating
Stance #3  Super-reasonable
Stance #4  Loving/Hating
Stance #5  Irrelevant (aka Distracting)
Practice Congruence

“I must be self-aware, aware of others and the situation we’re in.”

The Adult
Take all 3 factors into consideration

- Own needs and capabilities
- Needs and capabilities of others
- Reality of the situation we’re in
Session Success Criteria

- Understand what Congruence is.
- Recognise incongruent behaviour in yourself.
- Recognise incongruent behaviour in others.
- Be aware that you can move from incongruent behaviour to congruent behaviour in stressful situations.
- Understand that it's possible to prevent many stressful situations by making congruence a habit.
Wishing you a Happily Ever After

Portia Tung       Jenni Jepsen

Recommended Resources:
• Agile Fairytales: www.agilefairytales.org
• Quality Software Management Vol. 3 Congruent Action by Gerald Weinberg
• The Satir Model by Virginia Satir
• New Peoplemaking by Virginia Satir
Session Retrospective

What Went Well?

What Went Wrong?

Puzzles

Lessons Learnt
For More Happy Endings

Share your Gift of Feedback

portia@agilefairytales.com
jenni@agilefairytales.com
Session Timetable

00.00 - 00.05 – Introduction
05.00 - 00.15 - Agile re-telling of ‘The Emperor’s New Clothes’
00.15 - 00.25 - Coping Stances - theory and practice
00.25 - 00.30 - Exercise 1 - Practice Coping Stances
00.30 - 00.40 - Exercise 1 - group debrief
00.40 - 00.50 - Congruence - Theory and practice
00.50 - 00.55 - Exercise 2 - Practice Congruence
00.55 - 00.65 - Exercise 2 - Group debrief
00.65 - 00.70 - Use of stances to increase self-awareness
00.70 - 00.80 - Exercise 3 - Identify your goto stance at work and at home
00.80 - 00.85 - Tips on how to become more congruent
00.85 - 00.90 - Session summary