

Chapter 1

Getting to Know NLP

In This Chapter

- ▶ Setting out on an NLP journey
 - ▶ Exploring the key themes of NLP
 - ▶ Getting the most out of NLP
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Here's a little Sufi tale about a man and a tiger.

A man being followed by a hungry tiger, turned in desperation to face it and cried: 'Why don't you leave me alone?' The tiger answered: 'Why don't you stop being so appetising?'

In any communication between two people, or in this case between human and beast, more than one perspective always exists. Sometimes people just can't grasp that fact because they don't know they need to change their behaviour to communicate in a way that gets them what they want.

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is one of the most sophisticated and effective methodologies currently available to help you communicate effectively. NLP centres on communication and change. These days everybody needs the skills to develop personal flexibility. Tricks and gimmicks aren't enough: everyone needs to get real.

So welcome to the start of the journey, as this chapter gives you a quick taster of the key NLP themes.

Introducing NLP

All able-bodied humans are born with the same basic neurological system.



Your *neurological system* transmits the information you receive from your environment through your senses to your brain. Your *environment*, in this context, is everything external to you, but also includes your organs, such as your eyes, ears, skin, stomach and lungs. Your brain processes the

information and transmits messages back to your organs. In response, your eyes, for example, may blink. The information can also create emotions, and you may cry or laugh. In short, your thought processes make you behave in a certain way.

Your ability to do anything in life – whether swimming the length of a pool, cooking a meal or reading this book – depends on how you respond to the stimuli on your nervous system. Therefore, much of NLP is devoted to discovering how to think and communicate more effectively within yourself and with others.

The term *neuro-linguistic programming* breaks down as follows:



- ✔ **Neuro** concerns your neurological system. NLP is based on the idea that you experience the world through your senses and translate sensory information into thought processes, both conscious and unconscious. Thought processes activate the neurological system, which affects your physiology, emotions and behaviour.
- ✔ **Linguistic** refers to the way you use language to make sense of the world, capture and conceptualise experience and communicate that experience to others. In NLP, linguistics is the study of how the words you speak and your body language influence your experience.
- ✔ **Programming** draws heavily from learning theory and addresses how you code or mentally represent your experiences. Your personal programming consists of your internal processes and strategies (thinking patterns) that you use to make decisions, solve problems, learn, evaluate and get results. NLP shows you how to recode your experiences and organise your internal programming so that you can get the outcomes you want.



To see this process in action, begin to notice how you think. Imagine a hot summer's day. You're standing in your kitchen holding a lemon you've taken from the fridge. Look at the outside of it, its yellow, waxy skin with green marks at the ends. Feel how cold it is in your hand. Raise it to your nose and smell it. Mmmm. Press it gently and notice the weight of the lemon in the palm of your hand. Now take a knife and cut it in half. Hear the juices start to run and notice that the smell is stronger now. Bite deeply into the lemon and allow the juice to swirl around in your mouth.



Words have the power to trigger your saliva glands. Hear the word 'lemon' and your brain kicks into action. The word tells your brain that you have a lemon in your hand. You may think that words only describe meanings, but in fact they create your reality – a concept we explore throughout this book.

Providing a few quick definitions

NLP can be described in various ways. The formal definition is that NLP is 'the study of the structure of your subjective experience'. Here are a few more ways of answering the elusive question 'what is NLP?':

- ✓ The art and science of communication
- ✓ The key to learning
- ✓ The way to understand what makes you and other people tick
- ✓ The route to getting the results you want in all areas of your life
- ✓ The way to influence others with integrity
- ✓ The manual for your brain
- ✓ The secret of successful people
- ✓ The method of creating your own future
- ✓ The way to help people make sense of their reality
- ✓ The toolkit for personal and organisational change

Considering where NLP started and where it's going

NLP began in California in the early 1970s at the University of Santa Cruz. Richard Bandler, a master's level student of information sciences and mathematics, and Dr John Grinder, a professor of linguistics, studied people who they considered to be excellent communicators and brilliant at helping their clients change. They were fascinated by how some people defied the odds to get through to so-called difficult or very ill people where others failed miserably to connect.

NLP thus has its roots in a therapeutic setting thanks to three world-renowned psychotherapists studied by Bandler and Grinder: Virginia Satir (developer of Conjoint Family Therapy), Fritz Perls (the founder of gestalt psychology) and Milton H. Erickson (largely responsible for the advancement of clinical hypnotherapy). In their work, Bandler and Grinder also drew upon the skills of linguists Alfred Korzybski and Noam Chomsky, social anthropologist Gregory Bateson and psychotherapist Paul Watzlawick.

From those early days, the field of NLP exploded to encompass many disciplines in many countries around the world. We can't possibly name all the

great teachers and practitioners in NLP today but you can certainly find a wealth of information online.

In the 1980s, Grinder became dissatisfied with some early coding work done in collaboration with Bandler, which he now refers to as Classic Code. Together with Judith DeLozier, he initiated some new models known as New Code (documented in his book *Whispering in the Wind*) and he continues this work today with Carmen Bostic St. Clair.

So what's next for NLP? The discipline has certainly travelled a long way from Santa Cruz in the 1970s, and since we wrote the first edition of this book the interest in NLP shows no sign of waning. So many more pioneers have picked up the story and taken it forward – making it practical and helping to transform the lives of real people. New neuroscientific knowledge offers some scientific explanation for many ideas that NLP practitioners have developed more intuitively. In particular, the world of coaching is heavily influenced by NLP. Today, NLP applications are being used by doctors, nurses, taxi drivers, salespeople, coaches, accountants, teachers, animal trainers, parents, workers, retired people and teenagers alike. In Chapter 21, we list just a few such practical applications.

Each generation takes current ideas, sifts through and refines them, adds knowledge discovered through its own experiences and communicates it in its own way. Information about NLP is now distributed via LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and so on – means of communication that didn't exist ten years ago.

Much of the development of NLP today focuses on the applications rather than the core models; people who are experts in one field incorporate NLP tools and take them into their own field. If NLP encourages new thinking and new choices and acknowledges the positive intention underlying all action, all we can say is the future remains bright with possibilities. The rest is up to you.

Offering a note on integrity

You may hear the words integrity and manipulation associated with NLP, and so we want to put the record straight now. You influence others all the time. When you do so consciously to get what you want, the question of integrity arises. Are you manipulating others to get what you want at their expense?

To make sure you behave with integrity, ask yourself a simple question: what is my positive intention for the other person in this interaction? If your intention is to benefit the other party (perhaps in a sales situation), you have

integrity – a win-win situation. If your intention is to benefit yourself alone, you're manipulating the other person. When you head for win-win outcomes in your dealings with other people and organisations, you're on track for success. And always bear in mind that what goes around comes around!

Encountering the Pillars of NLP: Straight Up and Straightforward

Neuro-linguistic programming is based on four pillars (check out Figure 1-1). These four foundations of the subject can be described as follows:

- ✔ **Rapport:** How to build a relationship with yourself and others is probably the most important gift that NLP gives you. Given the pace at which most humans live and work, one big lesson in rapport is how you can say 'no' to all the requests for your time and still retain friendships or maintain professional relationships. To find out more about rapport – how to build it and when to break it off – head to Chapter 6.
- ✔ **Sensory awareness:** Have you noticed how when you walk into someone else's home the colours, sounds and smells are subtly different from yours? Or that a colleague looks worried when he talks about his job. Maybe you notice the colour of a night sky or the fresh green leaves as spring unfolds. Like the famous fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, you begin to notice that your world is so much richer when you pay attention to all your senses. Chapter 5 describes the power of your sensory perceptions and how you can use your natural sight, sound, touch, feelings, taste and smell to your benefit.
- ✔ **Outcome thinking:** We use the word 'outcome' a lot throughout this book. This term relates to thinking about what you want, instead of getting stuck in a negative problem mode of thinking. The principles of an outcome approach can help you make the best decisions and choices – whether that's about what you're going to do at the weekend, running an important project at work or discovering the true purpose of your life. Head to Chapter 4 to get the results you deserve.
- ✔ **Behavioural flexibility:** This term means discovering how to do something different when what you're currently doing isn't working. Being flexible is key to practising NLP, and you can find related tools and ideas in every chapter. We help you find fresh perspectives and build these into your repertoire. Information, exercises and examples on how you can maximise your own flexibility can be found throughout the book.

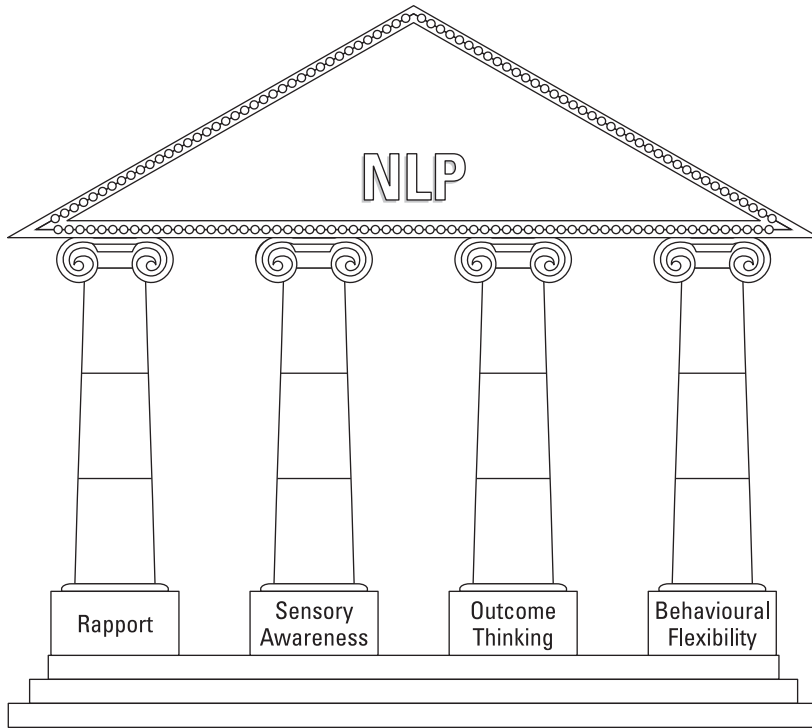


Figure 1-1:
The four
pillars
of NLP.

Here's an example of what these four pillars may mean to you in an everyday event. Suppose that you order a software package for storing the names, addresses and phone numbers of friends or clients. You load it onto your computer, use it a few times and then it mysteriously stops working. A bug is in the system, but you've already invested many hours in installing it and entering contacts' details. You phone the supplier and the customer service people are unhelpful to the point of rudeness.

You need to employ all your *rapport*-building skills with the customer service manager before anyone listens to your complaint. You need to *engage your senses* – particularly your ears as you listen carefully to what the supplier says – and notice how to control your feelings and decide on your best response. You need to be very clear about your desired *outcome* – what do you want to happen after you make your complaint? For example, do you want a full refund or replacement software? And, finally, you may need to be *flexible in your behaviour* and consider different options if you don't achieve what you want the first time.

Discovering Models and Modelling

As we describe in the earlier section ‘Considering where NLP started and where it’s going’, NLP began as a model of how people communicate and grew out of studies of some great communicators. The concept of models and modelling is thus at the heart of NLP.

The NLP premise begins as follows: if you can find someone who’s good at something, you can then model how that person does that thing and learn from him. You can discover how to model anyone you admire – top business leaders or sports personalities, the waitress at your favourite restaurant or your hugely energetic personal fitness trainer. You can find out more about modelling in Chapter 19.

Employing the NLP communication model

The NLP model describes how you process the information that comes at you from the outside. According to NLP, you move through life not by responding to the world around you, but by responding to your model or map of that world. The model is explained with examples in Chapter 8.

A fundamental assumption of NLP is that ‘the map is not the territory’ and that each individual has different maps of how the world operates. This insight means that you and another person may experience the same event and yet do so differently.

Imagine that you go to a party – you have a good time, meet lots of friendly people, enjoy good food and drink and perhaps do a spot of dancing. If we ask you and another guest to recount what happened at the party, however, you’d each tell a different story. That’s because your internal representations of that outside event are different from the event itself: ‘the map is not the territory’.

Alternatively, picture being suddenly transported to a country with a completely different culture on the other side of the world. The thoughts and assumptions that your new-found neighbours construct regarding how life operates will be very different to your own.



NLP doesn’t change the world – it simply helps you change the way that you observe and perceive your world. NLP allows you to build a different or more detailed map that helps you to be more effective. It gives you an understanding of patterns of behaviour so that you can consciously stop doing what gets in your way and begin doing more of what helps you achieve your goals and desires.



John, an architect, rents expensive office space in a city centre. He used to moan that the offices weren't cleaned to a high enough standard, the staff were lazy and the office manager wouldn't address the problem. When we met John in his office, we discovered that he worked in chaos; every available surface was covered in paperwork and he clearly never tidied anything away. He frequently worked late and was grumpy if interrupted, and so the cleaners came and went without daring to disturb him.

Through coaching, John came to recognise that he hadn't considered anyone else's point of view or noticed what a difficult task the cleaners faced trying to clean his office around him. His map of reality was completely different from that of the office manager and the cleaners. He subsequently built a new map that incorporated the reality of what life in the office was like for his colleagues, and he became more considerate towards them. By changing this one map of his experience, other aspects of his life also improved, and he grew more aware of the effect of his general untidiness on others. For example, he now feels more comfortable inviting girlfriends to his neater flat.

Modelling excellence

Modelling excellence is a theme much discussed in this book, because so much of NLP is future orientated and applied to creating change for the better – whether that's a better-qualified individual, a better quality of life or a better world for the next generation.

The NLP approach is that you learn best by finding someone else who already excels at whatever you want to learn. By modelling other people, you can break your discovering into its component parts. This perspective is empowering, and an encouragement to convert large, overwhelming projects into lots of small ones and discover people who've already been there and can show you the way.

Using NLP to Greater Effect

As you discover throughout this book, NLP is about increasing your options instead of being restricted by your experience and saying, 'this is the way I do things, and this is how it has to be'. In order to benefit from NLP, you need to be open to questioning and challenging your norms. This section provides a few tips on how to adopt this mindset.

Understanding that attitude comes first

Essentially, NLP is about developing a positive attitude to life and its possibilities rather than dwelling on problems. NLP provides the necessary tools and support to help you change anything about your life that doesn't reflect who you want to be today. So much more is possible when you have the mindset and attitude to support your success; you tap into your natural human resourcefulness. If your attitude doesn't support you in living a richly rewarding life, you may want to consider changing it. Changing your mind and attitude really does change your life.



Many people spend a lot of time looking at the negatives in their lives – how they hate their jobs, or don't want to smoke or be fat. By conditioning yourself to concentrate on what you *do* want, positive results can be achieved very quickly.

Being curious and confused are good for you

Here are two helpful attributes to bring with you: *curiosity* – accepting that you don't know all the answers – and a *willingness to be confused*, because, as the great hypnotherapist Milton H. Erickson said, 'enlightenment is always preceded by confusion'.



If you find that ideas in this book make you feel confused, thank your unconscious mind because confusion is the first step to understanding. Take the sense of confusion as a sign that you're processing information to enable you to find the way forward, and that you intuitively know more than you realise consciously.

Changing is up to you

Gone are the days when you needed to stay stuck in a downward spiral of repetitive behaviours and responses that were tedious and ineffective. Today, NLP is all about producing measurable results that enhance the quality of people's lives without a lengthy and painful journey into the past.

As you read the chapters in this book, you discover the experiential nature of NLP – that it's about trying things out, having a go. Test out the ideas for yourself – don't take our word for it.

The responsibility for change lies with you, and this book is the facilitator. If you aren't open to change, you aren't going to get the most from the book. So we encourage you to do the exercises, note your new processes and share them with others – explaining something to someone else means that you learn it twice and thus really absorb it. By the time you complete the book, you may be surprised at how much you've already changed.



The neural network that makes up your brain has an amazing capacity to change and forge new connections (see Chapter 3 for more on the structure of the brain). You can change at any age thanks to this neuroplasticity – what an encouraging thought!

Having fun on the way!

When Clint Eastwood was interviewed on TV by Michael Parkinson he offered sound advice: 'Let's take the work seriously, and not ourselves seriously.' NLP involves much fun and laughter. If you set yourself up to become perfect, you put enormous and unrealistic pressure on yourself. So pack a sense of your own playfulness as you travel and try to make sense of a changing world: learning is serious work that's serious fun.