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# An Introduction to Neurolinguistic Programming NLP

## Part One

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*“We can change our  
reactions to events which  
are constraining our lives.”*

## An introduction to NLP

Here in Part One, Master NLP Practitioner, **Philip Titheridge** gives us a glimpse of how NLP can work to change your life...

This first in a series of articles on NLP by Philip Titheridge introduces us to the basic concept. It shows you how NLP can work to change ingrained thoughts and perceptions to help you lead a more fulfilling life.

### What is NLP?

NLP started in the 1970s from the work of two pioneers – John Grinder, a linguistics professor in California, and Richard

*“A skill of one person can be taught to another provided the patterns for performing the skill successfully are known.”*

Bandler, a student of psychology. Together they studied the work of three successful therapists. The question they were trying to answer was, “What are the patterns that these people

use which make them particularly effective in helping others?”

Bandler and Grinder established these patterns, and found that they could be taught to others to make them just as effective. This is one of the key principles of NLP – a skill of one person can be taught to another provided the patterns for performing the skill successfully are known.

### Modelling

The NLP technique for finding out the patterns behind how someone does a skill is called ‘modelling’ and it is one of the building blocks of NLP. By using modelling it is possible to determine all the behaviours /thinking strategies/beliefs and so on of how someone performs the particular skill. These are the patterns.

The test of the success of modelling is to teach the skill to someone else using the patterns identified by modelling. If that person can then perform the skill

competently the patterns of that skill have been successfully identified.

When I think of this modelling technique I am impressed by how liberating this is for all of us. It means that any of us can learn how to perform tasks/display skills if we can find experts and use NLP modelling techniques to extract the patterns behind how they do what they do.

*“Any of us can learn how to perform tasks/display skills if we can find experts and use NLP modelling techniques to extract the patterns behind how they do what they do.”*

Now I suppose I should put a rider on this – if you are five foot nothing you may struggle to out-perform a seven foot tall basketball player even if you know how he hits the basket every

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time. But even with this rider about physical skills, any of us has it within our power to improve our performance to the optimum of our own physical potential.

### **Fundamental principles**

We'll keep how to do modelling for a later article because there is another fundamental topic I want to cover first. It is a set of about 10 basic principles which underpin NLP. There is no universal version of these, so I'll give you the ones I personally favour. However, given this is only the first article, I'm going to give just the first principle:

### **The First Principle of NLP**

We do not operate directly on the world. We create maps from our sensory experiences, then operate and communicate from our maps. However, the map is not the territory. Most human problems are caused by the maps in our heads. It is easier to change the map than the territory.

*For me, this first principle is one of the keys to unlocking the potential of NeuroLinguistic Programming, to bring benefit to people.*

### **Maps and reality**

Most of us believe we live in the real world. However let me challenge this belief for a moment. Have you ever gone to an event (party, film, play, whatever) with another person and found that each of you has had a different experience? One of you

might have thought it was great whilst the other might have thought it was anything but.

So why is that? The reason is because of the maps we construct in our own minds which tell us what the world looks like, how it works, what is safe or

dangerous, who we are, what it is OK for us to do and so on. In short, our maps describe our world, and our experiences are massively influenced by those maps.

Now there's nothing wrong with having a map of the world. Our childhood (indeed all our life

experiences) help us to build our map – life would be pretty confusing and overwhelming if we didn't

have one. It would be like being an alien arriving on a different planet! However our maps can become a cage (which may not be comfortable depending on its size and shape)....

Imagine for a moment what the world would seem like if you have a map which tells you that you have little value, will never achieve anything worthwhile, and believe others are all against you. Not a very pleasant place, is it?

Then imagine life in a map where you see the world as full of exciting possibilities, new experiences to embrace, where you are loved and respected by many people. It gives a very different experience, don't you think?

Hopefully you get the idea – the map which we build for ourselves profoundly affects our experience of life. The wonderful thing about NLP is that it gives us the ability to change our personal maps to enable us to transform our lives for the better.

### *Example*

*Some people love getting on a plane and flying; others are terrified. Some people enjoy doing exams, attending interviews, giving speeches, etc. Others can't think of anything worse!*

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### **The map is not the territory**

Imagine a street map of your local area. The map is a representation of that part of the real world, but we all recognise that it is not the same as the real world, only a small-scale and simpler version of the world looked at from one perspective.

Different maps can emphasise different aspects; a street finder map would concentrate on street names, for example; a topological map would show heights and contour lines; a map for electricity or gas suppliers would emphasise cable/pipe routes. Get the idea? The different maps are all 'right' in a sense but differ in the perspective they take.

In the same way each of us has our own personal map, so we can quite genuinely experience the same world in a different way. We often tend to operate under the delusion that our view of the world is 'reality' and that it is the

'correct' perspective. But our personal map is not the same as the real world – it is a subjective and simplified image of the world created out of our life experiences. In other words 'the map is not the territory'.

So the power of the first principle is this. Once we understand that our own personal map of the world is just that – it is a simplified representation of the world – we can consider changing it, if we need to. We can also be aware that other people have their own (possibly different in some key respects) map which influences their behaviour, and they are probably not aware that that map exists.

### **Changing the map**

It's easier to change the map than the territory. Going back to the analogy of a street map, it is quite easy to make a change in it (one bottle of correction fluid and a pencil should do it), but it is a lot

**“Once we understand that our own personal map of the world is just that – it is a simplified representation of the world – we can consider changing it, if we need to.”**

more difficult to change the course of a road or move a building in the real world. In the same way it is easier to change our personal map than to change the real world. See the example below.

When we change our personal map we can change our reactions to events which are constraining our lives. This is what NLP gives us the skills to do. We'll cover the techniques to do this in later articles. In the meantime you might like to ask yourself which aspects of your own map are causing you discomfort or making you feel less fulfilled than you could be. We can tackle these in future articles.

### **Example**

*Imagine two people going for a job interview. One has a map that sees the process as a competition to 'win' at all costs in a contest with the other candidates to get the job. The other sees the interview as a meeting to discuss the degree of 'match' between her skills and the job requirements, and comes away from the interview thinking that the job is not a good fit. Assuming both get a letter saying the job was given to someone else, their emotional reactions might be quite different.*

**“NLP is a collection of techniques for helping people achieve their potential and happiness”**

*That's why I get excited about it!*

*Philip*

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# About Philip

**P**hilip Titheridge has been interested in NLP for more than 10 years since working with a group of professional development coaches in the 1990s. He initially experienced the power of NLP as a 'client' when going through a programme of personal development. He then studied it seriously as a practitioner, becoming formally qualified in 2000. Since then he has used his skills to improve the effectiveness and happiness of people around him, both in their working and personal lives. This has included time spent as a counsellor, coach and trainer, as well as working as a manager leading businesses through change.

Now NLP is an inherent part of how Phil operates every day, and he takes the opportunity to help and support others in addressing the challenges in their lives. He particularly enjoys working with groups/teams in the workplace where the multiple challenges of balancing personal, team and business goals can cause stress and performance difficulties which NLP can help to resolve. He has been married for more than 30 years and has two grown-up children both now living their own (mostly!) independent lives. Although his working life often takes him to other parts of UK and Europe, he has his home base near Bristol, in the UK.

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