

# What is NLP?

## A Practical NLP Podcast briefing paper

You could think of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) as an owner's manual for the human brain. It's the study of how we think, feel and act, marked by an intense curiosity about how (rather than why) human beings get the results they do.

NLP originated at the University of Santa Cruz in the mid-seventies when a group of talented people led by Richard Bandler and John Grinder came together to share information and insights across disciplinary boundaries. It incorporates insights from behavioural and Gestalt psychology, family therapy, hypnosis, linguistics, information theory and anthropology, among many other disciplines.

Unlike some other schools of psychology, which concentrate on *why* problems arise, NLP started from studying people who are exceptionally good at what they do, and finding out *how* they do it so that anyone can get similar results by doing the same things. It aims to move beyond remedial change (fixing specific problems) to 'generative' change, which empowers you to achieve more in every area of your life. Often people find that when they learn a new skill or make a breakthrough in one area of their life, problems in other areas seem to disappear or seem less important.

By studying how 'star performers' in every field achieve their results, the developers of NLP have built up a vast reservoir of knowledge about what works in every field of human endeavour. You can apply the knowledge resulting from this curiosity to help others, to become more successful in your work, or even to tap into your own hidden resources.

The insights of NLP are being successfully used in business, education, sales, sports psychology, and health care, as well as therapy, coaching and self-improvement.

Another difference between NLP and other approaches is that NLP concentrates on the *structure* of experience, rather than the *content*. How you think about something is at least as important as what you are thinking about. So, for example, if you remember a pleasant experience as a big, bright, moving picture, it will probably give you a much more powerful pleasant feeling than the same experience viewed as a small, dark, monochrome snapshot.

One of the things that often surprises people about NLP is the speed with which many problems can be resolved. Solving one's problems is all about learning - at the unconscious level, which is where it counts - and learning can happen very quickly.

## Some principles of NLP:

- People have their own model of the world, and what they do makes sense within that model
- Mind and body are one system
- People have all the inner resources they need to succeed (there are no unresourceful people, only unresourceful states they get into)
- There is no failure, only results
- I am in charge of my mind, and therefore my results

We can't say that these principles are 'true' (nor can we disprove them by experiment) - what we can safely say is that when you act *as if* they were true, you get better results, enjoy your life more, and will be better able to cope with any challenges you face.

For more information about NLP, visit our web site at [www.nlppod.com](http://www.nlppod.com) or call Andy Smith on +44(0) 844 284 6372.

# Some Useful NLP-based Interventions

## Peripheral vision for instant relaxation

1. *Starting from focusing on a point slightly above your eye level, broaden out your field of vision until you are paying attention to what you can see out of the corners of your eyes, while still looking straight ahead.*
2. *Now extend your awareness even further out, beyond the edges of your vision and all the way behind you, 360 degrees.*
3. *When you come back, notice how calm you feel and how your breathing has slowed down.*

## Anchor your good feelings

Remember a time when you felt really good and in control. Choose a word, an image, and a physical gesture that sum those feelings up. As you relive that time and the good feelings are coming to a peak, repeat the word to yourself, see the image and physically make the gesture. Practise getting into those good feelings until they are 'anchored' in, and you can access them any time you need them just by using the word, the image or the gesture.

## Rise above uncomfortable emotions

If you are feeling overwhelmed, imagine you are floating above the situation looking down at yourself. Float up until you reach a height at which you are completely comfortable. Ask your inner self, "What do I need to learn from this?"

## Dealing with the 'inner critic'

If you have an inner critic or 'chatterbox' that constantly takes a negative view of things, try this:

1. *Notice where in your body the voice is coming from. What if it came from your left big toe? Would it still have the same effect?*
2. *Move it back to where it was. Now what if it said the same things, but in the style of Donald Duck?*
3. *Change it back. What if it used a very high-pitched voice?*
4. *Change it back. Notice what tone it uses. What if it said the same things in a caressing tone, or a humorous, chuckling tone?*
5. *What if you turned the volume down? Would it still have the same effect?*
6. *Notice which change works best for you.*

## Books About NLP

**Practical NLP: How to use NLP principles to improve your life and work, even if you're not NLP trained** by Andy Smith (Kindle ebook)

**The NLP Workbook** by Joseph O'Connor

**Words That Change Minds** by Shelle Rose Charvet

## NLP on the Web

[www.nlppod.com](http://www.nlppod.com)  
[www.anlp.org](http://www.anlp.org)  
[www.altfeld.com](http://www.altfeld.com)

The Practical NLP Podcast, plus useful articles  
The Association for NLP  
Jonathan Altfeld, innovative US NLP trainer

