



## Neuro Linguistic Programming

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) was created in the early 1970s by Richard Bandler, a computer scientist and Gestalt therapist, and Dr John Grinder, a linguist and therapist. Bandler and Grinder invented a process known as 'modelling' that enabled them to study three of the world's greatest therapists: Dr Milton Erickson, father of modern hypnotherapy; Fritz Perls, creator of Gestalt therapy; and Virginia Satir, the mother of modern-day family therapy. They wanted to know what made these therapists effective and to train others in their methods. What is offered today as NLP is the product of this modelling process.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming is an extremely powerful concept. It is said by many to contain all the positive and most useful aspects of modern psychology. NLP has many beneficial uses in the business environment. The experience of undergoing NLP training is a life-changing one for many people, and its techniques offer substantial advantage to most roles in organizations:

- Directors and executives
- Managers at all levels
- Sales people
- Administrators
- Engineering and technical staff
- Customer care operatives
- Receptionists
- Secretarial staff
- Trainers
- HR and counselling staff

NLP techniques help particularly by making it possible for people to:

- Set clear goals and define realistic strategies
- Coach new and existing staff to help them gain greater satisfaction from their contribution
- Understand and reduce stress and conflict
- Improve new customer relationship-building and sales performance
- Enhance the skills of customer care staff and reduce customer loss
- Improve people's effectiveness, productivity and thereby profitability



## **NLP operational principles**

NLP consists of a set of powerful techniques for rapid and effective behavioural modification, and an operational philosophy to guide their use. It is based on four operational principles, which below these headings are explained in more detail.

1. **Know** what outcome you want to achieve. (See principle 1 - achieving outcomes.)
2. Have sufficient **sensory acuity** (acuity means clear understanding) to know if you are moving towards or away from your outcome (See principle 2 - sensory awareness.)
3. Have sufficient **flexibility of behaviour** so that you can vary your behaviour until you get your outcome. (See principle 3 - changing behaviour.)
4. **Take action now.** (See principle 4 - time for action)

It is important to have specific outcomes. Many people do not have conscious outcomes and wander randomly through life. NLP stresses the importance of living with **conscious purpose**. In order to achieve outcomes it is necessary to act and speak in certain ways. NLP teaches a series of linguistic and behavioural patterns that have proved highly effective in enabling people to change the beliefs and behaviours of other people.

In using any of these patterns NLP stresses the importance of continuous calibration of the person or people you are interacting with in order to see if what you are doing is working. If it is not working it is important to do something different. The idea is to **vary your behaviour until you get the results you want.**

This variation in behaviour is not random. It involves the systematic application of NLP patterns. It is also important to take action, since nothing ever happens until someone takes the initiative. In short, NLP is about **thinking, observing and doing to get what you want out of life.**



## NLP principle 1 - achieving outcomes

The importance of knowing your outcome cannot be stressed enough. Many people do not have conscious outcomes. Others have no idea what they want but know what they don't want. Their life is based on moving away from those things they don't want. NLP stresses the importance of **moving towards those things you want**. Without outcomes life becomes a process of wandering aimlessly. Once an outcome is determined you can begin to focus on achieving that outcome.

NLP lists certain **well-formedness conditions** that outcomes should meet. The first of these is that the outcome needs to be **stated in positive terms**. This means that the outcome must be what you want and not what you don't want to happen. Outcomes must be capable of being satisfied. It is both logically and practically impossible to give someone the negation of an experience. You can't engage in the process of 'not doing'. You can only engage in the process of doing.

The second **well-formedness condition** for outcomes is that the outcome must be **testable and demonstrable in sensory experience**. There must be an evidence procedure. Unless this is the case, there is no way to measure progress towards the achievement of the outcome. With an evidence procedure for the outcome it is possible to determine whether or not you are making progress towards achieving the outcome.

Third, the desired state must be **sensory specific**. You must be able to say what you would look like, sound like and feel like if you achieved the outcome.

Fourth, the outcome or desired state must be **initiated and maintained by the subject**. This places the locus (ie position) of control and responsibility for achieving the outcome with the subject and not with someone else. It is not a well-formed outcome when someone else does something or changes in some way. All you can do is have an outcome in which you can change yourself or your behaviour so as to bring about a change in someone else.

Fifth, the outcome must be **appropriately and explicitly contextualised**. This means that outcomes must not be stated as universals. You must never want either 'all the time' or 'never', but only under specific circumstances. In NLP we always strive to create more choice and never to take choice or reduce the number of possible responses. The goal instead is to make the choices or responses available in the appropriate circumstances.



Sixth, the desired outcome **must preserve any positive product of the present state**. If this is not the case then symptom substitution may occur.

Seventh and finally, the outcome or desired state must be **ecologically sound**. You should consider the consequences for yourself and for other people and not pursue outcomes that lead to harm to yourself or other people.

### **NLP principle 2 - sensory awareness**

Once you know your outcome you must next have sufficient sensory acuity to know if you are moving towards it or not. NLP teaches the ability to calibrate or 'read' people. This involves the ability to interpret changes in muscle tone, skin colour and shininess, lower lip size and breathing rate and location. The NLP practitioner uses these and other indications to determine what effect they are having on other people. This information serves as feedback as to whether the other person is in the desired state. An important and often overlooked point is to know to stop when the other person is in the state that you desire.

### **NLP principle 3 - changing behaviour**

The third operational principle of NLP is to vary your behaviour until you get the response you want.

If what you are doing isn't working, then you need to do something else. You should use your sensory acuity to determine if what you are doing is leading you in the desired direction or not. If what you are doing is leading towards your outcome, then you should continue. If, on the other hand, what you are doing is leading away from your goals, then you should do something else.

### **NLP principle 4 - time for action**

The fourth and final operational principle of NLP is to take action now. There is no place for the slogan 'Complacency rules, and I don't care.' NLP is about taking action now to change behaviour for yourself and for others, now and in the future. So, to use another catchphrase: 'Don't delay; act today.'



## NLP presuppositions

There are certain presuppositions underlying NLP. These are things that are presupposed in effective communication. Some of these are as follows. Below these headings each presupposition is explained in more detail.

1. The **meaning** of a communication **is the response** you get.
2. The **map** is not the **territory**.
3. Language is a secondary representation of experience.
4. Mind and body are parts of the same cybernetic system and affect each other.
5. The law of requisite variety (also known as the first law of cybernetics - cybernetics is the science of systems and controls in animals, including humans, and machines) states that **in any cybernetic system the element or person in the system with the widest range of behaviours or variability of choice will control the system**.
6. **Behaviour** is geared towards **adaptation**.
7. **Present behaviour** represents the **very best choice available** to a person.
8. **Behaviour** is to be evaluated and appreciated or changed as appropriate **in the context presented**.
9. People have **all the resources** they need to **make the changes** they want.
10. '**Possible in the world**' or '**possible for me**' is only **a matter of how**.
11. The **highest quality information** about other people **is behavioural**.
12. It is useful to make a **distinction between behaviour and self**.
13. There is no such thing as failure; there is **only feedback**.



## **NLP presupposition 1 - meaning equals response**

In communication it is usually assumed that you are transferring information to another person. You have information that 'means' something to the other person and you intend for the other person to understand what it is you intend to communicate.

Frequently a person assumes that if they 'say what they mean to say', their responsibility for the communication is over. Effective communicators realise that their responsibility doesn't end when they finish talking. They realise that, for practical purposes, what they communicate is what the other person thinks they say and not what they intend to say. Often the two are quite different.

In communication it is important what the other person thinks you say and how they respond. This requires that the person pays attention to the response they are getting. If it is not the response they want, then they need to vary their own communication until they get the desired response.

There are several major sources of 'misunderstanding' in communication. The first arises from the fact that each person has a different life experience associated with each word in the language. Frequently, what one person means by a word (their **complex equivalence** for that word) may be something different from what another person means by it. The second misunderstanding arises from the failure to realise that a person's tone of voice and facial expression also communicate information, and that the other person may respond to these as much as they do to what is said. As the old saying goes: 'Actions speak louder than words,' and in NLP people are trained that when the two are in conflict, the person should pay **more attention to the actions**.



## **NLP presupposition 2 - map and territory**

Good communicators realise that the representations they use to organise their experience of the world ('map') are not the world ('territory').

It is important to distinguish between several semantic levels. First there is the world. Second comes the person's experience of the world. This experience is the person's 'map' or 'model' of the world and is different for each person. Every individual creates a unique model of the world and thus lives in a somewhat different reality from everyone else. You do not operate directly on the world but on your experience of it. This experience may or may not be correct. To the extent that your experience has a similar structure to the world it is correct and this accounts for its usefulness.

A person's experience, map, model or representation of the world determines how they will perceive the world and what choices they will see as available to them. Many NLP techniques involve you changing your representation of the world to make it more useful and to bring it more into line with the way the world actually is.

## **NLP presupposition 3 - language and experience**

Language is a secondary representation of experience.

Language is at a third semantic level. First is the stimulus coming from the word. Second is the person's representation of experience of that stimulus. Third is the person's description of that experience by way of language. Language is not experience but a representation of it. Words are merely arbitrary tokens used to represent things the person sees, hears or feels. People who speak other languages use different words to represent the same things that English speakers see, hear or feel. Also, since each person has a unique set of things that they have seen, heard and felt in their lives, their words have different meanings from each of them.

People are able to communicate effectively to the degree that these meanings are similar. When they are too dissimilar, problems in communication begin to arise.



## **NLP presupposition 4 - body and mind affect each other**

Mind and body are parts of the same cybernetic system and affect each other. There is no separate 'mind' and no separate 'body'. Both words refer to aspects of the same 'whole' or 'gestalt', They act as one and they influence each other in such a way that there is no separation.

Anything that happens in one part of a cybernetic system, such as a human being, will affect all other parts of that system. This means that the way a person thinks affects how they feel and that the condition of their physical body affects how they think. A person's perceptual input, internal thought process, emotional process, physiological response and behavioural output all occur both simultaneously and through time.

In practical terms, this means that a person can change how they think either by directly changing how they think or by changing their physiology or other feelings. Likewise, a person can change their physiology or their emotions by changing how they think. One important corollary of this, which will be explored later, is the importance of visualisation and mental rehearsal in improving the conduct of any activity.

## **NLP presupposition 5 - widest range of behaviours or choices controls the system**

Control in human systems refers to the ability to influence the quality of a person's own and other people's experience in the moment and through time.

The person with the greatest flexibility of behaviour - that is, the number of ways of interacting - will control the system. Choice is always preferable to no choice, and more choice is always preferable to less choice. This also relates to the third general principle of NLP, mentioned previously. This principle is that a person needs to vary their behaviour until they get their desired outcome. If what you are doing is not working, vary the behaviour and do something else. Anything else is better than continuing with what doesn't work. Keep varying your behaviour until you find something that works.



## **NLP presupposition 6 - behaviour and adaptation**

Behaviour is geared towards adaptation. A person's behaviour is determined by the context in which that behaviour originates.

Your reality is defined by your perceptions of the world. The behaviour a person exhibits is appropriate to their reality. All of a person's behaviour, whether good or bad, is an adaptation. Everything is useful in some context. All behaviour is or was adaptive, given the context in which it was learned. In another context it may not be appropriate. People need to realise this and change their behaviour when it is appropriate to do so.

## **NLP presupposition 7 - present behaviour is the best choice**

Behind every behaviour is a positive intent. A person makes the best choice available to them at any moment in time, given who the person is and based on all their life experiences and the choices they are aware of. If offered a better choice they will take it.

In order to change someone's inappropriate behaviour it is necessary to give them other choices. Once this is done they will behave accordingly. NLP has techniques for providing these additional choices. Also, in NLP we never take away choices. We only provide more choices and explicitly contextualise the existing choices.

## **NLP presupposition 8 - context of behaviour**

You need to evaluate your behaviour in terms of what you are capable of becoming. You need to strive to become all that you are capable of being.

## **NLP presupposition 9 - resources to change**

People have all they need to make changes they want to make. The task is to locate or access those resources and to make them available in the appropriate context. NLP provides techniques to accomplish this task.

What this means in practice is that people do not need to spend time trying to gain insight into their problems or in developing resources to deal with their problems. They already have all the resources they need to deal with their problems. All that is necessary is to access these resources and transfer them to the current time frame.



### **NLP presupposition 10 - the how of possibility**

If any other human being is capable of performing some behaviour, then it is possible for you to perform it, too. The process of determining 'how' you do it is called 'modelling', and it is the process by which NLP came into being in the first place.

### **NLP presupposition 11 - behaviour speaks louder than words**

Listen to what people say but pay more attention to what they do. If there is any contradiction between the two then rely on the behaviour. Look for behavioural evidence of change and don't just reply on people's words

### **NLP presupposition 12 - distinguish behaviour and self**

It is useful to make a distinction between behaviour and self. In other words, just because someone 'screws up' on something it doesn't mean that they are a 'screw-up'. Behaviour is what a person says, does or feels at any moment in time. This is not a person's self, however. A person's self is greater than their behaviours.

### **NLP presupposition 13 - feedback, not failure**

It is more valuable for a person to view their experience in terms of a learning frame than in terms of a failure frame. If a person doesn't succeed in something, that doesn't mean they have failed. It just means that they have discovered one way not to do that particular thing. The person then needs to vary their behaviour until they find a way to succeed.

## **NLP techniques and definitions**

NLP consists of a set of powerful techniques to effect change. Some of these techniques are as follows, with their definitions:

### **anchoring**

The process of associating an internal response with some external trigger so that the response may be quickly, and sometimes covertly, reaccessed by activating the trigger.



## **anchors**

These may be naturally occurring or set up deliberately. They may be established in all representational systems and serve to control both positive and negative internal states.

## **stacking anchors**

The process of associating a series of events with one specific anchor so as to strengthen the intensity of the subject's response to a specific anchor.

## **collapsing anchors**

A process of neutralising negative states by triggering two incompatible responses at the same time.

## **chaining anchors**

A process by which a series of anchors is created to lead from an undesired state through a series of intermediate states to a desired state.

## **associated state**

Being fully present in a state so as to experience the kinesthetics of it. For past states this involves being in the experience looking from the perspective of the person's own eyes.

## **dissociated state**

Recreating a past experience from the perspective of an onlooker or observer. This means the person does not re-experience the original emotion but instead experiences the emotions of an observer.

## **double kinesthetic dissociation**

The process of watching yourself watching a film of a past experience. This is used in cases of phobias and extreme psychic trauma.

## **calibration**

The process of reading a subject's internal responses in an ongoing interaction by pairing them with observable behavioural cues.



## **change history**

A process of guiding a subject to re-experience a series of past situations by the use of selective anchoring. Resource states are developed for each situation and are installed in the subject's repertoire in order to change the significance of the past events.

## **rapport**

The process of establishing a relationship with a subject that is characterised by harmony, understanding and mutual confidence. This is done by reducing to a minimum the perceived difference at the unconscious level.

## **reframing**

A process used to separate a problematic behaviour from the positive intention to the internal part responsible for that behaviour. New choices of behaviour are established that maintain the positive intent but don't have the problematic by-products.

## **strategy**

A set of explicit mental and behavioural steps used to achieve a specific outcome. This is represented by a specific sequence of representational systems used to carry out the specific steps.

## **submodalities**

The subclassification of external experience. The decomposing into its components of a picture, sound or feeling.

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