

Observing what is actually happening.

by Sudha Hamilton



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Neuro linguistic programming (NLP) is something that many people have heard about, or have read or experienced some form of training with it as a basis. NLP is probably the most influential technique for personal development of the last 30 years. Founded by Richard Bandler and John Grinder in the 1970s, it has gone on to become a worldwide phenomenon, which has transmuted into a variety of exciting mental techniques for self-improvement and increased effectiveness in business, relationships and peak performance activities. NLP began with Richard Bandler, a psychology student, and John Grinder, a linguist specialising in syntax, collaborating in research studies with three well known and successful psychotherapists, Fritz Perls (founder of Gestalt), Virginia Satir (family systems therapy) and Milton Erickson (hypnotherapy). They began the study by reviewing hundreds of hours of video and audio of the therapists working with clients, and then imitating the successful processes to create models of effective communication.

Although each of them was schooled in different approaches to therapy and had developed their own unique style; they agreed upon the following finding:

“You need only three things to be an absolutely exquisite communicator. We have found that there are three major patterns in the behaviour of every therapeutic wizard we’ve talked to — and executives, and salespeople. The first one is to know what outcome you want. The second is that you need flexibility in your behaviour. You need to be able to generate lots and lots of different behaviours to find out what responses you get. The third is you need to have enough sensory experience to notice when you get the responses that you want [...]”

(Bandler and Grinder, 1979).

These methods of observation, employed by Bandler and Grinder to learn and codify the initial models of NLP, came to be known as NLP “Modelling.” Part of this “Modelling” also involves understanding the patterns of one’s own behaviour in order to “model” the more successful parts of one self. One of the tenets of NLP is that the way we think, how we solve problems, remember things, and use language; are all directly related to our sensory impression of the world around us, and - are predominantly visual (seeing), auditory (hearing) and kinesthetic (touch) representations.

These internal references are in a continuous state of forming and reforming, and they effect whatever action or process is taking place in our lives. The techniques developed through the NLP paradigm aim to positively transform behaviour and results by modifying these internal

representations. Bandler stated that clues could be found through sensory cues like eye movements and verbal signals. For instance looking up and to the left or right could indicate visual processing; whilst looking left or right at the same level showed auditory functioning; and down to the right kinesthetic. Likewise saying, “That rings true to me,” signalled auditory processing; whilst stating something like, “that’s clearer now” or “I can see what you mean,” conveyed a visual representation; and if the client had, a grasp of the facts, it could indicate a kinesthetic inclination. It was thought that each individual had a preferred representational system (PRS) and this was a key to designing effective “submodality” tools, like intensity of visual imagery, sounds, textures and other visualised representations.

This led to the development of a number of techniques like “Rapport” – matching and establishing rapport; “Anchoring” – the process where a desired state is definitively associated with a gesture, tone of voice, mental image or touch; “Swish” – a visualisation technique for reducing unwanted habits; “Reframing” – using language to perceive a situation in a new light; and “Parts Integration” – identifying often opposing parts of ourselves and resolving the inner conflict.

Since then, NLP has continued to evolve, and has been taken in a number of directions by human potential trail blazers, all over the planet. Its close links to hypnosis have often been an integral part of that expansion. In 1985, Tad James, an innovative NLP teacher, and developer of new NLP techniques, now based in Australia, created Time Line Therapy™, which is a collection of processes that act upon our stored unconscious memories. Our “Time Line” involves how we know the difference between a memory from the past and a projection into the future and it works on the premise that we do not readily change our behaviour based on rational or conscious thoughts but from those deep thoughts or beliefs located in our unconscious mind. The link between language and the subconscious mind is at the root of much of the so called ‘magic’ of NLP, and this appears to be an inexhaustible source of therapeutic understanding.

There are now a number of high quality NLP schools and presenters in Australia, regularly offering a variety of seminars and trainings at certificate levels. The answer to the secrets of the mind; and the magic that unlocking those can bring, are yours for the asking. 🌀