

NLP

Practitioner Manual

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Introduction

Themes for this course

1. Personal Responsibility

The Cause and Effect equation and putting yourself 'at cause'. Who's driving the bus?

2. Reasons vs Results

You can either have results, or reasons for not getting the results. You can have one or the other. It's better to choose results.

3. "The Map is not the Territory"

Your mind filters incoming information, so your perception is always going to be subject to deletions, distortions and generalisations. Sometimes your perception is actually projection.

4. Pay attention!

It's the only way you will notice what is going on around you, what patterns are happening that you can use, what results you are getting, and when you need to change what you are doing.

What is NLP?

"The study of subjective experience"

Neuro

the nervous system - the mind and the sensory organs with which we receive and filter information through our five senses.

Linguistic

the way we communicate and interpret experience through language, including body language, images, sounds, feelings, tastes and smells as well as words.

Programming

the way we construct personal 'programs' (similar in some ways to computer programs) of thought, communication and behaviour

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is the study of how we think and communicate, with ourselves and with others, and of how we can use this to get the results we want.

The heart of NLP is modelling successful behaviour - the techniques which are commonly thought of as making up NLP are just the results of that modelling.

NLP has been defined as:

The ability to master your own states by running your own brain
- Richard Bandler

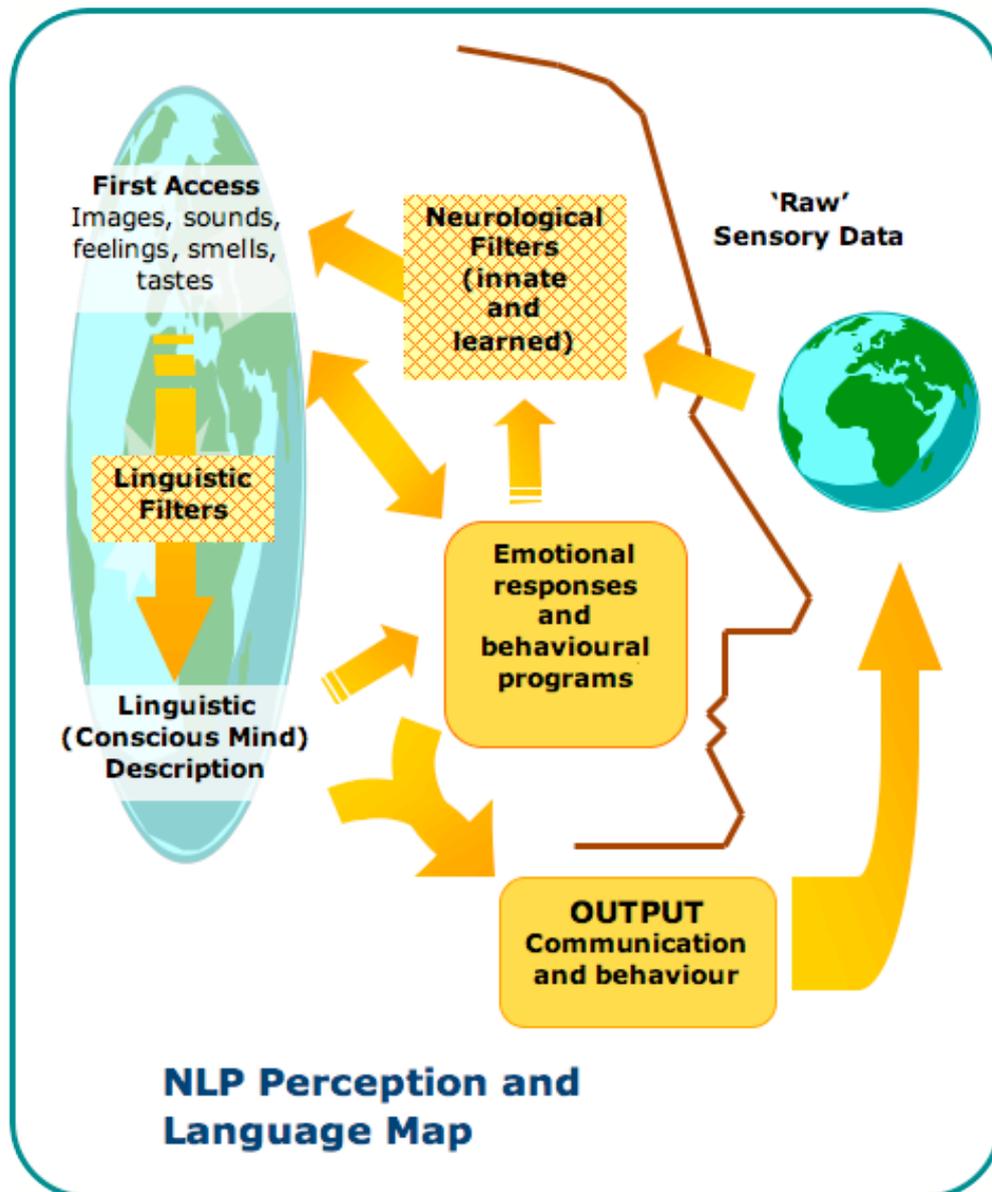
The study of excellence and how to reproduce it
- John Grinder

An attitude (wanton curiosity) and methodology (modelling) that leaves behind a trail of techniques
- Richard Bandler

The process of creating models of human excellence in which usefulness, not truthfulness (of the model), is the most important criterion for success
- NLP Comprehensive

How to use the language of the mind to consistently achieve our specific and desired outcomes
- Tad James

An NLP Map of Perception



Your internal filters introduce:

- **Deletions** (we pay attention to what we are interested in)
- **Distortions** (we look for patterns and connections)
- **Generalisations** (we look for commonality and predictability)

'First access' is the term John Grinder uses for our sense impressions of the world (which have already been through our perceptual filters by the time we become aware of them) but before they have been categorised and judged by our conscious mind's description in language.

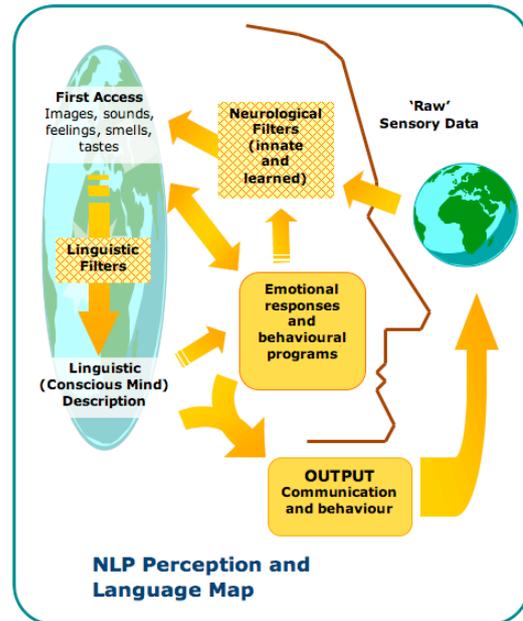
Both the neurological filters and our linguistic filters impose deletions, distortions and generalisations.

The Map Is Not The Territory

Our conscious awareness has a limited number of 'chunks of attention' (around 7, many people say, citing the psychologist George Miller's paper 'The Magical Number 7±2: tinyurl.com/magical7, **but in practice it's probably more like 3 or 4**).

So in order to make sense of the huge amount of information that our senses take in each moment from the world around us, we unconsciously filter it.

We have to do this filtering. If we didn't, our brains would be overloaded and the world would appear as a booming, buzzing riot of smells, feelings and colours, just as it must appear to a new-born baby.



These are some of the filtering processes that our brain uses to protect us:

- **Deletion.** Attention is a limited resource. We just don't notice certain things, especially if we are not interested in them. So in every situation, there is more going on than you realise. Most of the information we delete may be irrelevant, but sometimes we overlook things that would help us if we noticed them.
- **Distortion.** In our attempt to make sense of the world, we will attribute meanings to events - based on our existing map. Psychologists have identified various 'cognitive biases' that distort our view of the world:
 - **Confirmation Bias** - we pay more attention to evidence that supports our beliefs, and downplay or ignore evidence that doesn't.
 - **The Bandwagon Effect** - we are more likely to do or believe something when we see many other people doing or believing it.
 - **Illusion of Control** - we believe we can control or influence outcomes, even when we can't.
 - **The Halo Effect** - if we like one quality or trait of a person or thing, we tend to view their other qualities or traits more favourably.

- **Generalisation.** Generalisations are the basis of learning. What we expect to happen is influenced by our perceptions of previous events. For example, gamblers and stock market investors tend to see a 'winning streak' after three good results, even though 'streaks' are a natural feature of any random sequence (see 'The Rule of Three', bps-research-digest.blogspot.com/2007/10/rule-of-three.html).

Usually, these 'cognitive shortcuts' work in our favour. Thinking is time-consuming, and expensive in energy terms. If we had to think every single thing we did through from first principles, we would be unable to act at all.

But sometimes, these shortcuts work against us - we miss relevant information, jump to conclusions, or view people through a lens of prejudice.

Some implications

What you experience is not reality. By the time you become aware of experiencing something, it's already been filtered. So your 'reality', as you are experiencing it right now, is subject to the deletions, distortions and generalisations of your filters.

A good map is one that is useful. Since all maps leave out information, the real issue is not "Is this map true?" but "Is this map useful?" A map is useful to the extent that it helps you find your way to where you want to get to.

Yours is not the only truth. Each person has a different viewpoint. They will notice things that you have missed, and vice versa. Their view of 'reality' is as valid to them as yours is to you. People who believe that everyone sees the world in the same way that they do are setting themselves up for constant bewilderment; people who believe that others **should** see the world as they do are setting themselves up for constant disappointment.

To communicate with someone, and especially to get them to change, start from their map. Don't expect them to jump over to your map straight away - find a bridge from their map to yours, and lead them gently to your viewpoint. The great hypnotherapist Milton Erickson used to say "there are no 'resistant' clients, only insufficiently flexible therapists".

People's actions make sense from their map, which we can never fully know or understand. Often their actions would seem crazy or wrong when judged in the context of our map - so when coaching or communicating with them, suspend judgement.

Five Principles To Achieve Success

1. Know what you want.

Know what you want, why you want it, and make sure your desired outcome is 'ecological' - good for you and for the people you care about (and for your community and the planet) in the widest possible sense.

Often people are not sure of what they want. The best ways to discover this are to find what is already working well in the area that you want to change, and to elicit your values for that context.

2. Do something about it.

Take action to make your outcome happen - nothing is going to happen unless you do something! The results you get, whatever they are, will provide you with useful additional information to learn from.

3. Notice what happens (have sensory acuity).

Notice the results you get from your actions. Are your actions taking you closer, or further away, from your goal? Consider knock-on and delayed effects as well as the obvious, immediate ones.

4. Be flexible.

If what you have been doing isn't working, do something else (behavioural flexibility). If you don't know what else to do, do anything else and go on changing your behaviour until you find what works.

5. Work from a psychology and physiology of excellence.

Mind and body are one system. Your breathing, posture and general physical state affect your thoughts and emotions. Get yourself into the best possible state - physically, emotionally, mentally - and then take action.

Headings inspired by 'Five Principles for Success' in Tad James' *NLP Practitioner Manual*.

12 Presuppositions Of NLP

Presuppositions are statements that you have to accept as true in order to make sense of something. You don't have to believe them, but you will only get good results with NLP when you act "as if" they are true.

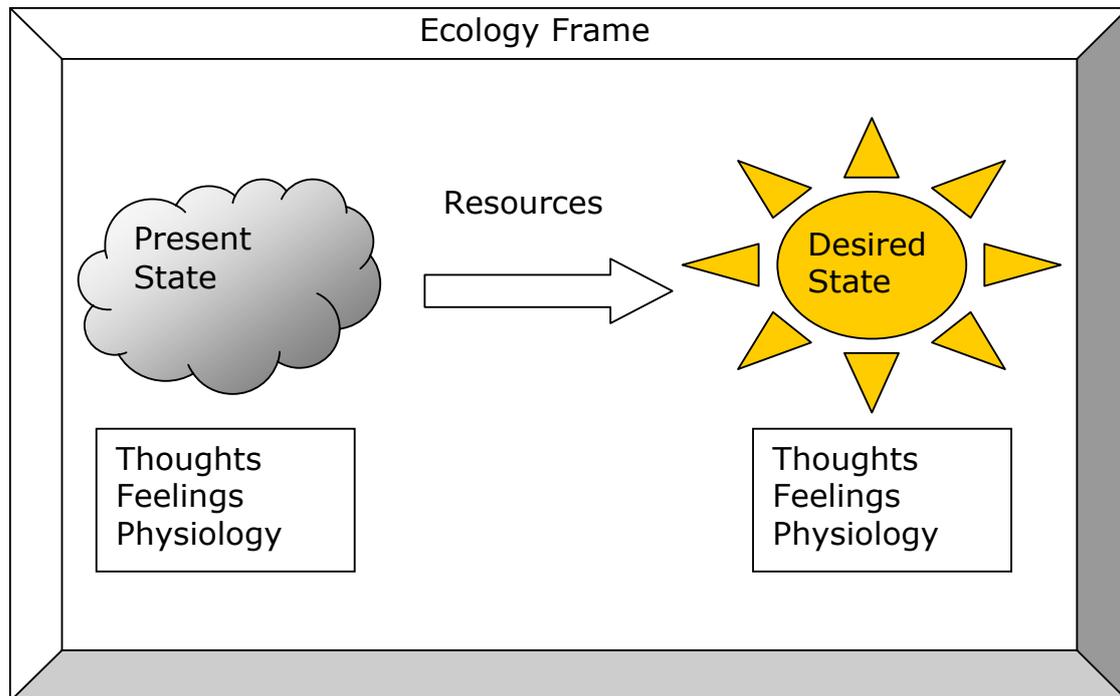
About people

- The map is not the territory
- All behaviour is the best choice currently available
- People have all the resources they need to succeed (there are no unresourceful people, only unresourceful states they get into)
- I am in charge of my mind, and therefore my results
- The only reliable information about a person is their behaviour
- Mind and body are one system

About communication and making changes

- Respect for the other person's model of the world
- The "meaning" of communication is the response you get
- You cannot *not* communicate
- There is no failure, only feedback
- The more complex the situation you have to cope with, the more behavioural flexibility you need ("Law of Requisite Variety")
- Any changes should increase choice and wholeness, and be evaluated in terms of ecology

Present State and Desired State



One way of thinking about any kind of change is to regard it as a movement from the 'present state' (how things are now) to a 'desired state' (how you want things to be).

In a person, the 'state' is the total gestalt of thoughts, feelings, and physical processes (physiology is the term often used for physical state in NLP).

In order to get from present state to desired state, we may need to apply resources. These can be new beliefs, new actions, evoking positive emotions, money, a new physical environment - anything that will bring about the desired change.

It is important to be clear about what the desired state is, and that we really want it. If we are not sure of our motivation, this may be a sign that the 'ecology' of the desired state (the effect it will have on the whole life of the person and the systems of which they are a part) may need attention.

Some people in NLP refer to the present state as the 'problem state', perhaps reflecting the earliest models of NLP that came from therapy. But remember that there will also be resources available in the present state, and resource memories and strategies available from the past that may be useful.

The Discovery Frame

The Discovery Frame is an attitude in which you suspend your expectations, judgements and attachment to a particular outcome in approaching a task.

The benefits are that you do not prejudge the outcome, and you are not disappointed with any outcome.

Instead, you are able to notice whatever happens more clearly, and you are open to learning something new - which is the most valuable thing you can get from anything that you do.

The Discovery Frame and Learning Experiences

How does adopting the Discovery Frame benefit you when you apply it to exercises designed to help you learn or any other new set of skills?

The most important benefit is that it helps you to remember this:

The exercise is not a competition.

It is not important how 'well' or 'badly' you do a learning exercise, as long as you are fully present when you are doing it.

What's important is what you notice - about your own responses, about the responses of others, about your thoughts, feelings and behaviour in each exercise.

Both during the exercise and reflecting on it afterwards, you are learning. You will learn most effectively if you apply the Discovery Frame, and maintain yourself in a good learning state (alert and positive) throughout.

And if you also apply the Discovery Frame to the learning experiences that life sends you, so much the better.

What you need to know about your unconscious mind

Your unconscious mind is on your side

It wants to serve and protect you. Even when the objective result of what it does is harmful, it believes it's doing it for your own greater good.

Most of the time, your unconscious mind is in charge

We go through life mostly on 'autopilot'. The conscious mind can look ahead to future consequences, plan, and make up rationalisations, but it's your unconscious mind that acts in the moment.

Your unconscious mind wants to do what you ask of it

If you don't give it any instructions, it will take its orders from orders from elsewhere - advertising, peer pressure, parental 'programming'. And, it will take the line of least resistance and do exactly what you ask of it and no more - so be careful what you ask it to do.

Your unconscious mind works with feelings, images and metaphors, rather than logic, words and abstract concepts

The unconscious mind will only respond to abstract concepts (i.e. nominalisations) when it has examples of those concepts to work with.

Your unconscious mind learns through intensity of emotion, and through repetition

Your unconscious mind does not process negatives

Negation is a logical, conscious-mind concept. So when someone says "Don't worry", the unconscious mind hears "Worry".

Don't think of a blue rhinoceros!