

"NLP is an attitude and a methodology that leaves behind a trail of techniques." (Richard Bandler)

L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.

Bobby G. Bodenhamer, D. Min.

Let us tell you a story about magic. It's a magical story, full of wows! And woes. It's a story of magicians and wizards and frogs turning into princes. It's an adventure into the very magic that occurs everyday in human neuro-linguistics, a story about you and the magic that's going on this very minute in your neurology.

What we call NLP is really the story of a new cutting-edge model about--

- How to run your own brain.
- How to effectively represent your experiences.
- How to map the world of experiences that you've been through, that you think is possible to experience, and that you hope you will get to experience.
- How to take charge of your states.
- How to develop effective strategies for your everyday life.

Now what we call, "the magic," is simply the highest and best of human experiences, "excellence" in human functioning. And the magic of that magic is this: there is rhyme and reason to your everyday experiences. In NLP, we say, the magic has structure. Above and beyond the details and content of any experience-- there is a framework that explains how it operates. And when you know that, you know many of the secrets of magic.

Magic?

Yes, the magic of getting over past hurts, the magic of forging a great big compelling future and making it happen, the magic of implementing your knowledge, the magic of getting into rapport with others, working through conflicts, taking another person's point of view on things, etc.

We use the term "magic" in NLP to speak about the very structure and experience of excellence. So when anybody does something in a superb and wonderful way—from learning, decision making, staying motivated, being resilient, operating proactively, managing, making wealth, selling, etc., we know that that experience has structure and that we can learn and replicate that magic.

And that's what NLP is all about.

The Letters-- The Letters

Okay, okay, the set of letters themselves. **NLP** literally stands for a mouth-full of a phrase: **Neuro-Linguistic Programming**. This refers to the fact It means that we have a mind-body system that we can program very much the way we can program software for a computer. This mind-body system or our neuro-linguistics is made up of ur

neurology (our nervous systems that enables us to live, breathe, think, and function) and our linguistics (the symbol systems that run the neurology).

Put mind-body together-- the linguistics of neurology and we have a marvelous, mysterious and even magical human bio-computer. And the best news-- it's reprogrammable. Sure, it's hard-wired with a few basic dispositions, but for the most part, "as we think (symbolize, give meaning to things), so we are." And with that, the adventure begins.

How?

What do you mean?

We mean that if you don't have a great strategy for making friends, learning, staying healthy, looking at the world with the eyes of opportunities, etc., then you just need a strategy. You work perfectly well. There's nothing wrong with you. You may simply not have the right strategy for the job, or you may have some stupid strategy running your programs of thinking, feeling, speaking, and behaving that's getting in the way. NLP, as a model of human functioning, takes a very different attitude from some of the old psychologies. In NLP, we do not start from the assumption (and what an assumption it is!) that people are broken. No. Instead, we assume the opposite—that people work perfectly well, that they have all the resources that they need, and that the only problem isn't with them, but with their programming.

The Sources

If that sounds familiar and similar to other fields, it is. NLP is a branch of the Cognitive Sciences and Cognitive Behavioral Psychology. It grew out of General Semantics (Korzybski), Transformational Grammar (Noam Chomsky), Anthropology and Cybernetics (Bateson), Reframing (Watzlawick, et al.), Family Systems (Virginia Satir), Gestalt Therapy (Perls), Medical hypnosis (Milton Erickson), and several related studies. This is most of the respectable body of knowledge from which NLP arose.

The Founders

To understand the story of how NLP came to be, you have to understand the times of the early 1970s in America and specifically in California. In a time of social upheaval, Vietnam War protests, drugs and rock-n-roll, a young college student happened upon the work of Fritz Perls and then Virginia Satir and found that he could mimic their high-level therapy skills to a degree that surprised him. So he got a young college professor of linguistics to help him figure it out and supervise a class and suddenly they both were replicating the skills that were supposed to be graduate therapy skills.

So the student (Richard Bandler) and the professor (Dr. John Grinder) teamed up to see if they could figure out (or model) the magic of these therapeutic wizards. So there on the campus of the University of California at Santa Cruz, Bandler used what he knew about patterns in mathematics and computers and Grinder used what he knew about patterns in linguistics to create a model about the Perls and Satir model-- a meta-model ("meta" is Greek for "above, beyond, and about).

Bandler's natural gift for mimicking enabled him to hear and replicate the language patterns by Virginia and Fritz. So he play acted with a group of students to see what he could do.

After enjoying immediate and powerful results from this initial modeling, Richard and John set out to model the hypnotic skills of Milton Erickson. And it so happened that he and Dilts and others of the original group were taking classes from Gregory Bateson at the University who not only introduced them to Erickson, but to other influential persons.

Within two years, they produced the original NLP books--

The Structure of Magic, Volumes I and II

The Patterns of the Hypnotic Language of Erickson, Vol. I & II

And that's how it began.

They built a communication model about human "thinking" and "processing" and used that model of how we see images, hear sounds, reproduces smells and tastes and touches in our mind to track and model the structure of subjective experiences.

NLP-- The Study of Excellent Experiences

Robert Dilts was soon commissioned to write the first scholarly book on NLP. He entitled it, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Volume I: The Study of the Structure of Subjectivity. This set forth NLP as a model and the key features of the model. For example, NLP speaks about "thinking"-- or information processing as the reproducing in the mind the sensory components of what we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch with our sense receptors. This is known as the Representational Systems, the VAK systems and these stand for the way or the "modes" by which we represent information:

Visual (Eyes) - for the Pictures, Sights, Images

Auditory (Ears) - for the Sounds, noises, tones, volumes

Kinesthetic (skin/body) - for the sensations, touch, pressure, etc.

When we think about something, anything, we encode our "thoughts" using our "senses." So we speak about our sensory systems or modalities. This makes our "thoughts" much more specific.

Think about your home or apartment. Got it?

What does it look like?

Sound like? Any noises or sounds associated in your picture?

What about smells?

Here's an "Thought Experiment" that we have in the book, User's Manual for the Brain. Try it out. Have you ever experienced anything that you would call "pleasant?"

Recall a pleasant experience from your past. As various things may pop into your mind, just allow yourself to go with some pleasure memory for the moment and allow yourself to go with that thought....

As you experience this pleasant memory, notice its visual aspects. What do you see? Notice the images. Now make the picture larger. Let it double in size... and then let that picture double again... Notice what happens. Do your emotions intensify?

Now shrink the picture. Make it smaller and smaller. Allow it to become so small you can hardly see it... Stay with that a moment... Do the intensity of the feelings decrease? Experiment again with making the picture bigger and then smaller. When you make it smaller, do your feelings decrease? And when you make it larger, do your feelings increase? If so, then running the pictures (sounds, feelings) in your awareness in this way functions as it does for most people. However, you may have a different experience. Did you? No big deal. We all code our experiences in our minds uniquely and individually. Now, put your picture of that pleasant experience back in a format where you find it most comfortable and acceptable.

As you maintain the same picture, move the picture closer to you. Just imagine that the picture begins to move closer and closer to you, and notice that it will. What happens to your feelings as it does? ... Move the picture farther away. What happens when you move the picture farther away? Do your feelings intensify when you move the picture closer? Do your feelings decrease when you move the picture farther away? Notice that as you change the mental representation in your mind of the experience, your feelings change. This, by the way, describes how we can "distance" ourselves from experiences, does it not?

Now experiment with the color. Are your pictures in color or in black-and-white? If your pictures have color, make them black-and-white, and vice versa if you have them coded as black-and-white . . . When you changed the color, do your feelings change?

What about the focus of your images? Are they in focus or out of focus? Do you see an image of yourself in the picture or do you experience the scene as if looking out of your own eyes? What about the quality of your images: in three dimensional (3D) form or flat (2D)? Does it have a frame around it or do you experience it as panoramic? Experiment by changing how you represent the experience. Change the location of the picture. If you have it coded as on your right, then move it to your left.

Playing with the Brain

Did you like that playing with your brain? The neat thing about playing with our brains in that way is that as we change our coding, we change our feelings. The

neurology of our emotions responded to the linguistics (or symbols) of our brain. When we change various features of our representations, it affected our responses.

This describes, in part, how "the magic" of NLP works. As we work with the very structures and processes of representation, rather than content, we change the programming. In the Thought Experiment, you might have changed how you feel by changing the quality and structure of your images. Amazing, is it not?

And when you know the structure of experience, then we can begin to use that knowledge to create more generative processes for improving life all around. What would happen if you made all your unpleasant pictures small, dim, and far away? What would happen if you made all your pleasant experiences big, bright and up close?

To learn to play with your brain and make it do wild and wonderful things, to run it for fun and profit, to induce the kind of positive states of mind-and-body, emotional states and states of value and belief, you only need to understand some of the basic components and how they work.

The VAK Representational Systems-- Sights, Sounds, Sensations, Smells, etc. These are the basic components.

Each of these have certain Audio-Visual components. Think of a TV or Radio and we have volume, tone, pitch, location, etc. We have distance (close/ far), clarity (clear/ fuzzy), dimension (3_D or flat and 2_D), etc. The NLP term for these qualities or distinctions is "sub-modalities."

Perceptual Positions-- the point of view that you take in thinking about something: your own (first person), another person's (second position), the point of view of the larger system (third position).

Running Your Own Brain

In the past 25 years, hundreds of techniques (the NLP technology) has arisen that provide step-by-step processes for "running your own brain" to produce outstanding results. There are patterns for effecting lasting change with phobias and trauma (the Phobia Cure pattern), for changing long-term habits (the Swish Pattern), for changing old traumatic reactions to memories (Decision Destroyer), for altering meaning (Reframing patterns),

NLP does indeed offer a fairly large toolbox of techniques. And it is more than that. Co-founder, Richard Bandler has said,

"NLP is an *attitude* and a *methodology* that leaves behind a trail of *techniques*."

The **attitude** of NLP involves one of intense and excited curiosity. It involves the desire to know what goes on behind the scenes. With this kind of attitude of curiosity, we want to know what makes the human mind work. So NLP runs on an attitude of experimentation. This attitude leads us to try all kinds of things. After all, we do not sort for "failure," but only for "feedback." If we find that something doesn't produce

the results we want, we just try something else. When you get the attitude or spirit of NLP, you'll experience a wild and wonderful passion for exploration, experimentation, and innovating. It will make you more creative, more open to the world of possibilities, and more of a pioneer.

The *methodology* of NLP is that of modeling: coping and mimicking how something works.

That's the Foundation

There's a lot more to it than that. Today there are training centers for NLP around the world, books in most language, and the model continues to grow and develop.