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Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of Neuro-linguistic Programming For Dummies, which is packed with ideas and tips to increase your success and happiness. Most likely, you're reading this book because you've heard neuro-linguistic programming (NLP throughout this book) mentioned as you go about your daily life – in companies, colleges, and coffee shops. We wrote the original version of this book because our experience of NLP transformed our own lives. We wanted to ignite the spark of curiosity in others about what's possible with NLP. We also believed that the time had come for NLP to move away from academic- and business-speak to real-life plain English, and be used by all people who want to make improvements in their lives.

In recent years, we've witnessed NLP growing ever more popular. Part of this popularity is because NLP offers enlightening 'aha!' moments, and part is because it simply makes sense. The jargon itself can be off-putting and the associated jargon may present a barrier to non-NLP professionals. So a little explanation is required:

- **Neuro** relates to what's happening in your mind.
- **Linguistic** refers not only to the words you use in your communication, but also your body language and how you use it.
- **Programming** tackles the persistent patterns of behaviour that you learn and then repeat.

Some people describe NLP as ‘the study of the structure of subjective experience’; others call it ‘the art and science of communication’. We prefer to say that NLP enables you to understand what makes you tick: how you think, how you feel, and how you make sense of everyday life in the world around you. Armed with this understanding, your whole life – work and play – can be renewed.

It's hard to believe that six years have passed since the first edition of this book was published. The first edition of Neuro-linguistic Programming For Dummies presented us with opportunities, which came primarily in the form of amazing clients who've shared their lives, problems, and successes with us. We have incorporated some of the lessons from this more recent work to bring a fresh perspective to you.

In particular, you have the benefit of two new chapters. The first one (Chapter 19) is about modelling. NLP began with modelling, an approach that enables you to enhance your skills. The second new chapter (Chapter 20) is focused on making change easier. Given that change is a given in the frenetic world in which we live, you'll find new ideas here to help you mitigate the negative effects of stress, and the application of favourite tools out of the NLP toolkit.
Part V: Integrating Your Learning

In this part we encourage you to bring together what you read and experiment within the book, and apply it to your own life. You find out about modelling and how to learn from your choice of role model to achieve excellence in your chosen field. In addition, we take a look at what happens in times of change and how you can move forward with grace and ease.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

If you’re impatient to get your answers about NLP sorted quickly, start here. This part takes you straight to some top ten tips and lists, such as applications of NLP, the resources and books to guide you, plus more besides. We design this part for those of you who always like to read the end of a book first and to understand the meaty stuff inside.

Part VII: Appendices

In the appendices we include an NLP resource list of useful addresses and websites, plus the two most important templates to use every day to achieve the following ends:

- Making your desired outcomes real – we explain more in Chapter 4.
- Building rapport with other people – we explore this aspect in Chapter 7.

Icons Used in This Book

The icons in this book help you to find particular kinds of information that may be of use to you.

This icon highlights NLP terminology that may sound like a foreign language but which has a precise meaning in the NLP field.

This icon suggests ideas and activities to give you practice of NLP techniques and food for thought.
Part I
Introducing NLP

The 5th Wave
By Rich Tennant

"My thinking has changed a little this year."
Chapter 1

Getting to Know NLP

In This Chapter
▶ Setting out on an NLP journey
▶ Exploring the key themes of NLP
▶ Getting the most out of NLP

Here’s a little Sufi tale about a man and a tiger:

A man being followed by a hungry tiger, turned in desperation to face it and cried: ‘Why don’t you leave me alone?’ The tiger answered: ‘Why don’t you stop being so appetising?’

In any communication between two people, or in this case between human and beast, more than one perspective always exists. Sometimes people just can’t grasp this fact because they don’t know to change their behaviour to communicate in a way that gets them what they want.

Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) is one of the most sophisticated and effective methodologies currently available to help you communicate effectively. NLP centres on communication and change. These days everybody needs the skills to develop personal flexibility. Tricks and gimmicks aren’t enough: everyone needs to get real.

So welcome to the start of the journey: in this chapter you get a quick taster of the key themes of NLP.

Introducing NLP

All able-bodied humans are born with the same basic neurological system.

Your *neurological system* transmits the information you receive from your environment through your senses to your brain. Your *environment*, in this context, is everything external to you, but also includes your organs, such as your eyes, ears, skin, stomach, and lungs. Your brain processes the information
memories, decisions, experiences, and your cultural and social background, to allow in only what your filters are tuned to receive.

When you’re with another person or other people, choose something in your surroundings and have each of you write a short description of what you observe: for example, the view from a window. Notice that people’s descriptions are individually tailored by their own life experiences.

Some Europeans and North Americans experience a major culture shock when visiting countries such as India or Mexico. Because of their cultural background, they may be shocked by the level of poverty in some areas whereas local people accept the poverty as part of life. People accept the familiarity of their own landscape.

**Travelling down another person’s map: Unfamiliar territory**

The result of this personal filter is that everyone has a very individual map of the world. To make communication easier, a really useful exercise is to at least attempt to understand the IR or map of the person with whom you’re communicating.

Romilla was buying some fish and chips for supper and was asked to complete a short form about the quality, service, and value-for-money of the food. The women serving behind the counter were very upset because the man who had just left had declined, quite rudely, to fill in the form. Romilla asked the ladies whether they had considered how the poor man may have felt if he was illiterate, and that perhaps he was rude because he was embarrassed. The change in the two ladies was phenomenal: ‘I never even thought about that,’ said one. Their demeanour changed immediately from one of anger and resentment to one of sympathy. They also felt much better in themselves and were able to let go of all the negative feelings.

The following short exercise helps you to find tolerance, or at least gain some understanding, when you find yourself in a situation where another person’s response or behaviour surprises you, irritates you, or just leaves you puzzled:

1. **Count all the blessings in your life.**
2. **With examples of your own good fortune rattling around in your brain, put on your most generous hat.**
3. **Ask yourself what may be going on in this other person’s world that would warrant the behaviour.**

When you begin to master this process, you may find that not only are you happier with your lot, but also you accept people and their idiosyncrasies with greater ease.
A child’s map of the world

A child’s map of the world can sometimes make an adult think again! This truth is neatly illustrated by the following delightful snippet.

A policeman was sitting in his police van with his canine partner when he noticed a little boy staring in at them. The boy asked if that was a dog in the van. The policeman confirmed that the other occupant of the van was indeed a dog. The little boy got extremely puzzled and asked, ‘What’s he done to get arrested?’

People respond according to their map of the world

Like all humans, you respond in accordance with the map of the world you hold in your head. This map is based on what you believe about your identity and on your values and beliefs as well as what you’ve learned, memories, and cultural background.

Sometimes, the map of the world from which one person operates may not make sense to you. However, a little understanding and tolerance can help to enrich your life.

When Dr Diwan was a junior doctor, she used to visit a psychiatric hospital. One of the patients was a very well-spoken, highly educated professor of English. One of the professor’s little foibles was to walk around at night with an open umbrella. He was convinced that the rays of the moon would give him ‘moon madness’. However, the professor took great delight in sharing his passion for English literature with members of staff, whose lives were certainly enriched by their daily interactions with him.

If the staff had been intolerant of the ‘mad professor’ and ignored or sidelined him, they may not have realised but their lives would have been impoverished without the richness of his literary stories and his sense of humour – he often referred to himself as the ‘impatient patient’.

There is no failure, only feedback

This presupposition is a very powerful one by which to live your life. Everyone makes mistakes and experiences setbacks. You have a choice between allowing yourself to be waylaid by your undesirable results or taking on-board the lessons that present themselves, dusting yourself off, and having another shot at jumping the hurdle.
Romilla attended a course run by a wonderful Hawaiian Kahuna, Serge Kahili King, during which he said that he never made mistakes. This statement caused a few chuckles because none of the delegates believed him and the twinkle in his eyes belied the deadpan expression on his face. He then added that he may not always get the results he wants, but he never makes mistakes.

One of the messages we took away from listening to entrepreneur and top marketeer Liz Jackson, MBE, at an International Women’s Day event, is not to be afraid of failure. Liz has herself had to adapt to the challenge of losing her eyesight, and still manages to run a successful company. She says that failure is one of the most powerful tools to learning; she inspires those around her to break down their barriers to success by talking about what their ambitions look like and stepping out of their comfort zones, even if it means being petrified for a while. She says ‘It’s only the failures that teach you.’

In normal language, the term feedback is associated with receiving input or getting a response from another person. The meaning of feedback has been expanded in the context of this NLP presupposition, however, to include the result or outcome you may get from a particular action.

You can discover a lot about feedback from Thomas Edison. Although he’s famous for inventing the light bulb, he was a prolific inventor. His genius lay in trying out new ideas, learning from unexpected results, and recycling concepts from an experiment that didn’t work in other inventions. Where other people saw Edison’s thousands of attempts at inventing the light bulb as failures, Edison simply saw each trial as yet another way of discovering how not to make a light bulb.

Worrying about so-called failure keeps you focused on the past and the problems. If you examine the results that you’ve already obtained, even if they’re unwanted, you can shift your focus onto new possibilities and move forward.

When you’re faced with ‘failure’, you can use this NLP presupposition to find the opportunities for growth by asking yourself some questions.

Think of something you ‘failed’ at and ask yourself:

- What am I aiming to achieve?
- What have I achieved so far?
- What feedback have I had?
- What lessons have I learned?
- How can I put the lessons to positive use?
- How am I going to measure my success?

Then pick yourself up and have another go!
Can you imagine a world in which you gave up learning to walk simply because you fell over the first time you stood up? What do you think Waterloo Station in London would look like during the rush hour if only a few people mastered the art of walking?

**The meaning of the communication is the response it elicits**

No matter how honourable the intentions of your communications, the success of the interaction depends on how the listener receives the message, and not on what you intend. In other words, the response that your words elicit is the meaning of your communication.

This presupposition is another very powerful assumption about communication: it places the onus of responsibility of getting your message across squarely at your door, as the communicator. When you adopt this presupposition, you can no longer blame the other person for any misunderstandings. If the response you get isn’t what you expected then, as a student of NLP, you have the tools to use your senses to realise that the other person is missing the point. You also have the flexibility to do things differently, through your behaviour and your words.

Start with the required end in mind and think of what outcome you want from your communication. What would happen if a builder started by slapping bricks on one another without a plan? You certainly wouldn’t get your cathedral! In order to build something with strong foundations you need to start with an architect’s vision of the end product. This presupposition is also useful in keeping your emotions out of the way when you’re involved in a situation that may get tough.

In Chapter 5, we discuss more ways of practising flexibility of behaviour and give a few more tips on dealing with emotions when the going gets tough. If you want to find out more about sensory awareness, please have a look at Chapter 7.

**If what you’re doing isn’t working, do something different**

This presupposition is so simple, and yet you don’t always modify your behaviour when things don’t go as you want. After all, wandering through life
was already getting massive amounts of love and attention from her husband and daughter. One of the side-effects of the therapy was that Janet was able to understand that her own mother’s behaviour was based on her mother’s problems and weren’t Janet’s fault.

When you identify the concealed positive intention that’s causing a person to behave in a particular unresourceful way, you can increase your flexibility and thereby your ability to communicate effectively with that person. You can then help to change the unwanted behaviour by satisfying the intention of the behaviour in a more positive way.

When one of the authors worked for a multinational company, a sales manager, Patrick, occupied one of the free desks in her corner of the building when he visited. Some of the kinder terms people used for Patrick were obnoxious and inconsiderate. He would spread himself out. He sprawled in his chair, which meant it was pushed out away from his desk and people in the corner had to squeeze past. He was loud, made demands on everyone around him, and was extremely unpleasant to his secretary.

An office gossip revealed that poor Patrick’s behaviour was the product of a domineering mother and even more masterful wife. Unfortunately, his need for acceptance, and especially respect, made him behave in ways that gave him results that were exactly the opposite to what he craved. One of the benefits of finding out about Patrick’s background was that the staff were able to think a little more kindly about him and his presence no longer sent blood pressures soaring. By showing him a degree of acceptance, they were able to satisfy his need to feel more and mellow his behaviour.

**People are much more than their behaviour**

Romilla was watching a television programme on speeches given by important historical figures. She was intrigued by Martin Luther King’s response to a journalist on how to deal with racists. King could have been quoting the presupposition that people are more than their behaviour when he said: ‘I’m talking about a type of love that will cause you to love the person who does the evil deed while hating the deed that the person does.’

The point is that behaving badly doesn’t make someone a bad person. Separating the behaviour from the person is really important. People can behave badly when they don’t have the inner resources or ability to behave differently in that instance. Perhaps they find themselves in an environment that stops them from being the best they can be. Helping people to develop
Final Words on Presuppositions: Suck Them and See

Test the presuppositions presented in this chapter for yourself by behaving as if the generalisations are true. Practise those that you find particularly useful until they become second nature. While trying out the NLP presuppositions, make a list and pick one each day, and live by it for one day. Then pick another one for the next day. You can then find, suddenly, that you’re living the presuppositions and ‘the living is easier’!

One great way to increase your understanding of NLP is to explore your basic assumptions, or presuppositions, about life. Whatever you currently think about different people and problems, how you communicate, and what’s important, sometimes taking a new perspective can help by triggering new action or behaviour.

No correct response exists to any of these presuppositions. As you get a flavour for each one in turn, consider it carefully. You don’t have to agree with them all. You can simply try them on for size and see what happens.
can get on with it better. The ideal situation is to have your conscious and unconscious minds working as one, pulling in the same direction.

By getting your unconscious mind on-board – working with you rather than against you – you can achieve much more in life, such as setting and achieving compelling goals with much less effort.

**Your unconscious mind can’t process negatives**

If we say to you, ‘don’t think about watching a film,’ you may get a sense of yourself in front of your TV or in a cinema with a film playing on the big screen, before you shift your thoughts to something else in order to comply with the instruction.

This exercise shows that before you can stop yourself thinking about something, you have to deal with the thought that automatically pops into your head.

Your unconscious can’t process negatives: it interprets everything you think as a positive thought. So if you think, ‘I don’t want to be poor,’ your unconscious mind focuses on the ‘poor’ and because it doesn’t do negatives, the focus becomes ‘poor’ and everything you associate with poor. Being poor then becomes the goal in your unconscious mind as it’s a young child, desperate to please, it means you behave in a way that seems you poor; which is obviously not what you wanted!

That’s why stating your goals in the positive is so important. In this instance, instead of thinking ‘I don’t want to be poor,’ you need to think ‘I want to be wealthy,’ because this creates the representations in your mind of what being wealthy means to you and helps you keep your focus on what you want. For more information on the importance of stating goals in a positive way, head to Chapter 4.

**Your unconscious mind needs direction**

Yogis liken the unconscious mind to a mischievous monkey, always leaping from tree to tree. The way to keep the monkey occupied and out of mischief is to stick a pole in the ground and direct the monkey to climb up and down the pole. If your conscious mind doesn’t provide a direction for your unconscious mind, the latter looks to find direction wherever it can. A young, directionless child, for example, may find that joining a street gang provides a structure to their life and they then find that they get their direction from the leader of the gang and the gang laws. Your unconscious mind does the same thing, and needs direction and focus or it may create destructive behaviours in you.

In order to direct the unconscious mind, you need to open up communication channels between your conscious and your unconscious minds. This rapport is developed by finding a quiet time for meditation or relaxation and examining the memories presented to you by your unconscious mind.
PTSD occurs when the amygdala receives input with a very high emotional value, gets in a panic, and can’t send the information to the hippocampus. Because of this, the traumatic event gets trapped within the amygdala and the hippocampus is unable to present the memory to the neocortex for evaluation, which means the brain can’t make sense of the event. Because the amygdala is the organ primarily involved with your survival, in PTSD sufferers it stays in a constant state of arousal, causing flashbacks and high levels of anxiety.

Virginia Woolf wrote the novel *Mrs Dalloway* in the early 1920s and her portrayal of Septimus Smith clearly identifies him as suffering from post-traumatic stress after the horrors of World War I. Unfortunately, at the time, conventional medicine was relatively inexperienced at dealing with psychological problems. Patients like Septimus Smith were advised to have plenty of rest in order to recuperate and were given useless advice such as ‘pull yourself together, man’.
In Chapter 9 you discover all about setting anchors. You can use anchoring to put yourself or a client into a resourceful emotional state before doing the Fast Phobia Cure.

**Accepting That Beliefs and Values Make a Difference**

You may have heard someone say, ‘teenagers today, they have no values’. Well, everyone has values; they’re just different for different people and different groups of people. Your values and beliefs are unconscious filters that you use to decide what bits of data coming in through your senses you pay attention to and what bits of data you ignore. You know what that means, don’t you? The unconscious nine-tenths of your brain has been sitting there on the quiet, building up all sorts of beliefs and making all sorts of decisions about you and your environment, and you’re not even aware of them.

**Getting to grips with the power of beliefs**

Your beliefs can, when allowed to go to the extreme, have the power of life and death over you. Your beliefs can help you to health, wealth, and happiness or keep you unwell, poor, and miserable.

The beliefs we’re talking about here are distinct from religious beliefs – these beliefs are the generalisations you make about your life experiences. These generalisations go on to form the basis of your reality that then directs your behaviour. You can use one empowering belief, for example, to help you to develop another belief to the next level of achievement. So ‘I’m a really good speller’ helps you develop the belief that you enjoy words and are quite articulate. This belief may lead you to believe that you can tell stories and suddenly you find that you have the courage to submit a short story to a magazine; and suddenly you’re a published author.

Just as you have positive, empowering beliefs, you can also have negative, disempowering beliefs. If you had the misfortune of being bullied at school, you may have developed a belief that people, in general, aren’t pleasant. This belief may make you behave quite aggressively towards people when you first meet them. If some people then respond in a similarly aggressive way, their behaviour may well reinforce your belief that ‘people aren’t pleasant’. You may not even notice when someone responds in a friendly manner because your belief filters aren’t geared to noticing pleasant people.
Be aware that a limiting belief may be lurking if you find yourself using words or hearing words such as can’t, should, shouldn’t, could, couldn’t, would, ought, and ought not, as in ‘I couldn’t possibly do your job’. As Henry Ford said: ‘He can who thinks he can, and he can’t who thinks he can’t. This is an inexorable, indisputable law.’

**Being impacted by the beliefs of others**

The really scary thought is that other people’s preconceptions can place false limitations on you, especially if the other people are teachers, bosses, family, or friends.

A very interesting study conducted with a group of children who had been tested and found to be of average intelligence illustrates how a teacher’s belief can enhance or hinder a child’s learning ability.

The students were split into two groups at random. The teacher for one group was told that the students in the group were gifted, whereas the teacher for the other group was told that these students were slow learners. Both groups of children were retested for intelligence a year later. The intelligence score for the group in which the teacher thought the students were gifted was higher than when first tested; whereas the group in which the teacher had been told the students were slow learners scored lower on the intelligence test than they had done before.

Sadly these limitations aren’t just the domain of overcrowded schools but exist in homes where parents shoehorn their children into an ‘acceptable’ position. Other examples include when your friends remind you to be careful of changing a secure job to pursue a dream, or when a boss whose communication style is different from yours has a detrimental effect on your career progression. We hear of many cases in which doctors declare to patients that they are never going to recover, and how this statement negatively impacts the life span of the patients. Not only are some of these professionals perceived always to know more than you, but also you may even place them on a pedestal.

A child can have difficulties overcoming the shortcomings of a teacher without parental assistance and even more so the restrictions of a parent or family environment. As an adult, however, you can weigh up the pros and cons of the advice you’re being given by seeing it from the other person’s point of view. (We cover this situation in Chapter 7, where we write about exploring perceptual positions.) When you understand the reasons for the other person’s opinion, you can choose to follow the given advice or not. Also, with this knowledge behind you, you can always start to use your boss’s communication style in order to get your message across and so progress in your chosen career.
If you hear sounds such as sirens or crying, reduce their volume and harshness. If you hear people saying something unpleasant, have them talk to you in a cartoon voice to mitigate their painful words.

5. **Adjust the quality of the picture.**

Make it smaller, darker, and in black and white; move it far away from you until it’s a dot and almost invisible. You may want to imagine sending the image up into the sun and watch it disappear in a solar flare. In this way, you experience yourself destroying the hold the memory previously had on you.

Changing the memory doesn’t mean that the event didn’t occur. It does, however, prove that you have a choice over how the memory affects you now and the impact it has on your future.

**You See It Because You Believe It**

Imagine that you’re among a group of people who witness a robbery. The chances are that everyone gives the police a different account of the robbery.

This situation arises because people receive the data that create their reality through their five senses (visual – eyes, auditory – ears, kinaesthetic – touch, gustatory – taste, and olfactory – smell). Your senses, however, bombard your brain with so much data at any one time that, in order to maintain your sanity, you process only a very small fraction of the incoming data. Filters – combinations of who you believe you are, your values and beliefs, and your memories – dictate what your brain accesses. You can pick up more about these filters in Chapter 5.

Just as your filters direct what you perceive, they also affect what you project out into the world. Maybe you find yourself surrounded by angry, selfish, or jealous people. If so, perhaps you’re harbouring unresolved anger, believing in a win–lose scenario because there isn’t enough in the world to go around, that somebody else can only do well if you don’t, or feeling jealous of someone else’s success.

One of Romilla’s clients, Mary, was extremely unhappy at work because she was being bullied. Her supervisor, along with the departmental secretary, ganged up on Mary, being very unpleasant and extremely petty.

Romilla helped Mary to recognise that the supervisor was a very lonely woman who had no friends and was very unpopular at work. Whenever Mary looked at the supervisor she imagined that the supervisor was holding a placard saying: ‘I feel I’m worthless and unlovable.’ Mary started to replace fear...
need to find a club where I can hire an instructor and a hang-glider. I need to adjust my availability to make time for my new hobby.'

**Have I evidence of achieving this type of goal before?**

Peter: ‘Well, I learnt to drive, and boy was that scary, the first time that police car seemed to drive at me sirens blaring and lights flashing, but I persevered and am a good driver now.’

**What happens if I act as if I have the resources?**

Peter: ‘Oh, I can feel myself soaring and I don’t have those butterflies in my stomach when I look down. I never thought I could leave terra firma without metal below me. Can’t wait to get soaring!’

Acting as if you have the resources now helps you to recognise and shift any beliefs that may be holding you back. It also enables you to try the outcome on for size – you may change your mind at this point. This approach is a great help because it can save you spending money on equipment that ends up taking up space in the garage, if you later find that the new hobby isn’t right for you.

**Have I evaluated whether the goal is ecological?**

The dictionary defines ecology as a ‘branch of biology dealing with living organisms’ habits, modes of life, and relations to their surroundings’. In NLP, when we talk about ecology checks, we’re simply asking questions to make sure that the outcome fits within all aspects of your life. Ecology checks shine a strong beam of light on any hidden agenda or secondary gain of which you may be unaware when setting your outcomes. A secondary gain or positive by-product is defined as a behaviour that appears to be negative or problem-causing, when in fact it serves a positive function at some level.

The following questions are the laser-guided system that helps you lock on to the nub of your desires. As you ask yourself these questions, be aware of any pictures, sounds, and particularly feelings that your unconscious mind raises. Be sympathetic to the response you get and adjust your goal accordingly.

- What is the real purpose why I want this?
- What will I lose or gain if I get it?
- What will happen if I get it?
- What won’t happen if I get it?
- What will happen if I don’t get it?
- What won’t happen if I don’t get it?
In a normal life, however, expecting to score perfect 10s for everything, all the time, is unrealistic. Life just isn’t like that. When you’re working hard, another aspect of your life may slip down the agenda. If you’ve been spending lots of time doing up your home, for example, you’re unlikely to have had time to socialise with friends. Or if you’ve been studying for exams, your exercise routine may well have flown out the window.

By noticing those areas of your life where you’re not happy with the scores, you have an opportunity to set yourself a well-formed outcome to address that area. Do you, for example, want to pay off your credit cards and get your finances in good shape, or join an online dating agency to get more romance back into your life? As you focus on what you want, you take charge of your life rather than simply reacting to what comes at you.
In this scenario the father changes his internal process and makes a conscious effort to remember when he was a teenager himself, in need of guidance and a firm hand. He decides on the result he wants from his interaction with the teenager and, having disengaged his emotions, is able to proceed down the path that keeps communication channels open in order to achieve the desired outcome: to get Drew to mow the lawn.

This scenario illustrates how, by putting the NLP presuppositions into practice, Dan is able to achieve his outcome of having Drew mow the lawn. (For example, the presupposition that ‘the person with the most flexibility in a system is the winner’. ) The male bonding is an added bonus. The response he gets from Drew when the teenager starts to become defensive is obviously not the one Dan wants. Dan has the flexibility to recognise Drew’s behaviour patterns and modify his own responses in order to get his outcome, thereby controlling the system.

Understanding the Process of Communication

John Grinder and Richard Bandler discovered that master communicators have three sets of capabilities:

- They know what they want.
- They’re very good at noticing the responses they get.
- They have the flexibility to modify their behaviour until they get what they want.

Simon taught Kate some valuable lessons about dealing with people. Simon always manages to keep his cool and usually achieves his outcome even in the most difficult situations. He does so by distancing himself from his emotions and keeping his focus on the result he wants. He also attempts to understand the other person’s point of view in order to arrive at a win–win result.

Everybody processes information differently and so reacts to situations differently. Wouldn’t it be really useful to understand how another person’s brain works? Read on for some clues.

Processing pieces of information

Professor George Miller conducted research into how many bits of data people can process at any given time. He came to the conclusion that a person can hold seven, plus or minus two, bits of information; that is, nine bits if they’re feeling good or have an interest in a subject and as few as five if
**Generalisation**

You make a generalisation when you transfer the conclusions you came to from one experience to other similar situations or occurrences. Imagine that you gave a very good speech that was well received. Afterwards, you may form a generalisation that you’re good at public speaking.

Generalisations can be useful; they help you to build a cognitive map of the world. If you didn’t generalise, for example, you’d need to relearn the alphabet and how to put together individual letters every time you read a book. Generalisations allow you to build on what you already know, without reinventing the wheel.

They can be limiting, though. The beliefs you hold about your world are generalisations and you delete and distort to the best of your ability to hold them in place. So, in other words, your generalisations can become restrictive because they can make you less likely to accept or trust actions and events that don’t fit with your preconceived notions.

This tendency can in turn lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. Confidence and self-doubt are two sides of a coin. When you feel confident about doing something, the chances are that your actions are successful because you expect a positive result. Even on the odd occasion when things don’t work out quite as you’d want, you move on. If you’re plagued with self doubt, however, convinced something isn’t going to work out or no one’s going to talk to you when you go to an event, a very high chance exists that your experience goes on to reflect your beliefs. Do you experience a slight disappointment when someone or a situation fails to meet your worst expectations? And do you feel a little triumphant when you’re duly disappointed? Sometimes, having your negative generalisation confirmed is more satisfying than a situation going better than expected. How self-defeating is that!

**Getting to grips with individual responses**

When different people are exposed to the same external stimuli, they don’t remember the event, and react to it, in the same way. The difference is because all people delete, distort, and generalise differently based on their own meta programs, values, beliefs, attitudes, memories, and decisions: we discuss these aspects in the next few sections.

**Meta programs**

Meta programs, which we describe in more detail in Chapter 8, are filters. They are the way in which you reveal your patterns of behaviour through your language. For instance, someone who’s inclined to take charge and get things done (meaning that they display more proactive tendencies) may be heard to say, ‘Don’t give me excuses, just give me results.’ Whereas someone who’s likely to take their time to think things over before acting (a reactive
happens if you consider this space in terms of textures – the kinaesthetic dimension? Perhaps then you choose a plush, velvety carpet or rush matting. You may expose some brickwork or prefer a new smooth plaster finish on the walls, depending on the feel that appeals to you.

In the context of learning, when you know about VAK you can start to experiment with different ways of taking in information. Say, in the past you’ve studied a language by listening to CDs in your car. Perhaps now you may make faster progress by watching foreign films or plays instead, or by playing sport, sharing a meal, or learning a dance routine with native speakers of that language. When people discover how to develop their abilities to access pictures, words, and feelings, they often discover talents of which they were previously unaware.

When Kate began to learn Italian from her friend Paola in Abruzzo, she initially wanted to see everything written down in order to remember what she’d heard spoken; and she felt she had to learn the vocabulary by rote. Paola encouraged her to relax on a comfortable sofa after each lesson, listen to what she had practised earlier, and allow the words to sink in naturally. This approach saved Kate from getting anxious about how she was going to remember everything and made the experience fun.

As a teacher who has studied NLP, Paola recognises two important things: pupils learn best when in a resourceful state; and all pupils have their own natural learning style.

A resourceful state is one in which you’re able to be open, curious to learn, and able to access all the resources you need to solve any problem you’re dealing with. The resources you access may be internal – such as your natural attributes of a desire to learn – or external – including other people or technical gadgets. In a resourceful state, you have a sense that you’re behaving ‘at cause’ where you have choices, rather than ‘at effect’ where you feel powerless and that life is something being done to you.

In ‘NLP-speak’, the different channels through which humans represent or code information internally using their senses are known as the representational systems, also called the modalities. (In NLP, speaking about the visual modality is the equivalent of speaking of the visual representational system.) You can also hear NLPers talk about rep systems for short, VAK preferences, or preferred thinking styles. Visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic make up the main representational systems. The submodalities are the characteristics of each representational system, such as colour and brightness (visual), pitch and tone (auditory), and pressure and temperature (kinaesthetic).

The sensory-specific words (such as ‘picture’, ‘word’, ‘feeling’, ‘smell’, or ‘taste’) that we employ – whether they’re nouns, verbs, or adjectives – are called the predicates. More examples of these predicates are given in Table 6-1, which you can find in the later section ‘Building rapport through words’.
to adjust your language pattern so that it aligns with those around you and therefore build rapport through the similarity of your language pattern.

Table 6-1 lists some of the sensory-specific words and phrases – the VAK predicates mentioned in the earlier section ‘Filtering reality’ – that you hear people say. You can start to build up your own lists and notice which words you say or write frequently. When you have difficulty getting through to certain people, check whether you’re stuck in a rut with your own language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 6-1</strong></th>
<th><strong>VAK words and phrases</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visual</strong></td>
<td><strong>Auditory</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright, blank, clear, colour, dim, focus, graphics, illuminate, insight, luminous, perspective, vision</td>
<td>Argue, ask, deaf, discuss, loud, harmony, melody, outspoken, question, resonate, say, shout, shrill, sing, tell, tone, utter, vocal, yell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It looks like...</td>
<td>It sounds like...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A glimpse of reality</td>
<td>So you say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We looked at our work</td>
<td>I heard it from his own lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is a new way of seeing the world</td>
<td>Who’s calling the tune?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now look here</td>
<td>Clear as a bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is clear cut</td>
<td>Important to ask me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight for sore eyes</td>
<td>Word for word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show me what you mean</td>
<td>We’re on the same wavelength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunnel vision</td>
<td>Tune into this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appears as if...</td>
<td>Music to my ears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a bright day</td>
<td>That strikes a chord</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A few olfactory and gustatory words also exist, such as the following: fragrant, fresh, juicy, odour, pungent, salty, smell, smoky, sour, spicy, sweet, and whiff.

Many words in your vocabulary don’t have any link to the senses. These words are non-sensory, and because they’re ‘neutral’ you neither connect nor disconnect with somebody else’s modality. Neutral words include the following: analyse, answer, ask, choose, communicate, complex, educate, experience, favourite, imagine, learn, question, remember, transform, think, understand, use, and wonder.
learners benefit from practical sessions and role playing: they prefer a ‘hands-on’ approach. Teachers of groups of pupils need to provide a multi-sensory approach that caters for all styles. Children may be labelled as ‘slow’ when in fact the dominant teaching style doesn’t fit with their preferred way of learning. All these principles apply to adult learners, too.

- **Increasing the impact of the written word.** When you put pen to paper and words to screen – from a job description, to customer proposal, charity letter, product advertisement, or article for your local community newsletter – you need to broaden your vocabulary to cover all the representational systems. To appeal to every reader, select words that include all three dimensions.

- **Connecting with clients and colleagues on the phone.** Nowadays more and more business happens on the phone and through email rather than face-to-face. You may never get to meet some of your clients or colleagues. Keep a pad by the phone and make a note of the kind of language they use – can you hear visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic language? As you listen, and then reply, phrase your sentences to match their preference.

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**Try this**

While reading this chapter, you may have become more curious about yourself and those with whom you spend time – how you and they think and experience life. To enhance your skills further, you can explore your senses in different ways, for example, picking a sense theme for each day.

Perhaps you can make today an olfactory day, when you pay attention to every fragrance, smell, and aroma. Or a visual day, when you switch off the music and focus on the sights, shapes, and pictures – really see what’s around you. A touch day can be fun, when you feel the surrounding textures or get in touch with your feelings at regular points in the day.

If you’re a creature of habit who takes the dog for a walk every morning or drives the same route every day, notice what changes for you when you pay attention to just one sense at a time.
Chapter 7
Creating Rapport

In This Chapter
▶ Getting people to listen to you in challenging situations
▶ Handling difficult people
▶ Improving your ability to say ‘no’
▶ Increasing your options in how you respond
▶ Gaining insights into other people’s experience

Rapport sits at the heart of NLP as a central pillar or essential ingredient, which leads to successful communication between two individuals or groups of people. Rapport is a mutually respectful way of being with others and a way of doing business at all times. You don’t need to like people to build rapport with them. Also, rapport isn’t a technique that you turn on and off at will. It is something that should flow constantly between people.

Rapport is like money: you realise that you have a problem only when you don’t have enough of it. The first rule of communication is to establish rapport before expecting anyone to listen to you. And this rule applies to everybody and in every situation, whether you’re a teacher, pupil, spouse, friend, waitress, taxi-driver, coach, doctor, therapist, or business executive.

Don’t kid yourself that you can pull rapport instantly out of the bag for a particular meeting, conversation or problem-solving session. True rapport is based on an instinctive sense of trust and integrity. This chapter helps you to spot situations when you do (and don’t) have rapport with another person. We share some special NLP tools and ideas to enable you to build rapport and encourage you to do so with people where it may prove valuable for you.
Chapter 7: Creating Rapport

Matching and mirroring are ways of becoming highly tuned to how someone else is thinking and experiencing the world: it’s a way of listening with your whole body. Simple mirroring happens naturally when you have rapport.

NLP suggests that you can also deliberately match and mirror someone to build rapport until it becomes natural. To do so, you need to match the following:

- Body postures and gestures
- Breathing rates
- Rhythm of movement and energy levels
- Voice tonality (how you sound) and speed of speech

Beware of the fine line between moving in rhythm with someone and mimicry. People instinctively know when you’re making fun of them or being insincere. If you decide you want to check out mirroring for yourself, do so gradually in no-risk situations or with strangers you aren’t going to see again. Don’t be surprised though if it works and the strangers want to become your friends!

When rapport helps you say ‘no’

Perhaps you’re one of those people who prefer to say ‘yes’ to everything, to be helpful and pleasing to the boss, clients, and family. You’re the first person to put your hand up in committee meetings, the one who organises the school jumble sale or charity dinner, who drives the kids around, and you’re always the one who ends up having to do the tasks. Discovering how to say ‘no’ sometimes is one of the greatest skills for modern living, if you’re to protect yourself from being overloaded and then becoming sick with the stress.

At work, a manager can easily be tempted to ask the willing worker to take on more. Consider James’s story.

As a maths teacher who loves his job, James was finding it increasingly hard to say: ‘I’m not going to take that on.’ He felt he was letting people down by saying ‘no’ and was in danger of making himself seriously ill through overwork. He discovered that by simply matching the body language of his head of department, he was more easily able to smile and say very politely: ‘I’d love to do that, but my time is already fully committed. If you want me to take on extra responsibility, you must decide what you’d like me to stop doing to make time for this.’ In this way he refused to take on a greater load than he was able to handle.
Part II: Winning Friends and Influencing People

✓ Speak more slowly and precisely than in face-to-face meetings. Remember you can’t get clues from the body language.

✓ Listen for the style of language – check whether people have visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic preferences, and match your language style to theirs as we suggest in Chapter 6.

✓ Get attention before making your point (otherwise the first part of the message gets lost). Begin with phrases along the lines of ‘I have something I’d like to mention here... it’s about...’

✓ Use people’s names more than in face-to-face meetings. Address questions to people by name and thank them for their contribution by name.

✓ Visualise the person at the other end of the phone line as you listen to the conversation (you may even like to have a photo of the person in front of you).

✓ Summarise and check your understanding of points and decisions continually.

Knowing How to Break Rapport and Why You May Want To

At times you may choose to mismatch people for a while in order to break rapport deliberately. Mismatching is the opposite of matching or mirroring (which we describe in the earlier section ‘Matching and mirroring’). To mismatch someone, you aim to do something dissimilar to that person, such as dressing very differently, speaking in a different tone or at a different speed, adopting a different physical posture, or behaving quite differently from the other person.

We worked with a team of doctors who were suffering from an increase in patient workload due to the long-term sickness of one partner. In the initial assessments with them, we noticed how most of the meetings with patients were completed within the allotted one hour, and yet meetings with one partner took nearly twice as long. This particular doctor had a reputation for being especially kind and helpful with her patients; she topped the popularity bill in a patient survey. Indeed she is a great listener, and patients loved her approach. However, in order to get through her case load during normal surgery hours, she had to discover how to limit the time with each patient in a more disciplined way. She found a way to mismatch sensitively and get through her patient list.
Part II: Winning Friends and Influencing People

Moving Towards/Away From

People invest time, energy, and resources moving towards or away from something that they find enjoyable or something they want to avoid. They use their values to judge whether an action is good or bad and whether the result they get gives them pleasure or pain.

Can you remember the last time you started an exercise regime or began a new diet? Perhaps you were all fired up and eager to start, and consequently you made terrific progress: your weight began to come down and you felt so much better because of the exercise. Suddenly, though, you lost your momentum, the weight stopped going down, or worse still, started creeping up. The visits to the gym became more sporadic. As things started to go downhill you got all fired up again until . . . . You were caught in a roller coaster of being motivated and losing your focus.

‘What happened?’ you cry in despair. Chances are that where your health is concerned you have an away from meta program, which means that you’re propelled to take action to get away from something, in this case weight or perhaps lethargy. Figure 8-1 illustrates how someone whose motivation to health is primarily away from may have their weight loss yo-yo over a period of time.
leaves of the trees, the colour of the sky, the shapes of the clouds, and how doing so makes you feel inside.

Learning lessons from negative past events can help to release their hold on you. Chapter 13 shows you how to release negative emotions and limiting decisions.

**Combining Meta Programs**

You have a combination of meta programs that you prefer to adopt when you’re within your comfort zone. Try to remember that this preference may change depending on the different circumstances in which you find yourself. For instance, a project manager may combine difference, proactive, detail, and toward preferences when at work, but choose to be more of a sameness, reactive, global person at home.

Also, realising that certain combinations of meta programs may fit certain professions better than others is important. It is understanding that many more meta programs are available that may be of use to you.

Would you want the pilot of your jumbo jet to have a high options, global, and difference meta program combination? You may well be a little nervous of being in the hands of someone who decides to skip a couple of the flight checks because the procedure is boring and seeing what happens if that red light flashes may be fun!

Would you want your prescription filled by a chemist who likes to test the result of adding a couple of extra drops of the pretty blue liquid to your angina medicine?

These examples are meant to illustrate that jobs work best when the profiles of people fit the parameters of their jobs. For instance, you may decide that the best meta program fit to fill the vacant position of a quality controller is for the person to have preferences for detail, away from, and procedures.

**Developing Your Meta-Program Skills**

Meta programs is one of the topics that excites the most interest in Romilla’s workshops, probably because delegates realise the power of using the so-called right language: that is, the words and phrases that mean the most to the person with whom you’re communicating. Using appropriate language allows you to build rapport and get your message heard better than someone who’s not as skilled in the art of meta programs.
Part III
Opening the Toolkit

The 5th Wave

"Well, that's just great! We're this close to landing 'Godzilla - The Mini-Series' and you lose your emotional distance over syndication rights!"
In This Chapter
▶ Understanding the effect of sounds, sights, smells, and sensations
▶ Controlling the way you feel on the inside
▶ Overcoming your stage nerves
▶ Changing the way you think about the past and future

I just don’t know what came over me!’ Are these familiar words? Ever had that feeling that your reactions to a situation have been way in excess of what was called for? Your feelings may have overwhelmed you. Perhaps you even say that you weren’t quite yourself.

Everybody has emotional responses all the time: some are great – falling in love, joy, and pleasure – others less so – falling out of love, sadness, and pain. These experiences and feelings are what make life and work interesting and fun, as well as confusing and unpredictable. Often, in our work, we talk to managers who sigh and say if only their colleagues would leave their emotions at home. And at home, many people would prefer that their partners leave their workplace stresses at work.

Maybe you’ve witnessed situations when someone has ‘blown a fuse’ unexpectedly. Often this event happens at what, on the face of it, seems the slightest provocation. Most people can identify with the discomfort or agitation of being in a bit of a state. In fact, NLP uses the term state to mean to look at, and become more aware of, how you feel at any moment in time.

Taken to extremes, these feelings of being overwhelmed and being out-of-control can scare people. They can affect your career and your social life. People question whether such a person can be trusted in responsible situations or when they have to represent the company.

Fortunately, with the stabilising influence of the NLP toolkit, help is at hand to control yourself, your state at any one time, and how you affect other people. And when you discover how to do so, the effect is fantastic.
Baroque music is especially suitable for creating a state of relaxed awareness, known as the alpha state. To explore this kind of music, look out for the largo and adagio passages in pieces composed between about 1600 and 1750—Bach, Mozart, Handel, and Vivaldi all offer good starting points.

Here are some different ways to think about the music you play. Perhaps you’re stuck in a groove with your listening taste:

✓ Vary the range of CDs you listen to or the tracks you download to your MP3 player—from baroque to classical, jazz and blues to reggae, or pop and rock to opera.

✓ Change the rhythm—compare predictable rhythms with varied and unfamiliar ones to encourage your creativity. World music is good for this aspect.

✓ Instrumental or vocal? Words can distract—solo instruments tend to encourage relaxation.

✓ Intuition—trust your own tastes. Don’t struggle with a piece of music you dislike: turn it off because it’s unlikely to make you feel good.

✓ Start the day differently—when you feel good in the morning, you get off to a flying start. Try swapping the confrontational news channel on the radio for inspiring and uplifting music.

Here’s an exercise to work through an issue with the help of music:

1. Think of an issue or a decision that’s bothering you—rate it on a worry scale of 1 to 10 and note the score on a piece of paper.

2. Select three pieces of music of very different styles, from mellow to lively.

For example, try some baroque, jazz instrumentals, heavy rock, or soft vocals.

### Brainwaves, from alpha to delta

You have four types of brainwave, measured in cycles per second:

1. **Alpha brainwaves**—clear, calm, and relaxed—8–12 cycles per second
2. **Beta brainwaves**—alert and problem solving—13–30 cycles per second
3. **Theta brainwaves**—creative and imaginative—4–9 cycles per second
4. **Delta brainwaves**—deep sleep—less than 6 cycles per second

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Baroque music is especially suitable for creating a state of relaxed awareness, known as the alpha state. To explore this kind of music, look out for the largo and adagio passages in pieces composed between about 1600 and 1750—Bach, Mozart, Handel, and Vivaldi all offer good starting points.
speak in public! Apparently in the US, public speaking is the number one fear; in the UK, it’s in second place behind a fear of spiders.

We regularly work with clients who suffer performance anxiety, which shows itself in hot sweats, loss of voice, and stomach cramps and upsets. When dinner guests are invited to give after-dinner speeches, they often fail to enjoy the meal, because of the prospect of entertaining the audience with their wit over the coffee, petits fours, and brandy.

If ever a reason existed to use anchoring to get back in control, public speaking is it!

If you have had a particularly bad experience of public speaking, ask an NLP practitioner to do a fast phobia cure with you to desensitise the memory. (See Chapter 3 for an explanation of the NLP fast phobia cure.)

**Using the circle of excellence**

The NLP *circle of excellence* is a technique to help you summon up the confidence to perform a skill. You can use it when you have a fear of public speaking or when you want to boost your confidence to play your best shot in sport, as well as in many other instances.

The circle of excellence is the classic NLP technique to practise with a partner when you’re providing the after-dinner entertainment. It works best if you enlist a buddy or NLP practitioner who takes you sensitively through these steps while maintaining rapport with you, and not rushing.

Think of the situation in which you have to perform, and imagine a circle on the ground in front of you about one metre in diameter. Then follow these steps, which describe the step-by-step instructions that take you in and out of your circle, telling you what to do at each stage, with the help of a partner:

1. **Stand outside the circle with your partner.**
   
   Identify your best state. Tell your partner what that state is in your own words. Your partner says: ‘Remember a time when you were [insert your exact words] . . . get back to it strongly . . . see what you saw then, hear what you heard.’

2. **Step inside the circle.**
   
   Relive that experience. Make it vivid, be there in it with all your senses. Feel what your hands are doing and hold or anchor that state with a hand movement at the point when the memory is most vivid.

3. **Step outside the circle, back to your partner.**
   
   Repeat the exercise with a second experience of your best state. In order to prepare for the future event, your partner says: ‘Think of a time when this state will be useful.’
After visualisation, some people find that dissociating is difficult. To do so, imagine stepping out of the car and onto the pavement. Turn around and look back at the car and see yourself sitting in the front seat. If you still can’t dissociate, pretend that you’re watching a film and you’re up there on the screen, in front of the car.

If you feel that you aren’t getting the hang of this exercise (or any others), feel free to leave it for the moment. You can always come back to it and give the exercise another go when you have more NLP experience embedded in your mind and muscle. Or you can find yourself an NLP practitioner or NLP practice group to work with in order to advance your skills (Appendix A is a resource list to help you make contact).

**Defining the details of your memories**

While you’re sitting down to read this book, you’re probably aware of the feel of the seat against your back and legs, although you’re now because we mention it. Similarly, you’re not always aware of the qualities of your memories until we ask you to remember them. If you were, for example, brushing your teeth, playing a game, reading a book, or cooking, then you realise that a range of qualities apply to those memories. For instance, when remembering reading a book, the picture you make of yourself, the book, or the story, may be surrounded by a frame, or it may be in black and white. Perhaps you can hear the sound of distant traffic or of the pages turning. Maybe the book you were reading makes you laugh and feel uplifted and happy.

You can become aware of the qualities of your submodalities by paying attention to what you see, or hear, or feel when you recall an experience. The following sections present you with questions that can help you elicit the quality of the visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic submodalities.

We focus on just the visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic submodalities in this chapter, and put taste and smell aside for now. We do so because we believe that – unless you’re a wine-, tea-, or coffee-taster – these senses don’t have the same power as sight, sound, and touch. Having said that, tastes and smells certainly affect your emotional brain and you may find the smell of roasted chestnuts suddenly transporting you back to a childhood memory of falling snow and Christmas carols.

**Eliciting visual submodalities**

You can define the quality of a picture in terms of where it’s located in space as you look at it. For instance, the image may be directly in front of you, to your left, to your right, or slightly displaced to the top or bottom. If the picture is panoramic, it looks like you’re standing in one spot and turning your head to look at the view in front of you. The picture has other qualities as well, brightness, shape, and so on. You can discover how you make pictures in your head by thinking about the following qualities:
When Charles changed the voice to a whisper and moved it to just below his left ear, outside his head, he realised he didn’t feel sick and he felt a warm glow in his stomach. Charles wasn’t prepared to change the voice further, however, because he believed the voice served to watch out for potential problems. He just needed to change the quality so that it allowed him to get on with his life.

Making Real-Life Changes

As you experiment with the exercises in this chapter, we hope that you begin to get a pretty good idea of your critical submodality: the submodality that can impact on and change other submodalities. And we hope that you gain the conviction that you’re in control of your experiences and can change them in order to choose how you feel. In the light of this knowledge and belief, experience real change in your life by working through the exercises in the following sections.

Just think: you can sit and program your mind on the train, in a traffic jam, or even over a boring meal with in-laws (or should that be out-laws, just kidding!). And remember, practice makes perfect, so start experimenting, safe in the knowledge that you can’t get arrested for playing with your submodalities, even in public.

Removing the pain from an experience

Can you think of an unpleasant experience you’ve had? We don’t mean something life shattering, just an incident that, when you think of it, makes you feel less than good. Got one?

Now, using the form in the later section ‘Submodalities Worksheet’, examine and note the submodalities of the experience. With this knowledge, start changing the picture, sounds, and feelings that you get when you think of the unpleasant experience. What happened? You do feel better now, don’t you? No? Then discover what happens when you change the submodalities of the unpleasant experience to those of the pleasant experience we asked you to recall at the start of the chapter.

Changing a limiting belief

How often have you heard yourself say such things as, ‘I can’t do that’, ‘I’m no good at maths’, or ‘I should learn to cook properly’? These statements are all examples of limiting beliefs, generalisations that you make about yourself and your world. These beliefs can disable you, holding you back, or they
NLP separates the intention that lies behind your action from the action itself. For this reason, NLP avoids labelling people. Phrases such as ‘men behaving badly’, for example, doesn’t mean that men are intrinsically bad, just that some behaviour is bad behaviour.

If you want to give feedback to encourage learning and better performance, always give very specific feedback about what someone says or does in terms of the behaviour rather than commenting at the identity level. So, instead of saying ’John. Sorry mate, but you were just awful.’ Try: ‘John, it was difficult to hear you at the meeting because you looked at the computer all the time and had your back to the audience.’

Here are some identity questions to ask yourself when you have a sense of conflict around your identity:

✓ How is what you’re experiencing an expression of who you are?
✓ What kind of person are you?
✓ How do you describe yourself?
✓ What labels do you put on other people?
✓ How would others describe you?
✓ Would other people think of you as you want?
✓ What pictures, sounds, or feelings are you aware of as you think about yourself?

A greater awareness of self is a valuable insight in any journey of personal development. Too often people try to change others, when changing themselves would be a more effective starting point.

Purpose

This ‘beyond-identity’ level connects you to the larger picture when you begin to question your own purpose, ethics, mission, or meaning in life. Purpose takes individuals into the realms of spirituality and their connection with a bigger order of things in the universe, and it leads organisations to define their raison d’être, vision, and mission.

Human survival amid incredible suffering depends on true acceptance of your circumstances that goes beyond identity. Witness the resilience of the Dalai Lama driven from his homeland of Tibet, or the story of Viktor Frankl’s endurance of the Holocaust in his book Man’s Search for Meaning.
As you become older and approach different life stages, you quite naturally start to question what you’re doing with your life. Sometimes a trigger inspires action and lights up your passion. A friend and logistics manager in industry, Alan, travelled to Kenya on holiday and saw at first-hand the educational needs of the country. Thus began a powerful one-man campaign that took over his life and led him to create an international charity taking educational materials into Africa, thanks to his personal passion to make a difference. On speaking to him about it, he often says ‘I don’t know why me. It’s mad, but I just know I have to do this.’ His purpose was stronger than his identity.

Here are some purpose questions to ask yourself when you want to check whether you’re steering your life in the right direction:

- For what reason are you here?
- What would you like your contribution to be to others?
- What are your personal strengths that you can add to the wider world?
- How would you like to be remembered when you die?

In his book, *The Elephant and the Flea*, management guru Charles Handy conveys the passion that comes from a sense of mission and underlying purpose. He talks of entrepreneurs he’s written about and his wife, the portrait photographer Elizabeth Handy, as people who leap beyond the logical and stick with their dream:

> Passion is what drove them, a passionate belief in what they are doing, a passion that sustained them through the tough times, that seemed to justify their life. Passion is a much stronger word than mission or purpose, and I realise that as I speak that I am also talking to myself.

When you’re operating in a purposeful way, notice how you’re unstoppable – you’re then in the best place to gain true alignment at all the logical levels.

**Figuring Out Other People’s Levels:**

**Language and Logical Levels**

The intonation in people’s language – the way they speak – can tell you at what level they’re operating. Take the simple phrase, ‘I can’t do it here’ and listen to where the stress (shown in italics below) is placed:

- ‘I can’t do it here’ = statement about identity.
- ‘I can’t do it here’ = statement about belief.
- ‘I can’t do it here’ = statement about capability.
When Kate worked in Zurich, a city in which you can set your watch by the trains running precisely on time, she had some fascinating conversations with a Swiss colleague who had married a Nigerian man. The marriage ended in divorce and one of the reasons cited was that husband and wife had very different attitudes to time:

When we lived in Africa, we’d make arrangements to visit somebody or to do something at a particular time, and then on the way we may bump into somebody else. Our detour could take days while we went off to another village or waited for another relative to appear. I could never rely on my husband to keep to commitments and he couldn’t understand my haste. It was infuriating for both of us.

Time also gives your memories meaning. With NLP techniques, you can switch the meaning you give to a memory by changing the quality of the memory as well as its relationship to time. In this chapter, we explore how employing time-line techniques enables you to work with time and memories to your advantage, including the ability to release yourself from negative emotions and limiting decisions. These tools give you the means to create the future you would rather have, without the influence of disempowering past memories.

Understanding How Your Memories Are Organised

Think of something you do on a regular basis, such as reading a book, driving to a shop, working at your desk, eating in a restaurant, or brushing your teeth. The event needs to be something that you can remember doing in the past, imagine or experience doing in the present, and also imagine doing in the future. As you access the memory or use your imagination, you code it with sensory data such as sounds, pictures, or feelings. When you access an image of the past, for example, you may also notice a difference in the quality of the pictures, to do with brightness, colour, movement, two or three dimensions, and so on. These qualities, or attributes, are called submodalities (you can read more about them in Chapters 6 and 10).

By going into the past to examine a memory and then into the future – via a pitstop in the present – you have experienced a little ‘land-based’ time travel. (You can experience the airborne variety a little later in the section ‘Discovering Your Time Line’.)

We ask you to consider these attributes in order to help you realise that a structure exists to your memories. You instinctively know whether a memory is in the past or whether you’re creating an experience in your imagination.
People view time differently: some are rooted in the past, others gaze firmly into the future, and some live in the moment. Research by Professor Philip Zimbardo shows that how you perceive time is pretty much unconscious and yet can have a significant influence on your behaviour. Understanding whether your own focus is on the past, present, or future, and getting the balance right, can have a dramatic effect on your levels of happiness and success. (Check out Chapter 8 to discover how to spot someone’s perception of time.)

If we ask you to define what you’re made up of, you may say ‘sugar and spice and all things nice’ or ‘hair, skin, and blood’. But of course the whole person that makes up ‘you’ is much more than your component parts. The term for this reality is Gestalt. A Gestalt is a structure, or pattern, which can’t be derived purely from its constituent parts. So, when thinking about you, someone’s mind makes the leap from your components to the whole you.

Your memories are arranged in a Gestalt. Associated memories form a Gestalt, although the formation of a Gestalt may start when you experience an event that first triggers an emotional response: a Significant Emotional Event, or SEE for short. The SEE is also referred to as the root cause. If you experience a similar event and have a similar emotional response, you link the two events. This process continues and suddenly you have a chain.

One of psychology’s founding fathers, William James, likened memories to a string of pearls, in which each related memory is linked along a string to the one before and to the one after. During any work with your time line, if you snip the string before the first occurrence, the Gestalt is broken (as the illustration in Figure 13-1 shows).

![Figure 13-1: A memory Gestalt.](image)

Discovering Your Time Line

Memories are arranged in a pattern. If we ask you to point to the direction from which a past memory came, where would you point? Similarly, if you were to point to something you’re going to do in the future, notice where you’re pointing now. Can you also point to where your present is? If you draw a line between the memory from the past, the one in the present, and the one in the future, you’ve created your very own time line.
People sometimes identify their past as being behind them and their future as in front of them. Others can have a V-shaped line, whereas some people have their past to their left and their future to their right – which is interesting because (as we discuss in Chapter 6) most people move their eyes to the left when they want to remember something and to the right when they want to imagine something that isn’t real, yet. In addition, some people arrange their timeline geographically, with their past in, perhaps, Cornwall, Los Angeles, or Timbuktu, and their present where they’re currently residing. Their future may lie in the place to which they want to move next.

A woman who attended Romilla’s workshop ‘Future Perfect’ (where people come to create the future they want to live) became confused while trying to find her timeline. We discovered that her past was in South Africa, her present in England, and she was unable to decide about her future. We asked her to trust her unconscious and point her finger to where her future may be. She pointed to her front and slightly to the right. Romilla asked her to point to where she thought South Africa was. She pointed behind her but slightly to her left. By getting her to draw a line from where she saw her future to where she pictured South Africa, we were able to establish her timeline ran in a diagonal from her left to her right.

The idea is to find a line that connects your past and future and whether you choose to do it by connecting geographical locations or simply by pointing won’t affect the final result.

You may find that ‘drawing’ an imaginary line on the ground is easier. Then, trusting your unconscious mind, you can walk along the line, from where you think your past is to where you feel your future lies.

Walking along a timeline can be difficult if spatial restrictions get in the way, for example if you’re in a small room. The following exercise shows you how you can visualise your timeline in your head by ‘floating up’ in order to get a clear view of the timeline stretching out below you:

1. **Think of an event that you experienced recently.**
2. **Now take a deep breath and just relax as deeply as you can.**
3. **Imagine yourself floating up, above your present and way above the clouds, into the stratosphere.**
4. **Picture your timeline below you, like a ribbon, and see yourself in the timeline.**
5. **Now float back over your timeline until you’re directly over the recently experienced event.**
6. **You can hover there as long as you like until you decide to float back to the present and down into your own body.**

Hope you enjoyed that trial flight. Remember this process because you’re going to be doing a lot of it.
Changing Your Time Line

When you’ve worked out your time line as described in the preceding section, ask yourself what its position is in relation to you. For instance, does the line run through your body as in the two in-time diagrams shown in Figures 13-2 and 13-3? Or is it out in front of you so that you can see the whole of your time line before you, as in the through-time diagram shown in Figure 13-4?

**Figure 13-2:**
A straight time line for an in-time person.

**Figure 13-3:**
A V-shaped time line for an in-time person.
so long that he felt panicky, he felt comfortable because he knew he would be able to plan and meet his objectives.

Simon had the opposite problem to John: he felt that he could never meet his deadlines. On examining his time line, Simon discovered that his future was so far out in front of him that he was unable to generate enough of a sense of urgency about his goals. Simon compressed his time line and imagined it as a conveyor belt. He placed goals at specific distances along the belt. When Simon made his ‘to do’ list for the next day, he moved the conveyor belt one notch closer. (We talk more about making ‘to do’ lists in Chapter 4.) This method had a real impact on Simon meeting his commitments.

**Travelling Along Your Time Line to a Happier You**

Your time line consists of a sequence of structured memories; pictures are in colour, sounds can be loud or soft, and feelings can make you feel light or weigh you down. (For more information on memory and the senses, turn to Chapter 6.) Your mind creates these memories in its own individual way: for example, if you experience the same event as other people – perhaps you witness an accident – each of you remembers that event differently.

As you travel your time line, examining your memories and understanding the lessons that need to be learned can release the hold that memories have on the present, which allows you to change their structure, making them smaller, softer, or lighter as necessary. Therefore, your past need no longer cast a shadow on your present – or more importantly, on your future.

**Releasing negative emotions and limiting decisions**

Anger, fear, shame, grief, sadness, guilt, regret, and anxiety are just a few examples of negative emotions. These feelings have value in that they make you human – and you wouldn’t want to be free of the ability to experience these emotions – but at times they have a powerful, undesired impact. They can cause physical illness and have a devastating effect on the way you conduct your life.

A *limiting decision* is one that you made in the past when, for some reason, you decided that you were unable to do something, because you were too stupid, unfit, poor, or any number of other reasons. For example, you may have said: ‘I can never be slim’ or ‘I’m bad at adding numbers.’ The limiting decision limits your potential, interfering with your success.
This exercise introduces you to a process that helps you to remove the negative emotions you may be holding on to, such as being prone to inappropriate feelings of anger. Please remember to keep an open mind to the answers that your unconscious mind presents:

1. Find yourself somewhere safe and quiet to relax, and think of a mildly negative emotion you experienced in the past.

2. Check with yourself that learning from the event and releasing the emotion is okay. When you relax, ask your unconscious mind, ‘Is it okay for me to let go of this anger?’

3. Ask your unconscious mind, ‘What’s the root cause of this problem, which when I’m disconnected from it, is going to cause the problem to disappear? Was it before, during, or after my birth?’

When you ask your unconscious mind whether the root cause was before, during, or after your birth, please keep an open mind about the answer you receive. Your unconscious mind absorbs a lot of information and makes a lot of decisions without your conscious awareness. Romilla’s clients have been surprised with their responses.

4. When you obtain the root cause, float way above your time line so that you can see your past and your future stretching below you.

You’re now at location 1 in Figure 13-5.

5. Still above your time line, float back along it until you’re above the SEE (location 2 in Figure 13-5). Take on-board what you saw, felt, and heard.

6. Ask your unconscious mind to learn what it needs to from the event in order for it to let go of the negative emotions easily and quickly.

7. Float to location 3 in Figure 13-5, which is above and 15 minutes before the SEE.

8. As you float above your time line at location 3, turn and face the present so you can see the root cause in front of you and below you.

9. Give yourself permission to let go of all the negative emotions associated with the event and notice where the negative emotions, if any, are now.

Have all the other negative emotions associated with the event also disappeared?

10. If other negative emotions remain, use each ‘out’ breath to release all the emotions that are associated with the SEE.

11. Stay at location 3 until you feel, or know, that all the negative emotions have dissipated.
Getting to Grips with a Hierarchy of Conflict

Conflict can take place at different levels of a hierarchy, known as logical levels, as follows:

- Identity
- Values and beliefs
- Capabilities and skills
- Behaviour
- Environment

When you’re considering some of the conflicts you face, understanding the level at which you need to engage is helpful. For example, if as a manager you believe that people are what make your company a success but you focus more on developing your technology than your people, you may need to modify your behaviour to bring it into line with the needs of your staff and ultimately with your beliefs.

The levels of this hierarchy are also referred to as neurological levels because they connect with your thinking processes and therefore the brain and its interaction with your body. (You can find out all about logical levels in Chapter 11.) These neurological levels operate in a hierarchy – like the rungs on a ladder – with identity at a higher rung and environment down below. When you can identify the real logical level at which you’re working, the conflict becomes easier to resolve.

Here are some examples of the conflicts you may face at the different logical levels:

- **Identity**: Often you have many roles to play in your life and work that pull you in different directions. You may want to be a good parent as well as a committed employee, or a nice, likeable person as well as a profitable manager. Perhaps you’re trying to be a supportive son or daughter or a volunteer in the local community, as well as an international jet-setter.

- **Values and beliefs**: Sometimes you have a mix of beliefs that don’t seem to fit well together or match your values. You may want to be happy, and yet part of you doesn’t believe that you deserve happiness. You may value both health and wealth but not believe that getting them both at the same time is possible. You may value family life and global business success and be struggling to see how these items can fit together, because you have no role models of these two values sitting side by side as equals.
A useful way to think about this concept is to start from the premise that at some point your unconscious mind is a complete whole. When you experience an SEE, a part is created and a boundary forms around this part of your unconscious mind, separating it from the rest of the unconscious mind.

This part functions like a ‘mini you’, with its own personality and values and beliefs. Just like the ‘conscious you’, this part exhibits behaviours that have purpose and intent. Unfortunately, the behaviours can be in conflict with the actual intention of the part. For example, a person who believes they were never loved as a child may develop shoplifting tendencies because the unconscious part craves attention, even though this kind of attention isn’t what the person really wants.

**Understanding a part’s intentions**

A major NLP presupposition is that *every behaviour has a positive intent*. For example, the positive intent behind someone smoking a cigarette may be to relax. (Head to Chapter 2 for more on the main NLP presuppositions.) Sometimes the behaviour that your unconscious part makes you exhibit doesn’t satisfy your underlying need.

Perhaps an alcoholic drinks to numb the pain (positive intent) of being abandoned by their spouse. The unconscious part is in fact crying out for love, but the manifested behaviour — drinking heavily — doesn’t satisfy the underlying need. The answer to this problem lies in identifying and understanding the real need and satisfying it in a positive way. So if the alcoholic can come out of their stupor and recognise that alcohol isn’t what they need but love is, they may dry out, clean up, learn the lessons from their failed marriage, and pick themselves up to find love.

**Getting to the heart of the problem**

Often a part of your unconscious mind can create problems for you. The reasons for these problems can be hard to understand logically. For example, you may suddenly develop a fear of an everyday activity like travelling or meeting people. You can reach the real, hidden purpose behind the intention of the part by peeling back and exploring each reason or intention as it surfaces. When you arrive at the true, underlying purpose of the part, you can then assimilate this purpose into the bigger whole of your unconscious mind.

The following anecdote illustrates what can happen when your unconscious mind drives the motivation of one part. Later in this chapter, in the section ‘Trying the visual squash technique’, you discover how to integrate two parts that are in conflict.
It’s been a hard day’s work

Supper table talk in Kate’s family often goes as follows: ‘So, has it been a hard day’s work today?’ In recounting the highlights of the day, the conversation invariably centres on what constitutes a hard day’s work. Does a 12-hour-long stint in a warm, comfortable office surrounded by the latest labour-saving computers and coffee-making devices qualify?

The question stemmed from watching a TV documentary of motorway maintenance workers who shift traffic cones in the dead of night. The family agreed that this really was hard work in comparison with the reality of a hard day for us, as well as most of our friends and co-workers.

What’s a hard day for you? In just one sentence, you can conjure up a wealth of different meanings. The qualities of the work experience when you’re running a home or an office are very different in comparison with the physical reality of, say, a fire-fighter tackling blazes or a builder constructing houses and exposed to the elements in all weathers.

A statement such as ‘a hard day’s work’ can be interpreted in numerous different ways. To get to any one speaker’s precise meaning requires access to more information – the facts that have been left out. As you read this chapter, you can discover how to gain easy access to relevant information to stop you jumping to the wrong assumptions about somebody else’s experience.

Gathering Specific Information with the Meta Model

Richard Bandler and John Grinder, the co-creators of NLP, discovered that when people speak, three key processes happen naturally, which they labelled deletion, generalisation, and distortion. These processes enable people to explain their experiences in words without going into long-winded details and boring everyone to death.

These processes happen all the time in normal everyday encounters. People delete information by not giving the whole story, make generalisations by extrapolating from one experience to another, and distort reality by letting their imaginations run wild.
To practise creating metaphors and have a little fun at the same time, try this exercise. You need three people: Person A has a subject (like writing a book, for example) that they want to communicate in a different way. Follow these steps:

1. **Person A says: ‘[The topic] is like. . . .’**
   
   Using the book-writing example, Person A may say, ‘Writing a book is like. . . .’

2. **Person B thinks of an object – any object at all to complete the sentence ‘Writing a book is like. . . .’**
   
   Person B, for example, may say, ‘. . .an apple.’

3. **Person C makes the connection.**

   For example, they may say: ‘. . .because you can get your teeth into it.’

This exercise makes a good suppertime game. And you can use it to find a metaphor to help you communicate a message in a more memorable way.

**Applying metaphors to find new solutions**

In his book *Sleight of Mouth*, Robert Dilts relates the story about a young man in a psychiatric ward suffering from the delusion that he’s Jesus Christ. He spends his days unproductively, rambling around, annoying and being ignored by the other patients. All attempts by the psychiatrists and their aides fail to convince the man of his delusion.

One day, a new psychiatrist arrives on the scene. After observing the patient quietly for some time, he approaches the young man. ‘I understand that you have some experience as a carpenter,’ he says. ‘Well . . . yes, I guess I do,’ replies the patient. The psychiatrist explains to him that they’re building a new recreation room at the facility and need the help of someone with the skills of a carpenter. ‘We could sure use your assistance,’ says the psychiatrist, ‘that is, if you’re the type of person who likes to help others.’

And so the story ends well. The patient has been respected for his beliefs and becomes open to communicating with people once more. Now his therapeutic healing can begin.

In this story, the new psychiatrist connects with the client by working with his own metaphor of carpentry. The patient believes that he’s Jesus Christ, and so the psychiatrist accepts that and doesn’t attempt to contradict. Instead, the psychiatrist works with the patient’s belief and adopts the same metaphor – Jesus the carpenter – to set the patient on the road to recovery.
Chapter 18
Asking the Right Questions

In This Chapter
▶ Making your questions more valuable
▶ Revealing limiting assumptions that stop you being your best
▶ Heading straight to the heart of an issue
▶ Making tough decisions easier

When you know the ‘right’ questions to ask, you get the results you want much faster. Throughout this book, in the true spirit of NLP, we deliberately aim to be non-judgemental, and so you can quite legitimately say that no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ questions exist – only different ones.

So we need to be more precise. When we talk about asking the ‘right’ questions, we’re looking specifically for incisive questions – those that put your finger precisely on the nub of an issue, those that have a positive effect in the shortest possible time. In this context, the ‘wrong’ questions are those that send you off-course, meandering down dead ends, and gathering interesting but irrelevant information.

In this book, we explain and demonstrate that your language is powerful; it triggers an emotional response in you, as well as others. Therefore, you can make a difference as you begin to choose your language with increasing awareness. In this chapter, we bring together some of the most useful questions you can ask in different situations to make things happen for yourself and for others. Knowing the right questions to ask may make a difference for you when you want to do the following:

✔️ Set your life going in the right direction
✔️ Make the best decisions
✔️ Help others to take more responsibility
✔️ Select and motivate people
✔️ Coach others to overcome their limitations
Question-Asking Tips and Strategies

Before rushing on to the critical question you probably want answered – ‘what are the magic questions that do make a real difference?’ – take a quick breather and consider how to ask questions when you’re working with people, which is just as important as what to ask.

In this section, we encourage you to challenge your personal style and assumptions and adapt your own behaviour in order to function at your best, whether you’re the client or in the coaching seat.

Cleaning up your language: Removing bias

Have you ever wondered how many questions you ask that make assumptions based on what you want, and your personal view of reality, rather than what other people want? Human beings find that not projecting their ideas, needs, wants, and enthusiasms on to others is difficult – especially on to those closest to them. You influence other people all the time; you just can’t help it.

For that reason most questions aren’t what we call clean – in the sense that they assume something, as in the famous ‘when did you stop beating your wife?’ question.

Even the one small word beating has different meanings for different people. Did you think of beating in the context of physical violence, or in the competitive sense of winning at a sport or game, or something else entirely?

Therapists go through many years of training in order to work with their clients like a clean mirror, which can simply reflect the issues back to clients so they can deliberate on them. Some mirrors get to shine brighter than others! After all, you know how much you can communicate just through one raised eyebrow or a suppressed giggle. (This is the reason why Freud had his clients lying on a couch while he, as the therapist, sat behind the client’s head!)

If you want to be respectful of other people’s views, make a point of noticing how well you can avoid prejudicing the result of a discussion. Are you telling somebody else what to do based on what you would do yourself?

Beware of making the kinds of generalisations or limiting decisions that we talk about in Chapter 15. Listen to what you say, and if you hear yourself issuing instructions that begin with words such as you ‘must’, ‘should’, ‘ought to’, and ‘can’t’ – the time is right to stop directing the action and imposing your stance on others.
Chapter 18: Asking the Right Questions

The overall aim of Clean Language is to remove the bias inherent in the questioner’s language by exploring people’s model of the world from their own perspective. Although the questions can look strange out of context, just consider the subtle difference between asking a really clean question such as ‘And is there anything else?’ compared with ‘What are you going to do now?’ The latter question clearly includes the expectation from the questioner that the person must do something.

Starting the Clean Language process

Penny and James suggest that one way to begin the Clean Language questioning process is to put the client into a resourceful state, by developing a resource metaphor. You can start the process of developing a resource metaphor by asking the following question:

And when you’re at your best, that’s like what?

You can ask this question generally, as it stands above, or you can make it more specific by placing it in a specific context, as we do by adding the following words in square brackets:

And when you’re [working] at your best, that’s like what?
And when you’re [collaborating] at your best, that’s like what?
And when you’re [focusing] at your best, that’s like what?

Or try adding a personal quality:

And when you’re most [patient], that’s like what?
And when you’re most [loving], that’s like what?
And when you’re most [content], that’s like what?

When the person has created a resource metaphor, you can then ask the following clean question that begins the process of developing a desired outcome (goal, objective) metaphor:

And what you would like to have happen, is like what?

When the person has spoken, written, or drawn a metaphor in answer to these questions, you can ask the first five developing questions listed in the next section, so as to bring the metaphor to life. We want the person to be living in their personal metaphorical landscape (to use several metaphors!).

Developing current perception questions

Here are some examples of asking clean questions that increase a person’s understanding of a situation:

...
Chapter 18: Asking the Right Questions

Recognising that the way you behave is what counts

Own up now . . . have you ever shouted at someone, ‘Stop shouting at me!’? Nonsense, isn’t it, expecting someone else to do what you clearly aren’t demonstrating in your own behaviour. Yet people do it all the time. You can easily see in someone else the negative qualities that you want to change in yourself.

The art of encouraging somebody else to change is to model that behaviour yourself. If you want somebody to become curious, be curious yourself. If you want someone to be positive and helpful, you too need to model that behaviour. If you think that someone just needs to lighten up, inject some fun into the proceedings.

Instead of expecting other people to change, lead the way yourself. One of the best lessons we can pass on is ‘The way you behave with other people determines the way people behave with you.’

So when you ask questions, do so with awareness of how you’re behaving as much as what you say.

Pressing the pause button

Silence is golden. Pausing for a moment when one person has finished speaking is helpful, and in turn lets you think before you speak.

Alan Whicker, presenter of the fascinating Whicker’s World television series, has a unique style of interviewing people. He asks a question and leaves a long pause after he gets an answer. The interviewees, feeling the need to fill the silence, elaborate with details that give far greater insights into their personality than the initial answer did.

Pauses give other people critical space to process what you said and to consider their reply.

Simply giving people unhurried time to think within a structured framework of questioning is a huge benefit in business and family situations. Listening to others is a generous act and an undeveloped, undervalued skill in most
In fact, Keith thrived on being out with customers and winning deals. The promotion wasn’t going to provide what he really wanted. With this realisation, he chose to reset his career direction and take his skills into another department of the corporation. From there, he was able to use his initiative to open up new international sales territories.

Over a longer period of getting into the habit of asking himself what he wanted, he made more significant life changes, leaving corporate life to set up his own software company. This move allowed him time to be with his young family in a way that his own father hadn’t been able to do: Keith wanted to watch his children growing up.

**Asking Questions to Help Make Decisions**

You make decisions all the time: whether to go to work or stay at home; what to have for lunch and supper; whether to accept an invitation to see a film; how much you should spend on a new computer or holiday; whether to lay on a Christmas party with your family or not.

Imagine that one sunny day you’re happily working at your job and a call comes in from a business head-hunter: a new job is on offer, you’re the person the company wants, and by the way, it means moving your home to a town by the sea 300 kilometres away. You weren’t even considering a change, but you’re flattered, and so you go and talk to the company. The deal looks pretty attractive and you think, wouldn’t it feel good to be working near the sea in hot weather like this? But a niggling little voice inside you is saying: ‘Is this the right thing to do? Are you sure?’

Should you go for it or should you stay doing what you know best? How can you decide this one?

Here are four key questions that you can ask yourself, or someone else, to guide in making a decision – a life-changing one or something smaller:

- **What will happen if you do?**
- **What will happen if you don’t?**
- **What won’t happen if you do?**
- **What won’t happen if you don’t?**

These four questions are based on Cartesian logic and you may find them referred to as **Cartesian co-ordinates**. All you need to remember is that they offer some powerful linguistic patterns that enable you to examine a subject from different angles.
Chapter 18: Asking the Right Questions

We often talk clients through these questions, and the decisions can be major – shall I leave my wife, move house, change career direction, have a baby, recruit a new team? The questions focus your attention and challenge your thinking. When you reach the last question, you may stop and think, ‘that’s confusing’. Good. This reaction means that you’re arriving at a breakthrough in your thinking.

If you make a change in one area of your life at the expense of another area, the chances are that the change isn’t going to last. So, for example, if you move jobs but have to give up important interests or friendships where you currently live, the change isn’t going to make you happy in the long term and you probably won’t stick with it. Don’t take our word for it; try the questions out now on something about which you’re deliberating. You can see that the questions encourage you to check out your decision based on the impact on the whole of your environment, in a healthy way – what we call an *ecology* check (we talk more about this aspect in Chapter 4).

**Challenging Limiting Beliefs**

When someone’s thinking is stopping them from achieving a much sought-after goal, you can ask three simple questions in order to challenge such thinking. To help others (or you) to overcome a limiting belief, ask the three questions set out in this section.

When asking the questions, give the person plenty of time to talk about an issue, and move on only when you sense that they’ve ‘got it off their chest’:

- **Question 1:** ‘What do you assume or believe about this issue that limits you in achieving your goal?’
  
  Ask this question three times until you’re sure that you’ve reached the heart of the matter – what NLP describes as a limiting belief. As you delve deeper, you may say: ‘That’s right, and what else about this limits you?’

  For example, the person may be thinking ‘I’m not good enough,’ or ‘Nobody will let me,’ or ‘I just don’t know how.’ When you hold a negative position like these ones, you stop yourself from doing what you need to do to achieve what you want.

- **Question 2:** ‘What would be a more empowering belief, one that’s the positive opposite of the one holding you back?’
  
  This question flips the limitation over to the positive side. For example, the positive opposite of the assumptions and beliefs above would be stated positively as ‘I am good enough,’ or ‘Somebody will let me,’ or ‘I do know how.’
What are some of the essential criteria for someone to perform this job well? Come up with about five key words, which may include things such as teamworking, self-starter, clear processes, creativity, customer service, learning, variety, stability, flexibility, well organised, intellectual challenge, good product, attractive environment, travel.

Does the person need to be motivated to achieve results or sort out problems?

Does the person need to be primarily self-motivated or get consensus from customers or a team?

Does the style of working mean that the person must follow processes or does the person have freedom in how things get done?

The next four sections contain questions that you can ask at the interview in order to gain specific information on how people are likely to behave in a given context, as well as their technical skills to do the job you have in mind. The questions are based on the NLP meta programs that you can read about in Chapter 8.

The same questions apply when you check in with members of your team to see how things are going and what adjustments you can make to keep people motivated.

What do you want in your work?

This question enables you to match the criteria or hot buttons that you’re looking for with those that are important for the individual. When you hear that someone wants lots of freedom and flexibility, they may do well in a creative environment but not if required to tightly project-manage an implementation of a new system. If they thrive on change, they may be good for a short-term contract, but are unlikely to stay more than a year or two unless you can provide new roles.

Why is that important?

Taking each of the applicant’s criteria in turn, ask ‘Why is that important?’ This question enables you to identify the direction in which the person is motivated: away from a problem or towards a solution. A person with an away-from preference may say that ‘Salary is important so I don’t have to worry about not being able to pay my mortgage.’ A person with a towards preference may say that ‘Salary is important so I can buy my own home easily.’
As you emerge from the change, integration then follows. You settle into the new way of doing things and are more flexible because you’ve had to learn to cope with a new environment. Your perception of your own competence rises and is likely to be measured more accurately. The change can be incorporated into the identity of the company by constantly referring back to it, until it becomes unconscious.

People react differently to change. Each person spends different lengths of time at each stage and each person has to be dealt with differently by team-mates and manager. A manager’s role, therefore, needs to change as they deal with the different stages that different people are at.

When you’re leading or facilitating a team, experiencing the team’s emotions is quite normal. For this reason, managers can feel a rollercoaster of frustration, fear, and anxiety as they experience the different phases themselves. So they may need coaching, mentoring, going for a beer, or whatever their release mechanism is, to gain space and perspective.

When people are under stress, their behaviour may need to be excused. Before reacting to someone, adopt the role of observer to, metaphorically, ‘walk in that person’s shoes’ in order to get a better understanding of how the person is feeling (check out Chapter 7 on understanding other people’s perspective). This process gives you the ability to move up and take the bird’s eye view when ‘trouble’s on the ground.

**NLP logical levels**

The NLP logical levels are a powerful way to think about change by breaking it down as a model into different categories of information. (Turn to Chapter 11 for more on logical levels, which are sometimes known as neurological levels.)

As you begin to consider the kind of changes that you experience, you find that logical levels can help you to find a route forward in confusing times. To do this, having alignment through all the logical levels of identity, belief and values, capabilities and skills, behaviour and environment is particularly important, because having an incongruity at one or more levels stops the desired result from happening. This model can be as useful when experiencing personal change as for understanding corporate change. The model’s key value is that it provides a structured approach for understanding what’s happening. This enables people to make a decision about choosing how they want to feel about the change and how they’re going to behave.
1. David applied the ‘what if’ reframing process (which we explain in Chapter 14) and asked himself, ‘What’s the worst that can happen?’

David knew that he may be out of work for several months but because he’d built a financial ‘war chest’ after the last cuts, he could survive for six months without work. This realisation went a long way to alleviating the feeling of dread he felt when he thought of being made redundant; the frequency declined but the intensity was still there. David decided to release the fear that he felt each time he thought of the changes that were being incorporated (see point 3 below).

He decided he didn’t like his work defining his identity, as in ‘I am a salesman.’ He asked himself what he’d do if he didn’t have to work to pay his mortgage and remembered how much he’d loved working with wood at school. David decided that regardless of the outcome at work, he’d take classes in woodwork.

2. He recognised he had a choice about how he dealt with the change.

Instead of letting the change get to him, he decided to treat each day as a learning experience. At the end of each day, he listed what had been difficult. He then reframed the difficulty by asking himself, ‘What can I learn from this?’ and ‘How can I use it in the days ahead?’

3. Most importantly, David decided to take charge of the way he reacted to the negative conversations around him and the fear he felt.

He began employing a pattern interrupt (see the NLPjargonalert icon that follows this list). Each time his colleagues began talking about the problems they were experiencing. He discovered how to differentiate between when the talk was negative, simply because his colleagues felt good about feeling bad, and when a need arose to solve a genuine problem. When the talk was meaningless negativity, David held his hand up and said something along the lines of ‘Let’s stop wallowing; we know things are tough and they’re likely to get tougher but we’ve got to stay strong.’ After a while, just having David hold his hand up switched his colleagues into problem-solving mode.

David found out that dread, for him, had two components. He felt the fear as heaviness descending, sliding down from his shoulders, and saw a solid, black cube encasing his torso. The cube was a metaphor for the way he felt in his body (see Chapter 17 for more on metaphors). Each time the dread returned, David changed the picture of the cube by introducing pockets of silver into it. The cube turned into a honeycomb of grey and then silver until it disappeared. (Check out Chapter 10 for more on submodalities.) While he worked with the image, David also did some breath work with an affirmation that he said out loud, if he was by himself. He drew a breath deep into the centre of the cube and on each exhalation he said, ‘I’m relaxed, strong, and confident, and I feel good.’
Core Transformation

Core Transformation (Real People Press, 1996) offers techniques in NLP, discovered and developed by Connirae Andreas, and designed to bring greater wholeness to the reader in order to facilitate personal change. The technique for Core Transformation is based on the premise that conflicting parts exist in every person’s unconscious, yearning to reach a core state and thereby wholeness. This book is a breakthrough in the field of personal development because it enables you to use limitations as a springboard to reaching core states such as inner peace.

Frogs into Princes

Frogs into Princes (Real People Press, 1979) is one of the seminal books in the field of NLP. The book is actually the transcript of a live training session conducted by the founding fathers of NLP, John Grinder and Richard Bandler, and beautifully edited by Steve Andreas. Although further developments have occurred in NLP since this book was first published, this title is a must-read for starting you on the path of discovering NLP.

Influencing with Integrity

In Influencing with Integrity (Crown House Publishing, 1984), Geine Z Laborde makes use of lots of line drawings and cartoons to create a book that’s easy to read and understand. She simplifies a complex subject to give the reader a set of state-of-the-art skills to use in all areas of communication. The straightforward approach, with its focus on business applications, makes this book especially useful for people in the corporate world.

Manage Yourself, Manage Your Life

If you want to discover the theory of NLP, Manage Yourself, Manage Your Life (Judy Piatkus Publishers, 1999) by Ian McDermott and Ian Shircore isn’t for you. However, if you want to experience NLP while you ‘plan to make change happen on your terms’, this book is just the one to read and practise. Experiencing NLP with this book, prior to going on an NLP practitioner course, provides an invaluable basis for your learning.
Persuasion Skills Black Book

Rintu Basu’s *Persuasion Skills Black Book* (Lean Marketing Press, 2009) is a practical book, written to help you master the language of persuasion in bite-sized chunks. The techniques are given further clarity by the use of everyday examples. This book is useful to a cross-section of people, from teachers to salespeople or parents trying to deal with recalcitrant teenagers.

Presenting Magically

If you’re a trainer or presenter, this elegantly written book by David Shepard and Tad James is a must for you. The techniques in *Presenting Magically* (Crown House Publishing, 2001) use NLP and accelerated learning and they show you how to captivate your audience from the start. Practise the exercises in the book to model ‘natural-born’ presenters and raise your presentation skills to mastery level.

The Magic of Metaphor

In *The Magic of Metaphor* (Crown House Publishing, 2001) as well as its sequel *More Magic of Metaphor*, Nick Owen puts together a collection of stories designed to transform the reader, with nuggets that motivate you and provide you with strategies for excellence. The stories uplift you and promote positive feelings and confidence while challenging the very foundations of your ideas, attitudes, and beliefs. This book is extremely useful to people in professions as diverse as counselling, psychology, professional speaking, management, and teaching.

Wordweaving: The Science of Suggestion

*Wordweaving: The Science of Suggestion* (Quest Institute, 2003) is one of two books by Trevor Silvester; the second being *Wordweaving Volume II – The Question is the Answer*. The author writes about the complex subject of trance in a very easy-to-follow style. The book moves away from the constraints of hypnotic scripts and instead addresses the relationship with the client presenting an issue. This approach gives the reader the flexibility and creativity to get results more effectively through trance. Anyone working with therapeutic issues, including NLP practitioners, hypnotherapists, and coaches, as well as novices, is going to find this book a very interesting read.
The film is a reminder to take pleasure in the ‘little moments’ of life, and that although having a road map for your life is useful, you shouldn’t fixate on goals to the exclusion of simple pleasures. You need to review your road map to fit in with your changing values and life experiences.

And in Ellie’s words...

*Thanks for the adventure – now go have a new one.*


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**Dune**

*Dune* follows a hero’s journey storyline where Paul Atreides (Kyle MacLachlin), the son of Duke Leto (Jürgen Prochnow), travels from his familiar world to Arrakis, a world that is almost supernatural by the standards he has known. He encounters the indigenous, ‘blue-within-blue’ eyed people who are indigenous to Arrakis and discovers the secret of the worms and the spice Melange – “the greatest treasure in the Universe.”

With this knowledge, Paul Muad’Dib, as he’s now known, frees the people of Arrakis from the Emperor’s corrupt rule, avenges his father, and fulfills his destiny.

The special effects of this film seem dated in the 21st century, but they were superb for 1984. Apart from being thoroughly entertaining, you can take some very useful lessons from this film: change is inevitable, especially for growth to take place:

...*but a person needs new experiences... they jar something deep inside, allowing him to grow. Without change, something sleeps inside us... and seldom awakens... The sleeper must awaken.*

—Duke Leto

Jessica, the Duke’s beloved concubine and Paul’s mother (Francesca Annis), demonstrates her sense of personal power by taking complete responsibility for her choices, whatever the consequences:

*I vowed never to regret my decision. I’ll pay for my own mistakes.*

—Jessica
Chapter 24: Ten Films That Include NLP Processes

*Dune* demonstrates the power of the mind and how it can conquer fear. In particular, when Paul Atreides is tested by the Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam (Sian Phillips), he has to consciously control the fear gripping him in order to survive the test.


**As Good as it Gets**

Jack Nicholson’s portrayal of a curmudgeonly, obsessive–compulsive recluse, Melvin Udall, is hilarious. This film has lessons about rapport – or rather, how not to do rapport!

Udall behaves horribly. He doesn’t care about the way he treats people and he’s an ace at breaking rapport, even when he doesn’t know it. Greg Kinnear plays a gentle, gay artist, Simon Bishop, who bears the brunt of Melvin’s unpleasantness. Unfortunately, Simon ends up in hospital and Melvin is forced into looking after Verdell (Jill the dog), Simon’s pet. The way Verdell trains Melvin in rapport building will delight animal lovers. One of Melvin’s behaviour patterns is to avoid cracks in the pavement. The bond between man and dog is sealed when Verdell follows Melvin’s example and daintily avoids the cracks in the pavement too.

In Chapter 2, we discuss an NLP presupposition that ‘every behaviour has a positive intention’. Melvin ends up doing kind deeds that are really appreciated by the recipients, however, the positive intention is usually to keep Melvin stuck in his obsessive–compulsive behaviour. One example is when Carol Connelly (Helen Hunt), a waitress who works in the place where Melvin has breakfast, is off work because her son is sick. Melvin gets a private doctor to treat the boy so that Carol can come back to work to serve him because he can’t abide anyone else serving him.

Bend it Like Beckham

This delightful film is about girl power, friendship, and fulfilling dreams and aspirations in spite of obstacles, and also shows how ‘isms’ can trap you in a prison of unhappiness until you have the courage to break out of the restrictions that are imposed on you.

Jess (Parminder Nagra) a British girl of Indian parents only wants to play football; unfortunately she’s trapped by a cultural background that frowns on such unladylike activities and has to sneak off to play the beautiful game, leading to some interesting subterfuges. Jess is miserable until she comes out into the open and admits her passion for football. She becomes close friends with a Caucasian, English girl Juliette ‘Jules’ Paxton played by Keira Knightly, which causes hilarious misunderstandings. When Jules leaves Jess at a bus stop and they’re spotted giving each other a hug by an Asian family, the family immediately see the innocent embrace through prejudiced filters and assume that the white, short haired person is a boy, which really sets the cat among the pigeons.

Juliet Stevenson plays Jules’s homophobic mother, Paula Paxton. She’s a total and utter delight as she struggles to understand and accept Jules’s tomboyish ways and what she misunderstands to be a homosexual relationship between Jess and Jules. Her attempts at trying to be politically correct and pretending to understand Asian ways in order to make Jess comfortable in her home are extremely touching and will have you shedding tears of laughter.

Chapter 14 examines some of the conflicts that arise when the logical-level hierarchy (see Chapter 11) is misaligned, whether it is within an individual or groups of people. Conflict is present in Bend it Like Beckham because Jess’s family and community have certain beliefs about the role of girls. The girls who do conform to the norms of being able to cook and produce offspring are accepted into the bosom of the family and community. In a way, the community’s identity is threatened by the behaviour of Jess’s non-conformity. Paula Paxton, too, allows Jules’s behavior to affect her feelings.


**Field of Dreams**

This classic film is about the fulfilment that comes from manifesting one’s dreams and the yearning that’s left when dreams aren’t fulfilled. When you focus on what you love, rather than what you think you ‘have’ to focus on, your ambitions are more easily realised.

Kevin Costner plays Ray Kinsella, a farmer who decides to build a baseball field in the middle of nowhere because he hears a voice say, ‘If you build it they will come.’ The film employs a host of sensory references to heighten the atmosphere – sounds, smells, and feelings, the importance of which we discuss in Chapter 6 – as well as using metaphors to the nth degree.

Kinsella and his family are a metaphor for you and the people you may experience in your life: the doctor, the relatives you have to tolerate, the conflicts you encounter in life, and how you deal with them. Notice how Ray talks about his father. He seems angry that his father grew old because he allowed himself to get worn down by life. His response to the voice is almost a reaction to the mediocrity of his father’s life and the fear that this chance may be his last to achieve something. Interestingly, Kinsella is running an away-from meta program in order to move towards his own dream (Chapter 8 has more on meta programs).


**Gattaca**

This inspiring sci-fi film concerns the situation in which determination overcomes genetic ‘flaws’ and proves that having everything handed to you on a silver platter doesn’t ensure success. This film illustrates how your focus on your goal can help you overcome even the most insurmountable odds. Vincent Freeman, played by Ethan Hawke is an ‘invalid’, a God child, meaning he was a love child, not genetically engineered. He’s left handed, considered a shortcoming, and has a risk of heart failure, and so has to live with everyone else’s belief in his vulnerability. According to the hand that Vincent is dealt, the only way he can get close to the space programme is as a cleaner. Therefore, Vincent ‘borrows’ Jerome Eugene Morrow’s (Jude Law) identity in order to gain access.
Stand and Deliver

Nothing to do with Adam and the Ants, but instead a terrific film based on a true story of a high-school teacher motivating his class of East Los Angeles barrio youngsters to believe in themselves and overcome stereotyping. What’s really interesting, and adds to the humour, is how Jamie Escalante, played by Edward James Olmos, paces his students to lead them to learning calculus (check out Chapter 7 for more on pacing people successfully). He uses similar gestures and body language to those of the students and uses rap to teach them simple mathematics. With a well-formed outcome in mind, Escalante shows considerable flexibility in his behaviour.

When Jamie can’t teach computing because of a lack of computers, he chooses to teach maths instead. As the class comes under suspicion for cheating, because they’ve done so well, Jamie demonstrates flexibility in his behaviour and persuades his class to re-sit the test. Curiously, other teachers are against the students being taught maths or to aspire to better themselves. They are driven by fear of failure. The other teachers are afraid that if the students fail, it will knock what little self-esteem they have.

One key lesson to take from this film is to be careful if trying to protect people from what you may see as their weakness. You may in fact be colluding in keeping them trapped in their comfort zone and stopping them from growing due to the filter you’re applying to the situation (turn to Chapter 5 for more on communication).


NLP at the Cinema

The preceding sections give you a taste of the NLPisms to look for in a film, so why don’t you now try your hand at sharpening your own NLP skills. Whenever you watch a film, see whether you can spot the items from the following list of suggestions:

- Which NLP presuppositions are demonstrated in this film?
- What do you notice about rapport in this film?
- What maps of the world are depicted – how do they match up to your reality?
The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant

Excuse me, Hannibal, but would crossing the Alps on ohh let's say - MOUNTAIN BOATS severely compromise your vision?
Appendix C

The Well-Formed Outcome Checklist

The checklist below is a summary of the process of creating well-formed outcomes that we describe in full in Chapter 4.

Feel free to photocopy this list and complete the questions whenever you want to set very clear goals for yourself.

What do I want?

Is the goal stated in the positive?

Is it self-initiated, maintained, and within my control?

Does it identify the first step I need to take?

Have I evaluated whether it is ecological?

Does it describe the evidence procedure?

Does it identify the needed resources?

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There’s a Dummies App for This and That

With more than 200 million books in print and over 1,600 unique titles, Dummies is a global leader in how-to information. Now you can get the same great Dummies information in an App. With topics such as Wine, Spanish, Digital Photography, Certification, and more, you’ll have instant access to the topics you need to know in a format you can trust.

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