



## **What is NLP?**

Why would you want to use neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)? NLP is the art and science of personal excellence. Because personal excellence is achievable, NLP can change your life. It is a remarkable facilitator for change. NLP can enable people to bring their dreams into life and to make huge changes. Career and life crisis can be solved; people can radically alter their work experience and their personal life.

NLP is a set of tools and techniques that help people deal with unhelpful patterns of thought and behaviour, substituting them with new and positive constructive ways to improve their life. The originators of NLP studied excellence and found ways to model that excellence so that it can be replicated by anybody who has learnt the techniques. This means that individuals can achieve outstanding results.

NLP started in the early 70's with the collaboration of John Grinder and Richard Bandler, who were both at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Together they studied three top psychotherapists; Fritz Perls, the innovative psychotherapist and originator of the school of therapy known as Gestalt, Virginia Satir, the extraordinary family therapist, who consistently was able to resolve difficult family relationships that many other therapists found intractable, and Milton Erickson, the world-famous hypnotherapist.

Bandler and Grinder did not set out to start a new school of therapy, but instead they sought to identify patterns used by these outstanding therapists and to analyse them in a way that would enable them to pass these excellent techniques to others. They were not concerned with theories. They sought to replicate the model of successful therapy that worked in practice. By modelling these three therapists they modelled three very different personalities, yet surprisingly each used similar underlying patterns. Bandler and Grinder took these patterns, refined them and built an eloquent model which can be used for effective communication, personal change, accelerated learning, and as a result a higher quality of life.

Having modelled the three outstanding therapists it became clear that there was a pattern to achieving excellence and methods of effective ways of thinking and communicating that were common to outstanding people. These patterns and skills could be modelled to make them into an even more powerful tool. Because this process contains a number of elements it became combined under the cumbersome title of neuro-linguistic programming.

The neuro part of NLP acknowledges that all behaviour stems from our neurological processes of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and feeling. We experience the world through our five senses and we make “sense” of the information in order to act upon it. Our neurology covers not only our invisible thought process, but also our visible physiological reactions to ideas and events.

The linguistic part of the title refers to the way we use language to order our thoughts, and behaviour, and to communicate with others.

The programming refers to ways we can choose to organise our ideas and actions to produce results.

- “Neuro” refers to the brain and nervous system
- “Linguistic” is the verbal and non-verbal language used to communicate
- “Programming” is the unique way it is all put together to create behaviour.

We have one brain but two minds – a conscious mind and an unconscious mind. The unconscious mind remembers all the things that we do automatically; how to ride a bicycle, drive a car, follow a habitual route to our usual destination and such like. This unconscious area is a store very much larger than the conscious mind. In the unconscious mind there are programmes that have developed over time to achieve the successful riding of the bicycle or following the route to the destination. Some of these programmes are good and some of them are not. NLP allows the recovery into the conscious mind of a less successful programme in order that it can be amended so that when it goes back into unconscious behaviour the outcome is more successful than previously was the case.

What if a person had a reaction to an event or situation which was unwanted? For example, they easily get angry when somebody speaks to them in a certain way or they totally freak out when they see a mouse or a spider. These are automatic programmed reactions in the unconscious mind taking control of the person and inducing emotional responses which are not helpful. NLP offers a better way. Using the range of strategies and techniques that have evolved over the last 40 years, NLP can give a person an ability to react differently by choice, and can equip a person to become more aware of their thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

What if you really understand what makes you tick and thereby are facilitated in making clear decisions about what you want from work and life. Would that not result in you having an ability to take responsibility for results in your life and to make the changes that can improve the quality of life? It is like taking hold of the steering wheel of the car and choosing the route you want to take instead of automatically following the old route.

NLP creates the ability for personal choice and opens the possibility of achieving personal excellence.