



AN INTRODUCTION TO NLP

NLP is an abbreviation for “neuro-linguistic programming”, the study and use of the psychological processes that people use to form automatic responses and behavioural patterns, often without being aware of them. These processes are key to the learning of new behaviours as well as the development of unwanted behaviours. An appreciation of their nature is fundamental to effective communication.

NLP focuses on the behavioural patterns of human excellence and has its foundations in the natural process of modelling, i.e, the replication of the language and behavioural patterns of a person who is excellent at a given activity. Most coaching models are based on NLP language patterns learnt from outstanding psychotherapists. NLP practitioners also make optimal use of the powerful role and effect of non-verbal behaviour in communication.

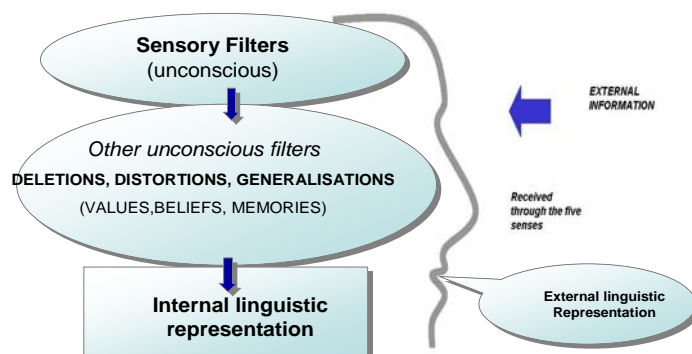
By appreciating how people individually perceive and experience the world and give meaning to their experiences, NLP practitioners can make desired changes in their own behavioural patterns and facilitate rapid, even instant, changes in the unwanted automatic responses and behavioural patterns of others.

The term “NLP” itself reflects one of its key presuppositions: “the map is not the territory”.

'Neuro' refers to the individual neurological systems that filter the millions of bits of data that a person continually is receiving through the receptors of the nervous system (the “senses”). These systems reduce and organise the data to form the images, sounds, feelings, tastes and smells (all internal representations) that constitute that person’s conscious experience of the world. By reason of the deletions involved in the filtering process, these internal sensory representations form an internal sensory “map” of the world as it is perceived by that person, which differs from the world as it actually is. Beliefs and values act as further psychological filters of the internal representations to form a further perceptual map.

'Linguistic' refers to the process by which the filtered internal representations are re-represented and given conscious meaning through the use of language. *'Programming'* describes the automatic patterns of personal behaviour that are triggered by internal representations and language. NLP practitioners use the analogy of the brain as a computer that is programmed, and can be re-programmed, to run selected behavioural patterns.

The Filtering Process



NLP was developed in the early 1970s when an Associate Professor (and expert in transformational grammar) from the University of California, Santa Cruz (John Grinder) teamed up with an undergraduate (Richard Bandler).

Their shared fascination with human excellence led them to model behavioural patterns of selected geniuses.

They began by modelling leading Gestalt therapist Fritz Perls, renowned family therapist Virginia Satir and the world's greatest hypnotherapist, Milton Erickson. These three geniuses were astonishingly effective communicators and outstanding in their profession as agents of change. Each of them performed their magical work from a position of unconscious excellence. In preference to having them provide a conscious (and therefore filtered) description of their behaviour, Grinder and Bandler developed modelling techniques to absorb the patterning inherent in the geniuses unconsciously.

Having little direct knowledge of each of the geniuses' speciality and the field of psychotherapy on the whole, Grinder and Bandler then explicated various portions of the geniuses' behaviour. They coded the results of their work in language-based models, using John Grinder's knowledge of transformational grammar.

Grinder and Bandler presented the first two NLP models to the world in 1975 through the publication of the academic works, "Structure of Magic I and II". Interest in NLP spread quickly. People in fields related to communication, behaviour and change sought to learn how they too could get amazing results in communication and change work. The training courses conducted by Grinder and Bandler in the application of the models demonstrated that the models were transferable to others, who could therefore use the NLP models successfully in their own work.

The practical techniques extricated from the modelling of the original geniuses, and, subsequently, other leaders in their fields, have been applied across areas as diverse as education, training, team building, sales, marketing, personal development, leadership and coaching. NLP techniques play an important role in problem-solving, conflict resolution and personal influence. They have an impressive track record for instigating fast and efficient change in groups as well as individuals.

NLP Practitioners can employ their skills working one-to-one, with groups, companies, global organisations and governments. Wherever there is human interaction and growth potential, NLP applications help to develop and enhance performance. For this reason, many people study NLP to help them become more effective in their specialised fields.

From a therapeutic or change work perspective, NLP applications have resolved a wide variety of issues ranging from unwanted habits and behaviours, fears and phobias, panic attacks and anxiety, allergies, addictions, depression, stress and insomnia, stammering, health and weight issues, relationship issues, past trauma, and painful memories. All are the result of usually inadvertent mental "programming".

John Grinder and Judith DeLozier further refined NLP applications through the development of New Code NLP. New Code NLP makes certain aspects of the original modelling techniques in NLP more explicit.

The focus of NLP New Code is on the attaining and use of high performance states, the awareness and use of internal communication systems and the avoidance of "content impositions". The latter occurs when a coach or therapist knowingly or unknowingly imposes their map of the world onto that of their client rather than facilitate the client in accessing more appropriate personal resources to provide solutions to the client's problems or to generate a change in the client's behaviour.

The majority of quality business seminars now include various aspects of NLP. There generally are three levels to full NLP Certification: Practitioner (Level 1), Master Practitioner (Level 2) and NLP Trainer. Concern over the standards of purported NLP coaches and NLP trainers has led John Grinder, and his partner Carmen Bostic St Clair, over recent years to become personally involved in the certification of NLP coaches and NLP trainers, with the aim of bringing back quality into the field.

Mind Resource Management is happy to offer recommendations of NLP training organisations world-wide.

Information provided by Michael Carroll of the NLP Academy, John Grinder/Carmen Bostic St.Clair (cf. "Whispering in the Wind") and Mind Resource Management