

Modalities and techniques in Coaching

by Brad Greentree

What is NLP?

NLP stands for **Neuro-Linguistic Programming**, a name that encompasses the three most influential components involved in producing human experience: neurology, language and programming. The neurological system regulates how our bodies function, language determines how we interface and communicate with other people and our programming determines the kinds of models of the world we create. Neuro-Linguistic Programming describes the fundamental dynamics between mind (neuro) and language (linguistic) and how their interplay effects our body and behavior (programming).

NLP is a **pragmatic school of thought** - an 'epistemology' - that addresses the many levels involved in being human. NLP is a multi-dimensional process that involves the development of behavioral competence and flexibility, but also involves strategic thinking and an understanding of the mental and cognitive processes behind behavior. NLP provides tools and skills for the development of states of individual excellence, but it also establishes a system of empowering beliefs and presuppositions about what human beings are, what communication is and what the process of change is all about. At another level, NLP is about self-discovery, exploring identity and mission. It also provides a framework for understanding and relating to the 'spiritual' part of human experience that reaches beyond us as individuals to our family, community and global systems. NLP is not only about competence and excellence, it is about wisdom and vision.

In essence, all of NLP is founded on two fundamental presuppositions:

1. The Map is Not the Territory. As human beings, we can never know reality. We can only know our perceptions of reality. We experience and respond to the world around us primarily through our sensory representational systems. It is our 'neuro-linguistic' maps of reality that determine how we behave and that give those behaviors meaning, not reality itself. It is generally not reality that limits us or empowers us, but rather our map of reality.

2. Life and 'Mind' are Systemic Processes. The processes that take place within a human being and between human beings and their environment are systemic. Our bodies, our societies, and our universe form an ecology of complex systems and sub-systems all of which interact with and mutually influence each other. It is not possible to completely isolate any part of the system from the rest of the system. Such systems are based on certain 'self-organizing' principles and naturally seek optimal states of balance or homeostasis.

All of the models and techniques of NLP are based on the combination of these two principles. In the belief system of NLP it is not possible for human beings to know objective reality. Wisdom, ethics and ecology do not derive from having the one 'right' or 'correct' map of the world, because human beings would not be capable of making one. Rather, the goal is to create the richest map possible that respects the systemic nature and ecology of ourselves and the world we live in. The people who are most effective are the ones who have a map of the world that allows them to perceive the greatest number of available choices and perspectives. NLP is a way of enriching the choices that you have and perceive as available in the world around you. Excellence comes from having many choices. Wisdom comes from having multiple perspectives.

NLP was originated by John Grinder (whose background was in linguistics) and Richard Bandler (whose background was in mathematics and gestalt therapy) for the purpose of making explicit models of human excellence. Their first work **The Structure of Magic Vol. I & II** (1975, 1976) identified the verbal and behavioral patterns of therapists Fritz Perls (the creator of gestalt therapy) and Virginia Satir (internationally renowned family therapist). Their next work **Patterns of the Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D. Vol. I & II** (1975, 1976) examined the verbal and behavioral patterns of Milton Erickson, founder of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis and one of the most widely acknowledged and clinically successful psychiatrists of our times. As a result of this earlier work, Grinder and Bandler formalized their modeling techniques and their own individual contributions under the name "Neuro-Linguistic Programming" to symbolize the relationship between the brain, language and the body.

The basics of this model has been described in a series of books including *Frogs Into Princes* (Bandler & Grinder, 1979) , **Neuro-Linguistic Programming Vol. I** (Dilts, Grinder, Bandler, DeLozier, 1980), *Reframing* (Bandler & Grinder, 1982) and **Using Your Brain** (Bandler, 1985). Through the years, NLP has developed some very powerful tools and skills for communication and change in a wide range of professional areas including: counseling, psychotherapy, education, health, creativity, law, management, sales, leadership and parenting.

What is Time Line Therapy™?

Since the introduction of the Line Therapy® Techniques in 1988 in the book *Time Line Therapy and the Basis of Personality*, there has been, not only excitement about the techniques themselves, but also major interest by the psychotherapeutic community and a rather rapid adoption of the process by people actively involved in seeing clients daily for various reasons. In the last few years, it has become obvious that an individual's Time Line with all the person's history -- his joys and fears, his happiness and sorrow, his loves and hates, his limiting and empowering decisions -- is a major part of that person's personality. Over the last few years, we found that, if we were able to intervene in a client's Time Line therapeutically, we were able to assist the client to create seemingly miraculous changes in his life -- changes that extended even to the deepest level of personality.

Models, such as Time Line Therapy®, are interesting devices. A model is a description or simulation of how something works. In essence a model is a blueprint or a map. Like a map, a model is not necessarily "true." It is just a representation of reality. So, we are not necessarily looking for truth in our model, we are only attempting to offer a description of how a portion of the human personality works. Like a map, it is only a description of the territory; and the value of any map or a blueprint lies in the results that you can produce by using it. In retrospect, even after 5 years, this model still seems to be a major discovery.

From the time of Aristotle to William James to Freud and Jung to Milton Erickson, M.D., people interested in Psychology have been searching for a way to adequately describe the human experience of time. Time Line Therapy®, as a model, has the potential to not only make sense out of our temporal experience, but also to change our understanding of how negative emotions and limiting decisions affect us, as well as describing how to create a meaningful future for all time to come, because with Time Line Therapy® we now understand the human temporal experience and can change the basic elements that make up someone's history.

Since 1988, thousands of people have been affected by the techniques of Time Line Therapy®. Hundreds of people have been trained in the techniques and use them daily. Thousands of others have attended the Secret of Creating Your Future® seminars given all over the world, and have seen dramatic changes in their lives. Today, there are institutes in Europe, Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, Brazil and the United States authorized to teach the techniques of Time Line Therapy®.

The Time Line Therapy® techniques are a relatively recent development. The idea of an individual having a means of knowing the difference between memories of the past, and the future, or having a "Time Line" is not. Aristotle was one of the first in our culture to mention the idea of a "Time Line" in Physics IV, for the Greeks had a clear idea of temporality. Our having a Time Line may be, at least in part, a result of the structure our language.

ARISTOTLE: "Western minds represent time as a straight line upon which we stand with our gaze directed forward; before us we have the future and behind us the past. On this line we can unequivocally define all tenses by means of points. The present is the point on which we are standing , the future is found on some point in front of us, and in between lies the exact future; behind us lies the perfect, still farther back the imperfect, and farther yet the pluperfect. ... The Greek language also has corresponding verb-forms which can be delineated in quite similar manner on a straight time-line. ... According to Aristotle, therefore, we must represent time by the image of a line (more accurately: by the image of movement along a line), either a circular line ... or a straight line." [Hebrew, pp 124-6]

WILLIAM JAMES: Time Line Therapy® has its roots in traditional psychological thinking, and is based on earlier models, which preceded it. William James, in Principles

of Psychology, in 1890 says, "If the constitution of consciousness were that of a string of bead-like sensations all separate ... we should be wholly incapable of acquiring experience. ... Whether a highly developed practical life be possible under such conditions as these is more than doubtful ..." He described the experience of time, "In short, the practically cognized present is no knife- edge, but a saddle-back with a certain breadth of its own on which we sit perched and from which we look in two directions in time. ... Date in time corresponds to direction in space. ... If we represent the actual time-stream of our thinking by an horizontal line, the thought of the stream or of any segment of its length, past, present, or to come, might be figured in a perpendicular raised upon the horizontal at a certain point." He says, "Some things we date simply by tossing them into a past or future direction." And so, "memory gets strewn with dated things -- dated in the sense of being before or after each other. The date of a thing is a mere relation of before or after the present thing or some past or future thing." [Principles, pp 396-413]

MILTON ERICKSON: Time Line Therapy® also has its roots in the work of Milton Erickson, who until his death in 1980, was the world's foremost Hypnotherapist. Erickson, almost single-handedly, brought hypnosis out of the closet, and made it possible for the American medical and psychiatric community to accept it as a "legitimate form of treatment." In the early 1960's Erickson was using an hypnotic technique which, remarkably, was quite like Time Line Therapy®.

"One hypnotic phenomenon can be used to induce another. The movie screen can be employed as an uncovering technique. The patient looks at it, sees his past ... He can look at the screen, lose his own identity, and observe various traumatic experiences that occurred in his own life experience. ..." The client can look at his past and his future in a non-threatening way: "... the patient saw himself at a later age; on another, at a still later age -- all the way from five years of age on up to thirty-two. ... Then he was allowed to set up another screen where he could see himself as he hoped to appear next year. Thus he was led to recognize what he wanted in his future, what was meaningful for him in that future. ... That technique has been called pseudo- orientation into the future. Just as one can orient a patient back to the past, so one can project himself into the future in accordance with his own motivations and ... desires." [Practical, pp 342- 344]

YOUR TIME LINE: Who are you if not your collection of memories? For almost 100 years, psychologists have agreed that our past experiences do determine who we are, and how we act. (Although the examination of memories has, in the last decade or two, fallen into disfavor among psychologists because they did have a reliable technique to affect the memories.) Memories are recorded and stored as we age and with time they have more and more influence on us. Our Time Line is the index to the memory encoding of the unconscious mind, and it is usually wholly unconscious.

THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND: In the context of Time Line Therapy®, the words "unconscious mind" are not intended to signify anything mysterious or unusual, simply the part of your mind of which you are not conscious, right now. Your unconscious mind is a very important part of you. Think about it for just a moment. Here is a part of you that runs your body; it makes your heart beat, causes the lymph system to circulate, your

breathing to continue, your eyes to blink, your stomach to digest your food, and many other tasks that perhaps you had never even considered. The first thing to appreciate is that your unconscious mind is the source of all learning, all behavior and all change. Let us look at each one of these individually:

LEARNING: Your unconscious mind is the part of you that learns, not your conscious mind. Now, you may have thought that you learned consciously in the past, and although your learning has to go through the conscious mind, it is your unconscious mind that remembers everything. Everything, once learned, resides in the unconscious mind.

Think about all the things you have ever learned. Until the subject was mentioned, how many of them did you remember consciously? Probably none! If you had to remember all the phone numbers you know consciously, there wouldn't be enough room for anything else, would there? So all learning takes place at the unconscious level.

Think of all the phone numbers you have learned, and which you now know. For example, you know your home phone number, do you not? If you'd like to do this with me, please say it to yourself. Now before you were thinking of your home phone number, where was it? Obviously it was stored somewhere, of which you were not conscious -- that is your unconscious mind -- the part of your mind of which you are not conscious, right now. What's important about that is that all your learning -- everything you have ever learned -- is stored in your unconscious mind.

BEHAVIOR: I was approached by a student at one of the hypnosis seminars I teach. He asked, "Can you make me move my arm unconsciously?" I asked the student if he had ever considered that he can't move his hand consciously. I said, "Do you know how many muscles there are between the tip of your fingers and your shoulder blade? There are 159 muscles. So, you couldn't move your hand consciously. You have to move it unconsciously. It's not just your hand, either -- all behavior is generated at the unconscious level. Think about walking. You just put one foot in front of the other, don't you? When you do, however, you don't think about it. You just do it. In fact if you think about walking, that thinking can be counter-productive. Thinking about walking is conscious thinking. The fact that it interferes with walking shows us that the behavior is generated unconsciously.

How about this, the last time you drove to work, how conscious of it were you? Do you remember the whole trip? Or do you remember none of it? If you want a real scare just look over at the person next to you on the freeway, the next time you drive somewhere. They too are probably unconscious.

One more example. You get on an elevator, punch a button (say 8) and the doors close. Your eyes go up, and you watch the floor numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ... 6, and the doors open, and the person next to you gets out, and you follow. "Is this the 8th floor." I do that all the time, I must admit.

CHANGE: Think of a bad habit you wanted to change in the past. Was it easy? Probably not. Most people find it hard to change a bad habit. For them it's something that takes time. I remember in the 60's when sideburns were long, and I used to play with mine all the time, and one day I said I'm not going to do that any more! But, you know, five minutes, and there I was again, playing with them. If change was that easy, you could walk up to a friend who was being a bit of a jerk and say, "Um, excuse me, but you're being a bit of a jerk! Would you please change?" And they would change. Right then -- if change was conscious! In the real world, change isn't always that easy. Many people go on doing the same old things over and over, year after year and they complain about it. If change isn't that easy for us, it is simply because we aren't fully in rapport with our unconscious mind. In the real world people are often not in rapport with the unconscious mind, and that is why change isn't that easy for them.

Your unconscious mind would really like to be in rapport with your conscious mind. In fact your unconscious mind yearns for rapport, and looks up to your conscious mind like a 5 or 6 or 7 year old brother or sister might look up to you. It wants your direction and support, and it would like to do what you asked if it only knew how. If you are not feeling like there is rapport between your conscious and unconscious mind, it may be because you were giving confusing messages to the conscious mind.

Let us look at this idea a little further: Your unconscious mind cannot process a negative in consciousness. It's true. In fact, it's also true for the conscious mind as well. Think about this. You cannot think about what you wish to not think about without thinking about it. Think about that. For example, if I said, "Don't think about a blue tree," what are you thinking about. unless you were semantically trained, you are probably thinking about a blue tree. Even though I asked you not to!!

Most of us go through our lives telling ourselves, "I don't want to think about a blue tree. When you go in to see the boss, do you say, "I hope he doesn't get angry like the last time."? Or when starting out in a new relationship, do you say, "Gee, I hope I don't get hurt."? Or how about a salesperson going in to make a sale and saying, "I hope I don't blow this sale."?

Do you do that? If you do, it may be the wrong signal to be giving to your unconscious mind. If it is the wrong signal, it is because the unconscious mind cannot process a negative in consciousness. So, to facilitate communication between the conscious and the unconscious minds let us find out a little more about this part of us which is so important, and of which we are so little aware -- the unconscious mind.